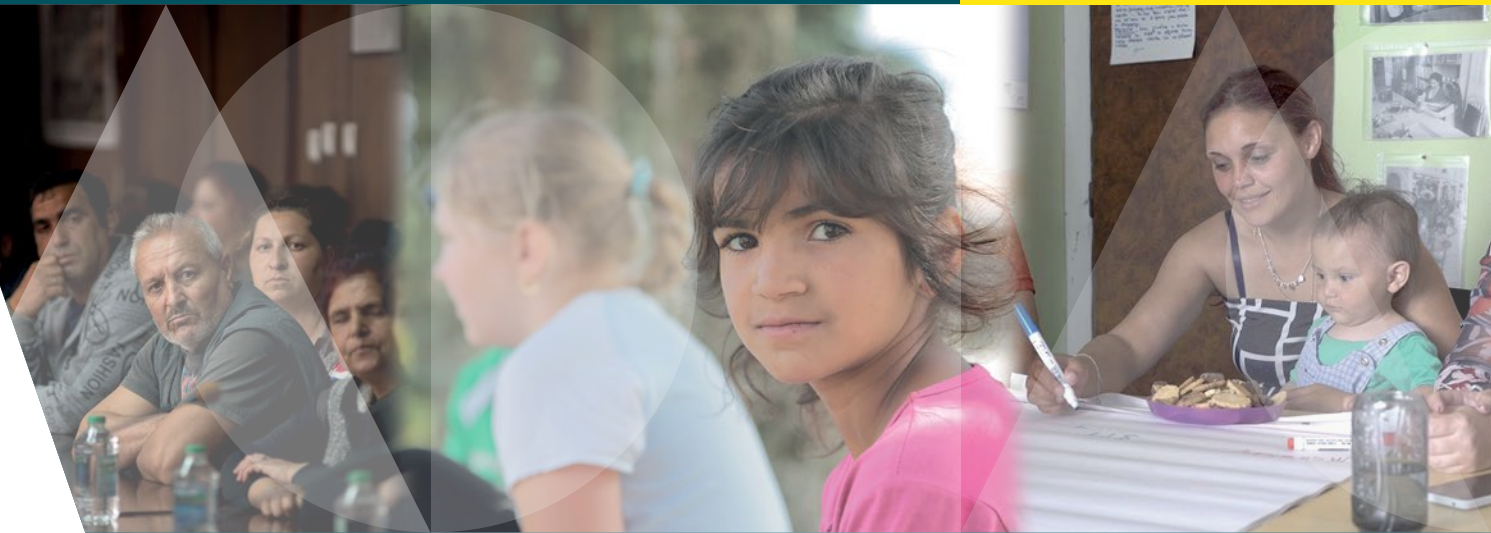


EQUALITY



Working with Roma: Participation and empowerment of local communities



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Working with Roma: Participation and empowerment of local communities

Foreword

There is no shortage of policy texts calling for strengthening Roma inclusion and respect for their fundamental rights. But local realities largely remain dismaying. How do we overcome that disconnect?

This report presents the main insights gained during the European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights' project on local engagement for Roma inclusion, which explores how to best involve Roma in integration efforts at the local level. Bringing together local authorities and residents, especially Roma, it investigated what aspects work, which ones do not, and why this is the case.

FRA's research took place in 21 localities across 11 EU Member States. Each of these participated in small-scale interventions in a wide range of thematic areas, such as education, employment, healthcare and housing, as well as non-discrimination, political participation, cultural awareness raising and community development.

The localities involved diverse local contexts, needs and challenges; used differing approaches; and enjoyed varying levels and forms of success. But the experiences in all of them underscored that money and other resources need to be better used to bring actual improvements in the lives of Roma across the EU.

Some clear lessons emerged. Making participation a central element of projects is vital and helps empower communities – as long as participation is meaningful and systematic. Understanding local realities, including sometimes delicate community relations, is also crucial. But so is making sure that local efforts take into consideration, and fit into, the broader policy context. Flexibility regarding timelines and how funds are spent can reap important dividends in the long run. No project will work without mutual trust – which is impossible without clear communication.

These lessons provide an opportunity: to overcome the problems highlighted in the European Commission's mid-term evaluation of the EU Framework for national Roma integration strategies, and to make the most of the post-2020 EU Framework for Roma integration.

Most importantly, improving the design, implementation and monitoring of integration efforts at local level will benefit the all too many individuals still living on the margins of society – Roma and otherwise. We encourage policymakers to embrace that opportunity.

Michael O'Flaherty

Director

Contents

FOREWORD	3
KEY FINDINGS AND FRA OPINIONS	7
INTRODUCTION	11
1 PARTICIPATION	15
Conditions for (Roma) participation in local social inclusion actions	15
Challenges to meaningful participation	17
Applying participatory action research techniques	18
Link between PAR techniques and community relations	19
2 BUILDING TRUST	21
Key promoters as trust builders and drivers of participation	21
Proxy participation: the role of 'local leaders'	23
Trust-building requires time	24
Tangible benefits: an important incentive for participation and trust building	24
Mistrust of intermediaries	26
3 COMMUNICATION	29
Risk management: communicating and managing expectations	29
Reaching out to and communicating with the community	31
Communication with individuals	31
Plain speaking – avoiding jargon	32
Transparency in communication and co-decision making to foster trust	33
Empowerment through self-awareness	35
4 COMMUNITY RELATIONS	37
Relations within the Roma communities	37
Grasping all sides of the story: understanding neighbours' differing perspectives	39
Role and engagement of local authorities	40
Power relations	43
5 IMPLICATIONS FOR DESIGNING AND FUNDING SOCIAL INCLUSION ACTIONS	45
Access to funding	45
Projects need to be integrated into wider Roma integration policies	47
Time frame of projects	47
Need for flexibility in project design and implementation	48
Embedding participatory approaches in project design	50
CONCLUSIONS	53
ANNEX I: PROJECT METHODOLOGY AND TECHNICAL NOTES	55
ANNEX II: OVERVIEW OF THEMATIC FOCUS BY LOCALITY	64
ANNEX III: OVERVIEW OF LOCALITY NEEDS AND INTERVENTIONS	66
ANNEX IV: CONTRACTORS AND FIELDWORK EXPERTS	75
BIBLIOGRAPHY	77

Figures and tables

Figure 1: Localities covered by FRA's local engagement for Roma inclusion project	13
Figure 2: Participatory Action Research (PAR) cycles in Aghia Varvara	18
Figure 3: Roma Work Group of the city of Jyväskylä (Finland)	41
Figure 4: The project's intervention logic	56
Figure 5: The research process	57
Table 1: Examples of PAR light and PAR deep techniques	58
Table 2: Overview of localities	59
Table 3: Overview of locality characteristics	61
Table 4: Overview of interventions by primary thematic focus	64



Key findings and FRA opinions

Promoting meaningful participation of Roma in activities that affect them

Participation is one of the European Union's "10 Common Basic Principles on Roma Inclusion." Participation of Roma in the design of local level projects, strategies and inclusion efforts that aim to support them is key to successfully implementing them. Modalities of participation can vary in terms of depth and intensity. For example, public authorities may invite residents to take part in organised meetings; or they may be encouraged to contribute in decision making processes; or they may be asked to participate in implementing actions. The research shows that creating a space for people to work together in meaningful ways, learning to make compromises and find common solutions can be difficult. Facilitating this therefore requires experience and skill.

Getting local people interested and involved in initiatives can be challenging. They want to know how planned actions can resolve their most pressing needs, and participation in projects may at times seem detached from their daily problems. Agreeing on specific goals and providing concrete results that yield tangible benefits for people, however small, is a way to ensure participation in projects and other inclusion activities. Addressing basic needs, such as adequate housing, access to healthcare, education, and employment can also be important before more abstract forms of community development action is taken. The research finds that to sustain engagement of local people, it is essential to build trust with Roma communities and local authorities, overcome patterns of ritualistic participation, resolve conflict or increasing tensions, and realise that participation cannot be imposed by force.

This is relevant because many municipalities and local communities are frustrated after years of limited or no progress in Roma inclusion. Few municipalities are willing or able to invest heavily in change, and communities are not always motivated to become actively involved. The research shows that focusing on successful past projects and willingness and openness of some local authorities to act on Roma inclusion are necessary preconditions for planning new activities and genuine engagement of local actors. The research also demonstrates that developing and applying methods for implementation that reflect local specificities, as well as the particular needs of individuals involved, can lead to more successful project outcomes. Accommodating the

specific needs of Roma women – and thus giving them a genuine role in the projects – is particularly important. In other words, there is no one-size-fits-all solution to Roma inclusion.

Many local community members had never been asked what they need and many had been accustomed to being passive recipients of social inclusion projects or programmes, on the receiving end as beneficiaries of initiatives designed and implemented by actors outside the community. They had mostly understood participation to be about attending a meeting, a training, a workshop, or being temporarily hired to carry out activities they had not developed themselves. Due to limited experience with more meaningful forms of participation, there is a need to support and build the capacity of community members to claim their right to actively engage in projects concerning them and to feel empowered to express their needs. This means that national or local authorities must also involve experts who can communicate effectively with local communities.

All this points to the main lesson learned: participation must be meaningful. This means addressing issues that resonate with people's needs and giving them a real role in defining and accomplishing the goals set out in social inclusion strategies, policies and projects. Local authorities and other actors implementing social inclusion projects or measures should ensure that they select and implement forms of participation that avoid a superficial tokenist approach. Meaningful and deep participation also requires time to allow participants to develop their communication and other skills.

FRA opinion 1

Member States, and in particular local authorities, need to create the conditions conducive for facilitating meaningful participation of Roma in local inclusion efforts. Local authorities and any actors implementing social inclusion projects or measures should clearly present the aims and objectives, specific outputs and outcomes, as well as the boundary conditions of any social inclusion actions in order to motivate and keep local residents engaged. They should also make special efforts to ensure that participation does not become a superficial, tokenistic exercise. This means engaging with local communities and supporting them to take part in decision-making to reflect their perspectives regarding local integration strategies, action plans and projects.

FRA opinion 2

Local authorities and project implementers should consider gender aspects to determine potential obstacles to women's participation in activities and prepare strategies to overcome them. Timing and locations of meetings and activities should take into consideration the specific circumstances and the

needs of their communities. Attention should also be paid to how these considerations may affect, in particular, Roma women or children, who may have more limited availability or other concerns that can have an impact on their ability to participate.

Building trust among communities to ensure success

Trust between stakeholders – or lack thereof – affects the implementation of inclusion projects. Building on existing relationships is an important element of engaging with local communities. Where communities trust individuals implementing projects, they are more likely to participate in project activities and share openly their thoughts and opinions; as a result, interventions end up leading to more concrete and meaningful results. The research shows that where local interventions fail to meet the expectations of addressing people's needs, this eventually leads to a loss of trust and ultimately to a lack of motivation to continue participating.

Building trust and identifying local 'key promoters' who have established relationships of trust with the communities is a difficult and complex process. In localities where experts enter communities as 'outsiders' unknown to the local communities, it is necessary to invest a considerable amount of time and energy into establishing and building up relationships of trust. In localities where inclusion efforts are implemented by already trusted figures and build on existing networks and relationships of trust, they are able to organise activities on shorter timelines and engage with people in deeper, more participatory ways. Delivering tangible changes that respond to the needs of the community and working on shared concerns of both Roma and non-Roma in a transparent manner is also essential for trust and participation to be sustainable.

FRA opinion 3

Member States should mobilise national resources and EU funding to support local authorities and civil society organisations working with Roma in providing concrete responses to local level needs. They should support participatory approaches when engaging with Roma and integrate participation mechanisms into local policy and strategy development. In so doing, they should build on existing networks and relationships of trust; pay attention to the role of key promoters and the time it takes to build relationships of trust with communities; and involve also non-Roma in issues of shared concern.

Communicating in transparent and accessible ways to manage expectations

Appropriate and tailored communication regarding local policies, strategies and projects is vital to managing local peoples' expectations and ensuring successful implementation of integration efforts. How the aims, methods and limitations of a project are communicated to local communities is in many cases as important as that information itself. Sometimes information that one side assumes to be clear and simple can be understood or interpreted differently by other actors. Such (mis)understandings are often attributed to how key information is communicated, both within and towards the communities.

The dynamics within localities largely determine the ways and means of communicating and the messages conveyed. Properly understanding these dynamics is crucial considering that many local community members often have limited experience and capacity to participate. Project implementers are responsible for ensuring that all information regarding communities' participation in projects, inclusion activities or in local policies and strategies is communicated to participants in an accessible and understandable way. This may entail using accessible language in the mother tongue of participants, sometimes in simple jargon-free language, and repeated often enough to ensure that everyone has an equal and full understanding of what is planned and what activities take place, how, and under which conditions. The research further reveals that communication at a personal level is more effective than indirect group-based communication channels such as newsletters, broadcasts and leaflets when it comes to gaining and maintaining the motivation of the local communities to participate in inclusion efforts.

Measures to increase transparency in communication with respect to how actions are implemented and how decisions are taken is essential, in order to appropriately manage expectations and ensure that everyone has a shared understanding. Roles and responsibilities, and their limitations, should be carefully communicated, so as to avoid the loss of trust following a possible failure to meet unrealistically high hopes in regards to project or policy outcomes.



FRA opinion 4

Local authorities and project implementers should take steps to ensure that information regarding projects and local policies is transparent and clearly communicated in an accessible and understandable way. Communication methods should be carefully chosen and executed to appropriately manage expectations and support local people's participation in projects and other inclusion efforts.

Paying attention to community relations to better design inclusion efforts

The research reveals a number of interesting trends with regard to community relations that can affect not only the choice of participation and engagement techniques, but also on the outcomes and success of local interventions. Relationships within communities among Roma, tensions between Roma and non-Roma citizens, power relations between communities and local authorities, the role and willingness of local authorities, and a number of other local-level dynamics between different actors all affect project outcomes, and the way local interventions and strategies are designed and implemented. The research experience also sheds light on the importance of key promoters, mediators and civil society organisations in facilitating local interventions.

'Key promoters' within the local communities, often due to their role or personality, have an important influence on the implementation and success of local activities. They can be key to motivating individuals to participate, to build trust in project implementers and project activities, and to boost the credibility of projects. When projects take into account such key promoters they can help to reach out to other community members and get them involved in local activities and projects.

There are many ways of empowering people. The research tries to empower the local communities involved by first asking them what their needs are, informing them of their rights and how to claim them, and supporting them to become agents of change. When people are given an opportunity to express their views in dialogue with local authorities, it gives them a better chance to fight for their rights and has the potential to lead to greater emancipation. Local authorities learn how to listen to their citizens' needs and views, and local residents learn how to develop more realistic expectations. More importantly, the research shows that empowering people can help break the stereotypical image of Roma in perpetual victimhood and encourage them to stand as equals in claiming their share of social development and progress. In particular, focused efforts to empower Roma women and youth were in several localities an important element of the project's success.

FRA opinion 5

Member States and local authorities should support project implementers to map the local-level context, community dynamics and power relationships before projects are designed and implemented. Local authorities should identify 'key promoters' and get them on board to reach out to communities and boost the credibility of local-level inclusion efforts. Local authorities should also create the space for everyone's voice to be heard, and in particular to take focused efforts to empower Roma women and youth.

Integrating participatory approaches and flexibility into funding mechanisms and project design

The research provides valuable insights on how local inclusion actions can be better designed, implemented and monitored, as well as flagging what issues and aspects should be avoided. There are a number of lessons learned that can improve the use of resources, whether they come from local budgets, national funding allocations, the European Structural and Investment Funds (ESIF), or other sources of financing. Participatory approaches are particularly important when implementing projects in localities where earlier initiatives failed to reach the people at local level and support Roma, and where communities have continually been met with disappointment in the past. The research finds that promoting small-scale, community-based activities, including promoting awareness raising of rights and cultural interaction, targeting interventions both towards Roma and non-Roma citizens, as well as adopting more flexible frameworks and longer timelines, could lead to meaningful results and change the situation of Roma at the local level. Developing local-level interventions not in isolation, but within the wider context of social inclusion projects for Roma and communities in marginalised or vulnerable situations is also important to ensure longer-term, sustainable impact. Projects are more successful when they build on existing relationships of trust and solidarity that boost and reinforce the social fabric within and between communities.

The research also highlights that projects and integration actions implemented at the community level are not always given sufficiently long timeframes to accommodate processes of participation, trust building, training and capacity building of participants, monitoring and evaluation, or flexibility in terms of adjusting the focus or direction of activities. Providing more time and flexibility for participatory approaches and cyclical processes that allow for the possibility to revise and re-adjust projects can also help to achieve longer-term, meaningful results.

Current funding mechanisms also tend to focus on measurable outputs and outcomes to determine the success of projects and uphold accountability towards donors and financing mechanisms. Yet not all meaningful outcomes are measurable in quantitative indicators. Capturing the important impact of participatory processes and more subtle effects such as empowerment and changes in the social fabric of communities is difficult, and generally absent from project evaluations and assessments. The value of implementing participatory approaches risks being lost if not reflected in the formal project reporting mechanisms.

FRA opinion 6

Member States and local authorities should ensure a link between local-level projects and broader national, regional and local integration policies and strategies, to ensure longer-term, sustainable impact.

Member States and local authorities should ensure that projects and integration actions implemented at the community level allow for sufficiently long time-frames to accommodate for processes of participation, trust building, training and capacity building of participants, monitoring and evaluation. They should also support participatory projects that blend quantitative reporting of results with a more holistic understanding of engagement and participation. A shift from focus on expected outcomes and outputs to the process of implementation can lead to more meaningful change in the lives of people whom such projects and activities are intended to help.



Introduction

This report is about understanding and exploring the process of Roma inclusion at the local level. The “Local Engagement for Roma Inclusion” research identifies key drivers of and barriers to Roma inclusion efforts at the local level – in other words, understanding what works for Roma inclusion, what does not work, and why.

Despite efforts at the national, European and international level to improve the social and economic integration of Roma in the European Union (EU), many still face deep poverty, profound social exclusion, and discrimination. This often means limited access to quality education, jobs and services, low income levels, sub-standard housing conditions, poor health and lower life expectancy. These problems also present often insurmountable barriers to exercising their fundamental rights guaranteed in the EU Charter of Fundamental Rights.

In recent years, the EU has increasingly engaged in efforts to improve the social inclusion of Roma and combat discrimination and anti-Gypsyism. An important turning point came in April 2011: the European Commission – determined to achieve more tangible change – introduced the [EU Framework for National Roma Integration Strategies up to 2020](#)¹. It calls on Member States to develop specific national Roma integration strategies or integrated sets of policy measures to improve Roma inclusion in education, employment, housing and health. In December 2013, the Council issued a Recommendation on effective Roma integration measures in the Member States, calling for support of “active citizenship of Roma by promoting their social, economic, political and cultural participation in society, including at the local level”.² The Commission assesses progress in implementing the Recommendation annually.³ In parallel, the Commission intensifies engagement with stakeholders through annual meetings of the European Platform for Roma Inclusion and the European Roma Summits, with high level political participation. The last Roma Summit in 2014 focused, in particular, on how to ensure that EU funds reach local and regional authorities, reflecting concerns that national strategies are not adequately implemented on the ground. Several legal instruments are also in place at the European level to secure the right to non-discrimination. The Racial Equality Directive prohibits discrimination on the basis of ethnic background, and the Council Framework Decision on

combating racism and xenophobia aims to counter racist stereotypes, hate speech and hate crime.

Concerns about implementation and tangible outcomes of Roma inclusion efforts had already been voiced in December 2010, by the Commission’s Roma Task Force; it found that “Member States do not yet properly use EU money for the purpose of an effective social and economic integration of Roma”. The Task Force identified weaknesses in the absence of specific strategies and measures, lack of know-how and administrative capacity to absorb EU funds. They also found “a lack of involvement by civil society and Roma communities themselves”.⁴ Six years later, in 2016, the European Court of Auditors issued a special report examining the use of EU funds for Roma inclusion projects over the period 2007-2013. The report observes that project selection procedures generally failed to incentivise wide involvement of Roma although “the involvement of all relevant stakeholders, either in the preparation of the project or as project partners, contributes significantly to the success and sustainability of projects”.⁵

The need to improve the delivery and outcomes of Roma inclusion at local level prompted the Council of Europe (CoE) to launch ROMACT in 2013. A joint initiative with the European Commission, it aims “to assist mayors and municipal authorities in working together with local Roma communities to develop policies and public services that are inclusive of all, including Roma.”⁶ In parallel, the CoE intensified its ROMED programme, active since 2011, aiming to improve the quality and effectiveness of school, health, employment and community mediators, with a view to supporting better communication and co-operation between Roma and public institutions (school, health-care providers, employment offices, local authorities etc.).⁷ Since 2013, the CoE expanded the programme to promote democratic governance and Roma community participation through mediation, aiming to enhance the participation of members of the Roma communities in the decision-making processes at local level.⁸ ‘Going local’ was also the focus of a joint Commission and World Bank Handbook for improving the living conditions of Roma at the local level, which was published in January 2015.⁹ The handbook suggests an integrated approach to Roma inclusion, looking at education, employment, housing,

1 European Commission (2011), *An EU Framework for National Roma Integration Strategies up to 2020*, COM(2011) 173 final, Brussels, 5 April 2011.

2 Council of the European Union (2013), Council Recommendation 378/1 of 9 December 2013 on effective Roma integration measures in the Member States, OJ 2013 C 378, p. 378/6.

3 For further details, see the Commission’s webpage on [Roma integration in EU countries](#).

4 European Commission (2010), *Roma Integration: First Findings of Roma Task Force and Report on Social Inclusion*, Brussels, 21 December 2010.

5 European Court of Auditors (2016), *EU policy initiatives and financial support for Roma integration: significant progress made over the last decade, but additional efforts needed on the ground*, *Special Report*, p. 52.

6 For further details, see the [ROMACT project](#) website.

7 For further details, see the [ROMED1 project](#) website.

8 For further details, see the [ROMED2 project](#) website.

9 World Bank, European Commission (2015), *Handbook for improving the living conditions of Roma at the local level*, p.27.

and health together as affecting one another. In particular, it emphasises the importance of community participation and highlights steps in formulating interventions – first identifying needs and barriers, prioritising needs and interventions, and mitigating risks to achieve sustainable results. It also calls for engaging local communities through community engagement, consultations and citizen feedback mechanisms to improve the effectiveness of interventions.

This research was developed in the context of Roma inclusion, but its logic and methodology are relevant beyond issues affecting Roma communities. Participatory approaches to local-level actions and strategy development have the potential to improve policies and projects that deal with other groups in vulnerable situations – such as persons with disabilities, children, homeless persons, migrants and refugees – as well as the general population. These practices can also help to empower citizens to claim their rights and improve their own local situation.

Why is this research needed?

The EU Fundamental Rights Agency participated in the Commission's Roma Task Force in 2010 and 2011, and provided survey-based statistical evidence¹⁰ on the situation of Roma. This evidence, however, could not explain why EU investment in Roma inclusion did not produce the expected outcomes. The agency therefore developed a multi-annual research project to identify and understand the operation of barriers to and drivers of successful investment in Roma inclusion. The project 'Local Engagement for Roma Inclusion' was implemented in 21 localities across 11 EU Member States, exploring how Principle No. 10 of the EU's Common Basic Principles on Roma Inclusion concerning the active participation of Roma is respected and implemented in practice.¹¹ The research is also needed because a deeper understanding of the drivers of and barriers to integration efforts at the local level is essential in order to develop and monitor the implementation of measures responding to national and European-level policy frameworks, including the EU Framework for national Roma integration strategies, the Racial Equality Directive and EU anti-discrimination legislation.

The research sheds light on what works and what does not work for Roma inclusion in communities,

neighbourhoods and within municipalities. It does so by focusing on mechanisms and methods of participation, bringing together local authorities, Roma and non-Roma community members, and civil society organisations working at local level in a process of engagement, mutual decision making, and cooperating to design, implement and monitor local integration actions. In this way, it seeks to understand key elements of local level success – or failure – and to feed these findings into national and European-level policy frameworks and strategies trying to achieve positive change in the situation of many Roma across Europe. These key elements can be grouped into broad patterns that emerged from the research: participation of local actors in inclusion processes, the importance of building trust and good communication, and taking into account aspects of community relations, and other factors that should be considered in social inclusion projects. These elements are elaborated in the chapters of this report, as are lessons learned from the research that can have implications for how funds are spent to support Roma inclusion at the local level. The research is therefore about exploring how participatory approaches can be applied at the local level, but also about what lessons can be learned through participatory methods.

The research is also relevant in light of the EU Member States' efforts to contribute to fulfilling the United Nations 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). In particular, the plan of action recognises that eradicating poverty is one of the greatest global challenges, and to do so implies 'leaving no one behind'. The Sustainable Development Goals cannot be achieved if substantive segments of the European population are systematically left behind due to historical disadvantage, multi-dimensional poverty, and structural discrimination or prejudice that Roma experience on a daily basis. One key objective of the research – understanding how the involvement of local communities in Roma integration activities can be improved in order to better address the drivers behind the exclusion of Roma – contributes exactly to the objective of leaving no one behind. Importantly, the project is in essence putting into practice SDG 17 on partnerships and cooperation through its practical implementation of participation and engagement methods, as a methodology for achieving all the SDGs and engaging with local communities to fulfil their rights. Moreover, the participatory approach tested helps achieve exactly that in specific areas of possible interventions, most of which correspond to the key SDGs related to ending poverty and reducing inequalities, but also to specific SDGs on education, empowerment, living conditions, and housing. In the context of the local level, SDG 11 on sustainable cities and SDG 16 on strong institutions – including local authorities – are also important.

¹⁰ FRA (2009), *EU-MIDIS - Data in focus: the Roma*, Luxembourg, Publications Office of the European Union (Publications Office).

¹¹ Council of the European Union, Council Conclusions on Inclusion of the Roma. 2947th Employment, Social Policy, Health and Consumer Affairs Council meeting, Luxembourg, 8 June 2009, [Common Basic Principles on Roma Inclusion – as discussed at the 1st meeting of the integrated European platform for Roma inclusion](#), April 2009.



The project facilitates local level engagement of Roma, improving their capacity to participate as more equal partners with local administrations and civil society. Its methodology entails the design, planning, implementation and monitoring of a diverse range of small scale interventions in various areas ranging from education to employment, healthcare, housing, culture, etc. These interventions were, from a research perspective, an essential tool to generate data and information. From the perspective of the Roma communities involved, these interventions were primarily an important outcome of the project, because the communities could themselves define priorities and implement actions with the support of fieldwork experts and local authorities. The development of the project's activities also contributed to drawing attention to the challenges Roma, Sinti and other Roma and Traveller groups face daily, thus raising awareness on discrimination and anti-Gypsyism. The evidence produced can assist the EU and its Member States to improve their policy responses, including the design of funding instruments, in order to facilitate the meaningful participation of Roma in actions aimed at improving their social inclusion.

The key objectives of the research were therefore to:

- identify and understand what works and what does not work for Roma inclusion measures at the local level, and the reasons why;
- generate evidence on the entire process of local-level Roma integration efforts, including how priorities are defined by communities and local authorities, how local stakeholders reach consensus, how exactly people participate and what roles they take;
- facilitate the participation of communities in inclusion efforts and explore how different methods of participation can be implemented;
- establish whether increased participation of community members in local level efforts can lead to better integration outcomes and/or better designed local level initiatives.

Figure 1: Localities covered by FRA's local engagement for Roma inclusion project



Note: In total, FRA's LERI project covered 21 localities across 11 EU Member States.

Source: FRA, 2015

How was the research carried out?

The project was implemented on the ground over three years, from the beginning of 2014 through the end of 2016, in 21 localities across 11 EU Member States: Pavlikeni and Stara Zagora in Bulgaria; Brno and Sokolov in the Czech Republic; Helsinki and Jyväskylä in Finland; Lille and Strasbourg in France; Aghia Varvara and Megara in Greece; Besence and Mátraverebély in Hungary; Bologna and Mantua in Italy; Aiud and Cluj-Napoca in Romania; Rakytník and Hrabušice in Slovakia; Córdoba and Madrid in Spain; and Medway in the United Kingdom. The localities represent a mix of rural and urban areas and diverse groups of Roma populations.

In consultation with experts, Participatory Action Research (PAR) was selected as the appropriate methodology for this research project. This is a qualitative research method that engages participants in social action to achieve change and to record and analyse the process and its outcomes. PAR is applied through a cyclical process of observation, reflection, planning, action, and then observing again and re-adjusting the plan. As such, a number of techniques are applied to engage participants in addressing a social problem, jointly coming up with a research plan, implementing it and then revising and replanning as necessary. While PAR is a research method, the focus on action implies that the research is centred around concrete activities designed to create change, and the focus on participation facilitates a gradual breakdown of the barriers between the researcher and the 'research subjects'. The method also applies a variety of different techniques, from interviews and focus groups, to community visioning and using peers as co-researchers. (For details on the project methodology, see [Annex I](#).)

The type of evidence produced through this research is unique, yet challenging. First, it is difficult to gain the trust of participants who are often in marginalised or vulnerable situations, and difficult to gain the trust of local authorities. Second, the time required for this type of research is much longer than what is usually allotted for data collection and projects carried out by EU bodies. Third, budgetary rules allow little flexibility in dealing with changes in local conditions affecting the research.

Action research is conducted through and around specific actions, in the case of this research the so-called 'local interventions'. These are seen as a unique opportunity for engaging Roma to participate in designing and implementing activities that they, rather than the authorities, consider important. The lessons learned in this regard are important for EU-funded large-scale

inclusion projects: properly resourced and supported small-scale activities based on participatory approaches can be a catalyst for developing meaningful participation processes that can be replicated in other EU-funded actions and projects. The participatory approach of the project can also be adopted to avoid 'token participation' where Roma do not have much of a say in designing or implementing projects and remain passive beneficiaries.

Furthermore, small-scale activities such as those implemented under the research allow for learning through trial and error, but without punishment or negative repercussions in case an activity did not turn out as initially foreseen or encountered insurmountable challenges. The nature of participatory action research allows for adjustments to be made along the way, so that activities could match with the local realities, even if outcomes deviate from original plans. The focus on the process rather than expected outputs created new potential for positive and meaningful change. As a local field expert from Finland said, "PAR is an interesting methodology because when things do not turn out as expected, it is a wonderful opportunity to find out why".

"We just missed something, but in the future, we can correct it, we can do it much better. This attempt was a necessary wrong, it had to happen. Now we know how to do it in a much more effective and useful way."

(Hungary, Roma NGO volunteer)

Although the overall design of the research was common to all localities, the way in which the research was implemented differs significantly from locality to locality. As there is no 'one size fits all' solution to local inclusion, taking into account locality specificities and adapting the PAR methods to each location was crucial. The research results are therefore always contextual, yet it is still possible to draw certain conclusions and identify patterns emerging across localities and countries. Importantly, the experience gained by local stakeholders – including Roma, local authorities and civil society organisations – through participatory processes and co-design of local interventions has the potential for longer-term, sustainable impact. The methods of cooperation and engagement can be sustained and applied in future project and policy development.

The analysis presented in this report was done through content analysis of research deliverables submitted by the project's fieldwork experts, including case study reports, local project plans, field notes, annexes, other documentation materials. Content analysis was then carried out in a structured approach, analysing the data through the use of ATLAS.ti as qualitative analysis software. The findings presented in this report are the results of this analysis.



1

Participation



Participation is a concept often referred to, but rarely explored in detail in terms of how to facilitate and achieve it. This report looks at participation not as a general principle, nor at political participation, but participation in the context of social inclusion projects and policies. This means the active involvement of individuals – in this case Roma – in actions aimed at improving their socio-economic situation and access to equal rights. Participation in this context implies taking on an active role and being given the ability to influence decision making and the way in which activities are implemented, rather than participating in more passive roles. The research therefore explores the entire process of participation, and how to facilitate, maintain and sustain participation. In other words, the dynamics and mechanisms behind the notion of ‘nothing about us without us’, a phrase originating within the disability movement.

The notion of community participation to achieve consensus in local development actions is not a new idea. It is a core element of the ‘Agenda 21’ action plan articulated during the 1992 Earth Summit (the UN Conference on Environment and Development) in Rio de Janeiro,¹² which was translated into local initiatives, known as ‘Local Agenda 21’. Community participation is at the core of the rights-based approach to development put forward in the 1993 Vienna Declaration and Programme of Action, which links democracy, human rights, sustainability and development.

The active participation of the Roma community is the 10th Common Basic Principle on Roma Inclusion. The European Commission noted in its midterm review of the EU Framework for national Roma integration strategies, published in 2017, that Member States should promote the transparent and inclusive involvement

of Roma, empowering, in particular, Roma young people and women.

The active participation of local communities and people in the design and implementation of social inclusion activities needs to be based on specific, carefully planned procedures. Simply promoting the idea of participation is not enough. Participation has mostly been understood as information sharing or consultation. Rarely have discussions on participation of Roma gone in depth into how active participation of Roma can be achieved, what different forms of participation exist, whether varying degrees of participation can affect outcomes differently, and how to foster meaningful participation of Roma that will not end up being tokenistic. This research found that participation can take many forms that reflect varying depths of involvement depending on the conditions fostering participation. However, participants need to have an active rather than a passive role for participation to be meaningful.

Conditions for (Roma) participation in local social inclusion actions

The research finds that one of the first and defining factors for sustained and meaningful participation of Roma communities is the support and cooperation of the local authority. Local authorities were very actively engaged in the project implementation in about half of the localities (11 of 21) (Brno, Aghia Varvara, Megara, Helsinki, Jyväskylä, Strasbourg, Mátraverebély, Bologna, Aiud, Hrabušice, Rakytín), taking part in local activities and project implementation. Local authorities in seven localities were less actively involved (Pavlikeni, Stara Zagora, Sokolov, Córdoba, Mantua, Cluj-Napoca, Medway), giving political support to the

¹² United Nations Conference on Environment & Development
Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, 3 to 14 June 1992, [Agenda 21](#).

project, yet not participating in project meetings and activities throughout the implementation. In Lille and Besençe, where the local intervention took place in various municipalities/villages, the level of engagement of the local authority varied depending on the specific location. In Madrid, while at one point during the project the local authority withdrew its support for the local intervention in reaction to conflict between local stakeholders, this changed gradually over time and the municipality ended up providing institutional, political and communication support, as well as additional funds for the local intervention. The most common form of support provided by local authorities was in the form of political backing, agreeing to having the project take place in the municipality, which was strong in 13 localities. Seven local authorities provided, in addition, access to resources, and five provided financial, technical and informational or communication support. The local authorities in Megara, Bologna and Rakytník provided additional human resources to facilitate the implementation of interventions.

A second important factor for sustained participation concerns the relationship between the local authority and Roma communities. Where there was a history of engagement between the local authority and Roma – for example, in Aghia Varvara and in Rakytník – Roma community representatives could engage those willing to participate in a relatively short time frame. The local authorities that had already invested in developing cooperation with Roma and had developed links to the community were also more familiar with their main concerns. As such, a basic level of trust and familiarity was established to facilitate further participation. Moreover, the local authorities must establish the boundary conditions for participation, including the limitations of what the local authority can offer or take action on, and where they might be constrained by legislative requirements (such as legislation with respect to social housing or trade licenses, etc.) or limited in terms of their mandate or resources. Once this is clarified, the local authority can also participate in projects mitigating the risk of unrealistic expectations from local citizens as to what results or outcomes can be expected, and can preserve a cooperative relationship with the local community.

A third critical element concerns the time and space to participate. This refers to how space for participation is available to people living in marginalised and impoverished conditions, including many Roma, for volunteering in participatory processes, as they have a number of obligations and activities to ensure their daily survival. This means that they may not be able to afford spending time on project activities unless they are designed in a way that facilitates their participation – either at times and intervals accommodating their schedules, or in settings that are conducive to them. For example, having

meetings take place in people's homes – as was done in Lille; designing meetings and activities taking into account family relations – as was done in Bologna; or organising activities at different times of the day so that different groups can participate, while not interfering with their other income-generating activities, as was done in several localities. Sufficient time for participation must also be taken into account with respect to timelines of projects and other inclusion activities. For deeper and more meaningful participation, certain techniques can require a longer period of time for implementation, which is not always foreseen by projects.

Finally, a fourth critical element concerns the equal participation of men and women. This remains a challenge, not only for Roma. It proved difficult to overcome, as cultural norms and traditional attitudes about gender roles prevail within most of the communities that participated in the research. In many cases, Roma men tended to participate in the research project activities, and additional efforts were needed to reach out specifically to Roma women. Sometimes specific methodologies were developed to include Roma women, who generally tended to have more household and childcare responsibilities and could not always participate in meetings or other activities. When methodologies were adapted, women were more able to participate.

An insightful yet challenging way to overcome such obstacles is to develop parallel activities that engage the entire family (children, parents and possibly grandparents), as was done in Pavlikeni, in Sokolov and in Medway. For example, organising training courses for parents taking place at the same time as parallel activities designed for children, so that participation was not restricted by childcare responsibilities.

One of the local interventions in Bologna was to support the training and capacity building of young Roma through internships. However, it turned out that the model envisaged was not suitable for all participants. As one Italian fieldwork expert describes, "Due to family commitments, the two young Sinti women who had shown interest in these internships would have needed much more flexible working schedules. This example speaks volumes of an attitude widespread within the Sinti community: especially (though not exclusively) for the women, family is always a top priority, and work is invariably perceived as an extra duty, to which people are willing to commit only if it does not force them to overlook the needs of their family members. This must be taken into account when designing programmes targeting the Sinti community, especially if aiming at women's involvement: lack of flexibility in the time schedule is very likely to result in people's choice to withdraw from a programme."



Challenges to meaningful participation

"Nobody can change the fact that when people need to struggle to survive, they do not think of going to their theatre workshop."

(France, social worker)

Even when these conditions are met and an adequate number of local community members are willing to participate in projects and local inclusion actions, there may still be obstacles impeding them from doing so in a sustained manner. This could lead Roma communities in disadvantaged situations of poverty and material deprivation to accept a passive role of 'beneficiaries' rather than 'partners'. This is partly a reflection of past experiences that many communities had with a more philanthropic model of provision of services, which translated social inclusion into the provision of benefits. As many had been used to receiving benefits rather than being invited to actively participate, one of the major challenges to participation was to overcome this more 'passive participation'.

Another frequently observed limitation, for example, was the lack of necessary educational or technical skills, as well as formal qualifications to participate in the design or to carry out some of the project activities. For instance, in Sokolov, participants realised that parents and grandparents did not have the right educational background to support young children in their schooling and with homework. As a member of the community in the Czech Republic expressed it, "Now, when my daughter is in the sixth grade, I am at the end of my abilities. I do not know how to support her when doing her homework". To address this, participants suggested the development of a summer school for Roma adults who are interested in completing their education.



Sokolov – a young mother participates in one of the family-based learning activities developed as part of the local intervention (©FRA)

"The Roma families [the project local team] worked with were not used to being consulted. In the case of some of the families, I really believe it was the first time that they had ever been asked what they want in their life. [...] This passivity is borne out of the severity of their living conditions over so many years, together with their reliance on social workers to bring about change."

(France, AFEJI social worker)

In many localities, the lack of experience in participation resulted in community members having to learn how to take part in such participatory methods, and to gradually become more empowered to voice their opinions and provide input into the project activities.

The prevailing understanding of citizens' participation in local politics and community life also affects their willingness to participate in projects. In Megara, for example, most Roma had difficulties to "understand the participatory approach of [the project] and its aim to co-design, plan and monitor particular actions", the Greece fieldwork expert explains. This was the case also in Rakytnik, Slovakia, where a semi 'top-down' approach had to be adopted instead of the envisaged bottom-up methodology: the mayor and local council proposed ideas for interventions, which were then validated by the Roma community. The intervention in Lille experienced comparable challenges, as being consulted was new and unusual for the Roma families involved in the project. In the words of one AFEJI social worker from France, "In the case of some of the families, I really believe it was the first time that they had ever been asked what they want in their life".



Lille – social workers from AFEJI participate in a meeting of the expression groups outside the homes of the Roma families. The expression groups allowed for Roma to vocalise their concerns, needs, and ideas (© FRA)

Another challenge concerns the design of projects. The research shows that when inclusion projects focus primarily on achieving pre-defined targets, all efforts are invested in achieving them rather than ensuring participation and engagement of the beneficiaries. This was

the case in many localities in their past experience with projects. When the research began, with the intention to more actively engage locals, one of the main challenges was trying to overcome the pattern of passive participation they had been used to. This was seen, for example, in Helsinki, where the research used open discussions, focus groups, interviews, journals and photography techniques to support Roma citizens coming from other EU Member States to undertake collaborative inquiry. These PAR techniques were chosen to improve their capacity and skills to steer the project. However, it became clear that more time than initially allocated by the project would be necessary, as well as more financial resources for mentoring and coaching, in particular youth – which could be secured, for example, through small easy-to-access grants (Finland).

In some cases, the attitudes of some local Roma were influenced by past experiences with EU-funded projects. For example, during an introductory meeting with FRA on the research project, a local Roma activist asked, “Tell me what you need; ‘soft’ or ‘hard’ measures?” The person was well aware of the activities eligible for EU funding and was ready to accommodate the ‘donors’ expectations, disregarding what was personally believed to be the real needs of the community.

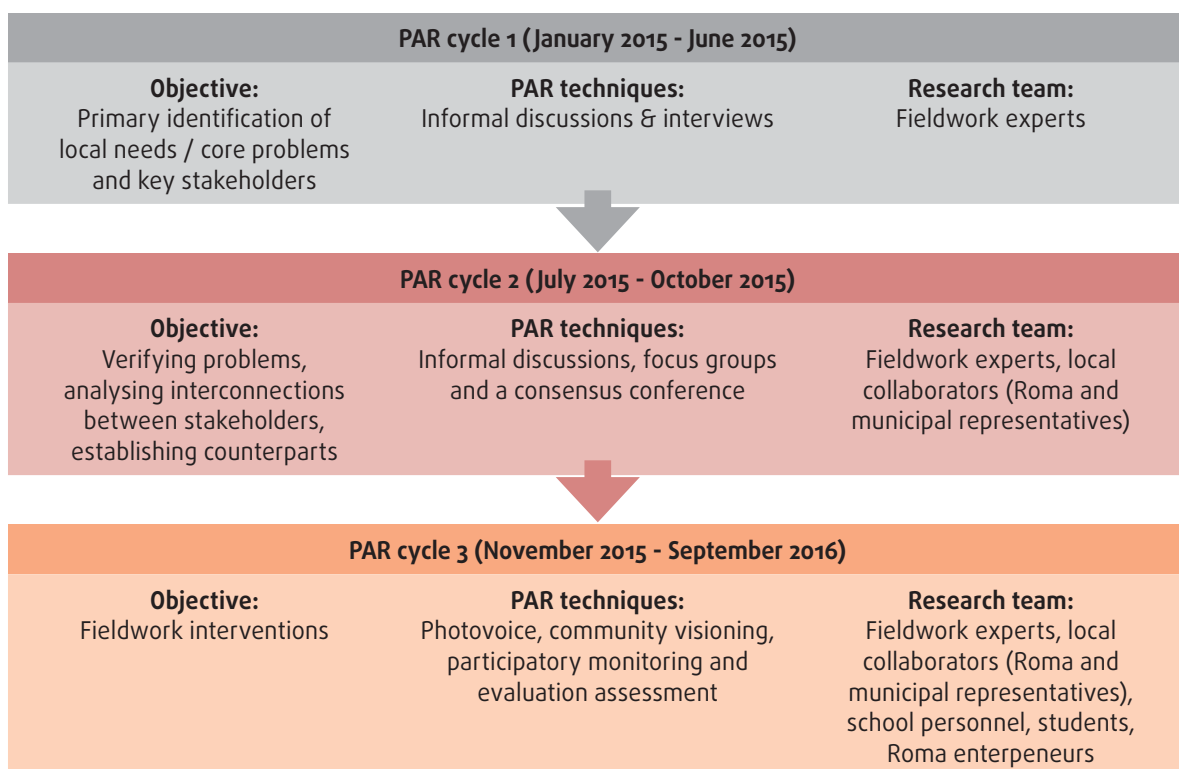
Applying participatory action research techniques

“For the first time a large number of Sinti families has been involved with the local government to talk about their own condition. Until now we were used to meeting the local authorities or the public officials only for specific issues, mainly regarding the management of the camp. In the project we talked about our overall condition.”

(Italy, representative of Sucar Drom)

PAR methodology ideally entails multiple cycles of planning, implementing, reflecting and readjusting. In some cases under the research, the progressive cycles developed so as to promote increasing levels of engagement and participation. This allowed participants to gradually build up their capacity to engage meaningfully and the fieldwork experts to document deeper knowledge of the issues, as well as the relations between the different stakeholders. However, this cyclical process of action research also entailed the risk of delays. The intervention in Aghia Varvara serves as an illustrative example of how this was applied in practice, as the PAR methodology was constructed progressively as each new activity and every next step was dependent on the results of the previous activities. The first

Figure 2: Participatory Action Research (PAR) cycles in Aghia Varvara



Source: FRA, 2018

cycle involved lighter participatory techniques such as informal discussions and interviews, which helped to build trust between the local stakeholders. In the second PAR cycle, deeper participation methods were then possible to apply, which included focus groups and a consensus conference (a citizens panel to inform policymaking through public engagement). This second cycle validated the results of the first cycle and explored potential solutions. The third cycle used even deeper participatory techniques to strengthen and assess critically the implementation of interventions.

A similar approach to implementation of deeper participatory techniques was also taken, for example, in Sokolov. As participants became progressively used to the project, the project team started to test new PAR methods, such as scenario workshops, where the participants were introduced to a fictive education-related situation or story (Czech Republic). The research finds that applying PAR methods in this way can also help to overcome 'forced' or 'ritualistic' or 'tokenistic' forms of participation, which have been common ways of engaging with Roma in the past. These forms of participation are more symbolic than meaningful; Roma are asked to participate but their opinions and contributions are not really taken into account, or where Roma are invited to a meeting for the sake of having Roma present and giving the appearance of inclusion. 'Forced' participation – where people do not participate on their own interest or initiative but are encouraged to take part in meetings anyway – may also lead to larger attendances in meetings and conferences. However, it risks involving people who have limited willingness and motivation to proactively engage with the project activities.

A key challenge in this regard is how to motivate people to participate in inclusion projects in more meaningful ways and to foster an environment where the local community feels co-ownership over the design and implementation of project activities. For example, in Stara Zagora, a consensus conference was held to bring together the local authorities with Roma families from a segregated neighbourhood where demolitions of illegally built homes were taking place. Some of the families had already been displaced. Despite a number of different perspectives, varying opinions and personal situations, the participatory technique involved everyone in a way which helped to facilitate cooperation and get everyone's ownership over finding a mutually agreeable solution.



Stara Zagora – local Roma discuss the pending demolitions of homes in the neighbourhood of Lozenetz at a consensus conference in April 2016 (© FRA)

“The PAR approach is very open. In my view any vulnerable group could use it.”

(Hungary, fieldwork expert)

Link between PAR techniques and community relations

“If we succeed with four families now, there are many more to come. And snowball, by snowball, we are going to have a snowperson at the end.”

(Bulgaria, Roma NGO leader (male))

One of the core processes of the research is to build communication and interaction between the local authorities, civil society organisations and Roma communities through the application of participatory techniques, to make participation in integration activities more meaningful. Different PAR techniques were selected for each of the 21 localities. These were often chosen in cooperation with and in consideration of the existing relations between the local authorities and the Roma community. The techniques for engagement were chosen with boosting the local political strategy for Roma inclusion and facilitating pro-Roma policies in mind, by providing the local authorities with more information regarding the Roma community's needs and perspectives. Yet in other cases, techniques were chosen to facilitate better relations between Roma and non-Roma, for example, to help share knowledge and appreciation of local traditions and culture.

In Mantua, for example, different participatory techniques were chosen in the participatory needs assessment phase “in order to facilitate the emergence and

development of different points of view of the various stakeholders, and facilitate the development of common ground for common actions”, a member of the project team explained. In other localities, such as Hrabušice and Rakytník in Slovakia and Besence and Mátraverebély in Hungary, lighter PAR techniques were chosen in the initial phases of the research. These aimed to activate the communities through games or other small activities that would get people into the spirit of communicating and taking part in the project. This paved the way for more elaborate forms of participation later on.



2

Building trust



The research reinforces the importance of trust as a precondition for participation in local level integration efforts. This is essential because trust helps to ensure meaningful participation in inclusion activities, building people's motivation and commitment to take part. The absence or presence of trust between local authorities and citizens, as well as between fieldwork experts and local community members, may have an impact on the implementation of project activities. Gaining the trust of people in marginalised and vulnerable situations, such as many Roma, and fostering a climate of trust and cooperation with local authorities and other stakeholders proved challenging. The research design in many localities included trust-building measures at the start of the project to develop positive relationships between the Roma community and the fieldwork experts, as well as to improve relations with local authorities, public services and others. Overall, the local teams invested significant time and effort to build up trust with and between the community and other stakeholders. In some cases, mistrust generated by failed past attempts to engage with the local Roma community or simply the absence of past similar experience meant that more time and effort had to be invested in these activities.

Key promoters as trust builders and drivers of participation

"If we convince some enterprising and successful young men with kids...to join us and to serve as an example, many more will join us after. The personal success of someone is a key for convincing the rest of the people."

(Bulgaria, CEO local Roma NGO WWB (male))

An interesting pattern emerged across the research localities during the implementation regarding the role of 'key promoters' within the local communities, who – either due to their role or due to their personality – had an important influence on the implementation and success of local activities. They were key to motivating individuals to participate, as well as helping to build trust in the local team and in the project activities themselves. In nearly all cases, building on existing relationships was an important element of engaging with key promoters.

Finding someone – a 'key promoter' – to promote the project locally proved to be particularly useful. This was possible in 12 localities (Pavlikeni, Stara Zagora, Aghia Varvara, Megara, Córdoba, Madrid, Helsinki, Jyväskylä, Mátraverebély, Bologna, Mantua, Aiud), where stakeholders promoting the project activities and interventions – for example, local authority representatives (in 9 localities), Roma or pro-Roma activists (in 8 localities) or Roma mediators (in 3 localities) – were respected by the community. They played an important role by facilitating communication between stakeholders and were widely seen as trusted persons.

“We have a national Roma inclusion strategy, but mechanisms are not moving on in themselves. We need people, and groups of people, such as the Local Action Group that we have created through [the project], which are taking the courage to put pressure on local authorities to take seriously the obligations that they have towards ethnic Roma persons and disadvantaged communities from their localities.”

(Romania, co-researcher (male))

For example, in Megara, when the project started, most Roma who felt marginalised and discriminated had “serious reservations regarding the project and did not trust its fieldwork experts”, as a participant from Greece said. Their negative attitudes towards the project can also be traced back to past experience in social inclusion projects, when Roma and other actors working on Roma inclusion were not actively involved by municipal authorities. To overcome this, the local team engaged in more intensive trust-building activities involving Roma, public authorities and other local actors with the support of the President of the Union of Greek Roma Mediators, himself Roma and a Romanes speaker. He was instrumental in changing the attitude of the local Roma community from “‘what can the project do for us’ to ‘how can we make the project deal with our needs’” (Greece). The considerable time invested in this process “succeeded in making Roma think creatively, ‘outside the box’”, as the President of the Union of Greek Roma Mediators explained.

In a number of localities, informal Roma leaders and community mediators were essential to the research implementation, serving as key contact points for the local teams. Such was the case, for example, in Pavlikeni, where ‘community moderators’ had been helpful in past community development initiatives. In Medway, a dynamic mediator who was known and trusted by the local community helped to facilitate a number of activities, and was an essential co-researcher to have on the local team. Mediators often helped facilitate discussions and interaction where it was difficult for ‘outsiders’ to access the community and often acted as catalysts for engagement, being trusted persons who could communicate with both the community and outsiders. Similarly, community leaders played different roles in each locality, depending on their abilities, aspirations and ambitions. At times they were seen by the local communities as gateways to resources, in other cases informal leaders would speak on behalf of the community or dictate who could participate in the project activities. In Mantua, the local Roma association, *Sucar Drom*, was the key promoter since it has the unusual composition of including a direct representative of nearly every Sinti family in the municipality. It should be noted that the extent to which such leaders fully represent the whole community can vary, and the two roles of mediator and informal leader are often very different.



Medway – a local mediator was essential in helping to mobilise a number of Roma parents to take part in continuing education activities to improve their English language and job market skills (participants shown with certificates at the end of the course)(©FRA)

In other localities the liaison between the local authorities and the Roma community was played by various institutions, organisations and service providers who had been working with a number of different stakeholders. This was the case, for example, in the Lille metropolitan area, where the organisation AFEJL had been delegated by the local authorities to manage the ‘inclusion villages’ where the Roma families participating in the research were living. The social workers from AFEJL made regular visits to the families and had become known and trusted figures within the community. Working with them was crucial to facilitating the research activities. Similarly, in Sokolov, the NGO *People in Need* was the key promoter for the research, having a long history of working with the community and implementing a number of past projects. In Stara Zagora, the local association *World Without Borders* played a key role in the research implementation by facilitating most of the local intervention activities. They possessed a high level of mutual trust between the local community and the fieldwork expert, and built the research on a number of past activities. Similarly, in Strasbourg, local NGOs that had been actively involved in activities with the Roma community served as facilitators and multipliers, integrating research activities into their ongoing work, while also maintaining a positive and close relationship with the local authorities. As one fieldwork expert from France put it, “it is necessary to identify and rely on the right persons to carry out a good project. It may take time to find out who these ‘right persons’ are, but it is worth taking this time and exploring the networks”.

In a few instances, the fieldwork experts themselves also served as key promoters and drivers of participation within the communities. For example, in Jyväskylä, the fieldwork expert – although not Roma herself – was seen to be almost part of the community. The Roma families trusted her, and through the participatory interviews and processes of engagement in the research she gave the Roma youth the feeling that she had really heard them. In Bologna, the fieldwork expert critically reflected on the research process, coming to the conclusion that non-institutional, external figures are



sometimes needed in order to endorse and promote participatory approaches, which do not come naturally to local authorities. Similarly, the key promoter in Hrabušice was the fieldwork expert, who was proactive in mobilising the community members to participate in the research activities, facilitating a number of both community activation activities and PAR techniques – of course with support of the mayor, who had also been actively involved with the Roma community before the project.



Jyväskylä – the local fieldwork expert in discussion with a Finnish Roma woman (©FRA)

Interestingly, that the EU Agency for Fundamental Rights was perceived as a European-level institution also had some important influence and impact on a political level, which in some cases was crucial to the success of the research. For example, in Madrid, where there had been a number of tensions between local organisations and authorities, FRA's backing of the research was seen by the fieldwork expert to be crucial. As she explains, "the support of the FRA has been essential: it has granted resources, of legitimacy and political support to a 'minority's' project within the Roma minority itself, furthering thus the level and the status of the debate. It has been done with enough time and a great deal of flexibility. The presence of a major human rights institution, detached from the local debates, can support more complex projects, 'break the deadlock' of certain situations, and endow the local politics with greater ambitions." While international institutions may not be able to engage deeply in local level projects, there can be a role to play in terms of providing methodological guidance, support and monitoring to local stakeholders, in particular in terms of promoting and encouraging local authorities to adopt participatory approaches.

Proxy participation: the role of 'local leaders'

In most of the localities participating in the research, the Roma communities rely on their 'local leaders' who usually represent the community's interests towards authorities concerning participation in projects or other integration activities. In a number of localities it appeared that the people tended to trust the stakeholders engaged in the project to the extent the local leader trusted them. For example, in Aghia Varvara, a local Roma leader empowered and motivated local Roma business people to engage in the project's entrepreneurship initiative. However, in some cases, such influential individuals also tended to represent the community in participatory processes, for example, when they would speak out 'on behalf of participants' who were asked to share their own ideas and thoughts. This was the case, for example, in Besence, where local community members trusted the Roma mayor, who often spoke on behalf of the interests of the community. Despite this, it was difficult to motivate participants to be more open. These examples illustrate the at times complex relationship between local Roma leaders and the community, and the role they may play in both supporting or discouraging the participation of the community. The research reveals different experiences with local Roma leaders, which cannot necessarily be generalised to all Roma communities. In some cases the local leaders may have had influence within their own families, but not in the wider local Roma community. Yet the variety of situations encountered in the research suggests that local leaders can take on many different roles, with both positive and negative consequences for the community and varying degrees of representativeness.

This behaviour brings to the forefront certain important considerations in relation to the role of community representatives (whether elected by the community or those who more informally speak on behalf of the community, i.e. 'self-appointed' representatives). One main concern relates to the topic of representation, and more specifically as to whether – given the diversity of the Roma community – a single person (be that a formal representative, an informal leader or an intermediary) speaking on behalf of the whole community is actually able to represent a plethora of interests in that diverse Roma community.

Trust-building requires time

The investment of sufficient time is necessary for building up trust between Roma communities and other local level stakeholders. Trust-building, however, cannot be rushed or achieved in a matter of weeks or months. This was reflected in the time required by the project to transition from simple forms of engagement, such as attending meetings, to more complex modes of participation, such as joining a working group. Over time, through constant contact between the Roma communities and the local teams, levels of trust and engagement in the project grew. In certain localities, this in turn improved the capacity of members of the local community to contribute in the design and implementation of interventions, as it improved their relevant participation skills.

For example, in Aghia Varvara, fieldwork experts visited the locality frequently, investing time with the Roma representatives, local authority staff and other stakeholders. This fostered an atmosphere of familiarity with the Roma representatives, who were trusted by the local community, and allowed the fieldwork experts to engage many local Roma through a snowball technique inviting participants who had been suggested by other participants. In this way, it became possible for the local team to engage in more complex forms of involvement and participation, such as photovoice techniques, community visioning and participatory monitoring and evaluation.¹³

This need for time to build trust was also the case in Strasbourg, where the local team picked up children every morning from a municipality administered site to participate in a theatre intervention. This was time-consuming for the fieldwork experts, but allowed families to develop regular and personal contact with the local team and build up their confidence in the project.



Strasbourg – children living in the municipal-run site participate in photovoice and theatre workshops as part of the local interventions (©FRA)

The research itself had a limited time frame for implementation, beginning with preparatory activities in 2014, and the implementation of the participatory needs assessments and local interventions throughout 2015 and 2016. More time would have been beneficial to develop additional activities and initiate deeper levels of participation. This could have had the potential for more sustainable project outcomes. This is reflected in the varying levels and degrees of participation and the types of activities that could feasibly be carried out under the frame of the research project in each locality.

Tangible benefits: an important incentive for participation and trust building

People will not participate in social inclusion activities ‘by default’. In particular, the research shows that, in many cases, people needed to understand how they would benefit from investing their valuable time. Their participation in the project needed to lead to concrete, tangible outcomes that benefited individuals involved and the local community, and that could be achieved within a reasonable time frame. Having tangible benefits, in particular in the short run, not only encouraged and facilitated participation by getting people involved, but also proved to be essential in terms of gaining their trust and contributing to the project’s sustainability.

This was the case in Aiud, where in the context of the failure of the ‘Second Chance’ schooling programme to ensure the registration of children, “for local co-researchers, organising another meeting ‘just to consult people’ made no sense given that no concrete activity was going to be implemented”, the Romanian fieldwork expert reflected. The reason for this was that



¹³ PAR techniques are further explained in Annex I.

co-researchers were reluctant to leave members of the local community with the false impression that they stand to gain tangible benefits from participation while there was no consistent activity planned.

However, the local intervention in several localities provided certain tangible benefits that led to small, immediate and concrete improvements in the lives of the participating members. Further details on the specific interventions can be found in [Annex III](#) and in the locality studies published on the project webpage.

For example, in Lille, Roma families initially did not understand the benefits of participating in meetings and activities. In response, social workers from the civil society organisation AFEJI, part of the local team, invited them to use the meetings to formulate requests concerning specific needs to the local authority, such as the construction of fences or other facilities within the housing area where Roma families were living.

In Aghia Varvara, local Roma entrepreneurs noted in a focus group session that past training they had been involved in did not meet their expectations. As a participant from Greece said, “We have participated in many [training sessions] and it was a waste of time. A lot of theory without any practical information”. As a result, they requested and helped design a training course that was more practical and hands-on.

In Pavlikeni, Roma engaged in a campaign on health-care that included a pilot experiment to provide medical insurance for three years to 10 Roma individuals who had previously been excluded from the system, to test whether supporting access to health insurance would increase take-up. The intervention was co-funded by the project. In the same locality, Roma parents participated in a community campaign to convince other parents of children aged five or six to enrol them in kindergarten, after the municipality agreed to pay part

of the fees, and subsequently developed an advocacy campaign to abolish pre-school fees. The intervention showed how immediate, tangible outcomes could build trust and capacity of the local people.



Cluj-Napoca – the local intervention focused on finding solutions to severe housing deprivation challenges, in particular among families living in an informal settlement near the garbage dump (©FRA)

In Cluj-Napoca, the project assisted local Roma to submit social housing applications and advocate for changing two criteria that excluded families in vulnerable situations, such as Roma, from accessing social housing. In Stara Zagora, Roma who had been displaced after demolitions of homes in a Roma neighbourhood were invited to participate in one of the local interventions to design the floorplans for a modular house, which could be used for rebuilding new homes adhering to all legal obligations, in line with building code standards and approved by the authorities. This plan was designed to take into account peoples’ preferences and to also accommodate cultural and traditional norms. It would also save costs and the difficulty of going through administrative approvals, to facilitate faster and compliant building procedures. The municipality got involved in the intervention and agreed to allocate certain areas of land to allow them to build their homes legally.



Stara Zagora – local residents from the Lozenetz neighbourhood discuss their ideal housing and floorplan of a model house at a focus group discussion in February 2016 (©FRA)



While initially reluctant to trust any housing relocation scheme, this – as a local Roma said – was different: “if it [the house] looks like that, I am going immediately to move in”. While the houses were not actually built during the project period, a mutually agreed approach to the planning and other preparations were achieved through the project’s participatory process.



Stara Zagora – informally built houses in the Lozenetz neighbourhood before the demolitions (©FRA)



Stara Zagora – visualisation of a model modular semi-detached house developed by an architectural team of the University of Architecture, Civil Engineering and Geodesy Sofia, presented at the consensus conference in April 2016 (©Architectural team of The University of Architecture, Civil Engineering and Geodesy, Sofia)

Mistrust of intermediaries

The issue of trust transcends the local stakeholders and has important implications for external actors involved in project management and implementation. Implementing a project such as ‘Local Engagement for Roma Inclusion’ in 21 localities across 11 EU Member States is a complex managerial and administrative endeavour, requiring multiple layers of coordination. Particularly where project implementation involves public procurement, additional actors such as consulting companies and other private sector companies may become involved – in addition to activists, thematic experts and local-level stakeholders working on the project at the local level. In the case of this research project, a consortium of two regional and one pan-European consulting companies was formed to centrally and regionally manage the research (see [Annex IV](#) on

contracting modality). The multi-layered coordination structure, the complex information-flow channels and the reporting mechanisms through several layers of project management had inevitable implications on the project, in particular in terms of budget distribution, how information was communicated, and how this affected building trust among local-level stakeholders towards the project at the local level. In other words, there was a risk associated with transparency of the project and local engagement, including possible misunderstanding of how transnational projects can be run.

One important impact of this structure is how the people in the communities (i.e. the so-called “beneficiaries”) understood the project and to what extent they trust an EU-funded initiative and those responsible for implementing it. As one of the local fieldwork experts in the Czech Republic described, “It is not possible to conduct PAR research through a profit-oriented international consortium. The business model exerts too much effort towards cutting the local budget at the expense of staff and participants. Once such a huge project is launched the donor will want to have it finished, and if the consulting company does not have, at the core of their mission, delivery of the best quality services, the whole project will disintegrate”.

For the local teams (Roma and non-Roma alike), and even more so for a number of the fieldwork experts, it was difficult to understand and establish trust in the project coordination structure. In particular, the multiple layers of communication had implications for how the research objectives, methodology, approach, and the practical conditions for implementing the project (such as the budget, timeline and deliverable requirements) were understood. The result was a need for a longer process of engagement also involving more direct contact between FRA and the local level, in order to ensure that all project implementing partners, including the local teams, had the same information and understood the objectives in the same way. At times, misunderstandings and mistrust of the project management reflected frustration of local level actors towards past EU-funded projects. The resulting frustration appeared to underlie many Roma activists’ complaints about the so-called ‘Roma inclusion business’ (i.e. the industry of projects on Roma integration, largely financed by EU Structural and Investment Funds). A number of non-Roma engaged in the project also expressed frustration over past projects on Roma inclusion, and were wary that the research project would be another expensive and inefficient endeavour that would not bring tangible benefits or improvements to the situation of local Roma communities. The result of all this past experience, and the resulting climate under which the project entered, was a long-term erosion of trust on many sides, of Roma and non-Roma. The implication for the project was to

try to work against this negative experience and to build trust in the research process among local Roma communities, as well as local team members, Roma activists and even the fieldwork experts.

As the research began, it was important for a number of the local teams to have full transparency with regard to costs and payments within the project, not only in terms of the share of the project budget that was allocated to each specific locality, but also within the overall project management structure. This also reflected a mistrust and criticism towards project management coordinated by organisations distant from the local

level, and a general mistrust of EU-funded projects in the past, where resources intended to benefit Roma had not always reached the intended beneficiaries.

As such, a sentiment expressed regarding the research was that it was also important for all the participants involved in the project implementation to have a clear and transparent overview of the distribution of the project budget, in terms of the share of resources that would directly benefit the people in need at the local level and the resources allocated to experts (in some cases non-Roma) and project management.

3

Communication



Appropriate and tailored communication regarding local policies, strategies and projects is vital to managing citizens' expectations and ensuring successful implementation of local integration actions. This is important because investments in communities facing marginalisation and poverty have to be communicated carefully. How the aims, methods and limitations of a project are communicated to the local communities is in many cases as important as that information itself. Local teams addressed communication in a number of different ways that were heavily influenced by the dynamics within the localities making communication challenging during the research implementation.

Risk management: communicating and managing expectations

The research shows that risk management in the form of clearly communicating and managing expectations is a critical aspect of participatory processes. Communicating the objectives and purpose of the research was challenging and stakeholders had difficulties in understanding the difference of this project to other EU-funded activities. This naturally raised a number of expectations, which the local teams had to manage through careful communication methods.

The local intervention in Besence is an indicative example of the dynamics at play when it comes to the need to manage the local communities' expectations. More specifically, ethical considerations associated with the

proposed project-implementation plan and activities emerged during the needs-assessment phase. One concern was linked to the potential consequences of the successful engagement of the Roma community in local affairs, in particular regarding whether unrealistic expectations were being developed. As the mayor of Besence stated at the beginning of the project, if local people express their needs, somebody will have to answer them. This links to the fact that, even after the research project ended locally, the local leaders would still be in the localities with no guarantee of being able to meet all the expectations expressed in the long term. In some cases, the failure to do so resulted in frustration with the project. This can carry over into other inclusion projects, thus damaging relationships of trust and prospects of developing participatory projects in the long run. Such sentiments could, for example, be seen in the following comments, as expressed by a participant in Hungary after the intervention, "This was useless. We were just talking but there are no new jobs. Please, tell me, what is the benefit of this? When will we have a real job? It was just talking. Leave me alone!".

This example also highlights the importance of setting boundary conditions and defining roles within a project from the outset. Local authorities, in particular, are well-positioned to do this by explaining the limitations in order for their participation in a project to take place (e.g. legislative limitations or areas of action outside of a local authority's competence). They can also clarify issues such as whether it is realistic that a project would be able to create jobs, or if other more modest outcomes can be expected. Clearly communicating such objectives is important to managing expectations.



Besence – local residents on a study visit to learn more about how municipal-run social cooperatives can help provide employment opportunities (©FRA)

The research project had a short time frame and limited investment opportunities. Some fieldwork experts also felt that such a research project could not easily be communicated in a comprehensible way for the local people because they, as an expert from Hungary put it, “are not part of a scientific community”. The aims and possible results of the project had to be clearly communicated, while also involving extensive consultation with the mayors, especially in the case of Besence. The local team managed expectations via community discussions and documenting all the views expressed. This required the continuous presence of the fieldwork expert in the community throughout the project implementation period.

In many localities, the project activities started with the presentation of the relevant information in relation to the project’s meetings, decisions, events as well as milestones. Moreover, information regarding the allocation of the local fund was officially made public.

The local intervention in Cluj-Napoca encountered a similar dilemma regarding expectation management during the needs assessment phase. The local team “supported people in applying for social housing, while knowing that they might not be ‘eligible’ or might receive low scores in the selection process that would therefore not get them onto the list of social housing applicants”. This approach risked overpromising to the local community something which the project and the fieldwork experts could not necessarily deliver on, after creating expectations that people would receive social housing. This risked a loss of trust both in the local team and in the local authority and the social housing system. However, the reasoning behind the submission of the application files, even for members of the local community who were unlikely to be ‘successful’ in their application, was that by these means local authorities would become more aware of the extent of the housing exclusion problem in the locality. Doing so would reveal the extent to which the social housing system is

exclusionary. The local team used this action and intervention to support their argument for amending the criteria for social housing allotment in a way that better meets the needs of the socially marginalised groups. For people from marginalised communities such as the Roma in Cluj-Napoca, a political awareness-raising action of this nature was not necessarily understood at the outset of the intervention. Before submitting an application, a number of psychological and capacity barriers had to be overcome. Roma often did not have confidence in dealing with institutions, and needed to develop further knowledge on the social housing procedures and to be persuaded that the efforts to submit applications were worth the outcome, even in the case that they might not receive a flat. In this regard, activating the local community to collectively submit the applications was a concrete community development outcome in itself. It also served to empower them as they could express their rights for adequate housing and for changing the dominant practices that excluded them from accessing social housing. In this example constant communication between the project team and the local community was required. To do so, the local team applied various approaches, depending on the concerned stakeholders. In Cluj-Napoca, people living in the targeted disadvantaged areas were offered assistance in completing their social housing applications. The act of filling out the forms allowed the PAR team members to initiate discussions and gain valuable information regarding people’s housing history and experiences in a non-intrusive way – an important factor given the potential sensitivity of the matter. Participants and applicants were appropriately informed about the additional purpose of filling out the application files, namely ensuring that their voices and needs were heard by the local authorities, and were invited to join discussions on further steps to draw the awareness of the local authorities to the daily challenges they face (proposing amendments to the allotment criteria for social housing).

Moreover, maintaining regular contact with the applicants and providing updates on the status of their applications was a way to monitor the outcomes of this action. As this activity was particularly challenging for the local team, co-researchers from the Roma community and the whole local team supported them in tackling such situations, and the preliminary and final results of the selection process were communicated to the applicants in three locations by the group of national experts, academic co-researchers and community co-researchers.

Based on the feedback received from local co-researchers, there were no tensions around learning about these results in the Roma communities, thus reinforcing the conclusion that people considered demanding their



housing rights by the means of these applications an important act and a success in itself, at least as important as the concrete scores that they received for their applications. Since they had no other formal ways by which they could have communicated their housing conditions and needs to the public administration, they acknowledged that they should continue this process in the years to come.

Reaching out to and communicating with the community

One of the challenges revealed in several localities was that local communities were not always adequately aware of available inclusion project opportunities where they could get involved. Extra efforts to reach out to Roma communities and help them become aware of opportunities were needed, especially where local authorities have failed in the past to reach out and inform them. In some cases, local teams assisted the communities in identifying such opportunities and tried to support the procedural steps of project design and application.

During the intervention in Megara, for example, the local team realised that the vast majority of local Roma were not aware of the existence of educational programmes – such as the Operational Programme ‘Education and Lifelong Learning’, run by the Ministry of Culture, Education and Religious Affairs, which was running an open call for applications at that time (September 2015) and which also included a thematic area dedicated to Roma for learning Greek. Moreover, even those who knew about it stated that they did not know how the application procedures work, which led to the fieldwork experts supporting interested Roma applicants in filling in and submitting their applications, along with all requested accompanying documents.



Megara – the mayor visits the Roma neighbourhood during a meeting to explain the research process and mobilise people to participate; outreach activities were often carried out within the neighbourhood (©FRA)

In Besenice, the second round of a study trip had to be postponed on several occasions until it was finally cancelled, due to low interest among the local people who were only partly involved in the development process, and thus did not feel a sense of ownership over the activity. In addition, the limited planning regarding communication, timing and facilitation contributed to a lack of clarity and misunderstandings within the local community regarding their eligibility for participation. The response of a local inhabitant as to why they did not take part illustrates this: “I am not a public worker. I believed it was exclusively for them”. The method used to communicate this opportunity (a long presentation with complicated language and logic) additionally confused the local community participants. As a result, it became evident that effectively communicating and promoting a project or activity is crucial, as a lack of (accurate) knowledge surrounding it inevitably results in low levels of interest on the part of the local community, as well as lack of clarity and knowledge regarding how to apply assuming that such an interest does indeed exist.

Communication with individuals

“We use all kinds of channels, but what is working is personal communication. Calling the people, meeting them, talking to them. You cannot rely only on leaflets.”

(Czech Republic, local team member)

The project tested a number of means of communication. The results show that communication methods based on face-to-face personal outreach were particularly effective in gaining and maintaining the trust of the local community as well as mobilising their interest to participate. These approaches include personal communication that resonates with the addressee, the importance of using simple and accessible language that does not alienate participants, and understanding the



perspectives of all sides. Carefully selecting and adapting the communication method to the target group is of utmost importance to the success of projects.

Personal communication is often more effective than alternative approaches to communication through leaflets or radio broadcasts which, although having the capacity to reach out to larger audiences, were not as effective when it came to creating sufficient trust or clarity to help the local community develop a sense of ownership over projects. This was observed during the Stara Zagora intervention, and in particular during the information campaign which was conducted regarding the precarious local housing situation (350 households were at risk of eviction, yet none of the local stakeholders had information on which households were affected, nor did many families know about the legal framework for building a house). Given the high illiteracy rate and the low education level among the local Roma population, an information campaign based on posters and flyers would have been highly ineffective. As a result, the activities were based on direct face-to-face communication with the Roma households. In addition, it was agreed that the offices of the NGO World Without Borders (WWB) would also serve as an information point, complementing the face-to-face household visits. Moreover, to ensure that the communicated information was relevant and applicable to all households, WWB conducted individual consultations on specific cases, exemplified by the 'cadastral notice', which was issued to a group of affected households regarding the land plot on which their future legal house would potentially be located.

Similarly, in Aghia Varvara, face-to-face contact and communication with all participants and stakeholders at all stages of the research process was essential for the implementation of project interventions. Particularly during a training on entrepreneurship, it was discovered that the majority of the entrepreneurs were unaware of open funding opportunities that were announced only on the websites of ministries and other national authorities. This was also verified by the limited participation in the local consultation forum, which had been announced on the website of the municipality and at Municipal Hall. Although young Roma in Aghia Varvara used the internet more widely than older Roma, even this proved to be an ineffective means of communicating employment, education or entrepreneurship opportunities among the young.



Aghia Varvara – Roma youth from the municipality on their way to the municipality office to communicate their ideas for how to improve community relations between Roma and non-Roma (©FRA)

Furthermore, the intervention in Hrabušice demonstrated that local media were also unreliable means of communication. Even though the opportunity to receive a small grant was promoted and communicated via municipal broadcasting and a newsletter, there was a lack of interest on the part of the local community. People were neither offering any project ideas, nor were they asking questions about this opportunity. Despite several extensions of a deadline for project submission and offers of further assistance in project development, the locals did not submit any proposals.

Individual communication on its own is not enough to ensure the participation and trust of the local community. In Mantua, a questionnaire was sent to 52 stakeholders by the Municipal Section for Welfare, presenting the results of the needs assessment and asking for their support. Another three requests were sent by the fieldwork experts, always with an individual communication. However, despite these measures, the questionnaire still achieved a low response rate. Only nine completed questionnaires were returned, while seven people refused to participate. This could be indicative of the challenges in achieving a high level of engagement of local stakeholders in the process, especially in contexts where there is a lack of established trust.

Plain speaking – avoiding jargon

It proved to be very difficult for the project's fieldwork experts and other project implementers to use language that is accessible and clear. Many Roma therefore had difficulties understanding technical and managerial aspects of the project, but rarely asked for clarification. In some cases, they may even have been hesitant to admit that they did not understand what the local team presented or asked for during meetings. The local teams became more aware of this and made a very conscious effort to ensure that everyone had an equal and correct understanding of the project methodology, objectives and project activities.

Local partners such as Roma mediators and representatives who had more experience with projects often helped, for example, in Megara and Aghia Varvara. The Roma representatives in Megara, namely the Presidents of the Roma Association and of the Union of Greek Roma Mediators, further helped with the implementation of the research activities. They suggested keeping the questionnaire that was to be completed via door-to-door interviews as compact and with as simple language as possible. Three local Roma co-researchers helped to pilot the questionnaire and identify potential difficulties related to the language and understanding of the questions, the cohesion of the questionnaire, and the time needed to complete it. Some slight adjustments related to specific questions and the overall length followed and all Roma respondents (all male and heads of households) found the questionnaire easy to complete and not too long, indicating a pay-off from making sure that accessible language is used.



Rakytnik – local citizens come from both Hungarian- and Slovak-speaking backgrounds (©FRA)

Moreover, in some localities additional linguistic barriers had to be overcome as Roma communities did not speak the national language. For example, in Rakytnik, access to local communities was difficult at first, given that most people, particularly young people, spoke Hungarian rather than Slovak. To address the resulting challenge – whereby members of the local community were often not aware of existing integration initiatives – the local project team engaged a co-researcher from the region who spoke both Hungarian and Slovak and had experience with youth work to act as a linguistic and cultural interpreter.

In Helsinki, the presence of Roma predominantly from Romania and Bulgaria created a linguistically diverse setting, where few spoke Finnish and thus could not communicate as easily with local social workers. Interpreters and other volunteers who spoke Romanian and Bulgarian were recruited to help with translation. An additional challenge was that, even though for many Romanian and Bulgarian was their mother tongue, they

often were not able to write or read. The research found that such an inability to reach out to certain segments of the Roma population, which may often be the most excluded, risks reinforcing existing power asymmetries.



Helsinki – greeting card developed by Roma in cooperation with Finnish artist Jani Leinonen; cards were sold to generate income and raise awareness regarding the challenges Roma from Bulgaria and Romania face in Helsinki (©FRA)

Transparency in communication and co-decision making to foster trust

The research also confirms how important transparency and clear communication are for trust, and how any potential limitations or ethical considerations need to be communicated to relevant stakeholders (and of course the local community) to ensure that an environment of trust is maintained. The research identified the need for fieldwork experts and those facilitating participatory processes to openly communicate why and how certain participants are selected, and how decisions are made.

Some of these challenges became apparent during the intervention in Sokolov. Representatives of the Czech NGO People in Need identified a potential risk that members of the local community could grow frustrated and lose trust in the project and its experts if the

communication from the project team regarding how participants were selected for the project activities was not transparent. People in Need had a limited capacity to transport and accommodate the large number of Roma families in the neighbourhood. A potential perception of non-transparent or unfair selection of participants risked having a negative impact on the established relationships of trust within the community.

Faced with similar challenges regarding possible intransparent selection of participants for the interventions and the capacity limitations of the local NGO, only a small number of participants could take part in the project's intervention assigning municipal flats to homeless families. A selection process, even if it were conducted in a transparent and open way, could potentially lead to tensions within the community. The risk was that each possible criterion for selecting participants, even if done objectively based on an "assessment of deservingness," might be disputed. The solution to this challenge was found during a series of consultations between stakeholders. Through this process they agreed that given the inability to reach consensus over a set of selection criteria, a random selection of the participants for the intervention would be fairer. The local team communicated clearly that the social housing would be given through a lottery drawing, although there was no guarantee that entering one's name would result in getting a flat. Understanding these conditions, some Roma women commented that it was better to have a chance at social housing than no chance at all, as was their situation at the time. The experience gained from the intervention in Brno therefore suggests that, even in a context where an optimal solution cannot be achieved (in this case, deciding on criteria for selection of participants), a feasible integration project can still be carried out. This was due in large part to the transparent communication on the side of the local project team, combined with an invitation to various stakeholders to discuss possible remedies which can help reach consensus, both of which built trust in the project.



Brno – conditions for entering the 'Housing First' lottery were discussed between local residents and the local team in an open and transparent matter (©FRA)

Another transparency-related consideration worth taking into account during the local intervention was the need to openly communicate to the local community how the data or information collected would be used. This is particularly relevant to interventions which include a survey, census or a questionnaire – as was the case for example, in Megara, Stara Zagora, and other localities. This need became apparent during the pilot phase, as some local Roma raised concerns regarding the survey, and in particular relating to the fact that it was not clear to them how the collected data would subsequently be used by the regional and local authorities. Such a need stems from the fact that, as the Greek fieldwork expert explains, "many projects and organisations had conducted surveys and research in the Vlycho settlement without going back and presenting the findings or offering a general follow-up to the Roma people [whic] resulted in the Roma people being sceptical about the usefulness of the survey and unwilling to take part". As expressed by the President of the Local Roma Association in Megara, "I estimate that 10 % of the 4,000 Roma might decline to respond because they might be afraid of providing data and this is why a full understanding of the reasons for conducting the survey is needed". To this end and to avoid any misunderstandings and doubts as to how the results would be used, the project team in the Vlycho settlement planned a survey launch event.

Seeing that some members of the local community continued to express concerns and uncertainty as to how the data collected from the survey would be used, even after the survey launch event, the project team decided to share a hard copy of the revised questionnaire and explain it to the representative of the Roma Association. Doing so signified that, once a representative trusted by the local community reviewed the questionnaire and approved it by stating that its purposes and questions were understood, reservations regarding the local intervention were reduced.

Empowerment through self-awareness

“During [the project] we could learn how to approach City Hall and we could also learn about our rights [...] It was great seeing how we could act together in order to obtain and link different information about our housing situation, information from the cadastre office, from the Prefecture, from the railway company, from architects, from lawyers, and not least from our people actually experiencing the effects of living where they live, on the margins of the city and under insecure and inadequate conditions.”

(Romania, evaluation meeting participant (male))

In European societies, the words ‘Roma’ and ‘Gypsy’ have long been associated with negative assumptions. In many cases, the local interventions in this research project aimed to raise awareness of Roma culture and improve community relations, to overcome tensions between communities and in particular also discriminatory attitudes towards Roma resulting from anti-Gypsyism. This was done through targeted communication methods, including disseminating knowledge about Roma and Sinti communities, cultural events to celebrate and promote Roma culture, and also empowering local communities through getting

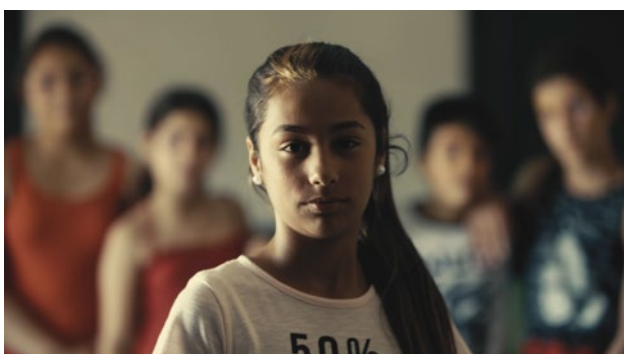
in touch with their own history and contribution to the local society. Awareness-raising activities also helped to promote integration and share information about people’s rights. Many examples of such activities to raise awareness about Roma are found in the research localities in Bulgaria, the Czech Republic, Greece, Hungary, Italy and Romania.

In Mantua, the local intervention focused on the creation of a cultural centre for the local Sinti community. It became an opportunity for the Sinti to become closer to the other citizens of Mantua, and to have a space where they could come together to share their culture, language and promote a more positive image of the Sinti vis-à-vis the local community. As one Sinti man explained, “for us this centre is extremely important, firstly because it is in the city. For our Sinti community, coming here with our kids, to study our language in a dedicated place that we did not have in the past, coming here in the city and leaving our camp is really important, for informing people about our culture and language. It allows us to show people who we are, and we are no longer forced to hide away all the time”.

In Mátraverebély, the local interventions also focused on promotion of the local Roma history through a calendar



Mantua – the local intervention supported the creation of a cultural centre for the local Sinti community, transforming a run-down building into a place where Sinti culture and language can be promoted (©FRA)



Cordoba – a local integration strategy was developed in a participatory way, including to help empower Roma women and youth (©FRA)



project, which highlighted the contributions of many of the Roma families to the development of the local community over the years. This jointly-designed and implemented activity was a source of pride for locals, both Roma and non-Roma.

Other local awareness raising interventions focused on providing more information and knowledge to the Roma communities, through educational activities and rights awareness programmes. For example, in Medway, the research processes brought together social workers and Roma families to help raise awareness on where they could turn to when they need support.

Particularly given the modest budgetary availability of the project's local funds, awareness raising activities proved to be meaningful actions that led to positive outcomes and important ways to address community relations. While the research could not always address larger-scale or more complex interventions such as overcoming unemployment or developing infrastructure, these small-scale but meaningful activities still managed to have an impact on local level Roma inclusion. Findings from the research further suggest that

formatting and presenting the projects as ethnically neutral (i.e. not exclusively targeting Roma) helps address the challenge of potential negative backlash from sections of the general population. For example, in Sokolov, activities were designed for children with very young parents and for children whose parents had not completed elementary education in high school, most of whom were Roma.

The use of cultural-sensitive communication can help mitigate the risk of reinforcing problematic power asymmetries. This can be done by taking into account the context and challenges affecting Roma communities, and to adjust project activities and processes in a way that understands and takes into consideration the living conditions as well as socio-economic barriers in the localities, as they may differ from the experiences of the project team or the wider population. The Megara intervention, for example, revealed that discrimination and perceptions that separate Roma people from the general population have the potential to lead to misunderstandings that Roma cannot participate in projects or activities that are open to all, but only in those specifically targeting Roma populations.



4

Community relations



The research reveals a number of trends with regard to community relations. This emerged as a key aspect in each of the localities, which affected not only the choice of participation and engagement techniques, but also the outcomes and success of local interventions. Relationships within communities, power relations between communities and local authorities, the role and willingness of local authorities, and a number of other local level dynamics between different actors all had effects on the project outcomes, and on the way local interventions and strategies were designed and implemented. The research experience also sheds light on the importance of mediators and civil society organisations in facilitating local interventions.

The complex dynamics within and between communities in a locality show how important it is to take into account locality specificities. Each locality is different, and unique, and local community dynamics are an extremely important condition for the success of any intervention, integration project and local strategy. In particular, where issues of discrimination and community level tensions exist, mapping of community relations becomes an even more important factor for such local level actions. These become important because many projects and policy interventions take place in the realities of segregation and conflict, and will have to deal with these local dynamics. They are, however, often overlooked and projects do not always foresee sufficient time to address such issues. Designing better local policies and projects means taking into account all the realities and complexities of community dynamics.

Relations within the Roma communities

“Doing things together has been a very empowering experience. I felt empowered when we were working together for one goal and sharing mutual support, I realised that we could actually change things.”

(Finland, co-researcher)

The research shows that relationships within Roma communities are often far more complex than is usually perceived. Local communities are not always homogeneous. Often many different groups of Roma live in a given locality, sometimes with entirely different characteristics, cultures, traditions, as well as challenges and needs. These different groups may not necessarily communicate or interact with one another, and in some cases there may even be tensions or conflict between groups. This was the case, for example, in several of the localities in Romania, Bulgaria, and France. For example, in Pavlikeni, there were already existing controversies among the various Roma groups at the start of the research, some of which even manifested between different clans within the same Roma group. The relations between Roma communities have to be carefully considered when developing project activities. Such community dynamics can pose challenges to participation and affect project implementation. While the selection of localities for the research was done so as to avoid operating in areas of high conflict, inner and intra-community tensions could not always be escaped.

In Hrabušice, initially, a consensus had been reached between members of the community and the local government regarding the construction of an outdoor amphitheatre, which could serve as a communal meeting place. All welcomed the idea and many promised their support, from helping to design the structure, assist in construction and in administrative support. However, "opinions started to differ when the location was discussed. Marginalised Roma living in the segregated neighbourhood on the outskirts of the village wanted it next to their houses. This idea was also supported by local government, which considered this option an opportunity to improve the disadvantaged area. However, the non-Roma and the well-off Roma living centrally in the village opposed this idea, preferring to locate it in the centre of the village. When it was eventually decided that the amphitheatre would be built in the segregated neighbourhood, the non-Roma and the well-off Roma lost interest and left the meeting", as the Slovak fieldwork expert explained. Ultimately a compromise was reached to build it in the middle, between the upper (the segregated) part of the Roma settlement and the lower part (where mostly better-off Roma live). In that way the meeting place could still be used by non-Roma and the integrated Roma and those from the segregated part would not feel uncomfortable as they might have if it had been in the centre of the village. This example not only highlights the tensions within the community, but also the realities of segregation and conflict.



Hrabušice – on the outskirts of the village, a neighbourhood with partly informally built homes in poor condition is inhabited mostly by Roma, while other Roma families live in more integrated parts of the village where housing conditions are better (©Sheena Keller)

The research also shows that tensions within the Roma community can spill over and cause delays in project implementation. For example, in Megara, the Roma

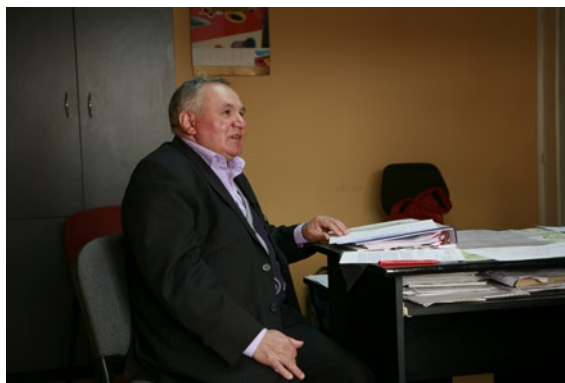
community had experienced inner-community tensions even before the start of the research, stemming from various conflicts between families, police raids that had taken place, and some alleged illegal activities, such as drug trading and robberies. As the fieldwork expert describes, these tensions "unsettle the community and cause significant difficulties not only in the cohesion and everyday lives of the Roma, but in its relations with the wider local community as well". These tensions were acknowledged as potential barriers to project implementation, but following discussions with the local Roma association and members of the community, there was a strong feeling that activities that focus on improving inner-community relations and relations with the wider neighbourhood would also help to overcome tensions and combat discrimination towards Roma. Tensions continued throughout the research implementation, and still ended up causing delays in some activities. At times, mediators were required to help facilitate communication between community members, as well as in facilitating interactions between the community, the fieldwork experts and the municipality.

Relations within the Roma communities can also manifest themselves at the political level, particularly through the various Roma and pro-Roma associations that represent Roma interests. The research in Madrid illustrates this, as a number of different Roma organisations and associations were active, some of which were set up and led by Roma, while others are managed by non-Roma but with significant contributions of Roma. The dynamics between these various organisations and associations came into play during the research implementation, and at one point a confrontation between a Roma women's association and the feminist Roma association from the local team escalated. This resulted in prolonged conflict, which worried the Equality Board of the City Council and caused them to withdraw their support for the Roma feminist Congress that was being organised under the local intervention. Another example in Hrabušice illustrates how tensions within the Roma community escalated, as a local NGO leader had been actively engaged in the research in the early phases of the project, but the relationship broke down between her and the local team as she ran against the mayor in municipal elections and stopped participating in project activities. As the fieldwork expert described, "the [project] team failed to find an effective replacement as community leader and co-researcher from the local community. This can be one of the reasons for a subsequent low level of participation of locals in project activities." Furthermore, when discussing the local project budget, "every attempt at discussing the situation and suggesting improvements for further meetings ended in tension."

Grasping all sides of the story: understanding neighbours' differing perspectives

The research confirms that the processes of engagement and cooperation between local level stakeholders is not always smooth. This reflects a major obstacle not only to participation of Roma, but more generally as an obstacle to social inclusion projects. Tensions between individuals or groups also extend outside of the Roma community and can quickly affect the implementation of project activities or impede the development and implementation of integration strategies or action plans. People tend to view their own situation and broader community level issues from their own perspective first. This makes it challenging to understand from which perspective other actors may be coming. These differing subjective perceptions were often highlighted in the way that local authorities, Roma community members and non-Roma neighbours discussed the same issue. Each participant saw the problem from their experience and prioritised different aspects of the issue depending on how they were affected. It was often difficult for them to gain full awareness of how the other participants viewed their reality. In many cases, this led to tensions in the research implementation between different local stakeholders.

The project in Auid brought such an example. In 2015 a mediation meeting was organised under the research to discuss the termination of several rental contracts of Roma tenants. The discussion was heated and one participant expressed his frustration over the fact that some Roma tenants had allegedly torn down parts of the metal fence in a building to sell them. For the Roma present at the meeting, the critical issue was the termination of the rental contracts and the assault on property was secondary. For the owner, however, it was the opposite. Ultimately the owner felt "under attack and walked out of the meeting" and the representatives of this private entity refused to attend future meetings to discuss the issues of rental contracts. The local team had to discuss alternative approaches to the local housing problems directly with the local administration, but an important opportunity for reaching mutual understanding was lost. This incident reveals how individuals' own attitudes can be reinforced when both sides are not willing or able to understand each other's perspectives or concerns.



Auid – a member of the Local Action Group created under the research discusses housing issues facing the Roma community with the local authorities (©FRA)

Such asymmetries in perception and the inability (or unwillingness) to understand the other side's concerns is an important driver and reinforcement of Roma exclusion. For example, in Stara Zagora, tensions were mounting over the past twenty years, as a growing number of Roma moved into neighbourhoods in the outskirts of the municipality and formed informal settlements through houses that were built without land titles, construction permits and registration. For the Roma, securing housing for their growing families was of primary concern (and compliance with the regulations was secondary). For the non-Roma, illegal squatting in a municipal park was the primary concern (and the poverty-related motives were secondary). Ultimately a number of anti-Roma demonstrations took place in recent years and the level of inter-ethnic tension grew into an open conflict. In 2011 plans began for evictions of these illegally built dwellings. By the time the research began, the first wave of evictions and demolitions had already taken place. Entering a climate of tension was a challenge for the fieldwork expert and the local team, but through participatory methods that aimed to help find solutions acceptable to all sides, some of these tensions were managed. Activities and participatory methods were carefully chosen to boost mutual understanding on both sides – on the one hand for the municipal authorities and the neighbouring ethnic Bulgarians to better understand the daily challenges with which Roma families struggle, and on the other hand, for the Roma to understand the concerns of the non-Roma. The local team was successful in bringing the communities to a shared solution, largely because it acknowledged the complexity of the situation invested in bringing the two narratives together and be able "to make an omelette without breaking the eggs".

Political tensions also have the potential to affect the implementation of local level projects and strategies. This is illustrated by several localities, where the interests of local politicians in up-coming elections created tensions within and between communities. For example, in Mantua, negotiations between the two right-wing political parties resulted in discussions concerning limiting funding to the Sinti community. This created difficulties in facilitating a process of engagement between the Sinti and some branches of the local authorities, as well as further distance and tension between the two sides. In Sokolov, the local authorities hesitated to carry out activities that would benefit the Roma, fearing that this would make local politicians unpopular among other local citizens in an election year.

However, in some cases, tensions between different sides can also be the first step towards identifying common areas of interest, and can in fact later lead to cooperation. For example, in Bologna, the presence of different groups of Roma – both Italian Sinti and non-Italian Roma – and the different NGOs working with the various communities had completely different opinions. During the needs assessment phase, “people from the Sinti and Roma communities initially found it hard to envision cross-cutting activities addressing joint interests and needs, and pushed for community-specific actions. This tendency was also evident within some of the NGOs dealing with either community. For example, the social cooperative working in the unauthorised Roma settlements appeared to resent the close cooperation of the local authority and the consortium working in the municipal Sinti camps,” as the local field-work expert explained. However, as the focus groups and participatory meetings continued, the participants were eventually able to identify one major issue that was common to all of the groups. Despite very different living conditions, challenges, and expressed interests, all the groups agreed that the lack of spokespersons and mediators recognised by all stakeholders dealing with the social inclusion of Sinti and Roma communities was an area that the research could focus on.

Role and engagement of local authorities

The research also showed how local authorities often fluctuate in their interest and commitment (i.e. their ‘political willingness’), depending on the time, whether elections are coming, or depending on a number of other factors. In several localities, local authorities were at first very willing to get involved in the research, but became less active when it came time to start working on concrete actions. In other localities, the local authorities were actively engaged and committed throughout the research. How the local authorities cooperated with other local level stakeholders had significant implications for how the research process of engagement was carried out, as well as affecting the outcomes of the local interventions. In a few cases, the local authorities welcomed the participatory approach and took steps to integrate similar methodologies into their current and future work even after the research project concluded.

Commitment of the local authorities, as highlighted under the conditions for participation, was often an important starting point for the project in many localities. For example, in Aghia Varvara, the political commitment from the local authorities created legitimacy for the interventions and the cooperation between the various local stakeholders to begin. The continued role of the local authorities through the end of the interventions was also an important motivating factor. For example, the students who had participated in a number of the PAR activities presented their views and suggestions on how to improve community relations to the municipal authorities. This opportunity for young students to interact with the mayor, deputy mayors, heads of departments and other municipal officials helped to improve relations with the local authorities and empower youth to become active and engaged citizens also in the longer term.



Bologna – local Sinti and Roma discuss their views on the main challenges to social inclusion and the lack of community spokespersons and mediators (©FRA)

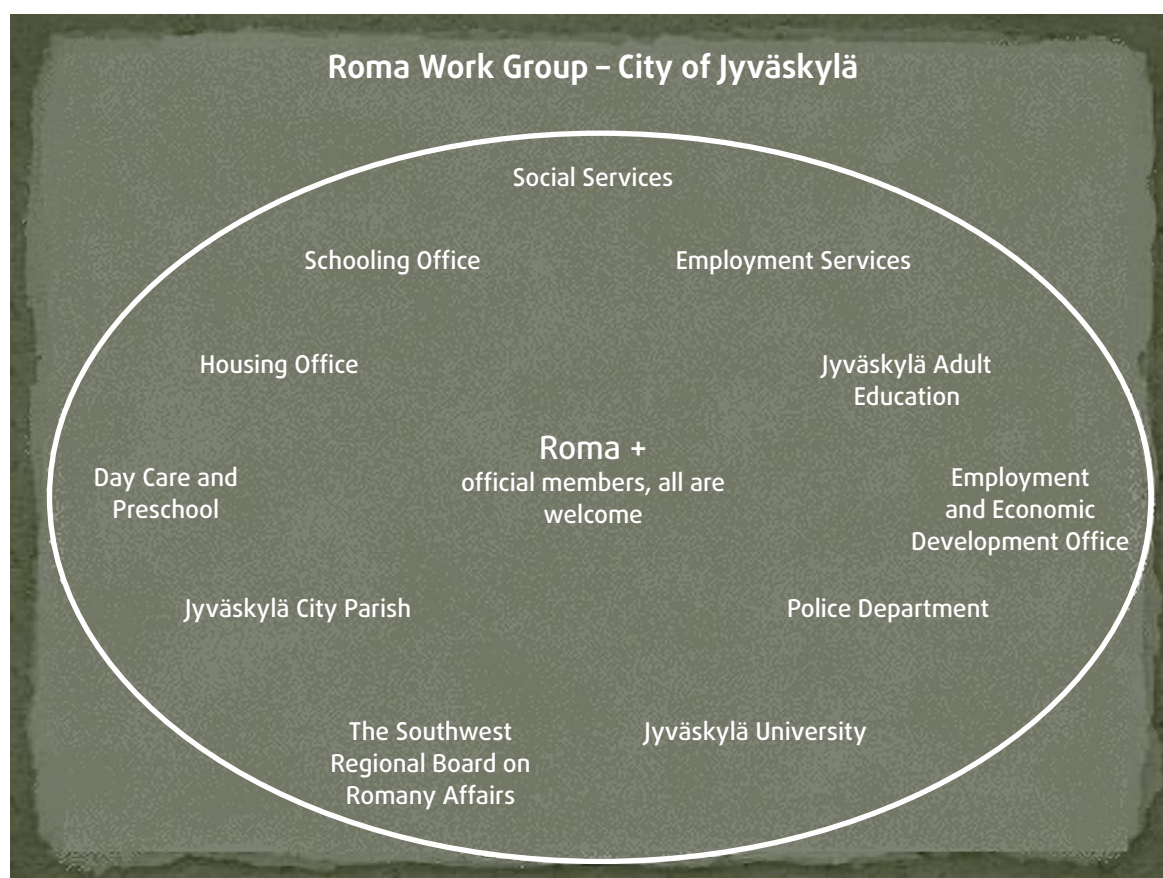


Aghia Varvara – Roma youth present their ideas for how to improve inter-ethnic relations in the municipality to the mayor and other representatives of the local authority (©FRA)

Sometimes political leadership is necessary to push successful initiatives forward. In this situation, the local authorities have both a large responsibility towards the people, as well as decision making power that can set things in motion for positive change. For example, in Brno, the political leadership of the municipality – through a clear commitment from the social affairs deputy and the involvement of the mayor in the

preparation of the local housing first project – were important elements of the intervention’s success. In Rakytník, the mayor was the main counterpart and was actively engaged in all aspects of the project design and implementation, which were met with a high level of enthusiasm and commitment. As such, the municipality provided organisational, political and material support to the research. The mayor “immediately identified the

Figure 3: Roma Work Group of the city of Jyväskylä (Finland)



Note: Visualisation of the various stakeholder groups represented in the Roma Work Group developed by the local authorities in Jyväskylä to address the inclusion of Finnish Roma.

Source: FRA, 2018

project as one of the very few accessible development opportunities for their small municipality in one of the most marginalized regions of Slovakia. At the same time, he clearly expressed that [the research] should have a sustainable effect and has to include strategic planning and capacity building of local stakeholders to stimulate further development beyond the [research] project period. For this purpose, the mayor of Rakytník contacted other municipalities of the micro-region to engage them into some of the project activities," as the Slovak fieldwork expert described.

In Strasbourg, the local authorities already had a well-established track record in actively dealing with Roma issues. The city had set up a Roma mission, with a number of dedicated staff. The policy officer in charge of the Roma mission explained at the beginning of the research, "I have always defended, in my commitments, the idea that it was necessary to associate the people with their future and with their fate. And I was very curious to see how other countries approached the problem of the Roma migrants". This increased the motivation of the local authorities to develop a local policy for Roma integration and to also take part in the project. This commitment helped to keep the local authorities engaged throughout the project implementation. As the Roma mission explained, "the programme and the project of the city of Strasbourg were on the same wave length; the strong interest in improving the lives of the Roma people was at the core".

Similarly, in Jyväskylä, the Roma Work Group established by the city in 2003 and one of the contributors to the Finnish national policy on Roma, was a constant factor throughout the research implementation. Moreover, the Director of the Adult Social Work and Empowering Services of the municipality was heavily engaged in the early stages of the research.

In some cases the local authorities had not previously interacted in closer ways with the Roma community, and so the process of engagement was a way to gain a greater and more hands-on experience with Roma inclusion issues. For example, in one locality, the local councillor – although knowledgeable about the challenges and issues facing the Roma families in a municipal camp – had not regularly visited the camp until this research began.

In Stara Zagora, the local authorities faced tough decision making regarding the housing situation of Roma, evictions and the illegal settlements that were to be demolished. Local community members at the beginning of the local interventions felt that the local authorities were quite distant. One resident explained, "We heard they have taken some decisions about the

houses, but what, actually, we do not know. There is no one in the municipality who comes and talks with us". Through the processes of engagement with the local Roma communities, the local authorities began to participate in new ways, sharing information about future plans and policies for the neighbourhood, as well as interacting more frequently with Roma citizens.

Similarly, in Megara, the implementation of the research actually "facilitated the interaction and cooperation between the local Roma association and the municipal authorities, while strengthening the position of the Roma association within the Roma community", according to the fieldwork expert. However, targeting the activities towards local authorities and not only towards the Roma community was an important element in this locality as it kept the local authorities engaged until the end. Furthermore, there was a positive political context at the regional and local level during the implementation of the research, which had a number of ongoing initiatives targeted towards Roma inclusion and strong political support from the Deputy Regional Governor of the Region of Western Attica. The Municipal Council even issued a decision for the provision of support to the research project in Megara. Towards the end of the implementation, a municipal official reflected on the process and showed how the cooperation was mutually beneficial to the local authorities and the local Roma community in the planning of a local census. "Through [the project] the municipality gained the knowledge on how to conduct the census in an effective way and gained the support of the Roma community, which is the most crucial factor for the successful implementation of any action related to the Roma community in Vlycho. [The research project] was a powerful partner for the municipality during this particular period," as the fieldwork expert explains. As such, the success of the actions under the project was in large part a result of the willingness of both the regional and municipal authorities, working together to support the local Roma association, despite a number of difficulties in the implementation. This case also highlights how positive outcomes can be achieved when local authorities view participation and support in such projects as an opportunity to approach the Roma community and be engaged in the improvement of the situation.

In several cases, the local authorities expressed political support and interest in the research – but during implementation their involvement waned and their active engagement was either limited or even absent in some cases. For example, the local authorities in Córdoba were eager to participate at the outset of the project, but following municipal elections and a change in local government, the new officials in place were not as aware of the local situation of Roma. While efforts



were made by the fieldwork expert, strains on human and financial resources led to a more limited involvement of the authorities in the remainder of the research implementation. Similarly, in Pavlikeni, the local authorities were informed of the project and supported it both politically and methodologically, but due to limited staff and time, they were not able to participate actively throughout all stages of the project's implementation. The experience in Sokolov illustrates how the political commitment of the local authority is dependent on the individuals in power. At the beginning of the project the mayor was very open and committed to developing meaningful interventions together with the Roma community. However, a change in political representation after local elections resulted in a withdrawal of support for the local interventions by the local authorities, who did not want to be seen as supporting the Roma at the expense of addressing other local citizens' concerns.

In several localities, the local authorities were more indirectly involved in the research through social service providers or other bodies coordinating services and support to Roma communities. This was the case, for example, in Helsinki, where the Hirundo drop-in centre provides support to Roma migrants and served both as the representative of the local authorities and as one of the main stakeholders for the project. Similarly, in Lille, the organisation AFEJ – hired by the Lille metropolitan area to manage the 'inclusion villages' – served as the main local stakeholder on behalf of the authorities and key partner in the research implementation. However, the fieldwork expert in Lille expressed a sense of disappointment in the limited involvement of the local authorities. He explains, "elected local politicians do not have the time to follow the [project] activities. There is a strong commitment to enhance cooperation, but in practice the local authorities did not provide financial or other types of assistance to [the project], nor did they attend the expression group meetings. However, they did permit AFEJ to go ahead with the plans".



Madrid – a member of a local Roma feminist association mobilises a group of Roma women to discuss the idea of a feminist Roma congress (©FRA)

In Madrid, conflicts between the local Roma associations ended up influencing the engagement and political support of the local authorities. When differences of opinion arose between different Roma and pro-Roma organisations on the design of a feminist Roma Congress (the local intervention), the City Council grew concerned and sought a unanimous decision among all the organisations to support the Congress. When consensus could not be reached, the local authorities pulled their support for the Congress. As the fieldwork expert describes, "the local government delegate did not know how to solve the situation and made the mistake of mixing the resolution of the conflict with the future of the Congress. She did not want a conflict within the Roma organisations of Madrid, and she did not have a clear line of support to the realisation of a feminist Congress, although she liked the idea". In this case, participation became a political issue, and the swaying political support of the local authorities jeopardised the outcome of the entire local intervention.

Power relations

Power relations between the various local stakeholders must be considered in any social inclusion project – not only power relations between the local authorities and local citizens, but also between other local actors. The research shows that this plays a role in how local actions (interventions, projects, other activities) are implemented, and ultimately is a key element in determining their success. Processes of engagement and the use of participatory action research techniques can help to alleviate power asymmetries and allow all participants to take part on an equal level in decision making and in local activities.

In a number of cases, the power relations between the local authorities and the citizens, both Roma and non-Roma, proved to be barriers to full and equal participation. This stems from the fact that local authorities are naturally in a position of power through their role and responsibility towards local citizens, and are used to making decisions on behalf of the community. This manifested itself on many occasions in the local community members hesitating to express their views or not trying to influence decisions regarding the focus and scope of the local interventions and other activities. For example, in a number of localities, the local citizens tended to agree with whatever suggestions were made by the local mayor or the NGOs involved in the project, without questioning or opposition. In Besençe, where the mayor was a trusted yet dominant figure, the local citizens were hesitant at first to express their opinions; the mayor made a number of decisions

regarding the local interventions on behalf of the community. Similarly, in Hrabušice, the mayor often took decisions on behalf of the Roma families living in the segregated neighbourhood, as she had strong ideas regarding what improvements were needed. By contrast, the Roma living in other more integrated parts of the village were more vocal about their views. In Aghia Varvara, the Roma participants were used to others taking decisions and at first were hesitant to express their own views on the situation. In other localities, such as Cluj-Napoca, where many Roma have been living in severely deprived circumstances for many years and power relations are very uneven, it was difficult to try to initiate processes of change without support from those members of the community who were in a more privileged situation. The research experience in Strasbourg also highlights that some of the Roma tend to be more passive in participation, and that more time would be needed to foster greater empowerment.

The research shows that power relations *within* the Roma community are also an important aspect to consider in implementing local projects. Power relations between Roma within the community can negatively affect overall community cohesion and the community's relationship vis-à-vis the non-Roma community. Sometimes few Roma individuals or families may be more dominant and possess greater influence than others. These tend to be the 'usual suspects' when engaging with outsiders and often serve as the main contact points for projects and other activities that take place within the community. They can also favour 'their' people when engaging in a project. This can potentially create additional tension and delay implementation of some activities.

For example, in Cluj-Napoca, the local team "had to deal with the changing dynamics within each and every community, including negotiations on positions of leadership and on community representation. These were influenced by existing patterns of internal power relations, disagreements and even conflicts emerging from the past. The participation of local people in these actions within the [research] project also acted as

a mechanism that contributed to the permanent reconfiguration and redefinition of the Roma community, both within the community and its relationships with the outside world, including the [local] team members". Such was also the case, for example, in Megara, where difficulties in reaching certain Roma representatives ended up delaying the project implementation, and jeopardised the participation of other members of the Roma community in the project activities. Mitigation measures had to be carefully planned to avoid further tension during the project implementation. This meant the fieldwork experts and local team had to carefully assess with whom they engaged and select contact persons within the community taking into consideration the various power relations at play.

When participation challenges the status quo concerning the decision making within the community and shifts the power relations by empowering new individuals or groups, tensions may rise further. However, the research also shows that participatory techniques that engage with broader parts of the Roma community can help to address some of these challenges and compensate for the negative effects of the redefined intra-community power relations. For example, the project created an opportunity for participants to design an intervention on equal footing in Córdoba, through the development of a local Roma integration strategy. This initiative at the same time empowered Roma women in Córdoba, who were at the heart of the intervention, yet had traditionally been more marginalised and excluded from political decision-making processes. In Lille, the research changed the power relations between the Roma families participating in the inclusion villages initiative as they gradually became more comfortable expressing their views through the local expression group sessions. This somewhat changed the top-down approach of implementing housing integration measures that had been the status quo until the research began. The focus of the local intervention in Bologna also helped to even out power relations as Roma and Sinti thematic spokespersons were trained and appointed. This was an important development for the community, as the spokesperson positions did not exist before.



Bologna – Roma and Sinti spokespersons were trained and appointed through the local intervention to help bring the needs and challenges of the local community to the local authorities (©FRA)

5

Implications for designing and funding social inclusion actions



The variety of experiences made during the research provides insight into how local inclusion actions can be better designed, implemented and monitored, as well as flagging issues and aspects to be avoided. As such, there are a number of lessons learned that can help to ensure a better use of resources, whether they come from local budgets, national funding allocations, the European Structural and Investment Funds (ESIF), or other sources of financing. While the research project is not directly about monitoring the use of funds, or evaluating the success or failure of other projects, there are some common messages that can be drawn from the wide range of the research experiences across the 21 participating localities.

The research focuses on Roma populations facing social exclusion, discrimination and marginalisation. These conditions make it particularly useful to apply participatory approaches to help empower local citizens. From this perspective, the participatory approach can also be replicated in projects dealing with other groups in vulnerable situations – such as persons with disabilities, children, homeless persons, migrants and refugees – or even those targeting a broader audience.

Access to funding

One of the first issues that arose during the research implementation concerning projects and funding mechanisms was regarding the selection of the localities (see [Annex I](#) on selection of localities). One of the primary selection criteria for the localities was the existence of past projects or integration strategies. The rationale

was that in places where local authorities and other local level stakeholders had experience in implementing EU-funded projects in the area of Roma inclusion, for example, there would be some administrative and substantive capacity to build upon. This would make it easier to identify why things had or had not worked in the past. However, the research project entered into an environment where many smaller municipalities and NGOs working on Roma inclusion had experienced difficulties in the past in securing funding for their work. Sometimes this was due to the requirements under the European Structural and Investment Funds to have municipalities provide a co-financing contribution to be eligible for receiving funds, which often ended up excluding smaller, rural localities in more deprived regions. Lack of administrative capacity within municipalities to draft grant proposals additionally compounded these problems, diminishing the chances of having local integration or other projects funded. Furthermore, in many cases, local level stakeholders “do not have access to necessary information distributed at national level on the availability of development funds, therefore their participation in national and international social and professional networks are limited and their ability to employ common policy tools is short”, as one of the Slovak fieldwork experts explained. In other cases, national requirements for access to funding also created barriers for smaller municipalities, such as Hrabušice and Rakytynik in Slovakia, both of which had no past experience with EU-funded projects targeting Roma inclusion. In Slovakia, access to rural development funds was conditional upon having a micro-regional strategy in place, and for projects to link to identified actions and priorities within these strategies.



Hrabušice – in a village with limited access to EU funding for Roma integration activities, one of the research interventions supported a summer camp for local children, both Roma and non-Roma, to improve community relations (©FRA)

Given the evidence that emerged in the selection phase of the research, it was decided to adopt a more flexible approach to the process, and not to place as much emphasis on only those localities that had past experience with various funding sources or a long history of project and integration strategy implementation. In particular, the selection of such small, rural municipalities in deprived areas to take part in the research was seen as an opportunity to increase the potential of villages and micro-regions to gain access to funding in the future. This was important given that “the concentration of resources in bigger centres instead of being dispersed across a number of smaller places should create economic acceleration in the neighbouring territories. Based on the implementation of this approach, villages the size of Rakytník remained outside of the main geographic focus [of the Slovak Partnership Agreement 2014-2020 on ‘poles of growth’]”, according to the Slovak fieldwork expert.

Similarly, in Madrid, the feminist Roma association supported by the research was a small and marginalised group that did not have much experience engaging with EU-funded projects in the past. Due to the nature of the research, developing a small local intervention with this group was a chance to support ideas in a participatory way, beyond reaching out only to larger institutions that tended to have more visibility and access to EU-funded projects.

In Pavlikeni, one of the local interventions ended up being designed around educational initiatives, because through the preliminary needs assessment phase it became clear that local educational institutions were not able to access funding opportunities provided by the Science and Education for Smart Growth national operational programme of the European Structural and Investment Funds. Neither the staff within the schools nor the local municipal administration had the skills or experience necessary to prepare a project proposal.



Pavlikeni – the local intervention focused on educational initiatives, including supporting participation in early childhood education (©FRA)

The problems in access to funding also applied to larger cities such as Brno, where the local team saw a need to look for alternative funding to test a ‘Housing First’¹⁴ methodology with different target groups, and to implement a larger project to also secure research and provision of social services to accompany the actual housing component. The research was seen as an opportunity to support this effort in the absence of other funding mechanisms.

These experiences reveal how strict entry and selection criteria and complex application processes can bias towards or away from certain municipalities, regions and often rural areas. The complexity also brings additional levels of intermediaries into the management and implementation of such projects. All this can reinforce exclusion and further contribute to rural, disadvantaged regions facing challenges in access to funding. The research project was therefore an opportunity to reach out to rural, disadvantaged areas and provide

¹⁴ ‘Housing First’ is an approach that offers permanent, affordable housing as quickly as possible for individuals and families experiencing homelessness, and then provides the supportive services and connections to the community-based support people need to keep their housing and avoid returning to homelessness. For further details, see the [Housing First](#) project website.



a modest, yet meaningful, amount of resources that had positive impacts. Focusing on local engagement and small-scale activities through participatory approaches could also have potential for larger funding instruments if there were explicit criteria to reach out to such areas.

Projects need to be integrated into wider Roma integration policies

The research points to a need to develop more holistic and integrated approaches to Roma inclusion, and for projects and interventions to be designed in a way that they fit into wider Roma integration and social inclusion policies. This means that previous projects, interventions and local policies and strategies should be taken into account before new ones are designed. It also suggests that participatory projects should not be implemented just for the sake of community engagement, but rather as a process and method to improve on how all kinds of local level actions are implemented. Community participation has tremendous potential to bring positive impact in any project that is addressed towards Roma. As such, the research did not simply advocate for stand-alone participatory projects, but rather to integrate participatory approaches into overall Roma inclusion processes, building up and joining up with other developing projects when possible, and embedding the principles that the project is trying to promote into the logic of EU-funded projects. This also implied allowing people to test new approaches, to re-think, re-design, and try multiple ways of doing things until they figured out for themselves, together, which initiatives work best for them in their local context, even if that implied accepting a risk of possible 'failure'. In many instances this was the best way of learning and adjusting to the realities of the local level, in other words, also learning from mistakes and improving future efforts. Capturing such changes, however, was not always possible in past EU-funded projects and some fieldwork experts commented on the fact that this is generally not factored into project monitoring criteria. Many local participants in the research actually felt an implicit pressure to report 'successes' at the expense of addressing the most pressing needs of the communities. This was largely the case, for example, in Aghia Varvara, where one local participant reflected that "the strict and rigid rules and requirements of European Social Fund (ESF) projects have made administrative personnel act based on 'what it is eligible' rather than 'what we can do to make the most of the action'".

The research also suggests that the active participation of municipalities should be foreseen in the national level decision-making processes regarding the allocation of

funds and policies that will have an impact on local authorities. This could, in particular, also be relevant for national managing authorities and the design of the operational programmes for the European Structural and Investment Funds at national level.

Some of the research case studies help to illustrate this argument. For example, in Spain, the research had a strong link to shaping local political agendas. In Córdoba, where the research supported a participatory development of a local Roma integration strategy, as well as in Madrid, where the preparation of a feminist Roma congress was supported, the research shows that getting Roma issues on the political agenda is a challenge. Moreover, it is important for projects to coincide with existing policies on social inclusion and integration. Similar findings from Greece reflect the need for an integrated approach. For example, in Aghia Varvara, part of the success of the local interventions is due to the fact that they were linked to a broader local strategy to promote Roma inclusion. Similarly, in Megara, the research shows that integrated interventions are needed to simultaneously address drop-out rates from education, while also addressing other needs linked to the reasons behind these drop-outs. The research experience in Brno also shows that addressing housing needs of vulnerable groups as a first step to social inclusion is important, but that these measures should be accompanied by additional support services to the families in transition, as well as being linked to the wider local housing policies.

Time frame of projects

The research provides strong evidence for the need for projects and other integration activities to plan sufficiently long timelines in order to implement things properly and take into account the likely delays that often arise due to a variety of reasons. Although the research initially set out to allow for three full years of project implementation, delays and complications within the project management as well as external factors affected the timeline of implementation. The fieldwork experts in most localities experienced delays beyond their control and time was not sufficient to address all concerns or to fully implement initially foreseen activities. This also mirrors experiences with other projects and activities beyond this research project. As such, the research shows in many ways how timelines tend to be overly optimistic, and that projects – in particular EU-funded ones – should allow for extended timelines of several years in order to achieve more meaningful change and tangible results.

The intervention in Bologna reveals further practical reasons suggesting a need for inclusion interventions

to have sufficiently long timelines. Namely, a particular problem which was experienced in Bologna was that it proved “difficult to reconcile the local authority’s pace with the time frame of the project, as [they are] structurally used to devoting large amounts of time to projects, including small practical steps, while the [project’s] objectives and limited time frame required a much faster pace”, as the Italian fieldwork expert reflected. She said that as a result, “most of time was spent in the practical implementation of the local intervention, mainly due to the structural slowness of bureaucratic processes, while not enough time was left for in-depth monitoring of people’s experiences about the local action itself, let alone assessing its impact on interpersonal relationships within the community”. Allowing for longer time frames for projects can help project designers and implementers to pre-empt and better prepare for such circumstances, as well as allowing for enough time to get all relevant stakeholders up to date on the project aims and methodologies. This observation is particularly relevant in the context of projects envisioning a participatory approach, as they involve a large number of stakeholders throughout the design, implementation and monitoring of the activities. This however gives rise to certain challenges regarding the time needed to contact these stakeholders and, in particular, ensure their support and proactive participation in the project. The broader the group of partners, the greater the risk of delays.

The intervention in Strasbourg further indicates that the requirement to achieve and maintain a participatory methodology in the design, implementation as well as in the monitoring of projects is more compatible with longer project time frames. Similarly to the findings in Bologna, one of the defining parameters behind this observation is the presence of many different stakeholders, as ensuring their ‘real’ participation at all stages of the project is a step by step process, which “includes the time and the availability to set up meetings and a common way to foresee the organization of the activities. It also takes time (and diplomacy) to adjust all stakeholders’ schedules and constraints,” a fieldwork expert from France explained.

In Aiud, the fieldwork expert reflected that “the main methodological limitations of PAR arose from the fact that most of the methods are very time-consuming. The limited time span of the project and the constrained budget did not allow for long-lasting presence of the team in the locality, which would be necessary to make full use of the advantages of the PAR methods”.

The project in Lille suggests a further reason why sufficiently long time frames are needed for participatory-based interventions. Sometimes a shift in attitude is

required in relation to participation. In Lille, “for the first 6 months, eighty percent of the subjects were material demands: internet access, television, fence, furniture, etc. Only gradually did the meetings begin to include other types of demands, demands regarding the rules of integration. After the training financed by the project, the subjects changed: People started to talk about their past, about the way they were living before, in camps, in Romania. In other meetings, they were able to talk about the education of their children, or about discrimination in France,” the fieldwork expert describes.

In some localities, the fieldwork experts identified an additional challenge in relation to time frames of projects: namely, that projects that are typically funded by ESIF or national governments do not usually have long enough time frames to form a proactive local community (in Hrabušice) or to properly implement PAR methodologies (in Brno). In Hrabušice, for example, consultations with experienced NGO professionals hinted towards the need for “at least five years to form a functional and proactive community”, which is a timeframe that is not typically supported by public sources or private donors, irrespective of the available resources. Similarly, in Mátraverebély, the fieldwork expert also hinted towards the need for a comparable time frame – namely three to five years – for the necessary stability to be provided for interventions such as those implemented during the research project.

Need for flexibility in project design and implementation

A key trend emerging from the research is a widespread sense of frustration with the European Structural and Investment Funds, in particular, the lack of flexibility in their design and reporting requirements and a history of those implementing projects not being able or ready to react to changing needs on the ground. Many fieldwork experts and local stakeholders expressed dissatisfaction over the inflexibility of past projects that they had participated in. This frustration manifested itself in the early phases of the research, as FRA had to explain to the local teams that the project was not, in fact, an EU-funded project as they knew and were used to, and the project was not a grant, but rather research on the drivers of and barriers to inclusion at the local level. It was also necessary to explain that PAR methodology intended to support actions to facilitate the process of engagement and learning about what those challenges are. The ‘action’ in the participatory action research was often perceived by the local communities as a small-scale ad hoc community-based project, but for the research it was a tool to help understand the processes behind local inclusion.



Most local teams needed additional time and clarification regarding the local fund, which was set up to finance the actions (i.e. 'local interventions') under the action research. Because the actual local interventions themselves were seen by the research as a tool for understanding local inclusion, how the money was spent and the reporting on the spending was a secondary concern. This allowed the research project to apply a much greater degree of flexibility in terms of how the local budgets were planned and executed – contrary to most EU-funded projects, which have strict requirements for project design, spending and reporting. As such, the project was able to adjust to changing situations in the localities, allowing for flexibility to change the local intervention ideas mid-way through implementation and re-design and adapt where it was deemed necessary, relevant or meaningful. The challenges that were faced in reaching this point, however, reflect a much broader sense of frustration with the perceived lack of flexibility of most EU-funded projects, and the difficulty in balancing the need for accountability to donors with the required flexibility to produce meaningful change on the ground.

Perhaps one of the greatest risks in the research approach, but also one of the factors that facilitated successful initiatives, was this degree of flexibility and openness in the research and project design. The nature of PAR methodology is that the process is based on a constant cycle of planning, implementing, assessing and re-designing. As such, when the local context changes, when blockages in progress arise, the methodology allows for the participants to change course and re-design the interventions. They are not locked into struggling to achieve pre-defined desired outcomes that may no longer make sense or even be feasible after local circumstances change. Many events can affect the possibility to continue a project: a change in political leadership after elections, which makes implementation of certain activities come to a halt; a key local figure dropping out of the project activities and consequent difficulties in finding a replacement; a change in national legislation that makes certain activities impossible; or a number of other factors both internal and external to the project at hand. Allowing for a flexible approach to projects can help to overcome these barriers and redesign activities so that it is still possible to achieve meaningful and tangible results. This element of flexibility is a key finding in nearly all of the localities across the 11 participating Member States. While the flexible approach of PAR and the research 'logic' was at first not always easy to grasp for local participants, it ended up being one of the most valued aspects of the project in hindsight.

For example, in Aghia Varvara, the cyclical nature of PAR was viewed as an important factor of success of the local interventions. The fieldwork expert explained that "[t]he flexibility of [the research] in changing its

orientation based on the findings of each research stage was a key factor for finally implementing an intervention which focused on a real need of the municipality. If the intervention had had to be implemented in less time and the [research] project had obliged participants to strictly follow the 'project proposal' as originally envisaged, the outcome would not have been the same and the intervention may not have supported the current and ongoing needs of the municipality".

Similarly, the fieldwork expert in Madrid felt that "FRA's flexibility to accept all the delays and changes in Madrid was an important but risky idea, which was one of the key aspects that made the intervention a success". This was particularly important given that during the research implementation period in Madrid, there were a number of delays due to fluctuating relations with the local authorities. This led to some revisions of the project ideas, which were very different from the initial plans. As the local team reflected, "[p]articipation should be taken seriously: if people and organisations are asked what they want, one should be willing to deal with it. The real participation always surpasses its initial objectives. A fact that becomes problematic when dealing with projects that have a fixed frame and deadlines". As such, the research initiatives in Madrid were only possible in the end as a result of the flexibility allowed under the project. Moreover, the need for adjustable project frames and deadlines is further reflected in the fact that, over the course of the local intervention in Madrid, there was an important increase in the level of participation – which surpassed original expectations. As the fieldwork expert reflected, "a few months passed without making progress, and when an interesting project was initiated it was completely different and far more ambitious than what was initially planned for".

Similarly, in other localities, the interventions needed to be altered in response to changing political situations and the backing of local authorities. For example, in Córdoba, a change in the local government caused delays to the initially foreseen research timeline. After several months of inaction, there were concerns that the project could not continue. However, as the project was able to adapt to changing circumstances, the situation was reassessed by the local team and a revised plan was developed.

In Helsinki, the research process allowed for a number of changes along the way. The local team embraced this opportunity, reflecting that "the core issue with participatory projects is to be responsive to local needs. The success of such projects also depends on the possibility to flexibly implement the project and allocate the resources across the various and changing needs. Therefore, PAR projects can also succeed if the donor is open to flexible processes and if the implementing body dares to make changes when needed."



Helsinki – the local team convenes a women’s group in an informal setting to discuss the issues and challenges they face in their daily lives and come up with ideas for project activities to help address income generation (©FRA)



Lessons learned from Lille revealed that integration policies designed in a gradual and iterative manner allow for the possibility of adjusting programmes as new developments or needs arise, which can bring better results. “A concrete example of this was the decision to extend the scope of the research project from Lezennes to all seven of the municipalities in the Lille Metropolitan area which set up ‘inclusion villages’. Readjustments to the scope of the project were possible thanks to the cyclical and iterative nature of PAR. The possibility to re-plan and adjust projects during their implementation has particular benefits for projects concerning Roma integration, given the historical ‘distance’ which exists between Roma communities and project managers”, the fieldwork expert explained.

Similarly, in both Hungarian localities the value of small-scale community-based projects was valued as they can be implemented in a step-by-step way that also allows for flexibility in terms of adjusting the activities over time. In particular where the interventions linked to local development objectives (i.e. addressing socio-economic development concerns at the same time as trying to promote social inclusion), it was felt that such small-scale community projects could have longer lasting impact on community development. As the fieldwork expert in Besence describes, “any development project that aims at stimulating local growth in an effective way in the long term has to be completed based on a step-by-step methodology running a series of local, small-scale projects in a row and employing sensitive and flexible project frameworks to avoid the phenomenon of ‘indicatorism’ that focuses on the project-based, measurable indicators rather than on meeting real development problems and improving the lives of the local target groups”. Similarly, in Mátraverebély, the fieldwork expert reflected on the research process as giving an opportunity to make necessary changes in the implementation and to allow for flexibility and openness, to manage unforeseen occurrences and to learn from mistakes, without an over-reliance on indicators as other projects often have. Under the

research some local teams felt “it was possible to be honest about what did or did not work, which can be built on in the future. Perfectly planned and managed human development interventions within contexts of acute poverty are just not realistic”. While indicators and measurement of project results are a crucial part of any intervention, monitoring and evaluation processes could also try to integrate indicators that capture not just outcomes but also processes, in the use of participatory approaches and a degree of flexibility to adjust to local realities.

Embedding participatory approaches in project design

The research shows that in many cases, local projects and integration actions can benefit from deeper and more meaningful forms of participation. This means that local Roma and non-Roma communities can contribute in substantive ways to decision making and are able to participate on a more equal level with others. This can lead to better integration and social inclusion outcomes, meaning better project design, smoother implementation, and more successful outcomes, i.e. change on the ground. Ultimately, this contributes to a better use of time, human and financial resources. Participation measures should also be integrated as core milestones into overall projects.

Despite the challenges in the implementation of the research, many of the local teams reflect positively on the overall experience after the project was completed, and in particular value the participatory approach of the research process. One fieldwork expert from Finland explained “the challenge is that funding structures and incentives are generally designed for interventions with short timelines, linear trajectories and clear and measurable outcomes. Participatory projects are characterised by unpredictability, but their outcomes more realistically reflect the complex factors that



come into play during implementation. Funding structures should be designed so they can accommodate actual participatory projects”.

A number of local teams were of the opinion that projects should be able to adjust to the situation on the ground. This was the case in Strasbourg, where the local fieldwork expert felt that “[Projects] are confronted with realities that don’t always fit with the initial goals. It is difficult to apply a project exactly as it was written. The experts on the ground should take into account that changes are possible in order to find compromises with human and material realities”. In this case it was considered beneficial to plan and implement every phase of the project in a participatory way by explaining the ‘ins’ and ‘outs’ to all stakeholders, including to the beneficiaries.

Although a number of the local teams voiced praise and support for participatory approaches, and the need for such to be applied to other projects, many also acknowledge the limited scope of the research. With limited funding and the small-scale nature of the local interventions, the research was able to create meaningful results for some local communities. But up-scaling could be a challenge. As one fieldwork expert in Spain noted, “[the project] is a well-designed and interesting project, but modest compared to the enormous problems of the Roma community in Europe. A clear political will and adequate funding for better results is necessary. [This research] could be a different way of working with the Roma population. It is important to change the method of work, in line with [the project]”.

Not all the local teams are optimistic about participatory approaches being used on a larger scale within

the framework of the European Structural and Investment Funds. Only nine of the 21 fieldwork experts feel that PAR could actually be integrated into EU-funded projects, and only eight feel that it could be applied in the context of projects with other vulnerable groups. This, however, may be linked to the general sense of pessimism regarding the EU funds, and not necessarily a reflection on the usefulness and meaningful application of participatory approaches. As PAR involves a broad range of techniques, the methodology is flexible in terms of the extent to which participatory approaches can be applied.

In some cases the research process did lead to more sustainable results, including inspiring working models of cooperation and integration of participatory approaches into the work of the local authorities. For example, in Córdoba, one of the impacts of the research is to continue using some of the participatory techniques, such as the roundtables and workshops organised under the project, in the continuation of the work of the local authorities. The “City Council has recently awarded a grant of € 12,000 to implement activities to promote Roma inclusion with the participation of all relevant stakeholders (most of them active within [the project]), regardless of whether actual funding for the Roma strategy is secured or not”, the local fieldwork expert said. This suggests positive longer-term impacts of introducing participatory approaches to Roma inclusion efforts, and more sustainable outcomes of future projects and activities. In this way the research’s ‘logic’ helps to put in place a different way of working with the Roma population and a change in the methods of work for the local authorities.

Conclusions

This project marks the first time the European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights was directly involved in local inclusion actions. The local activities show modest but concrete ways in which the fundamental rights of Roma can be protected, respected and promoted in practice – for example, through the local interventions to address the rights to access education, employment, healthcare, housing and the right to non-discrimination. Underlying the whole research process was the principle of participation as a critical element of a fundamental rights-based approach to local level inclusion.

Although the objective of this research is not to bring about change *per se*, its implementation contributes to building-up the capacity of local actors in the localities where it was implemented. A direct result of the research process is facilitating modes of cooperation and engagement between local authorities and Roma communities, in many cases where such interactions were not established before. People learned how to express their needs and work together to find joint solutions to local level integration challenges. In this sense, even experiences of trial and error throughout the research process to achieve cooperation between local authorities, Roma and other residents are valuable experiences that shed light on the complexities and difficulties of local level inclusion efforts. The varied experiences across the 11 EU Member States with different local situations and very heterogeneous Roma populations reveal important insights into the opportunities, shortcomings and challenges, and can be valuable in terms of lessons learned. While the findings of the research are specific to the 21 participating localities, there are elements of the participatory approach that could be applied to other local contexts, and the lessons learned can be relevant for Roma inclusion efforts across the EU. Furthermore, while this research happens to focus on Roma, its approach and methodology could easily be replicated with other groups in vulnerable situations and in other settings.

Importantly, the research highlights the importance of acknowledging and learning from successes and failures. Promising practices are often the focus of efforts to increase the positive impact of projects and policies. But simply sharing best practices in hopes of replicating and up-scaling them at a national level is not sufficient to achieve progress. Context matters, and simply replicating one successful project in another locality with very different conditions will not guarantee another success. If there is to be real change on the ground in the situation of Roma, it is essential to understand the elements of success, so that parts of those processes can be transferred into other contexts, even when the

local conditions vary widely. Similarly, it is important to acknowledge the various types of challenges that each project or policy faces in its implementation, whether they are financing gaps, community-level tensions, communication issues or even management related problems. Learning from attempts that have not necessarily worked out as initially planned is critical to better designing future projects, policies and approaches to Roma inclusion. Furthermore, being honest and open about challenges is often lacking, which can hinder constructively searching for ways to overcome these and readjust actions in response to failures. Success cannot be achieved until failure is also acknowledged and overcome.

The research reveals a wealth of knowledge about social inclusion and Roma integration in practice. As many of the individual locality studies highlight, meaningful and tangible change can be achieved, local communities can be empowered and local authorities can become more responsible and effective in working to protect and promote the rights of their local citizens. Moreover, the research shows that participatory processes that empower local citizens to engage in decision-making processes can be an important tool in social inclusion processes. Understanding the complexities of social inclusion and exclusion can help to contextualise other existing data and serve as a first step towards addressing the real problems on the ground.

Ultimately, the research also helps to shed light on the notion of participation and what it means in practice. First, facilitating processes of meaningful and genuine participation of Roma communities can lead to better integration outcomes. The form and nature of participation can vary, from lighter to deeper participation techniques. Deeper forms of participation have the potential to result in better outcomes, so long as participation is perceived by the communities as meaningful, their sense of ownership over the local projects and integration processes will usually increase, and people will be more invested in seeing positive outcomes.

Second, the research explored when participation works well and how participation can be successfully supported. The experiences across many localities shows that participation works best when certain conditions are fulfilled. Importantly, where relationships of trust are established and when all sides are willing to cooperate and listen to each other's concerns, needs and wishes, more collaborative participation can take place. Participation also works better when there is flexibility in the project interventions for making adjustments according to the local needs and local reality.

Third, the research reveals interesting findings regarding when participation does not work so well, and

the factors that should be taken into account that can jeopardise meaningful participation. A lack of tangible outcomes and concrete benefit to the communities involved can make people lose their motivation to participate or even rule out participation before an activity is set to begin. Community-level tensions – whether within the Roma communities or between Roma and non-Roma – can also undermine processes of engagement and cause delays in the implementation of project activities. Short timelines that do not allow for preparing people and building their capacity to participate or address power relations within the community that are critically linked to participation can also hinder positive outcomes of any initiatives. Lack of flexibility in the

design and objectives of projects or strategies can also limit progress and undermine participation.

Finally, the research shows that a number of positive outcomes can result from participation and engagement with Roma, as highlighted in the individual locality case studies. Ultimately, when processes of participation are supported, municipalities can benefit from better designed projects and policies, better integration outcomes, better use of financial, human and other resources, and greater community cohesion. Such participatory processes are key to treating people with dignity and respect, and in promoting a fundamental-rights based approach to social inclusion.



Annex I: Project methodology and technical notes

Participatory action research

The overall research design was developed by FRA and the fieldwork was carried out under contract by a consortium comprised of the following partners: ICF International, Bolt International Consulting, and the Budapest Institute for Policy Analysis. The consortium employed fieldwork experts to implement the research activities at local level, who were also responsible for putting together a 'Local Team' which organised and implemented activities. The local teams often included co-researchers from the Roma communities and in some cases also representatives of the local authorities. The local teams were responsible for selecting the specific PAR techniques to apply in each locality, and to adapt PAR to the specificities of each local situation. FRA staff followed the research in all localities to ensure quality control and make adjustments, when necessary. The analysis presented in this report has been carried out by FRA on the basis of the research outputs, including field notes, submitted by the fieldwork experts and the implementing consortium.

Participatory action research methodology has been used to study organisational change, issues in education and healthcare, as well as community development at least since 1946, when Kurt Lewin argued that "research that produces nothing but books will not suffice".¹⁵ There is also some academic research on Roma inclusion that applies similar methodologies,¹⁶ as well as work by civil society, such as the Save the Children project LYRA in the Western Balkans,¹⁷ but this is the first time an EU agency applied this methodology. It was also chosen as the best way to study processes at local level, the space where policies are implemented and where funds are invested successfully or not.¹⁸

In the project, specific PAR techniques were chosen adapted to the needs and particularities of each locality. This allowed researchers, fieldwork experts facilitating the project, and local participants to develop a sense of ownership over the project's activities and results, in line with the underlying philosophy of PAR that research should be 'with' people and not 'on' or 'for' them and in an effort to "make sense of the world through efforts to transform it, as opposed to simply studying human behaviour and views about reality".¹⁹ Participants in the local PAR activities included a wide range of stakeholders, such as local authority representatives, social workers, Roma and non-Roma community members, mediators, civil society organisations, teachers and other school staff, and others. Depending on the activities, different actors were involved, but always with a goal to keep activities as participatory as possible. The fieldwork experts kept an overview of the participants in all activities, and together with the local team decided who would participate where.

As the project methodology is based on participatory action research, the "action" component of it is conceptualised in the form of a small-scale local intervention.²⁰ These interventions are intended as a research tool to generate information on the processes of Roma integration at local level, the challenges that emerge and how they can be overcome. The local interventions, however, serve a dual purpose. Seen from the perspective of the community, the small-scale ad hoc local projects (the 'local interventions') are the main purpose and benefit of the research. Seen from a research and evidence-based policymaking perspective, the local interventions are the research tools applied to generate the evidence on the entire process of local level Roma integration efforts – how they can succeed, and what creates blockages in successfully implementing them and achieving desired outcomes. They reveal important information regarding how participation works in practice and what elements are needed to facilitate participation – including the need to build trust between parties involved, being clear and transparent, and taking into account community relations and how projects can affect these dynamics. The interventions also shed light on many of the challenges to implementing social

15 Lewin, K. (1946), 'Action research and minority problems', *Journal of Social Issues*, Vol. 2, No. 4, pp. 34-46.

16 Málovics, G., Mihók, B., Szeentistványi, I., Balázs, B., Pataki, G. (2012), 'Participatory Action Research for local human rights: the case of Roma Minority in Szeged, South-Hungary' in: Renn, O., Reichel, A., Bauer, J. (eds.), *Civil society for sustainability – a guidebook for connecting science and society*, Bremen, Europäischer Hochschulverlag, pp. 149-170; Ryder, A., Greenfields, M., *Roads to Success – Economic and social inclusion for gypsies and travellers*.

17 Save the Children (2014), 'LYRA – young Roma in action', 8 April 2014.

18 European Commission (2017), *Commission staff working Document Roma integration indicators scoreboard (2011-2016) (SWD(2017) 286 final/2, 15 November 2017) accompanying the document COM(2017) 458 final - Midterm review of the EU framework for national Roma integration strategies*.

19 Chevalier, J. M., Buckle, D. J. (2013), *Participatory Action Research: Theory and Methods for Engaged Inquiry*, London, Routledge.

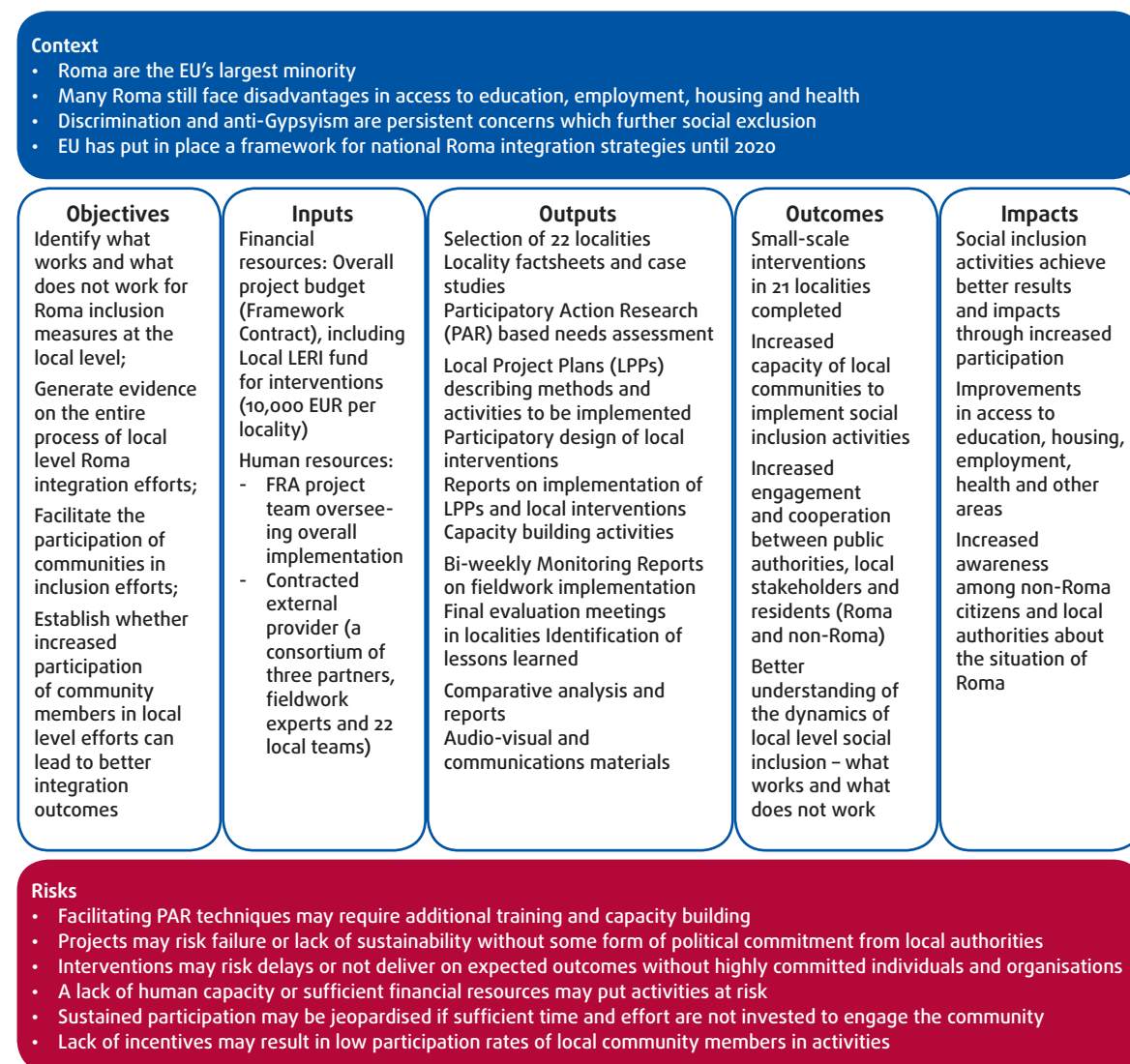
20 For further details on the individual interventions, see the website of the [Local Engagement for Roma Inclusion Project](#).

inclusion projects for and with Roma, in particular where participatory methods are envisaged. In the research, the local participants were given the freedom to come up with whatever ideas they felt were most meaningful to them, then implement them together, and with the support of the fieldwork experts facilitating the research, they recorded all the stages of the process of implementation. An overview of the needs identified and local interventions and activities per locality can be found in Annex III.

Figure 4 illustrates the overall intervention logic, outlining the European, national and local context, the problems to be addressed, the objectives, resources that were available, planned activities involved, outputs expected to be generated by the activities, the short and medium-term outcomes, as well as the desired impacts.

Within this overall logical framework, the project was implemented incrementally in stages. These started with a preparatory phase, followed by designing the participatory action research techniques and applying them in order to develop local project plans, agree on, design and implement local interventions, and ensure ongoing monitoring and evaluation. Depending on the locality, different PAR techniques were applied. In some, levels of participation remained at the level of intensive consultation and did not involve all stakeholders at every stage. In others, participants were engaged in all stages of the research. The project had to invest considerable time and effort to build-up the capacity of participants, so that they could act as real and equal partners with local administrations in designing and implementing social inclusion activities. This was also crucial in order to guarantee the sustainability of the actions, even beyond the formal end of the project.

Figure 4: The project’s intervention logic



Source: FRA, Local Engagement for Roma Inclusion project, 2018

Figure 5: The research process

➔ **Preparatory stage - Selection of localities**

The 11 EU countries and 22 localities* represent a mix of social inclusion issues and various Roma population groups. Within the countries, localities were selected which fulfilled certain criteria, such as having a past or current local Roma inclusion plan and prior experience in implementing local Roma inclusion projects, local authorities demonstrating openness and motivation to cooperate with the project, as well as having a network of partners for future cooperation.

(1 month – early 2014)

➔ **Preparatory stage - Mapping stakeholders and their inclusion activities**

The preparatory stage included a mapping of local stakeholders. This included local authorities and public services, the Roma community (e.g. presence of different Roma groups or communities, Roma mediators, local Roma associations, local leaders and representatives), civil society actors working with and/or within Roma communities, and other relevant actors, e.g. local businesses, etc.

(3 months – early 2014)

Fieldwork research stage 1

➔ **Feasibility study**

FRA together with the contractor and fieldwork experts selected a 'Local Team', usually consisting of the project's local fieldwork expert(s) responsible for coordinating and facilitating the research and documenting all processes, as well as Roma from the local community who acted as co-researchers and, in certain cases, local authority representatives.

The Local Team carried out a feasibility study mapping the socio-economic and fundamental rights situation of Roma in the locality, past integration projects and local level strategies or action plans, as well as involvement of the locality in ongoing and future projects. This included an ex ante identification of the main challenges facing the Roma community with regard to education, employment, healthcare, housing, infrastructure and issues of discrimination or local conflicts.

The outcome of this feasibility study was discussed during the initial meetings with mayors and local public services, as well as local stakeholders, including members of the Roma communities, local NGOs and other actors, which served to communicate to all local project participants the objectives and methodology of the project.

(4 months – mid 2014)

Fieldwork research stage 2

➔ **Developing a Local Project Plan (LPP)**

The Local Team, based on the feasibility study and initial discussions with local stakeholders, developed a local project plan (LPP), which outlined in detail how participatory action research techniques would be applied to validate the needs identified in the feasibility study and suggest potential responses. The LPPs also detailed community activation activities that were foreseen to be necessary to facilitate people's participation. The LPP was intended to be a working plan that would be regularly updated and revised throughout the project implementation. Later on in the research process, the LPPs were updated to include plans for the local interventions.

(4 months – mid-end 2014)

➔ **PAR Needs Assessment**

The Local Teams began implementing the LPPs, including envisaged PAR techniques to verify the needs and challenges identified in the feasibility study. At the end of the PAR needs assessment, consensus was built among the local stakeholders regarding the main issues facing the community and ideas emerged regarding how they could tackle them. Proposals were developed through a participatory process for small-scale local interventions that the research could implement as the "action" component of the PAR research. In most cases the local interventions were small-scale projects that the local Roma participants considered meaningful and important. The LPPs were subsequently revised to include the plans for implementing the local interventions.

(6 months – early 2015)

Fieldwork research stage 3

➔ **Implementation of local interventions**

Local Teams implemented the local interventions agreed on by the community participants and local authorities. Implementation at times required re-adjusting or re-designing the interventions. The project provided a small 'local fund' of approximately € 10,000 for financing these local interventions in each locality.

(mid-2015 through end of 2016)

➔ **Monitoring and evaluation of fieldwork implementation**

Local Teams monitored the implementation throughout the process. Monitoring notes were submitted to FRA every two weeks. At the end of the local interventions, most Local Teams organised a participatory evaluation session with local stakeholders to reflect on the participatory research process and their views on the local intervention results. Fieldwork experts also responded to a FRA questionnaire reflecting on the PAR process and the project implementation at local level, including lessons learned and their recommendations for future such projects.

(mid-2015 through end of 2016)

➔ **Analysis and communication of results**

The process of designing and implementing the local interventions, as well as their outcomes, were analysed by the Local Teams in case studies, which included recommendations about the process of engagement with local communities, participatory methods and reflections on the implementation of local strategies and projects for Roma integration as a whole. The Local Project Plans, information on the localities and the project, as well as audio-visual material such as locality videos and photos are available on [FRA's website](#).

(2017)

Source: FRA, 2018

* 22 localities were initially foreseen for the research, but due to the drop-out of a fieldwork expert and other local circumstances, one of the localities had to be dropped from the project. The research was finalised in 21 localities across 11 Member States.

Table 1: Examples of PAR light and PAR deep techniques

Participatory Action Research techniques	
PAR light	PAR deep
Interviews Focus groups Surveys Public hearings Visioning sessions Charrettes Citizens' councils or juries Consensus conferences Research advisory boards Peers as researcher staff	Peers as co-researchers Forum theatre Legislative theatre Participatory video Photo voice

Source: FRA, 2018

The variety of approaches to implementing participatory projects at the local level, and in adapting the method to the diversity of local situations, is best seen in the distinction between PAR light and PAR deep techniques. PAR light only implements some elements of participation and does not necessarily involve all affected people at all stages of the project. PAR light techniques tend to involve participants in a selective consultation process. In contrast, PAR deep implies a longer timeline and more complex forms of engagement, as participants take part in all stages of the research, from the development of research questions to the evaluation of findings.

The option to select among PAR light or PAR deep techniques was given to the local teams and fieldwork experts implementing the project. The reason for this was to allow for the adaptation of activities and interventions most appropriate to the local dynamics, needs and characteristics of the localities.

Selection of localities and countries covered

The research was carried out in 21 localities in 11 EU Member States. Initially 22 localities – two per Member State – were covered. The Member States covered included: Bulgaria, Czech Republic, Finland, France, Greece, Hungary, Italy, Romania, Slovakia, Spain, and the United Kingdom.

After the pilot phase, several localities had to be changed, due to a number of circumstances. In France, the selected locality of Grenoble was changed due to the inability of the fieldwork expert to continue and the lack of a replacement expert. In Greece, the selected locality of Ampelokipi-Menemeni was changed after an initial field visit of FRA and the national fieldwork experts to the local authority. The visit revealed high levels of tension between the local stakeholders and the local authorities, which rendered problematic

cooperation between the various counterparts. After the visit, the local authority formally withdrew its participation in the project. As these conditions were not conducive to the engagement methodologies foreseen through the participatory action research, a new locality was selected in its place. In early 2016, Glasgow was dropped from the research, due to the inability of the fieldwork expert to continue project implementation and the lack of a replacement expert. The research was completed in the remaining 21 localities as planned.

Table 2 gives an overview of localities covered per Member State, including changes in locality selection.

A multi-stage approach was used to select the research localities. The first stage aimed to create a 'short list' from 342 localities identified as possible sites for the implementation of the research project. The long list was made up of 282 localities across nine Member States (BG, CZ, EL, ES, FR, HU, IT, RO, SK) initially identified; these were drawn from the primary sampling units that had been used in FRA's 2011 Roma survey and were known to be localities with a sizeable Roma population. In addition to these, 60 additional localities were added by the national fieldwork experts, including 10 localities each in both Finland and in the United Kingdom, and 40 localities in the other nine Member States.

In a second stage, localities were evaluated on the basis of exclusion criteria. Localities that did not have prior experience in implementing local projects in the fields of education, employment, housing and/or health were excluded. Localities with existing or pre-existing projects addressing business initiatives, poverty reduction, infrastructure works to limit polarisation and marginalisation, or open access to public services were all considered. This was understood as a necessary condition for the research to take place, due to the overall objectives of the research trying to better understand what works or does not work for local inclusion actions. Localities' previous experience with projects suggests a sufficient



Table 2: Overview of localities

Member State	Initial selection	Final selection
Bulgaria	Stara Zagora	Stara Zagora
	Pavlikeni	Pavlikeni
Czech Republic	Brno	Brno
	Sokolov	Sokolov
Finland	Helsinki	Helsinki
	Jyväskylä	Jyväskylä
France	Grenoble	Lille Metropole
	Strasbourg	Strasbourg
Greece	Aghia Varvara	Aghia Varvara
	Ampelokipi/Menemeni	Megara
Hungary	Besence	Besence
	Mátraverebély	Mátraverebély
Italy	Bologna	Bologna
	Mantua	Mantua
Romania	Aiud	Aiud
	Cluj-Napoca	Cluj-Napoca
Slovakia	Hrabušice	Hrabušice
	Rakytník	Rakytník
Spain	Córdoba	Córdoba
	Madrid	Madrid
United Kingdom	Medway	Medway
	Glasgow	

Source: FRA, 2018

capacity and willingness to implement Roma integration activities and would allow the research to further identify, focus on and intervene in existing practices and guide them in a sustainable manner by means of PAR methodology.

The short-listed localities were then assessed against three criteria, with the aim of identifying the localities with the following traits:

- **Having a past or current local integration strategy** (either targeted specifically towards Roma or mainstream measures that include Roma, as well as indicating whether financial commitments have been allocated to the strategy and whether they have been subject to formal evaluation).
- **Demonstrated openness and motivation to cooperate on the side of the local authority** (e.g. through a local focal point for Roma issues within the local administration, a local Roma advisory council or Roma interlocutor, Roma mediators, or other evidence of a multi-stakeholder approach and openness to addressing Roma inclusion issues).
- **Presence of a network of reliable partners for future cooperation** (including community focal points, relevant civil society organisations, Roma activists, and other individuals working on social inclusion issues or with the Roma communities).

After evaluation of the localities list on the basis of these criteria, a short list of ten localities per Member State was drafted.

Finally, on the basis of further information regarding the composition of the local communities and their specific characteristics, the short lists were further narrowed down to consider a final selection of two localities. This stage involved assessing localities based on: a) the type of Roma community concerned (% of the total population, % national Roma, EU mobile Roma, and third-country national Roma, integrated or segregated settlements); b) geographical considerations of the locality (size, GDP per capita, rural or urban); and c) project management considerations (e.g. capacity of local authorities to implement projects, reliability of local partners, etc.). These indicators were used to make a final selection of 22 localities (2 per Member State) which were considered sufficiently diverse to capture both the national realities and various experiences of different Roma communities.

It is worth noting that in the final selection of localities, there were some exceptions to the above selection criteria. For example, Rakytník did not have

experience with EU-funded development projects before the research project. In fact, the local authorities had very limited experience in project design and limited information on potential funding opportunities. Nevertheless, the local authority (especially the mayor) was highly committed to embracing positive change, the locality had a good track record in involving both Roma and non-Roma residents in small community projects and the local authority demonstrated openness and motivation to take part in an international pilot project like this one. In addition, local Roma were represented in the local council and the local authority showed interest in experimenting with a project that would heavily rely on multi-stakeholder engagement. Therefore there was strong reason to include this locality in the final selection.

The final selected localities represent a diverse geographical, political and economic selection, which is illustrated in Table 3.



Table 3: Overview of locality characteristics

Member State	Locality	GDP/Head (% of EU average)	Size	Settlement	Roma community	% Roma	% Segregated	Community tensions (prior to the project)	Political representation of Roma
Bulgaria	Pavlikeni	< 75%	Town	Sub-Urban	BG Roma	15%	86%	Yes	Yes
	Stara Zagora	< 75%	Large city	Sub-Urban	BG Roma	4%	30-100%	Yes	Yes
Czech Republic	Brno	< 75%	Large city	Urban	CZ Roma	3.60%	55%	No	No
	Sokolov	< 75%	City	Urban	CZ Roma	4%	70%	No	No
Finland	Helinki	> 75%	Large city	Urban	FI Roma, EU Roma	0.33%	13%	No	Yes
	Jyväskylä	> 75%	City	Urban	FI Roma	0.20%		No	Yes
France	Lezennes (Lille Metropole)	> 75%	Large city	Sub-Urban	EU Roma	3.90%	76%	Yes	No
	Strasbourg	> 75%	Large city	Sub-Urban	FR Roma, EU Roma	0.40%	67%	No	No
Greece	Aghia Varvara	< 75%	City	Urban	EL Roma	20-22%	0%	No	Yes
	Megara	< 75%	Small city	Urban	EL Roma	3-50%	100%	Yes	No
Hungary	Besence	< 75%	Village	Rural	HU Roma, EU Roma	50%	0%	No	Yes
	Mátraverebély	< 75%	Village	Rural	HU Roma	50%	70%	No	No

Member State	Locality	GDP/Head (% of EU average)	Size	Settlement	Roma community	% Roma	% Segregated	Community tensions (prior to the project)	Political representation of Roma
Italy	Bologna	> 75%	Large city	Sub-Urban	IT, EU and non-EU Roma	0.20%	100%	Yes	No
	Mantua	> 75%	Small city	Sub-Urban	IT Sinti	0.60%	70%	Yes	No
Romania	Aiud	< 75%	Town	Urban	RO Roma	4%	98.50%	No	Yes
	Cluj-Napoca	< 75%	Large city	Urban	RO Roma	1%	50%	Yes	No
Slovakia	Hrabušice	< 75%	Village	Rural	SK Roma	42%	86%	Yes	No
	Rakytník	< 75%	Village	Rural	SK Roma	25%	75%	No	Yes
Spain	Córdoba	> 75%	City	Urban	ES Roma	2.50%	0%	No	No
	Madrid	> 75%	Large city	Sub-Urban	ES Roma, EU Roma	1.90%	NA	No	No
United Kingdom	Medway	> 75%	Town	Urban	English Gypsies and Travellers	2.80%	5-10%	No	No

Source: FRA, 2018

More than half of the localities (12 out of 21) had a GDP per capita lower than 75 % of the EU average. Eight of the selected localities were large cities, four were medium-sized cities, two were small cities, five were towns and four were villages. The majority of localities (17 out of 21) were urban (10) or sub-urban (7), while only four were rural. In fourteen localities, the Roma communities concerned were made up predominantly of national Roma, while in six localities the Roma communities also consisted of EU national Roma (e.g. predominantly Romanian or Bulgarian Roma living in other EU Member States). Bologna was the only locality which hosted a group of non-EU national Roma. In six localities, the Roma community was considered 'integrated' in the wider municipality, while in the other localities, most Roma lived in segregated areas. In seven localities, significant tensions between the Roma and non-Roma were registered before the start of the research. In eight localities, Roma communities enjoyed political representation.

Limitations of the research

It is important to acknowledge the limitations of the research. While this was mainly a research project, the participatory action research methodology applied in the research called for a set of actions around which to engage participants and create change. From these actions and how they were implemented, the project was able to generate the data and information that is needed to understand the dynamics and complexities of local inclusion efforts. As such, the research was heavily focused on the design and implementation of small-scale local level interventions. In many cases the interventions were by nature ad hoc community-based activities and small-scale projects. These were financed through a modest local fund set up as part of the research methodology to facilitate the 'action' part of the research. The research did not have as an objective to implement a small project as the main aim, but these small actions ended up being a crucial and important part of the overall research process. They contributed to learning, testing participatory methods, and helped to better understand how to engage with Roma communities. This reflects the importance of flexible, small-scale community activities that can produce meaningful change.

This research was a look into the processes, the how and why, and understanding the mechanisms of engagement. Due to the nature of the research and the limited resources/project budget, the focus had to remain at smaller-scale interventions. Because of this, sometimes larger scale issues like employment, infrastructure, etc. could not be tackled, but the learnings could still have implications for EU funding structures and similar Roma integration projects at local, regional and even national level. Sometimes small, flexible activities should be given space, possibility and budget to take place to complement larger-scale efforts and big projects.

A further limitation of the research is that it could not always engage with the entire community. This was often a question of its small scale nature and low budget. In most cases the local research team ended up choosing one particular community or group of Roma to work with (e.g. in Medway where the project ended up not working with the local community of English Gypsies and Travellers and focused only on Roma from the Czech Republic and Slovakia).

The research also worked exclusively on the local level, bringing together local authorities with other local level stakeholders. However, municipalities are not always positioned to address every possible problem. In many cases, solutions to challenges in employment and housing, for example, were issues that needed to be tackled from the regional or national level as well. National legislation was at times a limiting factor, even when local authorities would have been willing to implement certain solutions. This shows how local actions also need to be linked to the bigger picture, to national integration policies and funding mechanisms, and at times areas of competence outside the sphere of influence of local authorities. As such, the research often ended up focusing on developing more ad hoc community level interventions, in particular in localities where addressing wider-scale, systematic or institutional problems such as unemployment or housing were too complex or difficult for a small local intervention to tackle.

These limitations must be considered when interpreting the results and findings of the research.

Annex II: Overview of thematic focus by locality

Table 4: Overview of interventions by primary thematic focus

Country	Locality	Education	Employment	Housing	Health	Empowerment	Community Development	Other
Bulgaria	Pavlikeni	X			X			
	Stara Zagora			X				
Czech Republic	Brno			X				
	Sokolov	X						
Greece	Aghia Varvara	X	X			X (youth)		Monitoring and consultation methods
	Megara	X	X			X		Mediation office; anti-discrimination
Spain	Córdoba							Local strategy development
	Madrid					X		Women
Finland	Helsinki		X	X		X		Women
	Jyväskylä	X				X (youth)		Youth and identity

Country	Locality	Education	Employment	Housing	Health	Empowerment	Community Development	Other
France	Lille	X (language)	X	X		X (expression groups)		
	Strasbourg	X (language)				X (expression groups)		
Hungary	Besence		X					Micro-regional strategy
	Mátaverebély						X	
Italy	Bologna	X (internship)		X (internship)				Communication
	Mantua			X		X (Sinti culture)		Awareness raising
Romania	Aiud			X				
	Cluj-Napoca			X				
Slovakia	Hrabušice	X					X	
	Rakytník		X			X	X	
UK	Medway	X				X (mediators)		

Source: FRA, 2018

Annex III: Overview of locality needs and interventions

MS	Locality	Needs identified	Interventions	Intervention outcomes
BG	Pavlikeni	<p>Education</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Low enrolment in preschool education • Segregation in primary education • Low enrolment in university education <p>Employment</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lack of professional qualifications • Stereotypes about Roma population <p>Health</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Limited access to and quality of health-care services • Preventative healthcare habits are not widespread <p>Intracommunity tensions</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lack of public support for integration policy • Lack of access to ESIF 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Community campaigns to increase enrolment in kindergarten • Campaign to abolish fees for kindergarten • Financial support to university semester fees <p>n/a</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Payment of 50% of 3-year fees to attain status of health insured for 10 people • Beneficiaries participated in awareness campaign • Open Hospitals Day for Roma organized • Empowerment: support for preparing project proposals to access ESIF 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increased enrolment in kindergartens • Support provided to 6 Roma students for their university studies • Increased number of Roma enrolled in university education <p>n/a</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Established model for increasing the number of health insured Roma • Four project proposals submitted
	Stara Zagora	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lack of information about the legal framework for building a house • High unemployment rates • Poor living conditions • Multiple discrimination 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Microcensus • Information campaign • Standardised house designed • Consensus conference 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 45 households enumerated (100% of those evicted and 10% of those at risk) • Information campaign conducted • Focus group on 'the ideal house' • Consensus conference

MS	Locality	Needs identified	Interventions	Intervention outcomes
CZ	Brno	Housing <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Prohibitive costs Limited transparency of flat assignment regulation Discrimination Addiction to substances and gambling Lack of timely crisis intervention 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Assisted in drafting project proposal for ESIF Trained social and peer workers Organised Registry Week Matched rehousing project budget with community events budget 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Approved project proposal for ESIF funding (50 municipal flats) Team of case managers and peer workers prepared for housing stabilization services Registry Week conducted Community events for rehoused families
	Sokolov	Education <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Educational segregation Limited Roma families support Other issues: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Unemployment Health problems Indebtedness Poor housing conditions Discrimination 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Free-of-charge leisure activities combined with education workshops 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> No major policy changes No city or community-level changes
			n/a	n/a
MS	Locality	Needs identified	Interventions	Intervention outcomes
EL	Aghia Varvara	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Educational segregation Limited employment opportunities Cultural differences between the Roma and local community Lack of local monitoring and evaluation tool 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Photovoice project documenting spaces of cooperation and conflict Consultations with Roma on on-the-job training needs Training for municipal authorities in monitoring and evaluation 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Four training courses on entrepreneurship delivered Output from photovoice and interviews presented to municipal authorities and local stakeholders Increased capacity for local authority to design and implement public consultation and engagement
	Megara	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Lack of available statistical data Lack of trust/cooperation between the Roma community and municipal authorities Lack of adequate infrastructure High illiteracy High unemployment rate and lack of peddler's licenses Discrimination / stereotypes 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Support for the design and implementation of a census of Vlycho Photo reportage to strengthen the ties between Roma and non-Roma communities Promoted participation of Roma in the Lifelong Learning Programme 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Census of the Vlycho settlement with input of Roma residents Mediation office established in Vlycho School performance awards to 110 Roma children

MS	Locality	Needs identified	Interventions	Intervention outcomes
ES	Córdoba	Housing <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Poor living conditions, ghettoization and eviction 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Surveys, videos, focus group, workshops and informative talks involving Roma women Equality Plan for Roma in Madrid Roma Feminist Congress 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Participation of Roma community in political decisions Higher self-esteem among Roma women Change in the methodology (working with the Roma, not for the Roma)
		Education <ul style="list-style-type: none"> High dropouts from secondary schools Roma perceived as “social problem”, social visibility, discrimination Poverty and unemployment Gender equality and recognition of women’s value 		
FI	Helsinki	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Lack of access to formal, regular employment Lack of access to housing Lack of equal treatment, anti-Gypsyism, exclusion Violence and discrimination against Roma women and girls 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Income generating intervention Coordinating with other stakeholders (pro-Roma NGOs) for advocacy regarding access to housing and public spaces Documented experiences of ethnic profiling Group discussions for Roma women 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Enhanced skills, knowledge, network for income generation Emergency shelter for non-residents Increased awareness about ethnic profiling of Roma Roma women and girls initiative
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> High dropout levels from school Unsuccessful transition from education into employment Limited access to social services Discrimination and isolation 		
Jyväskylä	Jyväskylä	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> High dropout levels from school Unsuccessful transition from education into employment Limited access to social services Discrimination and isolation 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Evaluation of ongoing ESIF project Training guidance for counsellors about Roma issues Improving access to health and social services Enhance engagement with local community and promoting Pan-European identity 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Increased school completion and on-the-job training Roma community included in dialogue to develop Roma-inclusive social services support International Roma Day activities, Roma-focused projects presented to general public
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> High dropout levels from school Unsuccessful transition from education into employment Limited access to social services Discrimination and isolation 		

MS	Locality	Needs identified	Interventions	Intervention outcomes
FR	Lille	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Limited self-confidence and awareness of rights and obligations Strong reliance on social workers Number of applications for accommodation in 'inclusion villages' exceeding availability Poor living conditions High illiteracy (including French) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Community visioning (recycling activities) Communication strategy on anti-discrimination Expression groups for inclusive housing blocks Training of AFEJL social workers 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Communication strategy Expression groups Trust-building and capacity-building Change in relationship between Roma and civil society organisations
	Strasbourg	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Limited access to employment Limited access to education Limited (French) language proficiency 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Cultural workshops (theatre, photography, cooking, music) Enhancing Roma self-confidence and self-esteem 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Music workshop Theatre workshop for children Theatre workshop for adults Expression groups Photography workshop Face-to-face interviews Improved confidence in speaking French Improved language skills Increased self-esteem

MS	Locality	Needs identified	Interventions	Intervention outcomes
HU	Besence	<p>Employment</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lack of job opportunities, lack of investment, low wages, low level of available income • Lack of development funds • Lack of motivation <p>Housing</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lack of access to local lands • Poor infrastructure <p>Community Development</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lack of leisure-time programs and youth clubs <p>Empowerment</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Low self-esteem • Loss of perspective, high degree of migration to Western EU countries • Low motivation and low participation in community programs 	<p>Employment</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Small scale agricultural project – chicken breeding in Csanyoszro • Study trip to Tiszakecske <p>Community Development</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Leisure-time micro project for women in Vajszlo <p>Empowerment</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Update local economic development strategy (precondition for accessing EU development funds) • Creation of local development fund in Besence 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identification of four new fields for local economic strategy • Bi-weekly dance classes, mostly for children
	Mátraverebély	<p>Employment</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • High unemployment rate • Few job opportunities • Lack of skills • Lack of mobility • Ethnic discrimination <p>Education</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Educational segregation <p>Community development</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lack of active local community • Lack of community space 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pilot of community radio station • Local quarterly calendar: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - local research - local history database - printing and publishing - evaluation of the programme 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Learning about the basic elements and techniques of radio-making • Self-confidence of Roma youth • Innovative ideas on public work programmes • International networking

MS	Locality	Needs identified	Interventions	Intervention outcomes
IT	Bologna	<p>Education</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Low levels of education and socio-political participation <p>Employment</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Limited access to formal employment • Low income <p>Housing</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Spatial segregation <p>Empowerment</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lack of cultural recognition • Limited knowledge of (and trust in) public institutions • Lack of mediators and spokespersons <p>Roma / non-Roma relations</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Vulnerability and widespread anti-Roma feelings • Tensions between Roma and Sinti communities 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mediator training through internships • Training on activism • Involvement in cultural events 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 10 internships in policy areas of education (1), housing (5) and culture/communication (4)
	Mantua	<p>Education</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lack of funding • Lack of teacher training on Roma and Sinti issues • Lack of cultural mediators • Limited use of the Sinti language <p>Housing</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Spatial segregation • Some Sinti own agricultural land but are not allowed to build on it • Lack of policies to support low-income families acquire housing <p>Employment</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Limited access to employment • Lack of informal connections • Low level of education, skills mismatch <p>Empowerment</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lack of cultural recognition • Low levels of attention devoted to Roma and Sinti by cultural producers <p>Roma / non-Roma relations</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Discrimination and hate speech 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Design and set-up of Sinti culture institute 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Establishment of the Sinti Culture Institute • Improved mutual acknowledgement and understanding among local Sinti community, Sugar Drom, and municipal government • Refurbishment of the municipal camp • Improved awareness of local authorities regarding conditions of Sinti in Mantua • Expressed commitment of the municipal government to social inclusion – administrative guidelines

MS	Locality	Needs identified	Interventions	Intervention outcomes
RO		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Insecure and inadequate housing Lack of information and capacity to address housing issues Difficult access to education Limited employment opportunities Discrimination Limited participation in local decision making 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Housing security for residents in Bethlen Gabor Legalising the tenancy of residents in Bufa Documentation of housing conditions in Feleud and Poligon 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 11 households regularised through local council decision 13 social housing applications submitted Report on housing needs and technical documentation of informal settlement LAG capacity building
	Cluj-Napoca	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Lack of access to adequate social housing Lack of legal recognition for informal housing Lack of awareness of local authorities about issues of housing exclusion 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Social housing applications (135) Creation of Local Action Group on Housing Inclusion Mapping the housing situation of marginalised urban areas Legal mapping 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Proposal for amending the allotment criteria of social housing Four area documents and two resource documents (legalization of informal settlements, prevention of forced eviction)



MS	Locality	Needs identified	Interventions	Intervention outcomes
SK	Hrabušice	<p>Employment</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Limited employment opportunities Low level of human and social capital Discrimination <p>Education</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> High drop-out rates from secondary school <p>Community Participation</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Lack of leisure-time opportunities Need to strengthen locals' capacity & motivation for developing their own small projects Need for public spaces Limited capacity of local government to address structural problems 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Design and construction of an amphitheatre Participatory needs assessment survey conducted by pupils Cookery project with training in household financial management Community project training Youth activities 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Amphitheatre constructed Two youngsters participated in international exchange Two summer camps for children from poor families Benches and trash bins installed
	Rakytník	<p>Employment</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Lack of employment opportunities <p>Empowerment - Youth</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Lack of opportunities for local youth and children <p>Education</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Lack of education opportunities, especially pre-primary education <p>Housing</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Lack of housing, basic infrastructural needs <p>Access to ESIF</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Shortage of financial resources in municipal budget 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> International youth exchange Improvement of community infrastructure Facilitation of micro-regional cooperation 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Local action group (CLLD) Public space that offers possibility for community open-air cooking Elaboration of regional development strategy

MS	Locality	Needs identified	Interventions	Intervention outcomes
UK	Medway	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Limited access to adult education; improved language capacity as an enabler for social integration, access to other rights Low employment-related skills Need for better information regarding public services Lack of organisation and representation among Roma in Medway 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Inclusion through learning (family learning model) Community engagement through learning (family learning model) Academic support and community cohesion for high school pupils (Roma and non-Roma) Integration through dialogue 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Improved language skills and confidence among adult participants Improved academic ability, understanding and confidence among youth Improved information / engagement with community, service providers Presentation and discussion forums with service providers; creation of Medway Czechoslovak Association; developing advocacy skills; membership of Medway Youth Parliament

Source: FRA, 2018



Annex IV: Contractors and fieldwork experts

The research was implemented under a framework contract by a consortium comprised of the following partners: ICF International, Bolt International Consulting, and the Budapest Institute for Policy Analysis.

The research was carried out at the local level by the following field experts:

Bulgaria:

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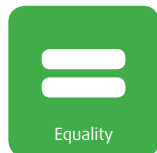
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HELPING TO MAKE FUNDAMENTAL RIGHTS A REALITY FOR EVERYONE IN THE EUROPEAN UNION

This report presents the main insights gained during the EU Fundamental Rights Agency's project on local engagement for Roma inclusion, which explores how to best involve Roma in integration efforts at the local level. Bringing together local authorities and residents, especially Roma, it investigated what aspects work, which ones do not, and why this is the case. The 21 localities in 11 Member States covered by the research involved diverse local contexts, needs and challenges. But the experiences in all of them underscored that resources need to be better used to bring actual improvements in the lives of Roma across the EU. This report outlines the main lessons learned during the research, providing an opportunity to improve the design, implementation and monitoring of integration efforts at local level – for the benefit of all individuals still living on the margins of society, Roma and otherwise.



**SUSTAINABLE
DEVELOPMENT GOALS**

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