



PROMOTING THE USE OF ESI FUNDS FOR ROMA INCLUSION

A glance at EUroma's eight years of work and how Roma inclusion is considered in the 2014-2020 programming period



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And final thanks to the Spanish ESF Managing Authority who has shown great determination in contributing to the improvement in the lives of the Roma across Europe by supporting EURoma during all these years.

Fundación Secretariado Gitano (FSG)
EURoma Technical Secretariat



Introduction

The 'European Network on Social Inclusion and Roma under the Structural Funds' (EURoma Network) is an initiative launched in 2007 by the Spanish Government (Spanish European Social Fund (ESF) Managing Authority) in cooperation with the Fundación Secretariado Gitano (FSG), who has led the Technical Secretariat.

The Network aims to promote the use of Structural Funds for the inclusion of the Roma population and as a result enhancing the effectiveness of policies targeting the Roma community. To this end, it gathers, under the leadership of the Spanish ESF Managing Authority, Managing Authorities (or delegated Intermediate Bodies/ Implementing Authorities) and National Roma Contact Points from fifteen Member States: Austria, Belgium, Bulgaria, Croatia, Czech Republic, Finland, Greece, Hungary, Italy, Poland, Portugal, Romania, Spain, Slovakia and Sweden.

EURoma was created in the context of the 2007-2013 Structural Funds programming period, which increased the scope of transnational cooperation between public authorities and civil society actors, and in light of:

- The need to guarantee the fundamental rights of the Roma population;
- The enlargement of the European Union through the incorporation of the countries with the highest concentration of Roma populations;
- The fact that Structural Funds, and particularly the ESF, were identified as the main financial instruments for the implementation, by Member States, of policies fostering social inclusion, cohesion and employment opportunities;
- The fact that the impact of the Structural Funds on Roma was quite limited (e.g. scarce knowledge on how to address Roma inclusion in the Operational Programmes and how to actually reach Roma in the implementation);
- The Spanish experience of effectively using the ESF for the inclusion of the Roma.

Within this framework, EURoma started its work to achieve, through mutual learning, knowledge generation and awareness-raising among relevant stakeholders, an increased and more effective use of Structural Funds (notably ESF but also other funds) for Roma inclusion.

Over these eight years, the Network has become a fundamental actor at European level as regards the inclusion of Roma population and Structural Funds. It has developed a wide range of actions to achieve this goal and contributed to the implementation of the 2007-2013 programming period and to the advances in the 2014-2020 period, including the incorporation of an explicit investment priority on Roma under ESF (IP 9.2. ‘Socio-economic integration of marginalised communities such as the Roma’). Today, the Roma population is more present in Operational Programmes than in previous programming periods: Roma are targeted largely and in a broad number of OPs and there has been a convergence in terms of approaches and methodologies to make a more efficient use of the funds.

As part of its activities, EURoma has produced a number of documents focusing on improving the use of Structural Funds for Roma, being this specific publication the final one of the programming period 2007-2013. This report first provides a glance at EURoma’s trajectory, main products and overall added value and impact during its life these years. It then presents an overview on how Structural funds have been planned through Operational Programmes for the 2014-2020 programming period in 14 participant¹ Member States, focusing on the scope, the funds and approaches planned, the thematic objectives and investment priorities selected as well as the areas of intervention and the application of the partnership principle.

The report also aims to reflect the advancement as regards the consideration of Roma issues within the framework of Structural Funds. Overall, it pretends to provide a general picture of how Roma inclusion is incorporated in the programming documents of the 2014-2020 European Structural and Investment (ESI) Funds programming period, identifying the most relevant trends as well as the key challenges for the implementation phase that has already started in Member States.

This initial analysis will serve for the future work of EURoma Network as well as for other stakeholders involved in promoting a better use of ESI Funds for Roma inclusion in the current programming period.

1. All participant Member States but Finland.

List of abbreviations and acronyms

CLLD	Community-led local development
DG	Directorate-General
EAFRD	European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development
EC	European Commission
ERDF	European Regional Development Fund
ESF	European Social Fund
ESI Funds	European Structural and Investment Funds
EU	European Union
IB	Intermediate Body
ICT	Information and Communication Technologies
IP	Investment Priority
ITI	Integrated Territorial Investments
LAG	Local Action Group
NGO	Non-governmental organisation
NRCP	National Roma Contact Point
NRIS	National Roma Integration Strategy
OP	Operational Programme
TO	Thematic Objective
YEI	Youth Employment Initiative

Executive summary

This report is the final publication of the ‘European Network on Social Inclusion and Roma under the Structural Funds’ in the 2007-2013 programming period. It has a **two-fold objective**:

- **To provide a glance at EURoma’s trajectory, main products, and overall added value and impact during its eight years of operation.**
- **To review how fourteen countries currently involved in the EURoma Network** (Austria, Belgium, Bulgaria, Croatia, Czech Republic, Greece, Hungary, Italy, Poland, Portugal, Romania, Slovakia, Spain and Sweden) **consider Roma inclusion in the Operational Programmes adopted for the 2014-2020 European Structural and Investment (ESI) Funds programming period**, identifying the most relevant trends as well as the key challenges for the implementation phase that has already started in some countries.

EURoma: Eight years promoting the use of Structural Funds for Roma inclusion in the European Union

The ‘European Network on Social Inclusion and Roma under the Structural Funds’ (EURoma Network) is an initiative **launched in 2007 by the Spanish Government** (Spanish European Social Fund (ESF) Managing Authority) **in cooperation with the ‘Fundación Secretariado Gitano (FSG)**, building upon the Spanish experience in the management of Structural Funds for Roma inclusion, notably within the Operational Programme ‘Fight against Discrimination’. It aims to **promote the use of Structural Funds for the inclusion of the Roma population** and as a result enhancing the effectiveness of policies targeting the Roma community.

To this end, it **gathers**, under the leadership of the Spanish ESF Managing Authority, **public bodies responsible for Structural Funds** (notably ESF Managing Authorities or delegated Intermediate Bodies/Implementing Authorities) **and for the policies targeting the Roma population** (notably the National Roma Contact Points) **from fifteen Member States**: Austria, Belgium, Bulgaria, Croatia, Czech Republic, Finland, Greece, Hungary, Italy, Poland, Portugal, Romania, Spain, Slovakia and Sweden. The Network also counts on the **participation of the European Commission**. The Fundación Secretariado Gitano holds the Technical Secretariat of the Network. In addition, a number of European Regional

Development Fund (ERDF) Managing Authorities from participating countries are also involved in Network activities.

To achieve this goal, the Network develops activities revolving around **three main lines of action**:

- **Mutual learning among Network partners.** Encouraging and facilitating the exchange of information and experiences on topics of relevance and/or common interest for Network partners as regards the use of Structural Funds for Roma inclusion (e.g. strategies and approaches, (un)successful practices, lessons learned, challenges, thematic areas...). Over the last years, particular attention has been paid to the preparation of the 2014-2020 programming period of the European Structural and Investment (ESI) Funds. Management Committee meetings, gathering Network partners, are one of the key instruments used for this end.
- **Knowledge generation based on experience.** Generating knowledge on key aspects related to the use of Structural Funds for Roma inclusion building upon the experience and shared approaches of Network partners and the work and debate within the Network. A wide variety of resources are produced including position papers and recommendations, analysis of the situation, information and guidance materials, guides and reports...All documents produced by the Network are available on the EURoma website www.euromanet.eu (Resource Center).
- **Visibility and dissemination.** Making the Network, its activities and products visible with a view to raise awareness among relevant stakeholders on the importance of Structural Funds for Roma inclusion and on relevant aspects to achieve a more efficient use of these funds. Different channels are used: EURoma Network website (www.euromanet.eu), regular newsletters (available in English and Spanish) regarding relevant developments about Structural Funds and Roma inclusion at EU level and in the Network partner countries, presence in relevant fora, initiatives, decision-making spaces and expert/consultative groups.

Active throughout the whole 2007-2013 programming period, **EURoma has become a fundamental actor at European level as regards the inclusion of Roma population and Structural Funds.** The Network has been not only highly valued by relevant actors, including the Network partners and the European Commission, but also one of the most active transnational networks over its eight years of operation. A number of factors demonstrate the value and impact of EURoma including its composition and large scope (currently involving fifteen Western and Eastern Member States); its capacity to bring together the

bodies that decide on Roma policies (National Roma Contact Points) and those that allocate the financial resources (Managing Authorities), aligning policies and financial resources; its role in boosting the idea that Structural Funds are a key financial and political tool to promote policies for Roma inclusion and in including Roma issues in the agenda of ESF Managing Authorities; and its contribution to a more effective use of these funds to promote Roma inclusion in the 2007-2013 and the 2014-2020 programming periods, including through the incorporation of an explicit investment priority on Roma.

Roma inclusion in the Operational Programmes of the 2014-2020 programming period

It is encouraging to observe that in the programming documents for the 2014-2020 European Structural and Investment (ESI) Funds programming period **increased attention is paid to Roma inclusion, with Roma people and Roma communities targeted to a large extent and in a broad number of Operational Programmes (OPs).**

While countries analysed use a wide variety of options in terms of scope, funds, approaches, thematic objectives, investment priorities and fields of intervention, **a number of general trends are observed** (some of them similar to the ones in the 2007-2013 period).

Roma inclusion is commonly considered, even in the countries with high percentages of Roma population, **in general Operational Programmes**, instead of specific Operational Programmes (or part of them) targeting Roma.

National and regional management

- There is a **general trend to address Roma inclusion in OPs at national level**, opting for a centralised management not only of national lines of intervention but also of regional and local ones.
- In some countries **Roma inclusion is also incorporated in the OPs at regional level. However**, it appears that, except in certain cases, Roma feature **to a minor extent** in regional OPs **compared to national OPs**, despite the attempts made by some countries (by increasing the number of regional OPs addressing Roma inclusion or giving them more capacity). In general terms, **there is little information on the extent and how Roma inclusion is considered in regional programmes** in many countries, which makes it difficult to assess the state-of-play and the progress made.

- While some advancements regarding the inclusion of Roma in regional OPs have been achieved, there are **still challenges that need to be addressed**, namely, the assumption of Roma priorities in the regional agendas, the increased coordination and information flow between the national and regional administrative levels, etc... These aspects, which are closely linked to the absence of adequate communication channels and the lack of mandate from the national bodies to collect information from the regional level, seem crucial in order to change this trend.

Use of funds

- An **increased awareness about the importance of using ESI Funds other than the European Social Fund (ESF), notably the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF), is perceived**. In the 2014-2020 programming period, most countries foresee the use of both ESF and ERDF to address Roma inclusion. Moreover, there are plans to use other funding sources and instruments --including the European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development (EAFRD) and the European Territorial Cooperation programmes- in certain countries.
- **While in some cases the use of ESF and ERDF is planned separately, a complementary use of both funds is foreseen in a large number of OPs**, which represents a step forward towards a more integrated approach. Three options are used:
 - › A single-fund OP (ESF/ERDF) supporting actions eligible under the other fund according to Article 98 of the Common Provisions Regulations
 - › Including both funds within the same OP (multi-fund OP)
 - › Complementing actions from different OPs (mostly single-fund) using ESF and/or ERDF funds

It remains to be seen how the complementarity of funds is applied in practice and how the main problems faced in this area in the 2007-2013 programming period (such as the difficulties in harmonising the calls for proposals from different funds) or new aspects (such as co-investing resources from different funds into one single intervention) are addressed.

- Unfortunately, the **potential of the Youth Employment Initiative (YEI) to support the employment of Roma**, a population significantly younger than the overall population and experiencing higher unemployment rates than the rest of society, **is largely missed**.

In general terms, Roma youngsters are not specifically considered in the Plans and OPs adopted by Member States to implement the YEI at national level, assuming that they will benefit from the measures simply because they are young and they are unemployed. However, experience shows that, if specific measures are not adopted to take into account the profiles and needs of the groups furthest from the labour market such as Roma (with limited educational background to comply with the procedures established and to access the training schemes and the labour market offers) and to effectively reach them, the potential of this type of initiatives will be missed.

- Whereas certain progress is acknowledged, **further efforts are needed to ensure that the needs of the Roma population are considered in all ESI Funds and that full advantage is taken of all the opportunities offered** to achieve a more effective use of these funds such as the combination of funds.

Approaches used

- **Different ways to address Roma inclusion are observed**, mainly related to the reference made to Roma/Roma communities within the Operational Programmes:
 - › **Explicit mention:** dedicated lines focusing specifically on Roma/Roma communities. This approach is largely used in certain ESF investment priorities, notably under ESF IP 9.2. (Socio-economic integration of marginalised communities such as the Roma), but also under other ESF IPs and TOs and to a lesser extent under ERDF IP 9.b. (Providing support for physical, economic and social regeneration of deprived communities in urban and rural areas).
 - › **Explicit but not exclusive mention:** general lines of intervention focusing explicitly on Roma/Roma communities but as part of a larger group (e.g. disadvantaged group) or geographical area (e.g. disadvantaged area). In this category a distinction should be made between those OPs that merely mention Roma/Roma communities as one of the many target groups/geographical areas of the OP and those that pay particular attention to them by having a limited number of target groups/areas, one of them Roma/Roma communities. 'Explicit but not exclusive' Roma targeting, if implemented properly, has proven to be one of the best ways of tackling the socio-economic inclusion of Roma.
 - › **No explicit mention to Roma** but Roma/Roma communities considered as part of a larger group /geographical area.

Finally, the **territorial approach**, which can be applied in any of the previous three cases. This approach aims at covering specifically the needs of geographical areas, sometimes micro-territories, in many cases at greatest risk of poverty and, as a consequence, tackle the needs of groups at risk of exclusion and discrimination living in these areas, as it is the case of the Roma.

- In general terms **countries combine different approaches to address Roma inclusion** (both within the same OP or in the different OPs) **and target Roma explicitly**. The only exception to this general trend is Sweden, which opts for not using an explicit approach (Roma are considered as part of one of the ‘minorities’ target groups).
- There are also **differences as regards the hierarchical level at which the interventions targeting specifically Roma/Roma communities are planned** (from the maximum level of relevance when defined as a priority axis to a specific objective or an action/type of intervention). Out of the OPs that include targeted interventions, only the Slovak ESF/ERDF *Human Resources OP* foresees dedicated priority axes, one under ESF (Priority Axis 5 ‘Integration of marginalised Roma communities’) and one under ERDF (Priority Axis 6 ‘Technical facilities in municipalities with presence of marginalised Roma communities’). The rest of countries foresee interventions at the level of specific objectives or actions/types of interventions. The most common trend is to use specific objectives, whether several ones (Romanian ESF *Human Capital OP* with five) or one only (Belgian ESF *Flanders OP*, Bulgarian ESF *Human Resources Development OP*, ESF/ERDF *Science and Education for Smart Growth OP* and ERDF *Regions in Growth OP*), Czech ESF/ERDF *Research, Development and Education OP*, Italian ESF *Social Inclusion OP*, ESF/ERDF *Metropolitan Cities OP* and ESF/ERDF *Legality OP*, and Spanish *Social Inclusion and Social Economy OP*). The rest plan Roma inclusion under actions/types of interventions (Austrian ESF *Employment OP*, Croatian ESF *Efficient Human Resources OP*, Greek ESF *Human Resources Development, Education and Lifelong Learning OP*, Hungarian ESF/ERDF *Human Resources and Development OP*, *Territorial and Settlement Development OP*, Polish ESF *Knowledge, Education, Development OP*, Portuguese ESF *Social Inclusion and Employment OP*).
- Experience shows that there is **no single right or better approach, what is important is that planning is translated into actions that actually reach Roma/Roma communities**. Particular attention should be paid to those actions that do not target Roma explicitly to avoid programmes disregarding them. The necessary guarantees should also be taken as regards the ‘explicit but not exclusive’ approaches, notably when there is a large number of target groups, to prevent the risk that Roma become blurred among

the many other groups. To this end, it is crucial to count on strong and continuous monitoring processes.

- It is also important to bear in mind that **there is still much scope to reach Roma/Roma communities in the implementation phase** even if the adopted programming documents do not feature specific measures or do not explicitly mention them (e.g. Roma can be mentioned as potential target groups of the calls for proposals or in the priorities of the projects...).

Thematic objectives (TOs) and investment priorities (IPs)

- Luckily most countries have understood that **the fact that there is a dedicated investment priority to address Roma inclusion within ESF (IP 9.2.) does not prevent them from planning interventions under other ESF IPs and TOs as well as under other funds (ERDF).**
- The most **common trend within the ESF** is to address Roma inclusion under **Thematic Objective 9** (Promoting social inclusion, combating poverty and any discrimination), followed by **Thematic Objective 8** (Promoting sustainable and quality employment and supporting labour mobility) and **Thematic Objective 10** (Investing in education, training and vocational training for skills and life-long learning).
- As it could be expected, **the OPs addressing Roma inclusion under IP 9.2. are the ones that include the most targeted actions**, including dedicated priority axes, thematic objectives and/or actions/type of interventions. **But it is worth noting that a number of OPs that address Roma inclusion under IPs other than 9.2. also pay particular attention to Roma, even with dedicated actions targeting Roma.**
- With respect to the **ERDF, Roma inclusion is mainly addressed under Thematic Objective 9** (Promoting social inclusion, combating poverty and any discrimination) **and Thematic Objective 10** (Investing in education, training and vocational training for skills and lifelong learning by developing education and training infrastructure).
- The **most explicit and targeted approaches to Roma/Roma communities under ERDF are found under IP 9.b.** (Providing support for physical, economic and social regeneration of deprived communities in urban and rural areas). However, in ERDF interventions it is more common to use ‘explicit but not exclusive approaches’ or even not mentioning Roma explicitly (considering them as part of larger groups), a trend that is to some extent related to the wide use of territorial approaches.

- **The consideration of Roma inclusion** in a large number of ESF and ERDF thematic objectives and investment priorities, **beyond the specific IP 9.2. implies substantial progress in terms of Roma policies and opens a lot of opportunities to achieve impact** if it is appropriately implemented.
- **The use of other thematic objectives which could have potential to reach Roma people** (e.g. 2, 5 and 6) **could be considered as merely anecdotal.**

Fields of intervention

- It is positive to observe that in the adopted Operational Programmes **countries incorporate actions addressing the four key fields of intervention identified by the EU Framework for National Roma Integration Strategies (employment, education, healthcare and housing), together in some cases with** interventions in other areas such as the **fight against discrimination or social inclusion/community-level social integration** (i.e. community-centres, field social work, intercultural mediation, access to social services...).
- Despite the wider scope in terms of fields of intervention, and similarly to the 2007-2013 programming period, **interventions are mainly focused on employment and education while healthcare and housing are considered to a lesser extent**, although housing issues are acquiring increased importance, with specific lines of support. The area of **healthcare** is however primarily included in general lines of support and considered from a global approach (initiatives covering different areas).
- One of the main challenges perceived in the previous programming period was the design and actual implementation of an **integrated and multidimensional approach** (both in terms of foreseen interventions and funds). In the 2014-2020 period, **despite the fact that it is widely recognised as a crucial element** to address complex situations facing Roma inclusion, it is **still not broadly considered** and when it is the case, it is often not clear how it will be implemented in practice.
- While these approaches are of particular relevance in areas with relatively widespread geographical segregation and marginalisation or where Roma are overrepresented, it is **important to go further and apply them in all types of interventions targeting Roma, emphasising** links between the different fields.

- It seems that further efforts are also needed as regards the **use of integrated approaches in micro-territorial interventions**. Integrated actions in these cases should entail investment in education, employment generation and access to healthcare with the pivotal development of basic infrastructure, including the rebuilding and renovation of housing. Other key areas to be considered as regards housing interventions are infrastructural (including sanitation) and environmental improvements in Roma communities, integrated actions for improving physical and housing conditions in neighbourhoods with a high concentration of Roma as well as desegregation and urban planning.

Partnership principle

- In line with the general **acknowledgement of the importance of involving relevant stakeholders for Roma inclusion** (Roma individuals, Roma NGOs and organisations working to promote Roma inclusion) **in the ESI Funds cycle**, certain **progress is observed in terms of the mechanisms, processes and methods for involvement**.
- **However, there is still room for progress**. Firstly, the extent to which these stakeholders are involved in practice and whether their proposals are reflected in the adopted documents and the decisions taken remains in many cases unclear as there is **no systematic monitoring or evaluation of stakeholder involvement**.
- Secondly, **major differences are perceived between the countries regarding the degree and quality of stakeholder participation and the forms it takes**. In addition, in many cases the mechanisms and processes for involvement are weak (e.g. informal), only happen in specific moments and in specific phases and are not linked to capacity-building processes of relevant stakeholders and beneficiaries.
- The **challenge** for the 2014-2020 programming period is to **extend quality participation of stakeholders to all phases of the programming period, from planning, to implementation, monitoring and evaluation, in line with the European Code of Conduct on Partnership**. To this end it is important to advance towards structured mechanisms to involve stakeholders and establish processes and methods that allow for an active and quality partnership (going beyond informative sessions and moving towards real consultation and partnership), to develop mechanisms that allow the systematic monitoring and evaluation of stakeholder involvement and to foster the capacity of stakeholders to get involved not only to merely participate.

Eight years promoting the use of **Structural Funds** for Roma inclusion in the European Union

Part 1

1. About the EURoma Network

The 'European Network on Social Inclusion and Roma under the Structural Funds' (EURoma Network) is an initiative **launched in 2007 by the Spanish Government** (Spanish ESF Managing Authority) **in cooperation with the Fundación Secretariado Gitano (FSG)**, building upon the Spanish experience in the management of Structural Funds for Roma inclusion, notably within the Operational Programme 'Fight against Discrimination'.

The Network aims to **promote the use of Structural Funds for the inclusion of the Roma population and as a result enhancing the effectiveness of policies targeting the Roma community**. To this end, it gathers, under the leadership of the Spanish ESF Managing Authority, public bodies from fifteen Member States: **Austria, Belgium, Bulgaria, Croatia, Czech Republic, Finland, Greece, Hungary, Italy, Poland, Portugal, Romania, Spain, Slovakia and Sweden**. The Network initially brought together twelve Member States and other three (Austria, Belgium and Croatia) joined it at a later stage.

Representatives of the Network in each country belong to two different categories:

- **European Social Fund (ESF) Managing Authorities or delegated Intermediate Bodies/ Implementing Authorities.**
- **Bodies responsible for the policies targeting the Roma population**, including the National Roma Contact Points.

The Network also counts on the **participation of the European Commission**. The Fundación Secretariado Gitano holds the Technical Secretariat of the Network.

In addition, a number of **European Regional Development Fund (ERDF) Managing Authorities** from participating countries are also involved in Network activities.

2. Network activities

The Network activities revolve around three main lines of action:

- **Mutual learning among Network partners**
- **Knowledge generation based on experience**
- **Visibility and dissemination**

2.1. Mutual learning among Network partners

The Network encourages and facilitates the exchange of information and experiences on topics of relevance and/or common interest for Network partners as regards the use of Structural Funds for Roma inclusion (e.g. strategies and approaches, (un)successful practices, lessons learned, challenges, thematic areas...).

Management Committee meetings, gathering Network partners, are one of the key instruments used for this end. Generally held twice a year, these regular meetings offer an excellent platform for exchanging, debating and agreeing on crucial issues. In addition, the fact that meetings are hosted by partner countries – on a rotating and voluntary basis – allows gaining a better insight into the reality of the different countries. Since the launch of the Network, sixteen Management Committee meetings have been organised.

EUROMA NETWORK MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE MEETINGS

2008: Seville (Spain), Bucharest (Romania) and Lesbos (Greece)

2009: Budapest (Hungary) and Stockholm (Sweden)

2010: Rome (Italy), Córdoba (Spain) and Cracow (Poland)

2011: Prague (Czech Republic) and Budapest (Hungary)

2012: Bratislava (Slovakia) and Madrid (Spain)

2013: Sofia (Bulgaria)

2014: Rome (Italy) and Vienna (Austria)

2015: Madrid (Spain)

The agenda of Management Committee meetings includes those aspects of interest for Network partners and relevant topics in the European framework. These include:

- **Thematic topics** such as employment, education or housing.
- **Relevant issues for Roma inclusion within the EU agenda:**
 - › Launch and follow up of National Roma Integration Strategies (NRIS)
 - › Amendment of art.7.2. of ERDF Regulation (housing interventions for marginalised communities, such as Roma)
 - › Implications of the Europe 2020 Strategy
 - › Potential of the integrated approach
 - › Role of local administrations in using Structural Funds for Roma inclusion
 - › Code of Conduct on Partnership
 - › Youth Employment Initiative (YEI)



Over the last years, particular attention has been paid to the **preparation of the 2014-2020 programming period** of the European Structural and Investment (ESI) Funds (e.g. monitoring, progress, comparative analysis regarding previous programming period) with a view to promoting the most effective use of these funds for Roma inclusion. This has been done in complementarity with the ESF Learning Network *'Reinforcing policy learning for Roma inclusion'*², which, throughout two years corresponding with the planning of the 2014-2020 programming period, focused on achieving, through transnational cooperation, a greater political commitment and ensuring that the lessons learnt during the 2007-2013 programming period were incorporated as policy decisions in the 2014-2020 programming period.

In addition, sections devoted to the **specific context of the host countries** are foreseen in the meetings.



2. Led and co-financed by the Spanish ESF Managing Authority (Ministry of Employment and Social Security), the Network consisted of the Heads of the ESF Managing Authorities and National Roma Contact Points from eight Member States (Bulgaria, Czech Republic, Greece, Hungary, Italy, Romania, Slovakia and Spain) together with European Commission representatives. For further information, visit the Network website at http://www.euromanet.eu/euroma_plus/index.html

2.2. Knowledge generation based on experience

EURoma aims to generate knowledge on key aspects related to the use of Structural Funds for Roma inclusion building upon the experience and shared approaches of Network partners and the work and debate within the Network. A wide variety of resources are produced including:

- Position papers and recommendations
- Analysis of the situation
- Information and guidance materials
- Guides and reports

All documents produced by the Network up to now are available on the EURoma website www.euromanet.eu (Resource Center). They include:

'Brief on ethnic data collection' (2009)

The main aim of this brief is to start up a reflection inside the EURoma Network about the collection of data on ethnic origin. It highlights the growing consensus about the importance of collecting these data and underlines the need to make progress in this area in order to improve policy effectiveness, dispel doubts about the legality of this practice and open and stimulate an internal debate to explore the way forward.

http://www.euromanet.eu/resource_center/archive/105921.html (available in English)

Mid-term report 'Roma and the Structural Funds' (2010)



Coinciding with the mid-point of the 2007-2013 programming period, the report reflects on the achievements, shortcomings and challenges ahead for mainstreaming Roma-related issues in Structural Funds programmes and for the EURoma Network itself. Following an introduction of the context within which EURoma was created, it expounds the process of constitution and activities of the Network. It then undertakes an analysis of the use of Structural Funds to improve the living conditions of the Roma, including the conceptual elements and how Roma inclusion appears in the Operational Programmes of EURoma partner countries. Finally it reviews the lessons learned and the challenges ahead and puts forward some recommendations for Member States and European institutions.

http://www.euromanet.eu/resource_center/archive/50622.html (available in English)

**Discussion note
'Coordination and
follow up mechanisms
of actions aimed at
the Roma population
supported by Structural
Funds' (2010)**

This document presents a first overview of the context in the countries participating in the Network with respect to the institutional set ups as regards the social inclusion of Roma and the inter-departmental coordination mechanisms with a special focus on the relationship between these and the implementation mechanisms of the EU Structural Funds.

http://www.euromanet.eu/resource_center/archive/105920.html (available in English)

**Position paper 'The
potential contribution
of the Structural Funds
to NRIS' (2011)**

Following the adoption by the European Commission of the 'EU Framework for National Roma Integration Strategies up to 2020' (NRIS), this position paper aims to raise awareness about the role and added value of Structural Funds for Roma inclusion and put forward some proposals for Member States on how these funds can contribute to the success of the NRIS.

http://www.euromanet.eu/resource_center/archive/105922.html (available in English)

**Position paper
'Proposals for the
future Regulations of
the Structural Funds'
(2011)**

This position paper aims to make a relevant and informed contribution to the debate on the Structural Funds Regulations for the 2014-2020 programming period. It makes concrete proposals and identifies possible orientations on how, in light of EURoma's experience, EU financial instruments could have a more effective impact on the living conditions of Roma.

http://www.euromanet.eu/resource_center/archive/98639.html (available in English)

**Report 'Analysis of
references to the
Structural Funds in the
NRIS' (2012)**

The present paper analyses comparatively how general recommendations regarding the use of Structural Funds are translated into concrete, operational proposals for Roma social inclusion and for the improvement of Roma living conditions in the National Roma Integration Strategies (NRIS).

http://www.euromanet.eu/resource_center/archive/98638.html (available in English)

**Guide 'Tackling Roma
needs in the 2014-
2020 Structural Funds
programming period.
Guide to improve the
planning process'
(2013)**



This Guide is conceived to provide a tool for the EU Member States (units responsible for planning different Structural Funds and other institutions involved in the programming period) to address the socio-economic inclusion of the Roma population in the Partnership Agreements and Operational Programmes for the 2014-2020 European Structural and Investment (ESI) Funds programming period. To this end, it identifies key issues that should be addressed within strategic areas (employment, education, housing, healthcare, anti-discrimination and gender equality) identified both in the EU Framework for the NRIS and in the strategic priorities set by the draft ESI Funds Regulations. It also makes practical recommendations, based on prior experience, which may inform the design of Operational Programmes on other forms of implementation in order to gain effectiveness in the use of these funds for Roma inclusion.

http://www.euromanet.eu/resource_center/archive/99581.html (available in English and Spanish)

Meeting report ‘The integrated approach of projects and the combination of EU funds to achieve a higher impact of the interventions for the social inclusion of the Roma community’ (2013)

This document gathers the main outcomes of a two-day meeting held by the EURoma Network to address in detail the integrated approach of programmes explicitly targeting the Roma population as well as the combination of EU funds (mainly ESF and ERDF) for such programmes. The meeting sought to support Network partners in achieving a higher impact of the interventions aimed at Roma inclusion in the 2007-2013 programming period, but also in the planning for the 2014-2020 programming period.

http://www.euromanet.eu/resource_center/archive/98635.html
(available in English)

Guide ‘Making use of European Structural and Investment Funds for Roma Inclusion. A Guide for Local Authorities’ (2014)



The central aim of this guide is to provide guidelines and practical suggestions to local authorities, Managing Authorities, National Roma Contact Points and other relevant actors on the use of the Structural Funds for Roma inclusion at the local level. In particular, the Guide:

- Stresses the potential role of local institutions in the integration of Roma and the implementation of the Roma integration strategies.
- Highlights the problems and challenges for local Roma inclusion policies and explains how ESI Funds can be used to foster these policies.
- Analyses existing barriers to access ESI Funds and gives practical tips to overcome them.
- Gives concrete recommendations on successful approaches, good practices and lessons learnt from other experiences at local level.

http://www.euromanet.eu/resource_center/archive/109047.html (available in English, Bulgarian, Croatian, Czech and Spanish)

In addition, the Network has been invited to share its experience and provide feedback in the context of the elaboration of different political documents and relevant resources developed by the European institutions and other actors, such as the recent European Parliament Resolution on ‘Cohesion policy and marginalised communities’³ or the European Commission ‘Guidance for Member States on the use of European Structural and Investment Funds in tackling educational and spatial segregation’⁴.

3. <http://www.europarl.europa.eu/sides/getDoc.do?type=TA&reference=P8-TA-2015-0402&language=EN&ring=A8-2015-0314>

4. http://ec.europa.eu/regional_policy/en/information/publications/guidelines/2015/guidance-for-member-states-on-the-use-of-european-structural-and-investment-funds-in-tackling-educational-and-spatial-segregation

2.3. Visibility and dissemination initiatives

Making the Network, its activities and products visible is crucial to raise awareness among relevant stakeholders on the importance of Structural Funds for Roma inclusion and on relevant aspects to achieve a more efficient use of these funds.

Different channels are used:

- **EURoma Network website** (www.euromanet.eu). Available in English and Spanish, the number of visits has increased over the years, with over 180,000 pages visited during the last 8 years.
- **Regular newsletters** regarding relevant developments about Structural Funds and Roma inclusion at EU level and in the Network partner countries. Available in English and Spanish, a considerable rise in the number of recipients is also observed (with an average of over 750 for the English version and 600 for the Spanish one).
- **Presence in relevant fora and initiatives at EU level.** The Network is invited to take part in the main fora, events and decision-making spaces in order to share its experience, activities and products. These include European Platforms and Summits for Roma inclusion, initiatives organised by different European institutions and international bodies, meetings of the Decade for Roma inclusion...
- **Participation in expert/consultative groups**, including the following two consultative groups of the European Commission:
 - › ‘Structured Dialogue with Experts on ESI Funds’ (Directorate-General Regional Policy), which gathers representatives from the European Commission Directorate-Generals dealing with ESI Funds.
 - › ‘Meetings with representatives of the civil society, international organisations and academics networks’ (Directorate-General Justice), which brings together these actors with representatives from the Directorate-Generals of relevance for Roma inclusion.

3. Value and impact of the Network

Active throughout the whole 2007-2013 programming period, EURoma has been not only highly valued by relevant actors but also one of the most active transnational networks over its eight years of operation. Both the Network partners and the European Commission value positively the work and impact of EURoma, which has become a forum of reference as regards Structural Funds and Roma inclusion. A number of factors demonstrate the value and impact of EURoma.

3.1. Value

- The creation of EURoma was an achievement in itself as it is the **first and only Network gathering the bodies responsible for the financial resources (ESF Managing Authorities) with those responsible for Roma policies (National Roma Contact Points)**. Therefore, EURoma has been putting into practice and consolidating an innovative partnership working method among key stakeholders, **advancing in the partnership principle now established in the ESF Regulation for the 2014-2020 programming period**.
- It has been **pioneer and innovative in introducing Roma inclusion in the agenda of ESF Managing Authorities and in addressing it using a specialised approach**.
- It has a **large scope, currently involving fifteen Western and Eastern Member States**, including those with the highest percentage of Roma population and those that are countries of destination of a large number of migrant Roma.

In addition, the steady participation of the twelve countries that joined the Network in 2008 and the willingness expressed over the years by other countries to get involved in it (such as Austria, Belgium and Croatia or the candidate country Turkey) or to use and disseminate the Network products is a proof of the interest raised by the Network.

COUNTRIES CURRENTLY INVOLVED IN THE NETWORK

Austria	Belgium	Bulgaria	Croatia
Czech Republic	Finland	Greece	Hungary
Italy	Poland	Portugal	Romania
Spain	Slovakia	Sweden	

- The **work of the Network**, considered a good model of horizontal cooperation between Member States within the EU policy framework, has been **aligned with the European Commission principles and agenda**. The **continuous involvement of the European Commission** (notably the Directorate-General Employment, Social Affairs and Inclusion, the Directorate-General Justice and the Directorate-General Regional Policy), in addition to showing the value given by the institution to the Network, has been crucial in promoting this alignment and creating valuable synergies among the Commission and the Network.
- It has managed to **involve other key actors for the inclusion of the Roma population**. In particular, the Network has incorporated in its activities the knowledge and experience of European Regional Development Fund (ERDF) Managing Authorities, European institutions and European and international organisations. Organisations such as the World Bank, the Committee of the Regions, the Council of Europe, the European Fundamental Rights Agency, the United Nations Development Programme, the Eurocities Network, the Open Society Foundations, the Roma Education Fund and the European Training Foundation have regularly taken part in Network activities. In addition, EURoma has also facilitated the involvement of regional and local administrations as well as non-governmental organisations.

3.2. Impact

- EURoma has **boosted the idea that Structural Funds are a key financial and political tool at the disposal of EU Member States to design and implement policies to promote Roma inclusion.**
- It has prompted the **creation of a link**, which was inexistent until then, **between the bodies that decide on the Roma policies (National Roma Contact Points) and the bodies that allocate the financial resources (Managing Authorities).** It is the first and only Network gathering these two different and crucial types of stakeholders.
- The networking between these actors has **contributed to the alignment between financial resources and policies.**
- It has **helped to integrate the Roma issue in the agenda of the European Structural Funds** in a more efficient and coherent way with existing needs: currently the Roma population is more present in the Operational Programmes, Roma are more visible in the actions and there has been a convergence in terms of approaches and methodologies to make a more efficient use of the funds.

In this sense, EURoma has contributed to the implementation of the 2007-2013 programming period and to the advances in the 2014-2020 period, including the incorporation of an explicit investment priority on Roma.

- EURoma has had a **trigger effect by identifying new issues before they were on the agenda of relevant stakeholders**, raising awareness about their importance and making proposals for their consideration (e.g. importance of involving the local level, integrated approach, etc...). It has had the capacity to make the Commission's principles and ideas visible and promote them by showing how to translate them into concrete actions (e.g. integrated approach, data collection...).
- It has also **promoted a more effective use of Structural Funds for Roma inclusion among EU institutions and Member States and issued practical recommendations** on possible ways to tackle Roma needs and address Roma socio-economic inclusion aimed at informing the design of the new ESI Funds policy framework (Common Regulations, Partnership Agreements and Operational Programmes).

- Together with the ESF Learning Network *‘Reinforcing policy learning for Roma inclusion’*, EURoma has **provided support to Member States during the planning phase of the 2014-2020 programming period with respect to the incorporation of Roma inclusion in the Partnership Agreements and Operational Programmes**. Both Networks have been key platforms for reflection and mutual learning among partner countries on the lessons learnt from the 2007-2013 programming period and on ways to effectively incorporate Roma inclusion in the 2014-2020 programming period.
- It has **identified crucial elements for the effective implementation of Structural Funds to promote Roma inclusion** and suggested, based on knowledge and experience, approaches and strategies to make a more efficient use of the Funds.
- It has served to **monitor progress as regards the use of Structural Funds** and areas where further improvement is needed.
- The Network has **become an important actor at European level regarding the promotion of a more efficient use of Structural Funds for Roma inclusion**, as shown by the fact that it is invited to take part in the main events, fora and decision-making platforms in these areas. Throughout these eight years, the Network has been present in numerous European and in some cases national events to share its experience, activities and products, and participates in the most relevant spaces related to Structural Funds and Roma inclusion at European level.

Finally, the high number of **mentions and acknowledgments of the role of the Network** are another proof of the impact and visibility of the Network (see Annex I).



How is Roma inclusion considered in the Operational Programmes of the 2014-2020 programming period

Part 2

1. Introduction and methodology

This second part of the report analyses how fourteen countries currently involved in the EURoma Network (**Austria, Belgium, Bulgaria, Croatia, Czech Republic, Greece, Hungary, Italy, Poland, Portugal, Romania, Slovakia, Spain and Sweden**) consider Roma inclusion in the Operational Programmes adopted for the 2014-2020 European Structural and Investment (ESI) Funds programming period with a view to understanding the state-of-play and identifying the crucial elements and potential challenges for the implementation phase.



1.1. Introduction

European Structural and Investment Funds (ESI Funds) Regulations for the 2014-2020 programming period imply substantial progress in relation to the 2007-2013 programming period and offer a broad range of opportunities to promote the inclusion of vulnerable groups, including Roma. One of the main advances is the establishment, for the first time, of a **specific Investment Priority (IP) focused on the ‘Socio-economic integration of marginalised communities such as the Roma’ under the European Social Fund: IP 9.2. under Thematic Objective (TO) 9 ‘Promoting social inclusion and combating poverty’**. In addition, other European Social Fund (ESF) and European Regional Development Fund (ERDF) thematic objectives and investment priorities could be of relevance for Roma inclusion, such as those within ESF and ERDF Thematic Objectives 8 (Promoting sustainable and quality employment and supporting labour mobility) and 10 (Investing in education, training and vocational training for skills and lifelong learning). The ex-ante conditionality under ESF/ERDF Thematic Objective 9 requiring that ‘A national Roma inclusion strategic policy framework is in place’ is another element of progress.

Now, with the Operational Programmes (OPs) adopted and the implementation phase recently launched, **it is timely to review how countries plan their investments in Roma inclusion within this general framework and to which extent they use the opportunities offered**. In this context, **this analysis aims to provide an overview of how Roma inclusion is considered in the Operational Programmes adopted for the 2014-2020 programming period** with a view to:

- Improve the knowledge and understanding of the plans to use ESI Funds to promote the inclusion of the Roma population in the 2014-2020 programming period.
- Serve as a tool for the exchange of information and mutual learning between relevant actors.
- Identify, building upon the outcomes and the lessons learnt from the 2007-2013 programming period, potential challenges and aspects to be taken into account for the implementation phase of the 2014-2020 programming period.
- Spark reflection and debate among stakeholders on these potential challenges and identify possible ways to address them.

Specifically, the information gathering process aimed to **identify the Operational Programmes which could be relevant for Roma inclusion both at national and regional level**, focusing mainly on those funded by the **ESF and to a certain extent by the ERDF**. This report presents the following **specific information for each of the identified OPs**:

- The **scope of action** (national or regional).
- The **type of fund(s)** and, in the case of several funds, whether the use of the different funds is planned for the actions targeting Roma inclusion and whether they will be used separately or in complementarity.
- The **approaches** foreseen for the relevant actions for Roma inclusion, notably:
 - › **Explicit approach**: dedicated lines focusing specifically on Roma/Roma communities.
 - › **Explicit but not exclusive approach**: general lines of intervention focusing explicitly on Roma/Roma communities but as part of a larger group (e.g. disadvantaged group) or geographical area (e.g. disadvantaged area).
 - › **No explicit mention to Roma**: Roma/Roma communities not explicitly mentioned but considered as part of a larger group/geographical area.
 - › **Territorial approach**: covering the needs of specific geographical areas, sometimes micro-territories.
- The **thematic objectives and investment priorities** under which the actions related to Roma inclusion are planned. While particular attention is paid to the specific ESF Investment Priority 9.2., the other TOs and IPs that could be of relevance for Roma inclusion (both within ESF and ERDF) are also considered.
- The main **fields of intervention**.
- The **implementation of the partnership principle**, notably the level of involvement of Roma individuals, Roma NGOs and organisations working to promote Roma inclusion in the OPs drafting process and their expected involvement in the implementation, monitoring and evaluation.

It is expected that the mutual learning and common reflection on these crucial aspects, including the potential challenges, at the beginning of the implementation phase help better address them throughout the 2014-2020 period and therefore contribute to achieving the most efficient use of the ESI Funds for the inclusion of vulnerable groups, including Roma.



1.2. Methodology

The data gathering process was **carried out in 2015**, during the final phase of the drafting and adoption of the Operational Programmes for the 2014-2020 ESI Funds programming period.

It is based on the **information gathered from representatives from the National Roma Contact Points (NRCPs) and the Managing Authorities (MAs) (or delegated Intermediate Bodies/Implementing Authorities) from fourteen countries currently involved in the EURoma Network.**

With the aim of obtaining comparable information from all countries, a template was used as basis of the information gathering process. This template was prepared by the Network Technical Secretariat and discussed with Network partners and European Commission representatives regularly involved in EURoma activities. **EURoma partners were in charge of providing the required information and, when needed, liaising with the bodies (other Managing Authorities or other bodies) in the best position to provide the information.**

Additional information, such as data collected in the context of Network meetings and bilateral contacts along with desk research (using public sources and the programming documents), was used to complement and refine the input gathered through the templates.

Preliminary results of the information gathering process were shared with EURoma partners at the latest meeting of the Network held in Madrid on 23rd-24th November 2015. The meeting allowed reviewing the information collected at that stage and agreeing on the type of information to be included in the final report and the criteria for its classification. **Input from European Commission representatives (Directorate-General Employment, Social Affairs and Inclusion, notably the Units on Social Inclusion and Poverty Reduction and ESF Coordination) was also considered.**

1.3. Limitations to the collection of information

It is important to bear in mind that the information collected, and therefore the analysis, is limited in terms of time (only developments until the end of 2015) and scope (mainly based on the initiatives identified by EURoma partners and the additional information collected by the Technical Secretariat).

In addition, a number of aspects determined the methodology of data collection, the availability of data and the comprehensiveness of the analysis:

- Not all countries were at the same stage as regards the planning and/or start of the implementation phase and therefore the definition of practical aspects was uneven.
- The collection of information and analysis took place in a difficult period for Managing Authorities (both those involved in EURoma and others in charge of relevant OPs for Roma inclusion), which were immersed in the closing of the 2007-2013 programming period and the planning of the 2014-2020 period. This situation delayed in some cases the gathering of information and/or resulted in limited or not too extensive information.

In addition, in some cases it was not easy to obtain information from the OPs managed by those Managing Authorities not involved in EURoma –notably from ERDF and regional MAs. As a result information collected about ERDF-funded OPs and regional OPs is more limited and uneven.

- There was a certain degree of difficulty in the identification of relevant interventions beyond IP 9.2., notably those that do not target Roma/Roma communities explicitly or mention them among other target groups, as well as the definition of the approaches used to address Roma inclusion.
- Finally, financial information was not considered, as the information available so far did not permit to identify the exact budgetary allocations earmarked for Roma inclusion.

Despite these limitations, **the analysis provides a general overview of planned investments in Roma inclusion and funding opportunities in individual Member States, as they could be identified at the beginning of the programming period. This information will be refined and complemented throughout the programming period.**

2. Operational Programmes of relevance for Roma inclusion

The table below provides a global overview of all Operational Programmes identified as relevant for Roma inclusion in the fourteen countries analysed, both at regional and national level and funded by European Social Fund (ESF) and European Regional Development Fund (ERDF).

Table I: Operational Programmes relevant for Roma inclusion per country

Country	Operational Programmes*
Austria	Employment OP (ESF)
Belgium	<i>Flanders OP</i> (ESF)
Bulgaria	Human Resources Development OP (ESF) Science and Education for Smart Growth OP (ESF+ERDF) Regions in Growth OP (ERDF)
Croatia	Efficient Human Resources OP (ESF) Competitiveness and Cohesion OP (ERDF)
Czech Republic	Employment OP (ESF) Integrated Regional OP (ERDF) Research, Development and Education OP (ESF+ERDF) <i>Prague-Growth Pole OP</i> (ESF+ERDF)
Greece	Human Resources Development, Education and Lifelong Learning OP (ESF) <i>Regional OPs</i> (OPs from 13 regions, ESF+ERDF)
Hungary	Human Resources Development OP (ESF+ERDF) Territorial and Settlement Development OP (ESF+ERDF) Economic Development and Innovation OP (ESF+ERDF) <i>Competitive Central-Hungary OP</i> (ESF+ERDF)

Italy	Social Inclusion OP (ESF) Metropolitan Cities OP (ESF+ERDF) Systems of Active Policies for Employment OP (ESF) Legality OP (ESF+ERDF) <i>Regional OPs</i> (no information about exact number of relevant OPs)
Poland	Knowledge, Education, Development OP (ESF) <i>Regional OPs</i> (OPs from 16 regions, ESF+ERDF)
Portugal	Social Inclusion and Employment OP (ESF)
Romania	Human Capital OP (ESF) Regional OP (ERDF)
Slovakia	Human Resources OP (ESF + ERDF) Integrated Regional OP (ERDF)
Spain	Social Inclusion and Social Economy OP (ESF) Employment, Education and Training OP (ESF) Youth Employment OP (ESF) Sustainable Growth OP (ERDF) <i>Cantabria OP</i> (ESF) <i>Castilla-La Mancha OP</i> (ESF) <i>Extremadura OP</i> (ESF) <i>Madrid OP</i> (ERDF) <i>Murcia OPs</i> (ESF and ERDF)
Sweden	Investments in Growth and Employment OP (ESF)

*Italics: regional OPs

- According to the information collected, it is perceived that **important attention is paid to Roma inclusion in the 2014-2020 programming period**, with Roma population and Roma communities targeted to a large extent and in a broad number of OPs.
- There is a **variety in the number of OPs chosen by countries to carry out interventions aimed at Roma inclusion**: ten out of the fourteen countries (Bulgaria, Croatia, Czech Republic, Greece, Hungary, Italy, Poland, Romania, Slovakia and Spain) opt for considering them through several OPs (including all of them national OPs, combined in some cases with regional ones) while the other four (Austria, Belgium, Portugal and Sweden) concentrate them into a single OP.

- However, it is worth noting that **the number of OPs or the fact that there are only national OPs or national and regional OPs is not necessarily directly related to the importance given to Roma inclusion or to the scope of the actions foreseen, but to aspects such as the administrative structure (i.e. level of decentralisation) and the strategy** selected by the countries. While some countries opt for diversification, others prefer to concentrate all actions related to Roma inclusion (addressing several areas) into a limited number of OPs (one or a limited number).

This is for example the case of **Romania** and **Slovakia**, which for simplification reasons decided to include the most relevant actions addressing Roma inclusion covered by different OPs in the previous programming period into one single OP in the current one. A sharp reduction in the number of OPs is also carried out by other countries by grouping several ones (at regional or national level) into a single one. For example, the **Hungarian Territorial and Settlement Development OP** is the follow-up to regional operational programmes and the **Czech Integrated Regional OP** to the seven regional operational programmes and partially to the *Integrated OP*.

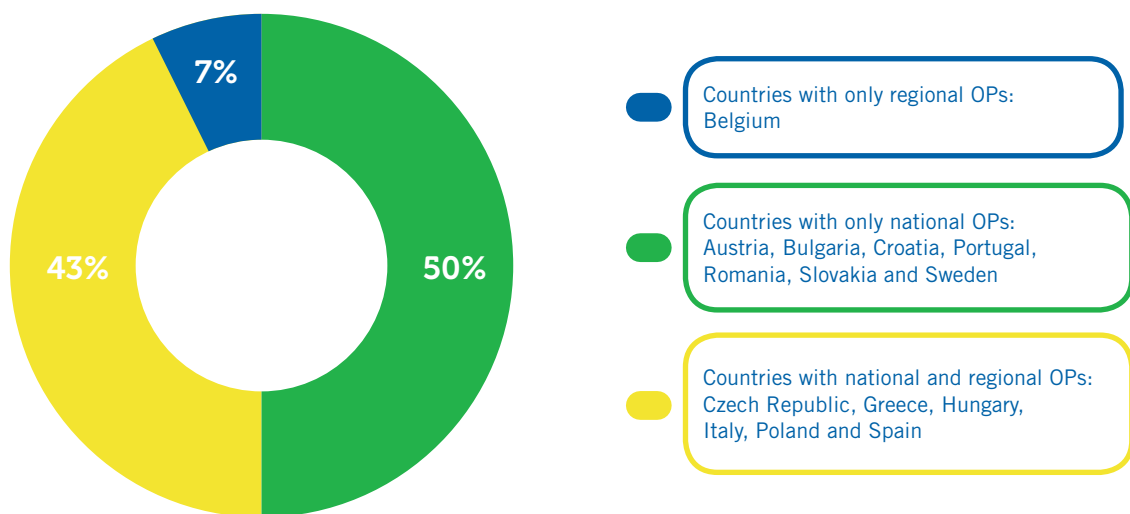
- Similarly to the 2007-2013 programming period, **Roma inclusion is generally considered, even in the countries with high percentages of Roma population, in mainstream Operational Programmes**, instead of developing a specific Operational Programme (or part of it) targeting Roma. This is perceived as a way of promoting the mainstreaming of Roma issues in different areas. The impact of the concentration or diversification of initiatives, and of considering Roma inclusion in mainstream OPs, remains to be seen.
- As it will be analysed in more detail in the coming chapters, **countries use a wide variety of options to address Roma inclusion in terms of scope, funds, approaches, thematic objectives and investment priorities and fields of intervention**. Despite the differences, a number of general trends can be identified (some of them similar to the ones in the 2007-2013 period).

3. Scope of OPs: national and regional management

This chapter reviews the different options used by countries as regards the scope of the Operational Programmes addressing Roma inclusion (OPs at national level, OPs at regional level or combination between OPs at both levels), building upon factors such as the level of administrative decentralisation of the country or simply the strategy selected.

3.1. A global overview

Graph I: Scope of OPs- national or regional level



- Similarly to the 2007-2013 programming period, there is a **trend to address Roma inclusion in OPs at national level, opting for a centralised management**, not only of national lines of intervention but also of regional and local ones.

Some **national OPs address interventions in all regions**, for example the ERDF-funded **Romanian Regional OP** and **Slovak Integrated Regional OP** or the multi-funded (ESF and ERDF) **Territorial and Settlement Development OP** in **Hungary**. Others focus on a specific number of regions as it is the case of the Italian **Legality OP** (ESF and ERDF), which targets the less developed regions in Italy.

In other cases, **national OPs have a clear local dimension**, envisaging investments in a selected number of locations, like the **Bulgarian ERDF Regions in Growth OP** (on thirty-nine urban centres), the **Croatian ERDF Competitiveness and Cohesion OP** (in five pilot towns) or the **Italian ESF/ERDF Metropolitan Cities OP** (in fourteen metropolitan cities).

The case of **Czech Republic** is also worth mentioning. The country **moved from a structure combining national and regional OPs** in the 2007-2013 programming period (with nine relevant regional OPs) to one mainly based on national programmes in which the Managing Authorities at national level will be the ones in contact with the regional level.

- There is only **one exception to this general trend: Belgium**, a case that should be seen in the context of the general administrative structure of the country.

In the 2014-2020 programming period, **Belgium** opts for a completely decentralised approach based on OPs at the regional level (one OP for each of the three Belgian regions plus an additional OP for the German-speaking community). Within this framework, Roma inclusion is addressed in the OP covering the Flemish region of the country (**Flanders OP**), while in the 2007-2013 programming period it was in one of the national OPs.

- **There seem to be attempts to consider Roma to a larger extent in regional OPs** (by increasing the number of regional OPs addressing Roma inclusion or giving them more capacity), understanding the potential impact of regional OPs on Roma inclusion (regardless of whether explicit actions targeting Roma are foreseen).

In **Greece**, while some actions are supported at national level under the ESF **Human Resources Development, Education and Lifelong Learning OP**, the regional OPs are the ones addressing ESF IP 9.2 and therefore supposed to include more actions specifically related to Roma inclusion.

In the case of **Poland**, as a rule, in the 2014-2020 programming period, support for individuals and families is provided under regional OPs. This will be complemented with the direct support for the Roma community foreseen at the national level under the ESF *Knowledge, Education, Development OP*.

In **Spain**, in addition to the OPs at national level, the OPs from several regions (Cantabria, Castilla-La Mancha, Extremadura, Madrid and Murcia) include measures aimed at Roma inclusion. These OPs are funded both by ESF or ERDF funds.

- While **some countries follow a model based only on national OPs, others opt for a model combining national and regional OPs**, in line with the one they had in the 2007-2013 programming period. This is particularly relevant in the case of countries with a high degree of decentralisation such as **Italy** and **Spain**, but also others such as **Greece** and **Poland**.

However, based on our data-gathering process, it seems that, in general terms, except in some cases in which all regional OPs are of relevance for Roma inclusion (**Greece** and **Poland**), **Roma inclusion features to a minor extent in regional OPs compared to national OPs**.

- Having said that, it should be noted that **obtaining information on the consideration of Roma within regional OPs remains a challenge** and makes it difficult assessing more precisely the current state-of-play and the progress made in the 2014-2020 programming period compared to the 2007-2013 period.

ASPECTS TO CONSIDER IN THE IMPLEMENTATION PHASE

The elements which, based on the outcomes of the analysis and the lessons learnt in the 2007-2013 programming period, would deserve particular attention in the implementation phase of the 2014-2020 programming period include:

→ **Any of the options selected by countries** (whether using only OPs at national or regional level or combining both types) **could be appropriate to address Roma inclusion; what is crucial is that a number of elements are ensured:**

- › A **clear strategy** that frames the interventions at the different levels.
- › **Institutional capacity** of the relevant bodies.
- › **Alignment, coordination and complementarity, including through adequate cooperation between the relevant bodies, between the funding sources (OPs) at the different levels and the funding and policy levels.** Different levels are to be considered:

- Between the OPs acting at the same level (at national, at regional level)
- Between the national OPs acting at regional level and the regional OPs
- Between the regional OPs and the national policy
- Between the national and the regional Managing Authorities (MAs)

This was one of the biggest challenges of the 2007-2013 programming period. The limited flow of information and coordination, the absence of adequate communication channels between the different levels together with the lack of a clear mandate and competences on the part of national MAs to encourage regional OPs to follow certain guidelines appeared to be major difficulties that should be addressed in this new programming period.

In this regard, it is particularly relevant to encourage the assumption of responsibilities as regards Roma priorities at all levels and to establish communication and coordination mechanisms between the different MAs/OPs in order to create synergies and avoid duplication of activities (e.g. between MAs in charge of the different OPs operating in a given territory).

- ➔ The **enhancement of the role of the National Roma Contact Points (NRCPs)** in the implementation phase. They could contribute in different ways, including:
 - Cooperating with MAs at national and regional level to contribute to the effective implementation of the actions of relevance for Roma inclusion (both those targeting explicitly the Roma population as well as others that could be relevant for them).
 - Cooperating with ESI Funds MAs at national level to provide information and guidelines to the regional authorities as regards the consideration of national priorities and commitments at regional level.

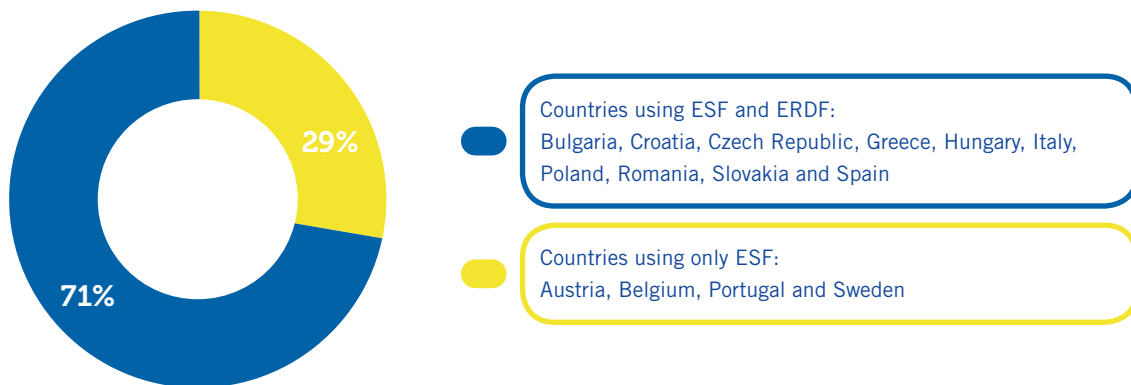
4. Using different funds to promote Roma inclusion

This chapter analyses the use made of the European Social Fund (ESF) and the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF) to promote the social inclusion of Roma.

4.1. A global overview

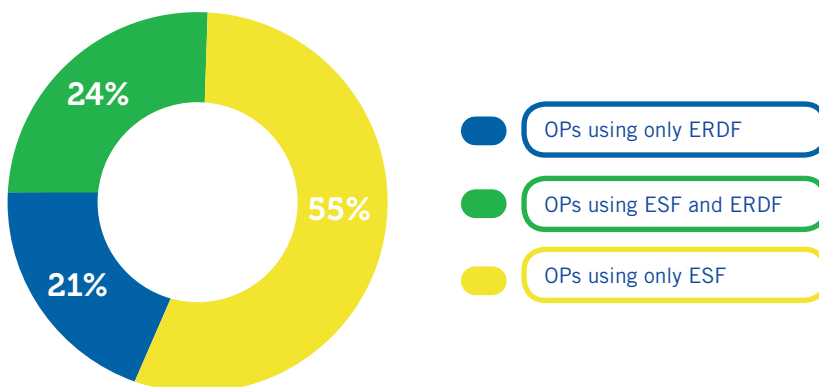
Graph II: Use of ESF and ERDF funds- An overview per country

*National and regional OPs are considered



Graph III: Use of ESF and ERDF funds- An overview per OPs

*Only national OPs and the Belgian regional *Flanders OP* are considered



4.2. Funds used

- Similarly to the 2007-2013 programming period, it appears that **Roma inclusion is considered to a larger extent in ESF OPs than in ERDF OPs (single-fund).**
- **However**, it seems that there is **an increased awareness about the importance of using ESI Funds other than ESF, notably ERDF, for Roma inclusion.** In this regard, only a limited number of countries (Austria, Belgium, Portugal and Sweden) opt for using only ESF (sometimes in combination with other funds such as the Youth Employment Initiative); the rest foresee the use of both ESF and ERDF. In some cases ERDF is foreseen in single-fund OPs; in others in multi-fund OPs (mainly covering ESF and ERDF interventions).
- **Several of the ERDF single-fund OPs pay particular attention to Roma inclusion** – notably in those of countries that already had similar programmes in the 2007-2013 programming period. As it will be further developed later on, in some cases, these OPs intervene in complementarity with ESF OPs relevant for Roma inclusion.

The **Bulgarian** *Regions in Growth OP* seeks to improve the living conditions of marginalised groups, including Roma, which will benefit from interventions related to housing conditions, health and social infrastructure, sport and cultural facilities and the modernisation of educational infrastructure.

The **Croatian** *Competitiveness and Cohesion OP* foresees measures to improve the socio-economic and living conditions in five pilot small towns selected based on a number of objective criteria, one of them Roma minority issues. In addition, these pilots will serve to design and test a new model to regenerate concentrated deprived socio-economic areas.

A significant number of the investments within the **Czech** *Integrated Regional OP* target socially excluded localities (mainly inhabited by Roma), which are identified on the basis of the 'Analysis of socially excluded localities in the Czech Republic'⁵ elaborated by the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs.

Roma are also one of the target groups of the **Romanian** *Regional OP* and may benefit from investments envisaged in the areas of health, social and educational infrastructure as well as to support economic and social regeneration of deprived urban communities (using tools such as the Community-led local development initiatives).

5. http://www.euromanet.eu/newsroom/archive/analysis_of_socially_excluded_localities_in_the_czech_republic_now_available.html

In **Slovakia**, the *Integrated Regional OP* will be realised without territorial allocation. Municipalities identified in the ‘Atlas of Roma Communities’ are eligible under the OP.

In **Spain**, measures related to Roma population within ERDF will be implemented, through integrated urban strategies, in the context of a national OP (*Sustainable Growth OP*) and two regional OPs (*Madrid OP* and *Murcia OP*). In addition, within the ERDF it is compulsory to invest between 25% and 35% of overall budget in Thematic Objective 9.

- Although this analysis mainly focuses on ESF and ERDF OPs, a mention should be made to the **Youth Employment Initiative (YEI)**, an instrument with a high potential to contribute to changing the situation of unemployed Roma youngsters. While many of the OPs of relevance for Roma inclusion also foresee the use of YEI funds, no information is available on interventions targeting specifically Roma. This could indicate that Roma youngsters are not being specifically considered in the Plans and OPs that Member States are adopting to implement the Youth Employment Initiative at national level, assuming that they will benefit from the measures simply because they are young and they are unemployed.

However, it is also worth stressing that in some countries, although no specific measures for Roma youngsters are foreseen, a number of projects targeting them are approved.

Within the **Spanish Youth Employment OP**, two projects targeting Roma that are neither unemployed nor integrated in the educative or training systems will be funded. Firstly, the ‘Integrated insertion pathways for Roma youth-Acceder’ project aims to promote, through integrated and personalised insertion pathways, the incorporation of these young Roma into the labour market or in educative or training processes. Secondly, the ‘Initiative to improve the employability of the Roma youth-Learning by doing’ expects to increase the employability, the professional, basic and cross-cut competences and the equal opportunities in the access to the labour market for these young Roma through the acquisition of knowledge and skills, the training in competences and working habits on the workplace.

- **This mapping does not consider information on funding sources other than ESF and ERDF and other instruments** that countries may use for funding projects related to Roma inclusion –including the European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development (EAFRD) and the European Territorial Cooperation programmes-, in which Roma inclusion is generally addressed to a lesser extent and through a less targeted approach. However, we are aware that, some countries are using these funding sources and instruments in the 2014-2020 programming period (e.g. the EAFRD-funded *Rural Development OPs* in Hungary and Romania).

4.3. ESF and ERDF funds working together: multi-fund OPs and complementarity between OPs

→ **A majority of countries** (10 out of 14) **plan to use both ESF and ERDF funds**. Three options are used:

1. **Single-fund OP (ESF/ERDF) supporting actions eligible under the other fund.**

According to Article 98 of the Common Provisions Regulations⁶ *“The ERDF and the ESF may finance, in a complementary manner and subject to a limit of 10 % of Union funding for each priority axis of an operational programme, a part of an operation for which the costs are eligible for support from the other Fund on the basis of eligibility rules applied to that Fund, provided that such costs are necessary for the satisfactory implementation of the operation and are directly linked to it.”* This is an option for OPs that only include one fund- whether they plan complementing their interventions with those of another OP or not.

For example, the **Polish Knowledge, Education, Development OP**, only funded by ESF, plans to use this option to extend the catalogue of expenditure co-financed from the ESF to include eligible costs under the ERDF.

2. **Including both funds within the same OP** (multi-fund OP). Several of the OPs identified foresee the use of both ESF and ERDF funds (in some cases in combination with other funds, notably YEI). However, in many cases, a number of aspects remain unclear, notably whether the different funds will be used in a complementary manner or for separate actions, and, should there be complementarity of funds, how it will be applied in practice and whether it will concern Roma inclusion interventions or only other types of actions.

The multi-fund *Research, Development and Education OP* of the **Czech Republic** combines ESF and ERDF funds in the context of the so-called ‘coordinated approach to socially excluded localities’.

6. <http://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=CELEX:32013R1303>

In the 2014-2020 programming period, **Hungary** extends the experience of combination of funds of the key Operational Programmes for Roma inclusion in the 2007-2013 programming period to all relevant national OPs: *Human Resources Development OP*, *Territorial and Settlement Development OP* and *Economic Development and Innovation OP*.

In **Italy** both the *Legality OP* and the *Metropolitan Cities OP* are co-financed by ESF and ERDF. For example, the *Metropolitan Cities OP* combines actions targeting Roma, Sinti and *Caminanti* funded by ESF (services for social inclusion, including access to housing, individual and group support and accompaniment as regards labour or education or citizenship regularisation) and by ERDF (actions related to accommodation and renovation of space services).

Within the **Slovak** *Human Resources OP*, actions targeting the most deprived marginalised Roma communities will be implemented in a complementary manner under ESF Priority Axis 'Socio-economic integration of marginalised Roma communities' and ERDF Priority Axis 'Technical facilities in municipalities with presence of marginalised Roma communities'.

Although the analysis of the funding sources focuses on the national OPs, it is worth mentioning the case of the **Greek** regional OPs. In order to address the challenges faced in the 2007-2013 programming period as regards the combination of funds between the relevant OPs for Roma inclusion at regional and national level, in the 2014-2020 programming period all regional OPs foresee the combination of both ESF and ERDF. While this option will give regional OPs an increased capacity and autonomy, a number of challenges are already foreseen in the practical implementation of this option.

3. Complementing interventions from OPs (mostly single-fund) using the different funds. In this case, it also remains to be seen how it will be applied in practice (e.g. through coordinated calls, multi-fund projects...).

In **Bulgaria**, the investments in social and healthcare infrastructure envisaged under the ERDF *Regions in Growth OP* complement the activities related to the provision of social, education and healthcare services under the ESF *Human Resources Development OP* and the ESF *Science and Education for Smart Growth OP*. The combination between the *Regions in Growth OP* and the *Human Resources Development OP* will follow the approach of the 'Integra' pilot model implemented in the 2007-2013 programming period for integrated interventions to support marginalised groups of society, including investments for social housing. A similar model will be used for the measures for deinstitutionalisation. In the area of education, the *Science and Education for Smart Growth OP* supports 'soft measures' for institutions in the system of education and the *Regions in Growth OP* sites of educational infrastructure.

In **Croatia**, the ERDF *Competitiveness and Cohesion OP* work in a complementary and integrated manner with the ESF *Efficient Human Resources OP* for the implementation of the intervention plans adopted for the improvement of the socio-economic and living conditions in five pilot small towns selected.

In **Romania**, measures targeting Roma and Roma communities under the ESF *Human Capital OP* may be complemented with measures under the ERDF *Regional OP*. The *Human Capital OP* funds soft measures under four Priority Axes 'Jobs for all', 'Social inclusion and combating poverty', 'Community-led local development' and 'Education and skills'. The *Regional OP* finances, applying a mainstreaming and territorial approach, and using in some cases CLLD, infrastructure related to socio-medical integrated community centres, social housing, education, social economy and basic utilities small scale infrastructure (sewage etc.). The implementation of measures is conceived as a 'package' within the context of the local development strategies (projects addressing both services and infrastructure in the same area tackling needs of the most vulnerable including Roma).

- A crucial element for the combination of funds to work effectively is the **coordination and cooperation between the bodies responsible for the different funds**. This element, which is particularly important when different bodies are in charge of the OPs or of the relevant parts within the same OP, was one of the biggest challenges in the 2007-2013 programming period. Some attempts to address this challenge in the 2014-2020 programming period are identified.

Spain set up, as part of the Spanish National Roma Strategy, an Inter-funds Committee bringing together representatives from the Managing Authorities of the ESF, ERDF and EAFRD and the National Roma Contact Point with a view to 'articulate in a coordinated manner the planning, monitoring and evaluation of the interventions targeting the Roma population'.

In **Bulgaria**, an interdepartmental working group is created to ensure the complementarity between the ESF *Human Resources Development OP* and the ERDF *Regions in Growth OP*. It oversees the overall policy on deinstitutionalisation, including the coordinated announcement and implementation of the schemes under both programmes.

ASPECTS TO CONSIDER IN THE IMPLEMENTATION PHASE

The elements which, based on the outcomes of the analysis and the lessons learnt in the 2007-2013 programming period, would deserve particular attention in the implementation phase of the 2014-2020 programming period include:

- ➔ The **importance of using the whole potential offered by the different ESI Funds, going beyond the European Social Fund**, in order to achieve progress. In this regard, the following measures are deemed necessary:
 - Ensuring the effective implementation of the actions foreseen under the different funds, paying particular attention to the use of new/less common funds for Roma inclusion (ERDF, EAFRD or others).
 - Making sure that Roma benefit from different funds, even if they are not featured explicitly.
- ➔ The **practical implementation of the combined use of the funds** (within the same OP or between OPs) **following an integrated approach**.
- ➔ The **alignment and complementarity between the different OPs/funds**, which should be ensured, even in those national contexts where combination of funds is not foreseen.
- ➔ The **potential of the Youth Employment Initiative**. The Youth Guarantee, in particular through the Youth Employment Initiative, could play a crucial role in supporting the employment of the Roma, a population significantly younger than the overall population and experiencing higher unemployment rates than the rest of society. However, as experience has shown, if specific measures are not adopted to take into account the profiles and needs of the groups furthest from the labour market such as Roma (e.g. limited educational and employment background to comply with the procedures established and to have access to the labour market) and to effectively reach them, this opportunity will be missed.

5. A combination of approaches, thematic objectives and investment priorities to address Roma inclusion

This chapter presents an overview of how Member States are approaching Roma inclusion within the Operational Programmes identified. In particular, it reviews:

- The **approaches used** within the OPs to address Roma inclusion.
- The **thematic objectives (TOs) and investment priorities (IPs)** under which Roma interventions are foreseen.
- The **hierarchical level at which Roma-related interventions are planned**, i.e. at the level of priority axes, specific objectives or actions/types of interventions.

5.1. Approaches to address Roma inclusion

In general terms countries combine different approaches to address Roma inclusion (both within the same OP or in the different OPs) **and target Roma explicitly**. The only exception to this general trend is **Sweden**, which opts for not using an explicit approach (Roma are considered as part of one of the ‘minorities’ target group).

The following **ways to address Roma inclusion, which mainly relate to the reference made to Roma/Roma communities**, are observed:

- **Explicit mention**: dedicated lines focusing specifically on Roma/Roma communities.

As it will be further developed in the next sections, this approach is largely used under certain ESF investment priorities, notably under ESF IP 9.2. ‘Socio-economic integration of marginalised communities such as the Roma’, but also under other ESF IPs and TOs and to a lesser extent under ERDF IP 9.b. ‘Providing support for physical, economic and social regeneration of deprived communities in urban and rural areas’.

This targeting can happen at the different levels within the Operational Programmes: from the maximum level of relevance when defined as a priority axis (only in the ESF/ERDF Slovak *Human Resources OP*) to a specific objective (in a large number of OPs

under ESF and ERDF TO 9 ‘Promoting social inclusion and combating poverty’ and in some OPs under ESF TO 8 ‘Promoting employment and supporting labour mobility’ and TO 10 ‘Investing in education, skills and lifelong learning’) or an action/type of intervention.

- **Explicit but not exclusive mention:** general lines of intervention focusing explicitly on Roma/Roma communities but as part of a larger group (e.g. disadvantaged groups) or geographical area (e.g. disadvantaged areas). In this category a distinction should be made between those OPs that merely mention Roma/Roma communities as one of the many target groups/geographical areas of the OP and those that pay particular attention to them by having a limited number of target groups/areas, one of them Roma/Roma communities.

‘Explicit but not exclusive’ Roma targeting, while including other groups in similar socio-economic circumstances, has proven to be one of the best ways of tackling the socio-economic integration of Roma. It guarantees that Roma are the focus of the programmes and allows carrying out adapted and flexible measures, including tools tailored to their needs, which usually lead to greater engagement and active participation on the part of the beneficiaries. Moreover, it is easier to gather information, including ethnic data collection, to measure results.

- **No explicit mention:** Roma/Roma communities considered as part of a larger group/geographical area. In some of these cases it is assumed that, although there is no explicit mention, if Roma are considered one of the vulnerable groups prioritised in the Partnership Agreement, Managing Authorities, Intermediate Bodies and implementing authorities will be encouraged to ensure that Roma are among the beneficiaries.

Finally, we observe the **territorial approach**, which can be applied in any of the previous three cases. This approach aims at covering the needs of geographical areas, sometimes micro-territories, in many cases at greatest risk of poverty and, as a consequence, tackle the needs of groups at risk of exclusion and discrimination living in these areas, as is the case of the Roma.

This approach is commonly used within ERDF OPs, although there are also examples under ESF OPs or OPs combining both funds. Some examples of this approach are as follows:

In the **Bulgarian** *Human Resources Development OP* (ESF), actions under Priority Axis 2 (Reducing poverty and promoting social inclusion) target specific territories with concentration of problems, including Roma neighbourhoods. Additionally, a specific action aimed at developing local communities and tackling negative stereotypes is planned.

The **Croatian** *Efficient Human Resources OP* (ESF) and *Competitiveness and Cohesion OP* (ERDF) will act complementarily using a territorial approach to improve the socio-economic and living conditions (including physical regeneration) in at least five pilot small towns, selected based on a number of criteria, one of them Roma issues. In addition, these pilots will serve to design and test a new model to regenerate concentrated deprived socio-economic areas.

In **Czech Republic**, social inclusion of the Roma population is planned using the ‘coordinated approach to social inclusion’, a comprehensive tool to address the specific needs of geographical areas which concentrates support from three OPs: the *Employment OP* (ESF), the *Integrated Regional OP* (ERDF) and the *Research, Development and Education OP* (ESF and ERDF). During the years 2015–2020, systematic support will be provided to at least seventy of the most vulnerable municipalities, micro-regions and municipalities which are home to socially excluded localities. The ‘Analysis of socially excluded localities in the Czech Republic’ and the ‘Map of socially excluded localities in the Czech Republic’ are crucial tools for the identification of the socially excluded localities to be targeted.

In **Hungary**, the territorial targeting is conceived to address, using an integrated methodology, the specific needs of the areas most affected by poverty or the target groups at highest risk of discrimination or social exclusion. For example, the multi-fund *Human Resources Development OP* (ESF and ERDF) will follow a territorial approach to address the situation of the potential 1700 Roma camps consider under the programme. In the context of the *Territorial and Settlement Development OP* (ESF and ERDF), measures targeting city areas with Roma camps/Roma population are foreseen with the aim of eliminating segregated Roma camps.

In the **Romanian** *Human Capital OP* (ESF), a territorial approach is applied under two priority axes. For example, under PA 4 (Social inclusion and combating poverty), the OP aims at ‘Reducing the number of people at risk of poverty and social exclusion of marginalised communities where Roma minority population represents at least 10% of the population in the community by implementing integrated measures’.

Under Priority Axes 8 (Health and social infrastructure development), 9 (Supporting economic and social regeneration of deprived urban communities) and 10 (Improving educational infrastructure), the Romanian *Regional OP* (ERDF) addresses the specific needs of geographical areas, tackling the needs of the most vulnerable groups living In these areas such as Roma.

The interventions of the **Slovak** *Human Resources OP* (ESF and ERDF) target a number of geographical areas selected using the existing methodology for determining the segregation index in combination with the data from the Atlas of Roma Communities (2013), which describes structural and social and economic situation of Roma sites in the Slovak municipalities.

5.2. Thematic objectives and investment priorities

For the analysis of the thematic objectives and investment priorities selected to address Roma inclusion, the Operational Programmes funded by the ESF and ERDF are considered separately. While the information about the ESF OPs is quite comprehensive (and therefore the analysis), data on ERDF OPs is more limited. Different OPs are included throughout the analysis, depending on the aspects considered: in some cases all OPs (national and regional level OPs) are considered, while in others, as in previous sections, only the national OPs and the regional Belgian *Flanders OP*.

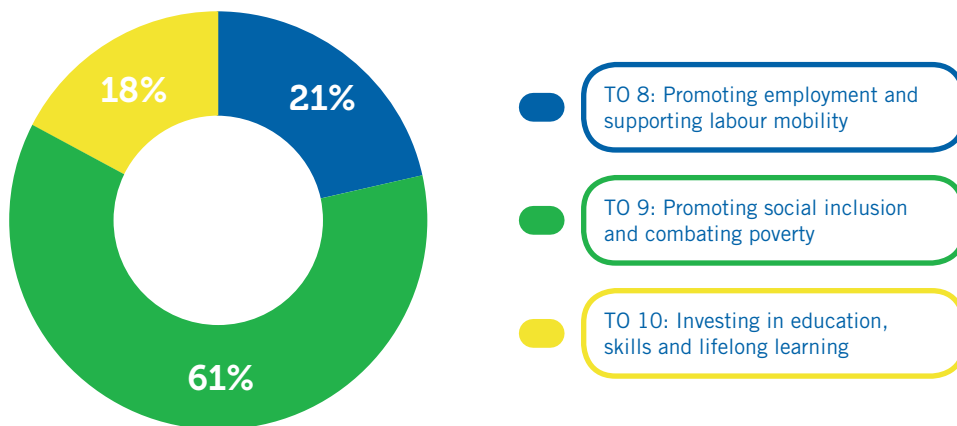
5.2.1. Operational Programmes funded by European Social Fund

Data collected on ESF OPs is analysed from different angles with a view to, on the one hand, reviewing the thematic objectives and investment priorities most commonly selected to address Roma inclusion and, on the other, look specifically at the use of the dedicated ESF IP 9.2. 'Socio-economic integration of marginalised communities such as the Roma'.

5.2.1.1. What are the thematic objectives (TOs) and investment priorities (IPs) used to address Roma inclusion?

Graph IV: Thematic objectives in OPs

*Only the national OPs and the regional Belgian *Flanders OP* are considered

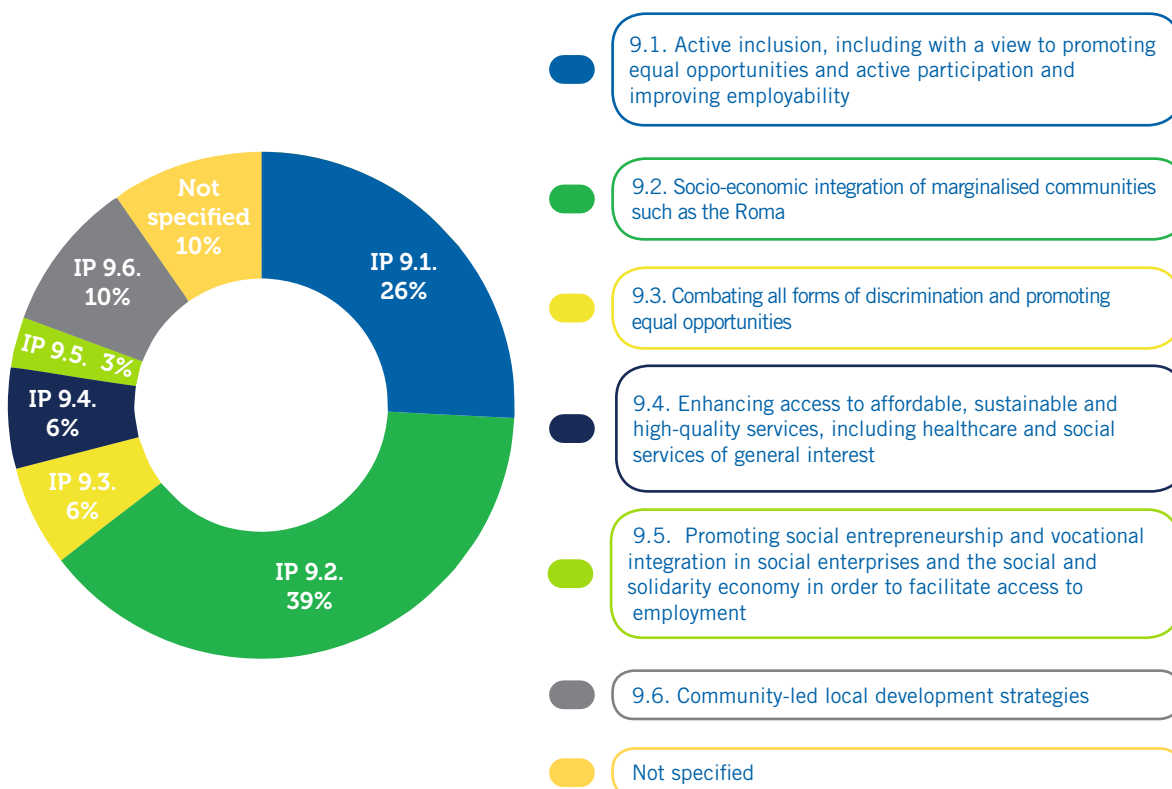


Roma inclusion is mainly addressed under TO 9 (over 61%), followed by TO 8 (around 21%) and TO 10 (around 18%).

ESF Thematic Objective 9 'Promoting social inclusion and combating poverty'

Graph V: Thematic Objective 9- Investment priorities

*Only the national OPs and the regional Belgian *Flanders OP* are considered



- The **most commonly used** investment priority is **9.2.**, followed by **9.1.** The others have more or less the same relevance.
- **IP 9.2. include the most targeted actions**, including dedicated priority axes, specific objectives and actions/types of interventions. **In the other IPs**, the **'explicit but not exclusive'** or **'no explicit'** mentions are generally used.
- **However IP 9.1. is to a certain extent the exception:** in some OPs particular attention is paid to interventions targeting Roma within this IP, including in certain cases

dedicated actions. Some countries even opted for this IP instead of IP 9.2. to address Roma inclusion (Austria, Poland and Portugal).

The **Austrian** *Employment OP* includes a dedicated action on ‘Roma empowerment for the labour market’ under IP 9.1. In the **Polish** *Knowledge, Education, Development OP*, one of the types of projects foreseen under Priority Axis ‘Effective public policies for the labour market, economy and education’ are ‘Comprehensive actions to improve education and employment of the Roma community and actions to eliminate the barriers to employment of the Roma and their integration with the majority community’. In **Portugal**, one of the actions to be financed within the Priority Axis ‘Promoting social inclusion and combating poverty’ of the *Social Inclusion and Employment OP* is the ‘Socio-professional integration of Roma communities’.

The **Hungarian** *Human Resources Development OP*, in addition to the interventions under 9.2., includes under 9.1. three types of interventions targeting specifically Roma population: ‘Training in employment of the Roma (in particular Roma women)’, ‘Active citizenship of disadvantaged people and the Roma’ and ‘Promoting the employment of Roma people in vocations high in demand within public services is directed at a priority target group’.

→ In the **remaining IPs** (9.3., 9.4., 9.5. and 9.6.) it is **less common to find specific interventions** targeting Roma/Roma communities, although there are some exceptions.

The **Romanian** *Human Capital OP* includes under IP 9.6 the Specific Objective ‘Reducing the number of people at risk of poverty and social exclusion in marginalised communities in cities with over 20 000 inhabitants, focusing on those with population of Roma minority by implementing measures/integrated operations in the context of CLLD mechanism’.

ESF Thematic Objectives 8 ‘Promoting employment and supporting labour mobility’ and 10 ‘Investing in education, skills and lifelong learning’

→ Interventions targeting Roma/Roma communities are also considered under TO 8 and TO 10, **mainly using ‘explicit but not exclusive’ or ‘no explicit’ mentions.**

→ There are however some exceptions to this general trend:

The **Romanian** *Human Capital OP* foresees two targeted specific objectives, including result indicators under IP 8.1. and other two under IP 10.1.

Under IP 10.3., the **Croatian** *Efficient Human Resources OP* foresees the specific action ‘Support to Roma students at the level of preschool and primary education aimed to speed up the process of their integration into regular education system’.

The **Greek** *Human Resources Development, Education and Lifelong Learning OP* also includes under TO 10 an explicit area of support: 'Providing specialised services by Roma mediators for the integration of students with cultural and religious differences'.

In the **Bulgarian** *Human Resources Development OP*, under the Priority Axis 'Improving the access to employment and quality of jobs', related to TO 8 and TO 10, although there are no specific measures targeting Roma, there are specific indicators.

- Although not all countries have identified information on the specific IPs selected within TO 8 and 10 in each OP, it seems that the **most common IPs** are as follows:
 - › **In Thematic Objective 8**, Investment Priority 8.1. (Access to employment for job-seekers and inactive people, including the long-term unemployed and people far from the labour market, also through local employment initiatives and support for labour mobility).
 - › **In Thematic Objective 10**, Investment Priority 10.1. (Reducing and preventing early school-leaving and promoting equal access to good quality early-childhood, primary and secondary education including formal, non-formal and informal learning pathways for reintegrating into education and training) and 10.3. (Enhancing equal access to lifelong learning for all age groups in formal, non-formal and informal settings, upgrading the knowledge, skills and competences of the workforce, and promoting flexible learning pathways including through career guidance and validation of acquired competences).
- It should be noted that the fact that Thematic Objectives 8 and 10 are not selected to address Roma inclusion in the areas of employment and education does not necessarily mean that interventions in these areas are not planned; in many cases they are foreseen in the context of other thematic objectives, notably TO 9, addressing them from the perspective of the promotion of social inclusion and the fight against poverty and any discrimination.

Other Thematic Objectives

It seems that other thematic objectives that could be also relevant to reach Roma, such as Thematic Objective 2 (Access to, and use and quality of, ICT), Thematic Objective 5 (Climate change adaptation, risk prevention and management) or Thematic Objective 6 (Preserving and protecting the environment, and promoting resource efficiency) are not largely used. While some of the OPs identified include other TOs, this is merely anecdotal and it cannot be confirmed whether investments under these TOs will be used for interventions related to Roma inclusion.

5.2.1.2. Are countries addressing Roma inclusion under IP 9.2.?

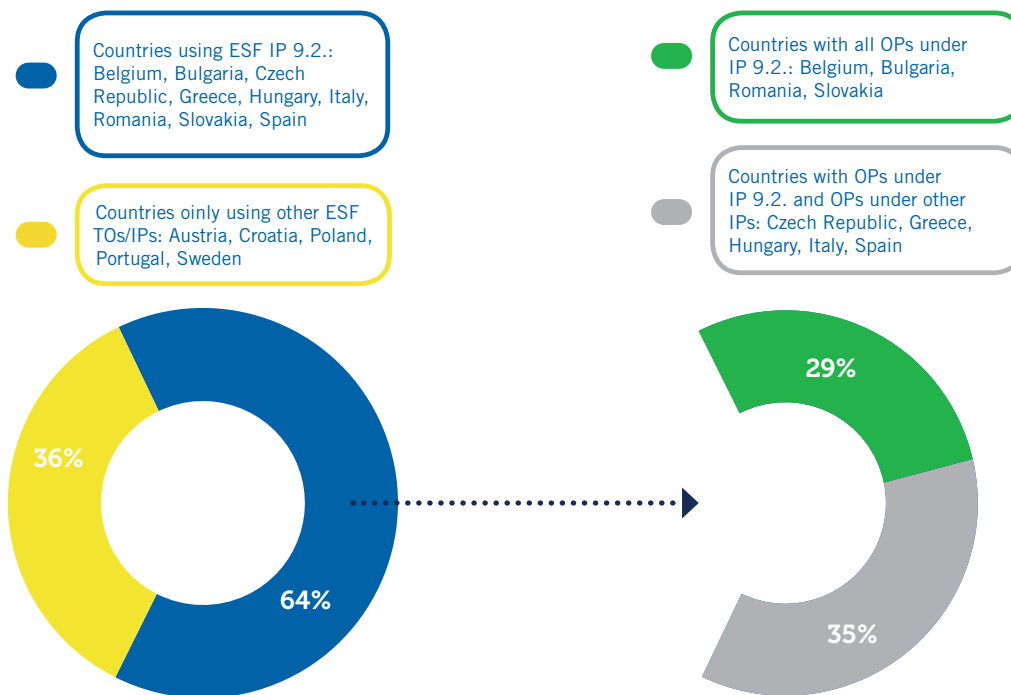
Table II: Overview of Operational Programmes using IP 9.2 and/or other IPs/TOs per country

Country	OPs addressing Roma inclusion under IP 9.2. (alone or with other IPs)	OPs addressing Roma inclusion under other ESF IPs/TOs
Austria		Employment OP
Belgium	<i>Flanders OP</i>	
Bulgaria	Human Resources Development OP Science and Education for Smart Growth OP	
Croatia		Efficient Human Resources OP
Czech Republic	Research, Development and Education OP	Employment OP <i>Prague-Growth Pole OP</i>
Greece	<i>Regional OPs (13)</i>	Human Resources Development, Education and Lifelong Learning OP
Hungary	Human Resources Development OP Territorial and Settlement Development OP <i>Competitive Central-Hungary OP</i>	Economic Development and Innovation OP
Italy	Social Inclusion OP Metropolitan Cities OP Legality OP <i>Regional OPs (no information on exact number)</i>	Systems of Active Policies for Employment OP
Poland		Knowledge, Education, Development OP <i>Regional OPs (no information on exact number)</i>
Portugal		Social Inclusion and Employment OP
Romania	Human Capital OP	
Slovakia	Human Resources OP	
Spain	Social Inclusion and Social Economy OP <i>Regional OPs (Cantabria OP, Castilla-La Mancha OP, Murcia OP)</i>	Employment, Education and Training OP Youth Employment OP <i>Extremadura OP</i>
Sweden		Investments in Growth and Employment OP

**Italics: regional OPs*

Graph VI: Use of ESF IP 9.2. in countries

* All OPs identified (regional and national) are considered



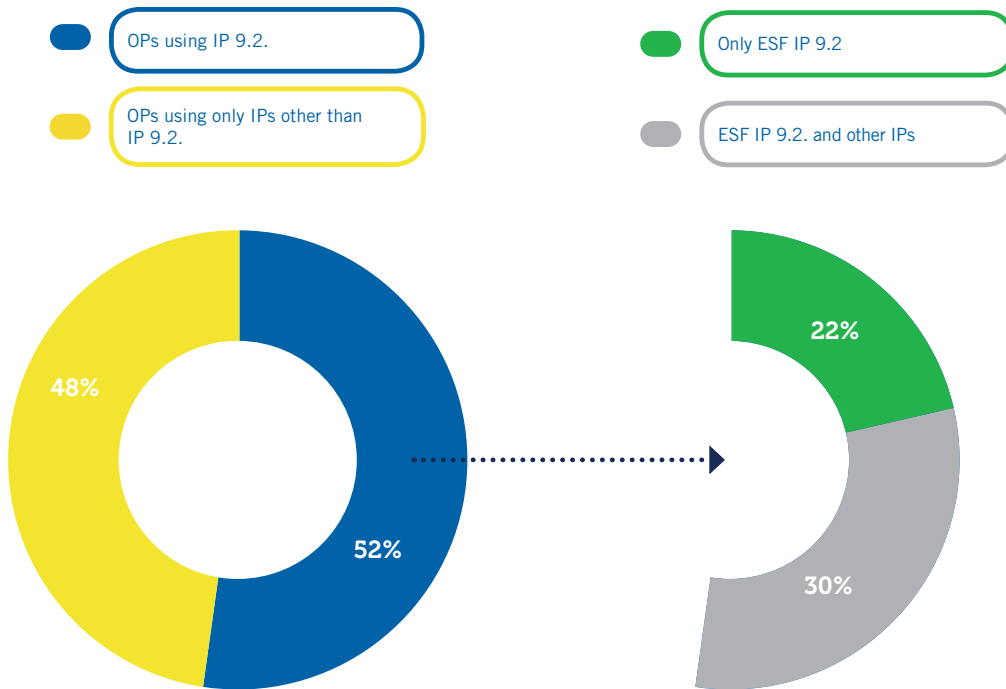
When analysing whether countries use ESF Investment Priority 9.2. or other IPs to address Roma inclusion, information collected shows that the majority of countries (65%) opt for using ESF IP 9.2. Out of these countries, a bit less than half use this IP in all their ESF OPs of relevance for Roma inclusion, either as the only IP or together with other IPs within each OP (Belgium, Bulgaria, Romania and Slovakia). The rest of the countries combine OPs addressing Roma inclusion under IP 9.2. together with OPs that use other IPs (Czech Republic, Greece, Hungary, Italy and Spain).

On the other hand, despite the fact there is a dedicated IP, five countries (Austria, Croatia, Poland, Portugal and Sweden) prefer using only other IPs (whether under TO9 or other TOs) to address Roma inclusion.

In this case, a distinction should be made between countries. While Sweden has decided to adopt a completely mainstreamed approach in which there is no explicit mention to Roma (Roma are considered as part of the target group ‘minorities’), the other four countries target Roma specifically – notably at the level of actions, including in most cases specific result indicators- mainly within IP 9.1. and IP 10.3.

Graph VII: Use of ESF IP 9.2. in Operational Programmes

* Only the national OPs and the regional Belgian Flanders OP are considered



When analysing whether the twenty-three OPs identified address Roma inclusion under IP 9.2. or under other IPs it is noted that numbers are quite similar (eleven opposed to twelve).

OPs addressing Roma inclusion under IP 9.2.

→ As it could be expected, in general terms, **the OPs addressing Roma inclusion under IP 9.2. (twelve OPs) are the ones that include the most targeted actions**, including

dedicated priority axes, thematic objectives and/or actions/types of interventions. While only one OP foresees a dedicated priority axis to address Roma inclusion (the Slovak *Human Resources OP- PA 5 'Integration of marginalised Roma communities'*), the most common trend is to dedicate specific objectives or actions/types of interventions to Roma inclusion. This is the case of the Belgian *Flanders OP*, the Bulgarian *Human Resources Development OP* and *Science and Education for Smart Growth OP*, the Czech *Research, Development and Education OP*, the Italian *Social Inclusion OP*, *Metropolitan Cities OP* and *Legality OP*, the Romanian *Human Capital OP* and the Spanish *Social Inclusion and Social Economy OP*.

- In general terms, it seems that **IP 9.2. is addressed in national rather than in regional OPs**. Two countries are however exceptions to this general trend: Belgium, where in this programming period Roma inclusion will only be addressed within the OP of one of the country's regions (*Flanders OP*), and Greece where, while certain measures benefitting Roma are foreseen within the national *Human Resources Development, Education and Lifelong Learning OP*, IP 9.2. is incorporated only in the regional OPs.
- **Out of the OPs that address Roma inclusion under IP 9.2., a large number also foresee actions under other ESF investment priorities** mainly under TO9 (notably IP 9.1. followed by 9.6 and 9.3.), TO 8 (notably IP 8.1.) and TO10 (notably IP 10.1.). However in these IPs a more general approach is used with an 'explicit but not exclusive' or even 'no explicit' mention to Roma/Roma communities.

OPs addressing Roma inclusion under IPs other than IP 9.2.

- Although the most targeted actions are found in the OPs under IP 9.2., **a number of OPs under IPs other than 9.2.** (five OPs) **also pay particular attention to Roma**, even with dedicated actions targeting Roma, notably under IP 9.1. and 10.

As already mentioned, **Austria** (*Employment OP*), **Poland** (*Knowledge, Education, Development OP*) and **Portugal** (*Social Inclusion and Employment OP*) foresee specific actions under IP 9.1. 'Active inclusion, including with a view to promoting equal opportunities and active participation and improving employability'.

Greece and Croatia opt for TO 10 'Investing in education, skills and lifelong learning'. The **Greek** *Human Resources Development, Education and Lifelong Learning OP* includes under this objective an explicit area of support on specialised services by Roma mediators for the integration of students with cultural and religious differences. The **Croatian** *Efficient Human Resources OP* foresees, under IP 10.3. a specific action to support Roma students at the level of preschool and primary education. In addition, Roma can benefit from other IPs where they are explicitly but not exclusively mentioned (9.1., 9.5) or where they are not explicitly mentioned (8.1., 8.6, 9.4., 10.4, 11.2.).

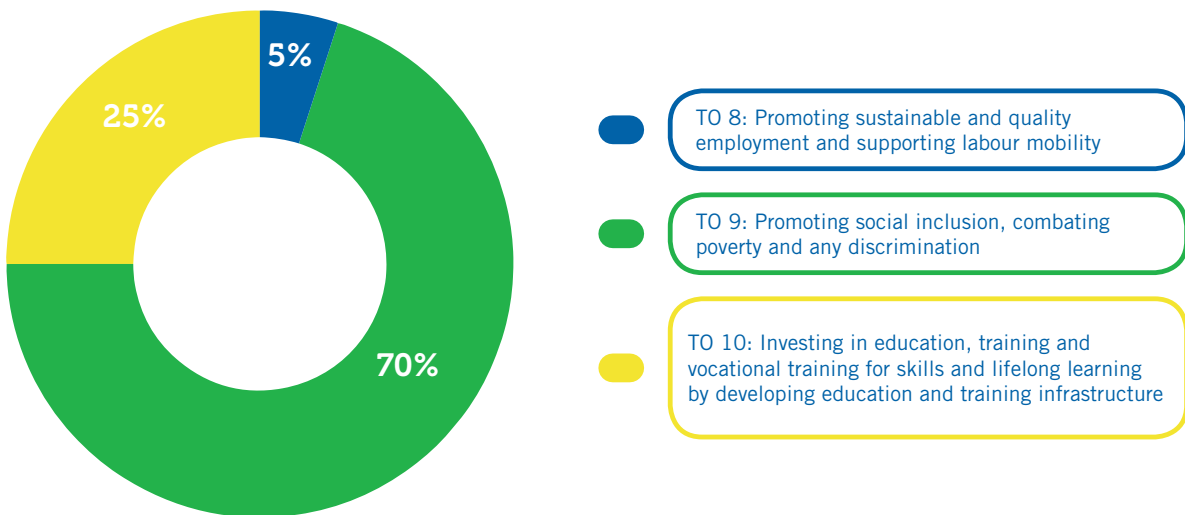
→ Contrary to this, **the rest of the OPs** that do not address IP 9.2. (six OPs) **mainly name Roma as potential beneficiaries** of the interventions among other target groups (e.g. the Czech *Employment OP*, the Hungarian *Economic Development and Innovation OP*, the Italian *Systems of Active Policies for Employment OP*, the Spanish *Youth Employment OP*) **or in some cases do not mention them explicitly and consider them as part of a larger group** (e.g. the Swedish *Investments in Growth and Employment OP* and the Spanish *Employment, Education and Training OP*).

5.2.2. Operational Programmes funded by European Regional Development Fund

5.2.2.1. What are the thematic objectives (TOs) and investment priorities (IPs) used to address Roma inclusion?

Graph VIII: Thematic objectives in OPs

*Only the national OPs and the regional Belgian *Flanders OP* are considered



- Roma inclusion is **mainly addressed under ERDF Thematic Objective 9 and Thematic Objective 10.**
- **Within TO 9, the most common IPs are IP 9.a.** (Investing in health and social infrastructure which contributes to national, regional and local development, reducing inequalities in terms of health status, promoting social inclusion through improved access to social, cultural and recreational services and the transition from institutional to community-based services) **and IP 9.b.** (Providing support for physical, economic and social regeneration of deprived communities in urban and rural areas). It is **under IP 9.b. that the most explicit and targeted approaches** are found.

An outstanding case is the **Slovak Human Resources OP**, which includes a dedicated priority axis on 'Technical facilities in municipalities with presence of marginalised Roma communities'. Other examples include the **Italian Metropolitan Cities OP**, in which one of the specific objectives aims at 'Reducing extreme marginality and interventions for inclusion in favour of homeless people and of Roma, Sinti and *Caminanti*', with a specific action on 'accommodation and space for services dedicated to the Roma community, Sinti and *Caminanti*'. In **Hungary** the *Territorial and Settlement Development OP* plans measures aimed at the elimination of Roma camps and the *Human Resources Development OP* 'Infrastructure investments for the inclusion of people living in persistent poverty, the Roma and for the elimination of peripheral living conditions'.

- As regards **TO 8 and TO 10**, the **information on the specific IPs is quite limited.**
- Despite the existence of some measures specifically targeting Roma/Roma communities, in ERDF interventions it is **more common the use of 'explicit but not exclusive' or even 'no explicit' mentions.**

In some cases this is related to the use of territorial approaches such as the ones previously presented. While in some cases interventions specifically target Roma settlements/Roma communities, in others they target urban/rural areas in general (some of them with a high percentage of Roma population) and it is assumed that Roma will benefit from the interventions as inhabitants of the target areas. Such assumption will need to be confirmed during the implementation phase.

- As already mentioned in the case of ESF, the **use of other thematic objectives** that could be also relevant to reach Roma, such as Thematic Objective 2, 5 and 6, **is not common.**

ASPECTS TO CONSIDER IN THE IMPLEMENTATION PHASE

- ➔ It is positive to see that **Roma inclusion is considered in a large number of ESF and ERDF thematic objectives and investment priorities, beyond the dedicated Investment Priority 9.2.** This implies substantial progress in terms of Roma policies and **opens a lot of opportunities to achieve impact** if it is appropriately implemented.

Ensuring that Roma benefit from programmes under other IPs and TOs is of utmost importance to take advantage of the full range of possibilities to promote the social inclusion of Roma offered by the ESI Funds in the 2014-2020 programming period.

- ➔ There are **many different ways to address Roma inclusion, both in terms of approaches** ('explicit', 'explicit but not exclusive' or 'no explicit' mentions, 'territorial approach') **and thematic objectives (TOs) and investment priorities (IPs).**

- ➔ Now it is **time to translate what is planned into actions that reach Roma,** and therefore efforts need to be made during the 2014-2020 programming period to find the best ways to implement what is planned.

In particular it remains to be seen how the different choices made in terms of TOs/IPs and approaches will be actually implemented and what will be their impact.

There are two **elements defined in the planning phase that could largely determine the impact of the interventions:**

- **The mention to Roma/Roma communities,** whether it is 'explicit', 'explicit but not exclusive' or 'no explicit'.
- **The hierarchical importance given to actions** explicitly targeting Roma/Roma communities, whether they are targeted at the level of priority axis, specific objective or type of intervention/action.

We could consider that the higher the hierarchical importance given to Roma inclusion in the adopted documents, together with the explicit mention to Roma/Roma communities (whether 'explicit' or 'explicit but not exclusive'), the more relevance in terms of impact and results.

However, this should not be given for granted. There are a number of **other factors that could also contribute to having have a positive impact:**

- › The **existence of result indicators**, including indicators disaggregated by ethnicity.
 - › The **scope of implementation** (implementation at national level or in certain regions/localities)
 - › The **duration of the initiatives**
 - › The **management model** and in particular **the body in charge of the implementation.**
- ➔ There is **no single right or better approach, what is important is that the planning is translated into actions that actually reach Roma/Roma communities.**

In this sense, particular attention should be paid to those actions that do not target Roma explicitly to avoid programmes disregarding them. The necessary guarantees should also be taken as regards the 'explicit but not exclusive' approaches, notably when there is a large number of target groups, to prevent the risk that Roma become blurred among the many other groups. To this end, it is crucial to count on strong and continuous monitoring processes⁷.

- ➔ It is also important to bear in mind that **there is still much scope to specifically target Roma inclusion in the implementation phase even if the adopted OPs do not include specific measures or do not explicitly target Roma/Roma communities.** A wide range of options are at the disposal of countries to this end. They include mentioning Roma/Roma communities as potential target group in the call for proposals (as it has been the case in Czech Republic- *Employment OP*) or in the priorities of the projects, establishing indicators related to Roma as final beneficiaries...Projects targeting Roma population can also be approved within general OPs (for example two projects targeting Roma youngsters are adopted within the Spanish *Youth Employment OP* even if no specific measures are foreseen).

7. The two handbooks drafted within the framework of the ESF Learning Network 'Reinforcing policy learning for Roma inclusion' on 'How to mainstream Roma inclusion in general programmes, projects and interventions' and 'How to monitor and evaluate Roma-related initiatives under ESI Funds' provide ideas on how to make mainstream programmes, projects and interventions under ESI Funds inclusive of Roma and how to monitor and evaluate the impact of Roma-related initiatives. http://euromanet.eu/resource_center/search/111646/index_1.html

6. Fields of intervention

This chapter analyses the main fields of intervention addressed by the Operational Programmes identified (national and regional level, ESF and ERDF-funded) and, without being exhaustive, provides some examples of initiatives planned by countries in each of the areas.

Table III: Overview of fields of intervention addressed by countries using an explicit approach*

Country	Employment	Education	Healthcare	Housing
Austria	√			
Belgium	√			
Bulgaria	√	√	√	√
Croatia	√	√	√	√
Czech Republic	√	√	√	√
Greece	√	√	√	√
Hungary	√	√	√	√
Italy	√	√	√	√
Poland	√	√		
Portugal	√	√		
Romania	√	√	√	√
Slovakia	√	√	√	√
Spain	√	√	√	√
Sweden				

*Only the fields of intervention where Roma are explicitly mentioned are considered; Roma may also benefit from other fields where they are not explicitly mentioned.

It is observed that in the adopted Operational Programmes **actions addressing the four key areas identified by the EU Framework for National Roma Integration Strategies (employment, education, healthcare and housing) are incorporated.** Despite this positive trend, similarly to the 2007-2013 programming period, **employment** and **education** are prioritised. Healthcare and housing remain considered to a lesser extent, although **housing** issues are acquiring increasing importance, with specific lines of support. The area of **healthcare** is however mainly included in general lines of support and considered from a global approach (initiatives covering different areas).

In addition to interventions in these four key areas, actions are also proposed in other less common areas such as the **fight against discrimination and negative stereotypes.** Actions related to **social inclusion/community-level social integration** (i.e. community-centres, field social work, intercultural mediation, access to social services...) are also quite common.

Finally, it is worth noting that particular attention is paid to the **less developed, in many cases, segregated areas** (physical regeneration, housing...), mainly through interventions addressed with/by of ERDF - combined in some cases with ESF actions- following a territorial approach.

6.1. Employment

Employment **remains the most common area of support;** countries include it among the fields of intervention, whether within specific or general lines of support.

Initiatives are **mainly addressed by ESF.** Despite the fact that there is a specific ESF Thematic Objective related to employment, TO 8 (Promoting sustainable and quality employment and supporting labour mobility), a large number of actions in this area are planned in the context of TO 9 (Promoting social inclusion, combating poverty and any discrimination), both under IP 9.2. and other IPs (notably IP 9.1.).

A wide range of interventions are foreseen. **The most common types of initiatives target the Roma population and seek to promote their access to the labour market and labour adaptability.** Actions foreseen relate to outreach, information and counselling, capacity building and training, acquisition of professional qualifications, apprenticeship and internship programmes and support to find employment. Some countries (such as Italy or Spain) foresee the use of **individual itineraries for labour inclusion,** adapted to the needs of each person, rather than one-off measures.

The **Belgian Flanders OP** (ESF), under the Specific Objective ‘Roma are being guided towards training for qualifications or to work’ supports measures to outreach, orient and guide Roma participants. The objective is that 15% of participants looking for work, following a training, obtain a (professional) qualification or find a job after the intervention.

In some of the OPs, in addition to interventions targeting directly Roma, **actions targeting other actors crucial to successfully achieve the labour integration of the Roma community** are planned, including:

→ **Actions targeting employers**, including awareness-raising initiatives to help fight stereotypes and discriminatory attitudes, provision of intermediary services, promotion of apprenticeship and internship programmes, incentives...

One of the lines of intervention within the action ‘socio-professional integration of Roma communities’ of the **Portuguese Social Inclusion and Employment OP** (ESF) consists in the elimination of stereotypes and the promotion of equal opportunities among employers, ensuring the accompaniment of employers and employees in the labour market, raising awareness about the rights and duties of both parts.

Both the **Romanian Human Capital OP** (ESF) and the **Bulgarian Human Resources Development OP** (ESF) foresee the provision of incentives to employers. The first one, financial support to encourage them to create new jobs and develop apprenticeship/internship programmes; the second, incentives to hire unemployed people from disadvantaged groups.

→ **Actions targeting professionals working with the Roma community (both in the public and private sector)**, notably related to capacity-building and to development of tools and materials.

Within the **Austrian Employment OP** (ESF) the action focused on ‘Roma empowerment for the labour market’ foresees actions for key workers for the empowerment of the Roma to support them in the training, advise and empowerment activities.

→ **Actions targeting the public authorities and policy-makers** aimed at overcoming stereotypes and promoting that public policies and initiatives take into account the specific needs of the Roma population.

Following recent trends at EU level, particular attention is given to the areas of **self-employment and entrepreneurship**, including activities such as counselling, entrepreneurial training, mentoring, support for the setting up a business, micro-grants... **Social entrepreneurship and social economy/social enterprises**, considered as an option for the integration of disadvantaged communities, is another area of growing importance addressed by most countries (Bulgaria, Croatia, Czech Republic, Greece, Hungary, Italy, Poland, Portugal, Romania, Spain and Slovakia).

Countries also plan other initiatives such as:

- **Assessment and certification of skills acquired in non-formal and informal system** (e.g. Romania)
- **Support measures to regulate and normalised the non-declared/regulated economic activities** (e.g. Italy or Spain, which pays particular attention to mobile trading and the collection of solid waste).
- **Vocational training** (e.g. Hungary, Italy, Romania, Spain) and other measures bridging the gap between formal schooling and access to labour market.
- **Promotion of public employment for Roma people** (e.g. Hungary)



6.2. Training and education

In addition to the training activities foreseen in relation to employment, **specific actions in the area of training and education are planned by most countries.**

They are **mainly addressed by ESF funds and in some cases by ERDF funds** aimed at the educational infrastructures (e.g. Bulgaria, Czech Republic, Hungary and Romania). They are planned within ESF Thematic Objective 10 ‘Investing in education, training and vocational training for skills and life-long learning’ but also under Thematic Objective 9.

Most OPs give **priority to actions targeting Roma students** at two levels:

- **Support measures to facilitate Roma students’ access, continuation and completion of the education system** (e.g. Roma mediators and class assistants, transition classes, after school activities).

The **Croatian Efficient Human Resources OP** (ESF) foresees the use of Roma class assistants and other measures to support Roma students at the level of preschool and primary education to speed up the process of their integration into the regular education system, including the teaching of Croatian language. The **Greek Human Resources Development, Education and Lifelong Learning OP** (ESF) also plans ‘reception classes’ to support the learning process of Greek as a second/foreign language and of other subjects in order to facilitate the smooth adjustment and accommodation of students in the educational system. Additionally, specialised services are provided by Roma mediators for the integration of students coming from vulnerable social groups and students with cultural and religious differences, including Roma.

Several OPs plan the development and implementation of after school activities. For example, the **Croatian Efficient Human Resources OP** (ESF) covers activities such as extended board programmes, summer camps and extracurricular events focused on the social integration of Roma pupils for disadvantaged students at pre-tertiary level. In the **Romanian Human Capital OP** (ESF), programmes such as school after school promote extra-curricular activities with a focus on the acquisition of key competences, school desegregation and the increase of elements such as self-esteem and cultural education

- **Direct support to students** (e.g. academic support and guidance, tutoring and counselling sessions, scholarships...)

Actions related to the **access and maintenance in the academic system**, with particular attention to **early school leaving**, are priority areas for countries.

While particular attention is given to the **lower levels of education**, including early childhood education, some countries also foresee actions targeting the **higher levels** (both compulsory and post-compulsory education). **Lifelong learning and adult literacy** are however only considered by some OPs.

Both the **Hungarian** *Competitive Central-Hungary OP* (ESF and ERDF) and the **Romanian** *Human Capital OP* (ESF) address tertiary education. The latest finances actions to increase participation in university and non-university education organised within the accredited higher education institutions, particularly for those students from vulnerable groups, with emphasis on the Roma.

The **Spanish** *Social Inclusion and Social Economy OP* (ESF) also includes interventions related to early school leaving and lifelong learning for youth who want to return to studies.

The **Bulgarian** *Science and Education for Smart Growth OP* (ESF) addresses the continuation to upper secondary and higher education level as well as adult literacy. Two operations were recently adopted. One of them aims to increase the number and percentage of the young people from vulnerable groups, including representatives of ethnic minorities and other groups unrepresented or presented on a small scale who are studying in secondary or higher education schools.

The **Croatian** *Efficient Human Resources OP* (ESF) includes Roma as one of the target groups of the specific objective 'Improving adult education system and upgrading skills and competences of adult learners'.

Within the **Portuguese** *Social Inclusion and Employment OP* (ESF), the Programme 'Choices' aims to promote the social inclusion of children and young people aged between 6 and 24 from vulnerable socio-economic contexts, giving priority to the descendants of immigrants and Roma communities. The programme, which is based on a bottom-up logic, also considers as indirect participants, among others, the family members of participants, teachers and other professionals.

In addition to the actions targeting Roma students, **interventions targeting other stakeholders crucial for achieving academic success** are planned, although to a minor extent. These include:

- **Actions targeting professionals in the academic field**, including awareness-raising about the academic situation and needs of the Roma community and capacity-building and training actions (e.g. Bulgaria, Czech Republic, Greece, Romania and Spain).

The *Research, Development and Education OP* (ESF and ERDF) of the **Czech Republic** includes a specific objective aimed at the ‘Social integration of children and pupils including the integration of Roma children in education’, with actions targeting municipalities with socially-excluded areas. Particular attention is paid to teachers with a view to improve their attitudes to the possibilities of joint education of children and pupils who live in different social environments and increase their competences in the specific features of work with Roma children and pupils.

- **Actions targeting the Roma community as a whole**, notably initiatives to raise awareness about the importance of education and to promote **parents’ participation in the educational process**, e.g. providing information and advice to parents, parents’ education programmes, including accompaniment measures (e.g. Bulgaria, Portugal, Romania, Spain).

The **Spanish** *Social Inclusion and Social Economy OP* (ESF) foresees awareness-raising and information measures targeting the Roma population on the need of attending school and the importance of education, with particular attention to the education of Roma women. Additionally, some of the regional OPs (e.g. *Castilla-La Mancha OP, Extremadura OP*) develop, together with actions targeting the Roma students, guidance, information and advice actions targeting the families to increase their involvement in the socio-academic processes.

- **Actions targeting society at large**, notably awareness-raising actions.

Other areas addressed by countries are as follows:

- Initiatives to promote **intercultural education**.
- The **elimination of segregation** in education centres and the inclusion of Roma children in mainstream education.

The **Bulgarian** *Science and Education for Smart Growth OP* (ESF) foresees the provision of appropriate material and psychological support for inclusion of children and students of Roma origin from ethnically segregated kindergartens and schools into kindergartens and schools outside Roma neighbourhoods through phased acceptance.

- Development of interventions aimed to promote **digital literacy, the use of internet and the Information and Communication Technologies (ICT) tools** to reduce the risk of digital exclusion of the Roma community (e.g. Spain).

6.3. Housing interventions and physical regeneration

Substantial progress is perceived in these areas, not only because of the increased number of initiatives but also because of their wider scope.

Interventions related to housing and physical regeneration are **undertaken with ERDF funds (hard measures), combined in some cases with ESF-funded measures (soft measures)**. They are commonly used within the context of territorial approaches, targeting in many cases settlements or communities in urban and rural areas with a high percentage of Roma.

While many interventions seem to be simply linked to **physical regeneration and basic infrastructure**, several countries are also considering actions to facilitate the **provision of housing solutions**, including:

- Construction, reconstruction and renovation of housing, including social housing (e.g. Bulgaria, Czech Republic, Romania, Slovakia, Spain)
- Purchase of second hand accommodation for renovation and transformation into social housing (e.g. Czech Republic, Spain)
- Self-building projects (e.g. Slovakia)
- Transitory housing (e.g. Slovakia)
- Subsidies for renting (e.g. Greece)
- Legalisation of lands (e.g. Slovakia)

In **Bulgaria** the *Regions in Growth OP* (ERDF) and the *Human Resources Development OP* (ESF) work in complementarity to promote social housing. While the first one seeks to provide modern social housing to vulnerable, minority and marginalised groups, including Roma, through construction, reconstruction, renovation and expansion of social housing (together with the rehabilitation of the adjacent yard), the second focuses on soft measures related to the provision of social, education and healthcare services.

The **Czech** *Integrated Regional OP* (ERDF) provides support for the purchase of apartments, residential buildings, non-residential premises and their adaptation to the needs of social housing as well as for the acquisition of the necessary basic equipment.

In **Italy**, the *Social Inclusion OP* (ESF) includes a priority dedicated to 'increasing the access to a wide range of housing solutions with a participatory approach, in order to definitely overcome the emergency approaches and large mono-ethnic settlements'. The *Metropolitan Cities OP* combines ESF and ERDF funds to promote services for social inclusion, including access to housing and to support infrastructure related to accommodation and space for services dedicated to the Roma community, Sinti and *Caminanti*.

Within the national ESF/ERDF OPs, **Spain** foresees the development of integrated actions of rehousing of the Roma population and the launch of programmes of social housing that offer temporary accommodation during the process of social integration, with particular attention to the needs of women and Roma girls. Integrated plans combine interventions related to access to social housing with others in the areas of education, health, sport facilities and employment services. ERDF interventions (such as the adaptations of housing or the construction of social housing) are complemented with ESF actions (actions of accompaniment). In addition, some of the Spanish ESF regional OPs (e.g. *Murcia OP*, *Castilla-La Mancha OP*) plan actions related to the rehousing of persons living in shacks and substandard housing, the improvement of the housing conditions and urban rehabilitation. In some cases, actions are complemented with those within the ERDF OPs in the regions.

One specific objective of the **Slovak Human Resources OP** (ESF and ERDF) is the 'Growth in the number of the Roma households with access to improved housing conditions'. Results include the improvement of the conditions for social integration of people from Marginalised Roma Communities (MRC) through a functional system of transitional housing; the introduction of a financial mechanism supporting self-build housing projects (micro-loans); and improvement of the quality of housing in the MRC environment through: infrastructure, access to drinking water and utility water, construction of access roads and communal waste collection.

Several OPs target their interventions at **disadvantaged areas in rural and urban settings**.

The **Hungarian Territorial and Settlement Development OP** (ESF and ERDF) targets segregated Roma camps, and the **Spanish Social Inclusion and Social Economy OP** (ESF) aims, in complementarity with ERDF, at the eradication of shantytowns and other substandard housing.

In **Croatia**, together with the *Efficient Human Resources OP* (ESF), the *Competitiveness and Cohesion OP* (ERDF) works for the improvement of socio-economic and living conditions in at least five pilot small towns. The package of interventions will result in the regeneration of degraded areas and contribute to the reduction of inequalities, social exclusion and poverty.

The **Romanian Human Capital OP** (ESF) aims at reducing the number of people at risk of poverty and social exclusion in marginalised communities in cities with over 20 000 inhabitants, focusing on those with population of Roma minority by implementing measures and integrated operations in the context of CLLD mechanisms.

The **Slovak Human Resources OP** (ESF and ERDF) targets under the ESF Priority Axis 'Integration of marginalised Roma communities' and the ERDF Priority Axis 'Technical facilities in municipalities with presence of marginalised Roma communities' the segregated and separated Roma settlements and locations based on the 'Atlas of Roma communities'. Interventions of the *Integrated Regional OP*, implemented through regional integrated territorial strategies, are also implemented in the territory of municipalities identified in the Atlas. Actions relate to the provision of social services, socio-legal protection of children and social guardianship, healthcare infrastructure, school infrastructure and material, and promotion of sustainable employment and job creation in the cultural and creative sector.

6.4. Healthcare

Healthcare interventions are **considered to a lesser extent**. A more limited number of countries select this area and, in general terms, when it is addressed, it is considered **from a more global approach** -i.e. within initiatives considering different areas or without targeting explicitly Roma- rather than in specific lines of support.

The exception to this general trend is Slovakia, which within the *Human Resources OP* foresees a dedicated specific objective covering healthcare issues, notably in relation to settlements and locations with marginalised Roma communities.

Within ESF Priority Axis 'Integration of marginalised Roma communities', the **Slovak Human Resources OP** (ESF and ERDF) seeks to promote access to healthcare and public health, including preventive care, healthcare education and increased hygiene standards of housing. It foresees support for:

- A systematic provision of services and assistance through the programme of community workers in the area of healthcare education in municipalities with the presence of separated and segregated Marginalised Roma Communities (MRC).
- Programmes of healthcare education for inhabitants of segregated and separated Roma settlements and locations. They focus on areas such as personal hygiene and care for own health, education to parenthood, protection of sexual and reproduction health, care for children, prevention of contagious diseases, manipulation with food, protection of environment, prevention of injuries and accidents, etc.
- Programmes to ensure minimum hygienic standards in communities with presence of MRC.
- Programmes to achieve a higher standard of hygiene in marginalised Roma settlements and a systematic reduction of the number of illegal dwellings characterised by extremely low levels of hygiene standards, also by the provision of technical assistance to municipalities with the presence of MRC aimed at the settlement of title to land.
- A monitoring system to evaluate the efficiency of instruments of policies and their impact on MRC.

- Actions in the area of healthcare are **funded by the European Social Fund**, mainly in the context of TO 9, **combined in some cases with ERDF interventions**, to develop health infrastructures.
- Most actions are aimed at **improving the access to healthcare services and covering the basic health needs** (e.g. provision of individual counselling services and social healthcare intermediary services, community workers in the area of healthcare, hygienic services...).

- Although to a minor extent, some countries also plan actions related to an **active promotion of healthcare** (e.g. healthcare education aimed at raising awareness about healthcare rights and create and improve health habits, promotion of family planning and responsible parenthood...).

The **Bulgarian** *Human Resources Development OP* (ESF and ERDF) foresees different actions to improve access to social and healthcare services, among them raising awareness among Roma population about their social and healthcare rights and improving the healthcare awareness and culture.

The **Czech** *Employment OP* (ESF) plans a wide range of initiatives targeting socially excluded persons or persons at risk of social exclusion. They relate to the provision of healthcare in the patient's social environment, the establishment of regional healthcare centres focused on the development and implementation of healthcare support programmes and healthcare literacy of groups at risk.

In the **Italian** *Social Inclusion OP* (ESF) attention is paid to facilitating access to local services and preventive healthcare services, with specific regard to women and children. The aim is to promote the use of cultural and social mediation and family education.

- **Actions targeting healthcare professionals** are also planned but to a minor extent.

In **Slovakia**, in synergy with the *Human Resources OP* (ESF and ERDF), the *Integrated Regional OP* (ERDF) aims at creating facilities and conditions for helping professions in healthcare education, in order to improve communication between residents of segregated and isolated Roma settlements and primary outpatient healthcare.

- Interventions related to **healthcare infrastructure** are also foreseen in the OPs of some countries (e.g. Bulgaria, Czech Republic, Romania, Slovakia).

The **Czech** *Integrated Regional OP* (ERDF) aims to improve the quality and availability of services leading to social inclusion, including healthcare services. Projects focus on building facilities for field services, purchasing equipment to work in hard-to-reach locations and for the mobile team providing healthcare and social assistance in excluded localities, etc.

6.5. Other areas

Other areas considered in the Operational Programmes include:

- **Community-level social integration** (access to social services, community centres, community social work, field social work...) (e.g. Bulgaria, Croatia, Czech Republic, Romania, Slovakia, Spain).
- **Combating discrimination and tackling negative stereotypes**, including awareness-raising and communication actions and initiatives targeting society at large and key actors in the fight against discrimination and the promotion of equal opportunities for Roma (both public and private).

The **Bulgarian** *Science and Education for Smart Growth OP* (ESF) aims at overcoming negative public attitudes based on ethnic origin and cultural identity (including through information campaigns related to non-discrimination based on race, ethnicity or religion).

The **Hungarian** *Human Resources Development OP* (ESF and ERDF) foresees actions aimed at social awareness-raising through anti-discrimination programmes. Interventions promote ethnic media preparation programmes, as well as Roma journalists, and training of media professionals.

The **Portuguese** *Social Inclusion and Employment OP* (ESF), as part of the action 'socio-professional integration of Roma communities' plans to 'sensitise and accompany professionals and institutions that promote initiatives for this community'. In addition, the OP foresees the promotion of awareness-raising and information in the field of fight against discrimination by providing tools to support the management of diversity, the fight against prejudices, the promotion of inter-religious dialogue, the knowledge of services and support networks to foreign citizens. Actions are linked with the 'Plan for the integration of immigrants and the National Roma Integration Strategy'.

The **Spanish** *Social Inclusion and Social Economy OP* (ESF) supports awareness-raising and communication campaigns to tackle stereotypes and discriminatory prejudices regarding marginalised communities, such as Roma, from a gender perspective. The integrated assistance programmes to adequate the public services to the Roma needs (e.g. healthcare, household, employment and social services) also include capacity building of staff of employment and social services that are in contact with marginalised communities, such as Roma, to make them aware of the specific needs and problems they face, with particular attention to women, highlighting the importance of equal opportunities and treatment.

→ Intercultural mediation

The **Portuguese** *Social Inclusion and Employment OP* (ESF) foresees a project of municipal mediators targeting the Roma communities. It is intended to work at the level of individuals, but also institutions, promoting networking and partnerships capable of building bridges between citizens and institutions. The creation of intercultural mediation teams or local mediators should take place within the framework of partnerships between local authorities and civil society organisations.

Greek regional OPs foresee the extension of the community centres that existed in the 2007-2013 programming period to all regions. The community centres in Roma settlements will focus on Roma and include Roma mediators among other staff. Community centres will also serve in areas with Roma and non-Roma population.

→ Citizenship regularisation (e.g. Italy).

→ Active citizenship of target groups

The **Hungarian** *Human Resources Development OP* (ESF and ERDF) stresses the importance of social active engagement in the strengthening civil society organisations, the development of minority self-governments, the support and participation of Roma women in the public life of Roma women's organisations strengthening.

→ Social, cultural and sport infrastructure (e.g. Bulgaria, Romania).

→ Use of **rehabilitation of confiscated assets for social inclusion measures** and integration of legal immigrants and asylum seekers (e.g. the Italian *Legality OP*).

While the gender dimension of OPs was not specifically addressed in the analysis, it is observed that, in general terms, there are not many references to gender aspects or to specific initiatives targeting Roma women. However, some countries do consider the gender dimension (e.g. Hungary, Italy, Spain, among others).

6.6. Combining actions from different fields of intervention

Except in certain cases in which complementarity between actions in the different fields of intervention is foreseen, in general terms it is difficult to assess whether the interventions planned will be implemented separately or in a complementary manner, following an integrated approach. Complementarity is easier to identify in the territorial approaches but it is also planned under other approaches (e.g. by planning interventions combining the different fields or including elements that encourage this combination).

The **Polish** *Knowledge, Education, Development OP* (ESF) foresees two contests to support comprehensive actions to improve education and employment of the Roma community and actions to eliminate the barriers to employment of the Roma and their integration with the majority population.

Within the **Romanian** *Regional OP* (ERDF), for the implementation of the measures to support healthcare and social infrastructure development and improve educational infrastructure, additional points are awarded if the projects address different areas complementarily (e.g. a social infrastructure project in the same area as a medical infrastructure project).

The **Spanish** *Social Inclusion and Social Economy OP* foresees the use of an integrated approach addressing the needs of the Roma population in different areas (employment, education, housing and social services) and combining actions focussing on the target group and/or systems and structures (labour market, social policies, companies, etc.). Within the framework of the OP, continuity is given to the national programmes 'Acceder' and 'Promociona' launched in the previous programming periods to improve the situation of the Roma population in employment and education. In addition, a programme to promote equal opportunities and socio-professional inclusion of Roma women, and to address the multiple discrimination that they face will also be implemented at national level.

ASPECTS TO CONSIDER IN THE IMPLEMENTATION PHASE

The elements which, based on the outcomes of the analysis and the lessons learnt in the previous programming period, would deserve particular attention in the implementation phase of the 2014-2020 programming period include:

- ➔ **Tackling all the four key areas of intervention for Roma inclusion** outlined in the European Commission Communication on an EU Framework for National Roma Integration Strategies, notably **employment, education, healthcare and housing (and essential services)**. In this sense, further efforts are deemed necessary in those areas that up to now received less attention such as healthcare.
- ➔ **Promoting the use of multi-dimensional and integrated approaches combining actions under the different areas and ensuring their actual implementation.**

The Regulations for the 2014-2020 programming period offer a number of mechanisms to encourage these approaches (e.g. Integrated Territorial Investments, Joint Action Plans, Community-led Local Development). Additionally, a wide range of options are at the disposal of countries (whether they are planned in the adopted documents or not), such as supporting comprehensive actions or setting as a requirement or awarding additional points to projects addressing several areas. Efforts are now necessary to address the remaining uncertainties about the design and management of these approaches and mainly their implementation in practice, which was the main challenge of the 2007-2013 programming period.

While these approaches are of particular relevance in areas with relatively widespread geographical segregation and marginalisation or where Roma are overrepresented, it is important to go further and apply them in all types of interventions targeting Roma, emphasising links between the different fields.

- **Considering developments in relation to less developed, and in many cases segregated, areas** (e.g. physical regeneration, housing) **where there is a high concentration of Roma**. In fact, ESI Funds provide the adequate framework, conditions and resources to address the situation of these areas and, in some cases, launch pilot projects aiming at the eradication of segregated settlements. Short-term interventions to improve living conditions should be combined with medium/long-term interventions aimed at finding sustainable solutions to ensure that these areas become fully integrated in the territory and that the people living in them enjoy the same opportunities as any other citizen.
- **Encouraging a long-term approach to achieve impact**. Aspects such as the mechanism for allocation of funds (call for proposals or other) as well as the type, duration and dimensions of the projects awarded are crucial to this end. Experience from previous programming periods show that projects with higher duration (and budget) have in principle higher potential to achieve real change, whereas the short/medium-term calls – the most common ones in these periods- lead to fragmentation of resources and in turn decreased impact. To ensure impact it is important to change the trends from the previous programming periods by moving towards projects with an increased duration and budget.
- It is important that **actions are framed and aligned with existing policies and strategies in these areas at different levels** (local, regional, national and European) and that they are **in synergy with other actions and projects**.
- **Ensuring that interventions** in the different areas **do not contribute to further promoting practices of segregation but rather to eliminate them**.
- **Making use of existing information and reports on the Roma situation**. Research, data collection and gathering of information on the situation of Roma are important to inform decisions to implement more effective, result-oriented and targeted measures and interventions responding to the real needs of Roma.

7. Partnership principle

Finally we look at the level of involvement of Roma individuals, Roma NGOs and organisations working to promote Roma inclusion in the Operational Programmes drafting process and their expected involvement in the implementation, monitoring and evaluation phases.

ESI Funds Regulations, specifically article 5 of the Common Provisions Regulation, pay particular attention to partnership and involvement of relevant stakeholders throughout the entire cycle of the funds. In addition, the **European Code of Conduct on Partnership**⁸ drawn up by the European Commission with the aim of helping national authorities to ensure the high quality involvement of partners could be a useful instrument to put these elements into practice. The Code:

- **Puts forward a set of guidelines and recommendations as well as examples of good practices to improve consultation, participation and dialogue** between public authorities and relevant stakeholders throughout the different phases of the programming period, from planning and implementation to monitoring and evaluation, of initiatives funded by the European Structural and Investment Funds.
- **Stresses the need to pay particular attention to “groups who may be affected by programmes but who find it difficult to influence them, in particular the most vulnerable and marginalised communities, which are *at highest risk of discrimination or social exclusion, in particular persons with disabilities, migrants and Roma people*”.**
- **Highlights the strengthening of the institutional capacity of partners** as an essential element to facilitate partnership and to help them to effectively participate in the preparation, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of the programmes. To this end, it proposes the **use of EU Technical Assistance** in the form of, inter alia, dedicated workshops, training sessions, coordination and networking structures or contributions to the cost of participating in meetings on the preparation, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of a programme.

8. <http://ec.europa.eu/esf/main.jsp?catId=67&langId=en&newsId=8248>

Furthermore, there seems to be a **general acknowledgement of the importance of partnership and involvement of relevant stakeholders** to achieve greater impact of programmes and policies. **However, the extent to which relevant stakeholders are involved in practice and whether their proposals are reflected** in the adopted documents and decisions **remains in many cases unclear** as so far there is no systematic monitoring or evaluation of stakeholder involvement⁹.

Major differences are perceived between the countries regarding the degree and quality of stakeholder participation and the forms it takes (from informal to formal and restricted mechanisms), **as well as the involvement in the different phases**. Moreover, in many cases the mechanisms and processes for involvement are weak, only happen in specific moments or in certain phases (notably in the implementation phase) and are not linked to capacity-building processes of relevant stakeholders and beneficiaries.

Having said that, despite differences between countries and the fact that there is still room for progress, there is a **wide perception that the involvement of different stakeholders is improving** (although such perceptions may vary depending on the actors involved in such processes) **and that certain progress is observed in terms of mechanisms, processes and methods for involvement**.

Without being exhaustive, this chapter aims to present the mechanisms used and/or planned by some of the countries analysed to involve stakeholders in the planning, implementation and monitoring/evaluation phases, which could serve as inspiration for others.

Information available so far does not permit assessing the extent and impact of the initiatives already undertaken -those related to the planning and to some extent to the implementation phase- and those planned for the implementation and monitoring/evaluation phase.

9. The EC is finalising two studies on partnership: Directorate-General Regional and Urban Policy on the implementation of the new regulatory provision of the involvement of partners in the preparation and implementation of Partnership Agreements and programmes; and Directorate-General for Employment, Social Affairs and Inclusion on the results of an online survey on partnership in the ESF programmes.

7.1. Planning phase

Involvement in the planning phase took place in different ways and to different extents, from formal to informal mechanisms, including:

→ **Informal mechanisms for consultation** such as bilateral contacts and face-to-face meetings.

For the elaboration of the **Hungarian Human Resources Development OP**, in addition to the discussions held with the representatives of the National Roma Self-Government, consultation took place at the meetings of the Social Inclusion and Roma Interdepartmental Committee, the Roma Coordination Council and the ‘Let it be better for the children!’ National Strategy Evaluation Committee.

→ **Open/public information and consultation mechanisms.**

In some cases, **meetings or fora** gathering relevant stakeholders and/or professionals were organised at national, regional or even local levels (for some OPs throughout the different regions; for others, in several parts of the country). In others, **electronic tools** were used, e.g. web portals and open line interfaces for publication of relevant information, discussion and comments, communications through email, online partnerships.

For the **Hungarian Territorial and Settlement Development OP**, an online social partnership was set up involving counties, cities and settlements and NGOs, including Roma self-governments.

→ **Setting up of specific structures**, such as working groups or thematic advisory committees.

In **Bulgaria**, a thematic working group was set up to draft the *Human Resources Development OP*. It comprised seventy-four members representing a large number of organisations and institutions, including social organisations working for the integration of ethnic groups and immigrants. Group members met regularly to review and approve the drafts of the Programme and discuss the proposals for revisions and improvements submitted in between the meetings. NGOs were also involved in the working group for the preparation of the *Science and Education for Smart Growth OP* and the *Regions in Growth OP*.

For the drafting of the **Slovak Human Resources OP**, three working groups were created: one regarding the ex-ante conditionality 9.2.; one for the monitoring and evaluation of the Strategy for Integration of Roma up to 2020; and one of the Slovak Government Plenipotentiary for the programming period 2014-2020. The latest brings together representatives from NGOs, state institutions and municipalities with a consultative role in setting the programming documents necessary for the implementation and use of EU funds in the context of the integration of marginalised Roma communities. Its main task is to build on this experience when drafting strategies, policy and programme measures in the process of Roma integration. The working group set up to plan the *Integrated Regional OP* also gathered central, regional and local authorities (including different MAs), social and economic partners and entities from the non-profit sectors. Among others the Roma Institute, the Plenipotentiary of the Slovak Republic Government for Development of Civil Society and the Plenipotentiary of the Slovak Republic Government for the Roma Communities were involved.

In **Romania**, thematic advisory committees were set up for the preparation of the *Human Capital OP*. Within the framework of the committees, the overall context of the interventions was presented and discussed, the needs and priorities were analysed and the type of eligible beneficiaries identified.

→ Promoting linkages with other initiatives related to social inclusion and/or Roma issues.

In **Greece**, the programming phase of the regional OPs (thirteen OPs) coincided with the formulation of the regional strategies for the social inclusion of Roma in which the Managing Authorities were also involved.

→ Other initiatives

Within the framework of the **Bulgarian Human Resources Development OP**, a national campaign was conducted using the twenty-seven regional information points and the Central Information and Coordination Office with the aim of popularising EU Cohesion Policy and gathering feedback from relevant stakeholders. A large-scale survey was conducted among representatives of organisations and institutions implementing projects under the OPs in order to identify the critical deficiencies in the implementation of projects financed by European funds and find ways to address them.

Within the framework of the **Romanian Regional OP**, for actions related to CLLD, a consultation was carried out at local level among the members of the future Local Action Groups, in charge of developing the local development strategies.

In **Croatia**, events were organised to present the EURoma Network Guides on Structural Funds and Roma inclusion, as relevant tools for the planning process.

7.2. Implementation phase

Information on the involvement of stakeholders in this phase is more limited and with important differences between countries, since at the time of gathering information, the implementation phase had just started and not all countries were at the same stage. Other initiatives may therefore exist or be developed throughout the implementation phase.

While we still observe that in some countries the involvement of relevant stakeholders is mainly limited to their role as beneficiaries of the actions, others plan a wider approach. Initiatives identified include:

→ **Participation of relevant stakeholders in structures in charge of aspects related to the implementation of the Operational Programmes**, including:

- › **Monitoring Committees** (e.g. Bulgarian *Human Resources Development OP* and *Science and Education for Smart Growth OP*, Slovak *Human Resources OP*, Spanish *Social Inclusion and Social Economy OP*).
- › **Working groups** set up to prepare and develop the Operational Programmes.
- › **Thematic working groups addressing specific topics of common interest** such as youth, unemployment, equality, social inclusion...

→ **Participation/consultation of stakeholders as regards certain elements related to the implementation phase** such as the preparation of the calls for projects and the content of planned projects.

Within the **Polish** *Knowledge, Education, Development OP* the content of planned projects was consulted ex ante with Roma representatives and public consultations were held to discuss the selection criteria for projects. In fact, ex ante consultation of project content with Roma representatives from the project area is one of the selection criteria.

→ **Promotion of cooperation between the bodies in charge of ESI Funds and those in charge of Roma inclusion.**

Spain set up, as part of the NRIS, an Inter-funds Committee bringing together representatives from the Managing Authorities of the ESF, ERDF and EAFRD and the National Roma Contact Point with a view to 'articulate in a coordinated manner the planning, monitoring and evaluation of the interventions targeting the Roma population'.

→ **Use of opportunities offered by existing thematic groups and networks**, both at national and European level, addressing aspects related to the objectives of the programme to inform and involve relevant stakeholders.

→ **Capacity-building of relevant stakeholders and beneficiaries** to promote their active participation.

The action plan developed within the framework of the **Spanish Social Inclusion and Social Economy OP** to improve the implementation of the ESF includes measures to promote the capacity-building of bodies and beneficiaries. It also establishes a series of actions specifically focused on the improvement of the governance, including the improvement of collaboration or the development of measures of information and visibility.

→ Actions to **support and increase the engagement and participation of the target groups at local level.**

In **Czech Republic**, both the *Employment OP* and the *Integrated Regional OP* support and develop participatory working methods with the target groups as well as community social work with the aim of increasing the engagement and participation of socially excluded people in prevention and decision-making processes at local level.

→ **Establishing criteria for promoting participation and partnership.** For example, some countries define relevant aspects related to involvement in documents such as the applicant guidance; others define, in the context of implementation of individual actions, criteria for the evaluation of project proposals which promote the partnership principle.

→ Other models facilitating and promoting the involvement of relevant stakeholders such as the ones established by **existing tools such as ITIs, CLLD...**

The implementation mechanism of the **Slovak Integrated Regional OP** is a model of regional integrated territorial strategies (RITS), the basic strategic documents for the implementation of integrated territorial investments (ITI). Building upon the principles of partnership and a 'bottom-up decision-making', all relevant stakeholders from various sectors participate in strategic planning and management on the European, national, regional and local levels. Stakeholders engaged in the preparation and implementation of RITS are, whether as a whole in form of partnership councils or individually, entrusted with competences related to the preparation of a given RITS, its implementation in form of identification (selection) of project concepts that are to be implemented in its territory, its monitoring, evaluation, etc.

7.3. Monitoring and evaluation phase

A limited number of initiatives are identified as regards the monitoring and evaluation. This may be due either to the fact that not sufficient attention is given to this phase in the 2014-2020 programming period or because we are at an early stage of the programming period and initiatives are still to be defined (although monitoring and evaluation aspects should be considered since the beginning of the programming cycle).

Initiatives foreseen include:

- **Participation of relevant actors in Monitoring Committees.**
- **Establishment of specific commissions/working groups to address the actions targeting Roma within the Monitoring Committees.**

In **Slovakia**, a commission set up within the *Human Resources OP* Monitoring Committee focuses on the two priority axes targeting marginalised Roma communities (Priority Axes 5 and 6). Its role is to approve for the Slovak Ministry of Interior certain aspects related to the national projects to be implemented in the country (e.g. project intents, substantial changes as regards the scope of activities or the person designated). In addition, the commission shall be informed about the planned calls for proposals and financial developments and monitor the development of the OP objectives.

- **Involvement of Roma-related organisations in the monitoring of project implementation.**
- **Cooperation of the bodies in charge of the ESI Funds implementation and monitoring with Roma-related organisations.**

ASPECTS TO CONSIDER IN THE IMPLEMENTATION PHASE

In line with the Code of Conduct, the challenge for the 2014-2020 is to put in practice elements that have proven their value to promote the involvement of relevant stakeholders including:

- **Extending participation to all phases of the programming period**, from planning, to implementation, monitoring and evaluation.
- **Advancing towards structured mechanisms** to involve stakeholders **and establish processes and methods** allowing for an active and quality partnership (going beyond informative sessions and moving towards real consultation and partnership).
- **Developing** mechanisms that allow the **systematic monitoring and evaluation of stakeholder involvement**.
- **Fostering the capacity of potential partners** to get involved, not only to merely participate.



The way forward

The way forward

The **ESI Funds Regulations for the 2014-2020 programming period open up a wide range of possibilities for promoting the social inclusion and non-discrimination of Roma** across the European Union. Elements such as the specific European Social Fund (ESF) Investment Priority ‘Socio-economic integration of marginalised communities such as the Roma’ (IP 9.2.), the ex-ante conditionalities (e.g. a national Roma inclusion strategic policy framework in place...) and the stronger linkages with the political priorities identified in the country-specific recommendations are new instruments that, if properly used, could contribute to achieve substantial progress in the use of ESI Funds for Roma inclusion.

The findings of the analysis carried out by the EUroma Network show **a positive picture as regards the consideration of Roma inclusion in the Operational Programmes adopted for the 2014-2020 programming period**. Roma are considered in a broad number of OPs, going beyond the use of the ESF and in particular the specific Investment Priority 9.2. In addition, progress is observed as regards the plans to use some of the tools included in the new Regulations to advance Roma inclusion, such as the combination of funds.

Now it remains to be seen how this positive framework and the different options selected by countries in terms of scope (national or regional OPs), **funds** (European Social Fund, European Regional Development Fund or others), **thematic objectives and investment priorities** (9.2. or others), **approaches** (explicit mention, no mention and territorial approaches), **hierarchical importance given to actions targeting Roma** (at the level of priority axes, specific objectives or actions) **and fields of intervention are translated into practice**. The main goal should be to ensure that the interventions planned in the programming documents are actually and effectively implemented and that they contribute to improving the socio-economic situation, equal opportunities and fight against discrimination of Roma people.

Building upon the analysis made and the experience from the 2007-2013 programming period, **the following aspects should be considered during the implementation phase:**

- **The effective implementation of the actions planned in the programming documents, ensuring that they actually reach Roma.** Particular attention should be paid to those actions that do not target Roma explicitly to avoid programmes disregarding them. The necessary guarantees should also be taken as regards the ‘explicit but not exclusive’ approaches, notably when there is a large number of target groups, to prevent the risk that Roma become blurred among the many other groups. To this end, **it is crucial to count on strong and continuous monitoring processes.**
- **The use of opportunities to promote Roma inclusion beyond those foreseen in the programming documents.** There is still much scope to promote Roma inclusion in the implementation phase even if the adopted programming documents do not feature specific measures or do not explicitly mention Roma (e.g. mentioning Roma as potential targets of the calls for proposals or in the priorities of the projects, establishing indicators related to Roma as final beneficiaries...). This could also apply to the consideration of the gender dimension in the programmes. As far as the funds are concerned, ESF and ERDF but also other funding sources and instruments -including the European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development (EAFRD) and the European Territorial Cooperation programmes- offer many opportunities.
- **The maximisation of the instruments available within the new Regulations for a more efficient use of ESI Funds.** Among them the combined use of different funds, whether within the same OP or between OPs with different funds, or the integrated and multi-dimensional approaches, both in terms of fields of interventions and funds. While these approaches are of particular relevance in areas with relatively widespread geographical segregation and marginalisation, or where Roma are overrepresented, it is important to go further and apply them in all types of interventions targeting Roma, emphasising the links between the different fields and funds.

In general, it seems important to widen the fields of interventions beyond the four key fields identified by the EU Framework for National Roma Integration Strategies (NRIS) (employment, education, health and housing) including also other areas of relevance, particularly non-discrimination. In this sense, further efforts are deemed necessary in those areas that up to now received less attention, such as healthcare.

- **The alignment, complementarity and coordination between the national, regional and local levels**, including between the OPs acting at the different levels and the financial and policy instruments (i.e. OPs and relevant policies on Roma inclusion at national and regional level such as the NRIS, among others).
- **The role of the National Roma Contact Points (NRCPs)** in the implementation, monitoring and evaluation phases and the need to improve the coordination and alignment between the National Roma Contact Points and the Managing Authorities.
- **The promotion of a quality participation, involvement and performance of relevant stakeholders** for Roma inclusion (including Roma NGOs and organisations working to promote Roma inclusion as well as Roma communities themselves) throughout the whole ESI Funds cycle (from planning, to implementation, monitoring and evaluation) in line with the European Code of Conduct on Partnership. To this end it is important:
 - › **To advance towards structured mechanisms to involve stakeholders** and establish processes and methods that allow for an active and quality partnership (going beyond mere informative sessions and moving towards real consultation and partnership), to develop mechanisms for the systematic monitoring and evaluation of stakeholder involvement and to foster the capacity of stakeholders to get involved.

- › **To promote a quality performance of intermediate bodies and final beneficiaries** as core aspects **for the effective implementation** of Roma inclusion programmes (selection criteria based on proven experience and professional competences; assuring adequate resources for effectively implementing the programmes....)
- › The **capacity-building of all relevant stakeholders**, including Managing Authorities, Intermediate Bodies and also final beneficiaries and other crucial actors can play an important role in enhancing their important role in ensuring the effective use of the funds.

In order to assure the effective incorporation of Roma within ESI Funds, it is **essential that all these elements are assumed not only by national Operational Programmes but also by regional ones**, which should fully develop their potential in this programming period.

The 2014-2020 programming period should serve to take the definite step forward in promoting a real change in the lives of the many European Roma that still today suffer from poverty, exclusion and discrimination. It is the responsibility of all relevant actors not to miss the opportunities offered by these political and financial instruments to address once for all the inequalities and injustice that European Roma citizens face in their daily lives.

The framework for transnational cooperation established for the 2014-2020 programming period and initiatives such as the EURoma Network can largely contribute to this goal by encouraging mutual learning, knowledge generation, capacity-building of relevant actors and provision of support to address crucial aspects for an effective use of ESI Funds for Roma inclusion.

Annex 1: List of most relevant references to EURoma Network

Year	Document
2009	<p>Vademecum: 10 Common Basic Principles on Roma inclusion</p>
<p><i>'Benefit from feedback and expert information from the EURoma network on the use of the Structural Funds for the Roma'</i> is proposed as one of the ways to achieve in practice Principle n° 7 regarding the 'Use of European Union instruments'.</p> <p>http://bookshop.europa.eu/en/the-10-common-basic-principles-on-roma-inclusion-pbKE3010317/</p>	
2010	<p>European Commission Communication 'The social and economic integration of the Roma in Europe' (COM (2010) 0133 final)</p>
<p>It makes reference to EURoma as a forum of exchange for Member States and encourages them to take part in the Network:</p> <p><i>2. Progress Achieved</i></p> <p><i>Member States report that they want to mainstream Roma issues and to use mutual learning and of peer reviews to explore how to improve their initiatives on desegregation and on access to education, employment and basic social services. A forum for such exchanges is the European Network on Social Inclusion and Roma under the Structural Funds (EURoma), which aims at exchanging information and experience, sharing strategies and approaches and generating knowledge.</i></p> <p><i>3. Challenges ahead</i></p> <p><i>The increasing exchanges of experience among national administrations about successful Roma-targeted programmes can be developed through the participation of Member States in the European Network on Social Inclusion and Roma under the Structural Funds (EURoma). An academic network on Roma studies, supported by the Commission and the Council of Europe, will improve the evidence base for Roma initiatives and create a stronger bridge with policy.</i></p> <p><i>The Commission will:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - encourage Member States to use the EURoma network to exchange best practices; <p>http://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=COM:2010:0133:FIN</p>	
2010	<p>Integrated European Platform for Roma Inclusion Road Map</p>
<p><i>'The EURoma network and its partners (Managing Authorities of Structural Funds and specialised agencies responsible for policies aimed at Roma inclusion and development)' are mentioned as 'adequate outlets' to disseminate the products 'in order to achieve a multiplier effect'.</i></p> <p>http://ec.europa.eu/justice/discrimination/files/roma_roadmap_en.pdf</p>	

Year	Document
2011	<p>Council Conclusions on an EU Framework for National Roma Integration Strategies up to 2020</p>
<p><i>The Council invites the European Commission and the Member States, in close cooperation and in accordance with their respective competences:</i></p> <p><i>36. To enhance cooperation between relevant stakeholders in order to facilitate the exchange of best practices and mutual learning regarding evidence-based policies and successful methods, including by extending and improving existing networks and initiatives such as the EU Roma Network.</i></p> <p>http://www.europa.eu/rapid/press-release_PRES-11-135_en.doc</p>	
2011	<p>European Parliament Resolution on the EU strategy on Roma inclusion (2010/2276(INI))</p>
<p>The European Parliament <i>'calls on the Member States to implement the horizontal priority 'Marginalised Communities' within the framework of the EU Structural Funds and to participate in the EU-Roma network working on the good implementation of structural funds for Roma social inclusion'.</i></p> <p>It also <i>'urges the Member States to make use of the EU Roma network in order to encourage an exchange of best practices'.</i></p> <p>http://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=CELEX:52011IP0092</p>	
2012	<p>European Commission publication 'Working together for Roma inclusion. The EU Framework explained'</p>
<p>EURoma is mentioned in the section <i>'Creating synergies between local and regional authorities'</i>. In particular it refers to the cooperation between the Network and the Committee of the Regions to develop a guide for local decision makers.</p> <p><i>The Committee of the Regions</i></p> <p><i>(...) The CoR has published two opinions on the issue of Roma inclusion. In addition, it is working with the EU-Roma Network, a group of 12 EU Member States that cooperate on Roma issues, on a guide for local decision makers on how to develop programmes for Roma inclusion using the EU Structural Funds, which is due to be published in autumn 2011.</i></p> <p>http://bookshop.europa.eu/en/working-together-for-roma-inclusion-pbDS3011315/</p>	

Year	Document
2012	<p>Italian National Strategy for the Inclusion of Roma, Sinti and Caminanti Communities</p>
<p>The Strategy makes reference to EURoma and to the involvement of Italy in the Network.</p> <p><i>In this context, mention has to be made of the EURoma Network and the relating activities by the National Network. Since 2008, within the transnational activities foreseen in the PON (standing for, Operational National Programme), Italy has joined the European Network on the RSC Inclusion, as promoted by the ESF Unit of the Ministry of Labor and Social Affairs of Spain, on the basis of the experience made by the latter in Equal.</i></p> <p><i>In the above Network, along with twelve other Member-States, Italy, participates: in the Management Committee through the General Directorate on Active and Passive Labor Policies (PAPL), DG Immigration and Integration Policies of the Ministry of Labor, and UNAR; and in working-groups on “Occupation” and “Social Inclusion”.</i></p> <p><i>This Network aims at increasing the use of structural funds by the Countries’ Institutions for actions concerning the social inclusion of Roma communities, and at providing guidance to policymakers to plan more effective interventions, besides promoting the exchange of good practices and of information on initiatives among relevant stakeholders.</i></p> <p><i>Italy thus participates in the European Network EURoma, to help promoting the discussion and sharing of information of initiatives for the RSC communities, which are also realized on the national territory.</i></p> <p>http://ec.europa.eu/justice/discrimination/files/roma_italy_strategy_en.pdf</p>	
2012	<p>Article ‘Learning from the EURoma Network’, European Roma Rights Centre (ERRC) Journal</p>
<p>This article is included in the 2011 Roma Rights Journal of the European Roma Rights Centre (ERRC) ‘Funding Roma Rights: Challenges and Prospects’.</p> <p>It shares the point of view and the experience of the EURoma Network on the use of European funds to promote the rights of the Roma population.</p> <p>http://www.errc.org/article/roma-rights-2011-funding-roma-rights-challenges-and-prospects/4062/2</p>	

Year	Document
2014	<p>European Commission Communication ‘Report on the implementation of the EU Framework for National Roma Integration’ (COM/2014/0209)</p>
<p>A mention to EURoma is included in the section 5 ‘Conclusions: the way forward’.</p> <p>In order to make sure that the path towards Roma inclusion opened up by the EU Framework and the Council Recommendation is consequently followed further, the Commission will among other measures:</p> <p><i>‘Promote the use of available EU funds (...) including through the EURoma network, made up of representatives of twelve Member States with the aim to promote the use of Structural Funds to enhance the effectiveness of policies targeting the Roma and to promote their social inclusion</i></p> <p>http://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=CELEX%3A52014DC0209</p>	
2014	<p>Partnership Agreement of the Czech Republic</p>
<p>A reference is made to the recommendation of the EURoma Network to focus on the Roma community following an explicit but not exclusive approach.</p> <p>Footnote 82. <i>‘E.g. according to EURoma (European Network on Social Inclusion and Roma under the Structural Funds), this approach proved to be one of the best ways to integrate the Roma, which among other things allows the formulation of clear objectives, adequate forms of implementation as well as specific forms of monitoring and evaluation. The explicit, rather than exclusive approach is also emphasized by the EU initiative “For Diversity Against Discrimination” as one of the 10 Common Basic Principles on Roma Inclusion).’</i></p> <p>http://www.strukturalni-fondy.cz/getmedia/92b600c0-fa29-4467-a758-9696268dcefb/CZ-PA-adopted-by-EC-20140826.pdf?ext=.pdf</p>	
2014	<p>Toolkit ‘Programming the Structural Funds for Roma Inclusion’ of the Open Society Foundations (OSF) Making the Most of EU Funds for Roma (MtM) programme</p>
<p>This toolkit makes reference to the Network and its publications. It also stresses the complementarity of this toolkit with the EURoma Network ‘Tackling Roma Needs in the 2014-2020 Structural Funds Programming Period’</p> <p>http://ec.europa.eu/justice/discrimination/files/roma_toolkit2014_20_en.pdf</p>	

Annex 2: Overview of relevant information in Operational Programmes at national level¹

Country	Operational Programme	Funds		Explicit mention to Roma/Roma communities ³
		ESF	ERDF	
Austria	Employment OP	●		√
Belgium	Flanders OP	●		√
Bulgaria	Human Resources Development OP	●		√
	Science and Education for Smart Growth OP	●	● ²	√
	Regions in Growth OP		●	√
Croatia	Efficient Human Resources OP	●		√
	Competitiveness and Cohesion OP		●	√
Czech Republic	Employment OP	●		√
	Integrated Regional OP		●	√
	Research, Development and Education OP	●	● ²	√
Greece	Human Resources Development, Education and Lifelong Learning OP	●		√
Hungary	Human Resources Development OP	●	●	√
	Territorial and Settlement Development OP	●	●	√
	Economic Development and Innovation OP	●	● ²	√

1. Only national OPs and the *Belgian Flanders OP* are considered

2. No information on specific ERDF TOs/IPs

3. Explicit mention to Roma/Roma communities (whether in all or only in some of the relevant TOs/IPs, whether exclusively or as part of larger target groups/geographical areas, whether including specific lines of intervention targeting Roma/Roma communities or not).

Thematic Objectives (TOs)									
TO 8	TO 9							TO 10	others
	IP 1	IP 2	IP 3	IP 4	IP 5	IP 6	no specific IP		
	✓								
		✓							
✓		✓						✓	
	○	✓						✓	○
	✓							✓	
○	✓			○	✓			✓	○
		✓							
✓	✓			✓		✓			
	✓		✓					✓	
		✓						○	
								✓	
	✓	✓ ✓				○		✓	
○		✓ ✓							
✓									

✓ Explicit mention to Roma/Roma communities (whether exclusively or as part of larger target groups/geographical areas, whether including specific lines of intervention targeting Roma/Roma communities or not).

Country	Operational Programme	Funds		Explicit mention to Roma/Roma communities ³
		ESF	ERDF	
Italy	Social Inclusion OP	●		✓
	Metropolitan Cities OP	●	●	✓
	Systems of Active Policies for Employment OP	●		✓
	Legality OP	●	●	✓
Poland	Knowledge, Education, Development OP	●		✓
Portugal	Social Inclusion and Employment OP	●		✓
Romania	Human Capital OP	●		✓
	Regional OP		●	✓
Slovakia	Human Resources OP	●	●	✓
	Integrated Regional OP		●	✓
Spain	Social Inclusion and Social Economy OP	●		✓
	Employment, Education and Training OP	●		○
	Youth Employment OP	●		✓
	Sustainable Growth OP		●	✓
Sweden	Investments in Growth and Employment OP	●		○

1. Only national OPs and the *Belgian Flanders OP* are considered

2. No information on specific ERDF TOs/IPs

3. Explicit mention to Roma/Roma communities (whether in all or only in some of the relevant TOs/IPs, whether exclusively or as part of larger target groups/geographical areas, whether including specific lines of intervention targeting Roma/Roma communities or not).

Thematic Objectives (TOs)									
TO 8	TO 9							TO 10	others
	IP 1	IP 2	IP 3	IP 4	IP 5	IP 6	no specific IP		
		✓							
		✓ ✓							
✓									
		✓							
	✓								
	✓		✓						
✓		✓				✓		✓	
	✓			✓				✓	
●	✓	✓ ✓	✓	✓				✓	
✓	✓			✓				●	
	●	✓							
●							●	●	
✓									
		✓							
●							●	●	

✓ Explicit mention to Roma/Roma communities (whether exclusively or as part of larger target groups/geographical areas, whether including specific lines of intervention targeting Roma/Roma communities or not).

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