



CITY GUIDELINES

Developing an integrated city plan for Roma inclusion

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Introduction

With its commitment to reduce poverty and discrimination against Roma¹ people, EUROCITIES supports cities in developing integrated city plans for Roma inclusion. The working group on Roma inclusion gathers 57 cities from across Europe to work together towards improving local policies on Roma inclusion, in line with the needs of Roma people.

EUROCITIES organises regular activities for mutual learning between cities to foster transfer of knowledge, experience and good practices among city authorities. The methodologies we use for mutual learning aim at scaling up and transferring innovative practices from one city to another. For this purpose, EUROCITIES developed the ‘critical friend review’ method to review a local policy or programme. The method consists of a structured study visit to a city that invites other cities to provide feedback on its local policy or programme for Roma inclusion. City experts from all over Europe go to visit the host city, learn about its policy or programme through field visits, interviews with practitioners and beneficiaries, and then provide friendly critical feedbacks and propose tailored actions to improve or scale up the policy or programme of the host city. A specific focus throughout the study visit is put on ensuring meaningful participation of Roma people to the review process. The goal of the critical friend review is to help the host city improve Roma access to education, employment, housing, healthcare and eliminate discrimination against Roma people in access to public services.

Context

On 24-26 September 2019, Braga hosted a study visit of the EUROCITIES working group Roma inclusion. 21 Roma inclusion experts (both policy makers and practitioners) from 13 cities² visited Braga for a critical friend review of Braga’s project on Roma inclusion. Besides supporting Braga in reviewing and scaling up its actions on Roma inclusion, city experts have produced a set of guidelines to support other cities interested in developing an integrated city plan for Roma inclusion.

Why develop an integrated approach to Roma inclusion at local level?

Roma - Europe’s largest ethnic minority - are often confronted with discrimination and unequal access to vital services. EUROCITIES’ mapping of the situation of Roma in large European cities³ shows that their situation remains critical. The study found that compared to the overall population, Roma experience:

- higher risk of poverty and more severe forms of poverty
- higher unemployment rates and more precarious jobs, due to a lack of qualifications but also discrimination from employers

¹ The term ‘Roma’ is used in line with the terminology of the EU institutions and international organisations to refer to a number of different groups and includes Gypsy and Travellers, without denying these groups’ specific characteristics.

² Antwerp, Belfast, Berlin, Braga, Ghent, Glasgow, Gothenburg, Grenoble Alpes Metropole, Oslo, Tetovo, Vienna. A representative of the North Macedonian government also contributed to the discussions.

³ EUROCITIES (2017). *Roma inclusion in cities: Mapping of the situation of Roma in cities in Europe*. <https://bit.ly/2GhKJVy>

- lower levels of education, with a low participation in higher education, higher absenteeism and drop out
- worse housing situation with overcrowded and precarious housing, while also being discriminated against by landlords
- more limited access to basic services (electricity, energy, sanitation, running water), in particular when living in camps
- higher risks for certain health conditions (obesity, heart and lung diseases)
- lack of information about the social services they are entitled to, combined with frequent mistrust due to priori discriminatory experiences

Pushed by the critical situation of Roma people on the ground, cities have developed integrated approaches for the inclusion of Roma at local level. More than half of cities (52%) surveyed in EUROCITIES' mapping have a local strategy for Roma integration. In many cases, these follow the framework set at EU level for Roma integration⁴. Other municipalities include Roma as a specific target group in their mainstream strategies against poverty and exclusion.

Examples of city-led integrated approaches to Roma inclusion

City plans and strategies develop integrated approaches through programmes that address the multi-faceted challenges of poverty and exclusion faced by Roma people. Municipalities also put a strong focus on participatory approaches. Nearly all cities identified in the mapping have structures in place to engage with Roma, such as local Roma councils and consultation platforms.

In **Braga**, the integrated plan of action for disadvantaged communities (PAICD) puts a strong focus on three priority social neighbourhoods where the majority of the inhabitants are Roma. The city's action plan combines urban and environmental regeneration of the area (including through refurbishment of the housing) with transversal projects focussing on education, culture, fighting discrimination and promoting interculturality.

Grenoble's local plan adopts an integrated approach with a specific focus on housing and employment. Based on an experimental project implemented in 2011, the programme was then expanded in 2013. A strong partnership is established with different stakeholders, from volunteers who support Roma people to find accommodation and identify job opportunities, to the University of Grenoble which conducts a study on the impact of 'housing first' on the Roma community.

A successful approach of the city has consisted in providing Roma families with temporary housing alongside support to find work and obtain their own non-temporary accommodation. 83% of the families involved in this programme find their own flat within 20 months. Job insertion is also fostered through language classes, internships and work placement or support to prepare job applications and interviews.

⁴ European Commission (2011) Communication of 5.04.2011: An EU Framework for National Roma Integration Strategies up to 2020. COM (2011) 0173 final. <https://bit.ly/3aBBhLZ>

Tetovo benefited from European funds as well as national donors to update the local action plan. The broad involvement of all affected stakeholders, including representatives of the Roma community, was ensured from the start. A strong focus is put on gathering accurate data on the situation of Roma in different areas of the city. Realistic defined objectives and targets ensure that the impact of the different measures in the action plan can be evaluated.

The strategy developed by the municipality of **Turin** aims in particular at supporting Roma to access adequate and decent housing to overcome authorised and spontaneous parking areas. A thorough mapping of the resources at local level (especially in terms of available housing options) helps identifying the best opportunities. This is combined with an individual assessment of each family's situation to map their economic possibilities & needs and provide them with the most adequate housing solution.

Guidelines for developing an integrated city plan for Roma inclusion

The EUROCITIES' mapping has identified five success factors for a successful city initiative for Roma inclusion, which are:

1. An integrated and coordinated approach
2. A combination of area-based and people-based solutions
3. A participatory approach to engaging Roma from the start
4. A strong partnership between the municipality and Roma NGOs
5. Secured funding for implementation post pilot phase

The city experts visiting Braga and participating in the critical friend review took part in a workshop where they reflected and discussed how to translate these five success factors into operational work. As a result of their group work, they prepared a set of guidelines to support municipalities on how to develop integrated city plans for Roma inclusion.

Ensuring proper mapping and monitoring of the situation



1. Mapping the initial situation

Identifying the needs

When starting to draft a city plan for Roma inclusion, it is essential to have a clear understanding of the specific local situation. Especially it is important to know the local Roma communities, their specific needs and their dynamics. In a given city, different groups might co-exist and may be confronted with different problems (e.g. domestic Roma and EU mobile citizens Roma coming from different countries face very different challenges that affect their access to support services). Gaining this precise knowledge will help clarify their needs as well as identify resources.

To gather such information, cities can conduct street survey and directly interview Roma people. Social field workers should, to the extent possible, aim at hearing the needs of each Roma family. This comprehensive needs' assessment should cover all aspects of life, including the possession or not of documents and permits, the education and work background and experience, the housing situation, the schooling of children (registration and attendance), access to social benefits, etc. Such a thorough mapping requires time - up to several months - but will establish a good basis for future activities and foster trust from Roma people. It is indeed essential to engage Roma from the beginning by asking them directly about their needs.

While the focus on the Roma population is essential in this context, gaining a precise vision of the position of the mainstream population will facilitate a city plan which addresses all relevant aspects. Indeed, the non-Roma population might express concerns or needs that will have to be addressed, or on the contrary provide resources that can be of interest. Often, the poverty faced by people living in a certain neighbourhood of a city is not specific to Roma people, but is common to all inhabitants of the poor neighbourhood. Therefore, many times cities need to develop *mainstream* measures against poverty that are relevant to both Roma and non-Roma people.

The aim of a thorough mapping is to provide the municipality with all relevant elements to identify the specific barriers that the city plan should address.

Establishing an initial baseline

The information gathered in this first mapping should be supported by a collection of data. These will indeed provide a local baseline that will facilitate adequate monitoring during the implementation of the city plan. Several sectors might be considered to establish a comprehensive picture of the situation. These could focus on the following elements:

- Demography (number of households, number of persons per family, age, gender, nationalities, city of origin etc.)
- Education (educational background for adults but also school registration and attendance, skills and grades of children etc.)
- Employment (work experience, current occupation, presence or not of a contract etc.)
- Health (current health status, access to health care, coverage of a potential health insurance etc.)
- Housing (stability of the housing situation, adequacy in terms of space compared to number of members in the household, decency criteria, legal contract etc.)

Collecting data on Roma inclusion might be challenging for local authorities. Different methods can be considered, in line with national legislations, such as self-identification or indirect gathering of information by targeting other groups (people in poverty, EU-mobile citizens, etc.). Partnerships with universities could also be envisaged. They can conduct desktop research for the mapping, thus ensuring academic rigour in the initial baseline. Building on robust data is indeed an important success element for a city plan for Roma inclusion.

Defining the structure of work

Besides identifying the beneficiaries and the needs that will be addressed, the initial mapping phase should also be an opportunity to define how the work will be structured.

In particular, all actors involved in the related sectors (public services, NGOs, existing project partnerships...) should be identified in order to set an inclusive partnership of allies,

and their role should be clearly defined. The engagement of all relevant stakeholders, in particular Roma people themselves (not representatives of the Roma communities), from an early stage on can foster better understanding and acceptance of actions conducted by the municipality, but also more precise targeting of these activities with better outcomes.

A clear framework for the city plan should also specify which target group the different actions should address. While Roma communities might be the focus of most activities, other groups with similar needs (migrants, people in poverty, etc.) could also benefit from some activities. Furthermore, fostering inclusion of Roma people also requires working with the mainstream population to tackle in particular prejudices and anti-gypsyism.



2. Defining clear objectives and indicators

A successful city plan requires clear, realistic and defined objectives that should be attained during the implementation of the action plan. These objectives will set the direction of the work of the municipality and its partners. They would be in line with the needs identified during the needs assessment and results from interviews with Roma people. For example, if one problem identified is high school dropout among Roma students, the objective would be to reduce the school dropout of Roma children. A specific percentage or figure could be defined in advance to establish a target. The different measures that will be implemented should contribute to reaching these objectives.

The goal should also be supported by clear measurable targets and related indicators. They will ensure proper tracking of the process towards the goals, throughout the implementation phase.

Moreover, having defined objectives and targets will help communicate on the city plan and inform on progress.



3. Monitoring the process

The operation of a city plan is a process which can be readjusted and improved according to the needs and first results. Yet this requires close monitoring of the implementation and first outcomes. To ensure this, a monitoring mechanism should be defined with regular meetings to discuss the evolutions and establish intermediary assessments. Depending on the cities, this takes different form (steering group, monitoring table with partners and beneficiaries, interagency Roma monitoring group, etc.). The structure and the work of this monitoring mechanism should be defined from the beginning (alongside the objective and targets of the city plan). Involvement of the Roma community in the monitoring as well as throughout the whole process should be guaranteed to give them ownership of the results.



4. Evaluating the results

At the end of the implementation period of the city plan, its results should be evaluated against the objectives and targets initially defined. This includes both the outcomes and, with a long-term perspective, the impact of the city plan. Ideally, the evaluation should be conducted externally by a neutral body and involve a representative group of stakeholders and beneficiaries, especially from among the different Roma communities. The EU Agency for Fundamental Rights⁵ provides for example support in this regard. This step is especially important when reflecting on the need for improvements and further actions and their nature.

⁵ EU Agency for Fundamental Rights. <https://fra.europa.eu/en>

Developing an inclusive participatory approach



1. WORKING together with the Roma community

The establishment of a successful city plan for Roma inclusion requires regular and trust-based dialogue with Roma people, from the development of the strategy to its evaluation and throughout each step of the implementation. A Roma advisory group could be established and consulted regularly in the whole process. In case different Roma communities are present in the city, their individual positions should be heard.

Yet for some groups, it might be difficult to establish regular contacts with their representatives (for example, the travellers). Also, while collaborating with Roma NGOs might be useful, it is vital to establish direct links with the members of the Roma community themselves as they can provide real-time information about their actual needs and worries. Separate dialogues could be organised with different groups within the community (e.g. men and women, leaders and ordinary members of the community, etc.) so that all points of view are heard. In particular, Roma children and women, who are often marginalised and suffer multiple discrimination, should be enabled to have their voices heard in the process.

To bridge with members of the Roma communities, mediators play here an essential role. Similarly, having one or several Roma people in the municipal services involved in the city plan might facilitate relationships. Ideally, there should be more than one mediator who come directly from the Roma communities, to ensure maximum trust and avoid any conflict of interest.

Adopting this bottom-up approach and listening to the needs and wishes of Roma people is also a way to empower Roma people and encourage them to be actively part of the inclusion programme. Structured dialogue can also improve their trust in public authorities, which might have been damaged by previous negative experience.

Establishing a trust-based dialogue is a two-way street; it takes engagement both from the Roma people but also from the public authorities. In this regard, the most effective way is to employ social workers from the social services of the city and to make them responsible for fieldwork in the Roma communities. A casework approach often works best by which a given social worker is the main contact with a given Roma family and he/she supports the family in contact with other public services: with healthcare professionals when vaccination of children is required, with educators, with social housing services etc. Over time, the contact with the same social worker makes the Roma family build trust and helps their accompanying towards supportive measures for their integration and inclusion.

In **Ghent**, ‘neighbourhood stewards’ support EU mobile families living in precarious situations Roma. They build relations of trust in order to emancipate these families. Neighbourhood stewards mediate between them and the regular city services and organisations. The methods are adapted on a case by case basis: prevention, information, trajectories, mediation etc.

Gothenburg’s Roma and knowledge centre was set up upon request from the domestic Roma in the city. It is based on the existing structures of the municipality and Roma were involved throughout the process of setting it up. Their participation was considered by the city council a key success factor.



2. Involving the local population

Ensuring an inclusive participatory approach also requires the involvement of the non-Roma population. Inclusion of Roma is a two-way process which involves changes for the Roma communities as well as other inhabitants. Especially, better mutual understanding of the two groups should be fostered. Community conversations can for example be organised with open invitations to multi-cultural evenings or events. Besides enabling neutral encounters and dialogue between the different members of the local community, these reunions can provide information on how the initiative was received, potential concerns and perceived areas for improvement. Cultural events could also be organised, giving Roma the opportunity to present their traditions, culture and language. Having non-Roma learn about Roma people would foster acceptance and understanding to combat anti-gypsyism. Roma people would also see that they are being valued and listen to and could feel more comfortable to open up more towards non-Roma in the community.



3. Communicating

Another important element for good understanding and successful implementation of a city plan for Roma inclusion is to communicate. In particular, it is useful to build a narrative and inform on the objectives that motivate the different actions. In this regard, targeted communication might be required to differentiate between several types of audience. Collaborating with the media can also facilitate the diffusion of your message. Yet communicating in Roma-friendly language (avoiding prejudices, offending language, using easy to understand wordings in case of language barriers, etc.) might require some sensibilisation of journalists and other people in charge of communication.

Establishing an integrated framework of action



1. Developing an integrated way of working

According to several studies, successful activities for Roma inclusion adopt integrated approaches. A transversal method should be adopted at political level to then be transposed in the city administration. Multi-agency work between different city departments and agencies (e.g. social services cooperating with employment and education services, healthcare, childcare, social housing agency etc.) enables to better connect information and work with a problem-solving perspective.

Integrated strategies often require clear leadership and definition of responsibilities. For some cities, this concretely means having one coordinator and a coordination platform / service.

To ensure clarity and simplification of the process for beneficiaries, a single entry-point might be established (e.g. the community service in the neighbourhood) to access the different services, be oriented according to ones' needs or receive information. Structures already in place and used by Roma people might also provide an opportunity to link other activities (for example organising alphabetisation, language classes, professional trainings, etc. in the school attended by Roma children in order to reach out to mothers).



2. Integrating different services provided at city level

Municipal services covered in integrated city plan for Roma inclusion often encompass health services, housing support, culture, education (from early childhood education and care to professional training) and labour market integration.

Example of actions in the above-mentioned areas:

- Employ a Roma health support worker dedicated to the Roma community
- Create a laboratory of social housing for the private sector to ensure their involvement and ensure mixing of population when new buildings are constructed
- Use public procurement social clauses to foster employment of the Roma community (e.g. in particular in refurbishment projects)
- Encourage Roma inclusion in the labour market through individual work placements, internships etc. Besides ensuring first work experience, this might help fight prejudices against Roma people among employers in the labour market



3. Addressing anti-gypsyism

Alongside providing support in the different areas that affect the everyday life of Roma people, integrated city plan should aim at combatting anti-gypsyism. Prejudices against the Roma community often prevent them from benefitting from many opportunities, accessing services or fully exercising their rights. The fight against anti-gypsyism needs to be tackled at all levels, from schools to service providers, landlords, employers or media.

Example of actions on fighting anti-gypsyism:

- Organise regular Roma awareness sessions open to all citizens to encourage open discussion and foster meeting between Roma people and the rest of the population.
- Target anti-discrimination workshops at school to educate and promote diversity. These actions can deconstruct prejudices among teachers and foster better acceptance among pupils.
- As part of its 'Integrated Plan of Action for Disadvantaged Communities', Braga developed a set of immaterial intervention through artistic and cultural activities to fight stigma associated to Roma-majority neighbourhoods. In particular the project 'who is afraid' aims at promoting attitudes of mutual respect for the difference by bringing together the Roma culture to the society where they live. By working on education, the project deconstructs fear & prejudice and showcase interculturality as an added value.

Securing a long-term vision



1. Building on a long-term strategic and political approach

Successful city plans are based on a long-term strategic vision and supported by strong political will. A broad network of allies can promote inclusive cities for all and encourage politicians to address the needs for Roma inclusion. Ideally, a transversal political platform could be created to push for political support across different parties and foster long-term approach. Obtaining the support from a mayor or deputy mayor is a first good step, but ensuring a broader political support in the city council for the Roma inclusion plan can facilitate continuity of the commitment in case of a change in the local political majority.

Advocacy for a broad spectrum of political support can be facilitated through collaboration

with networks at local, national and European level. Using existing frameworks and legislations at the different levels - in particular national Roma inclusion strategies and the EU framework for Roma inclusion - can add external incentives for taking action on ensuring Roma inclusion in the long run.

Besides ensuring strong political will, adopting long-term perspectives require a strategic approach. Long term perspectives should be supported by short terms goals which address the priorities and are then enhanced to include broader elements. Projects are here useful tools to experiment new approaches and secure funds, but successful pilots should then be further integrated into permanent institutions.

Similarly, continuity of the team should be encouraged to build the expertise and the trust (in particular in the relations with the Roma community).



2. Building future capacities

The inclusion of Roma people is an intricate issue which will not be solved in the short run. Therefore, integrated city plans for Roma inclusion should address several generations and build future capacities. In particular good examples and role models should be promoted to provide inspiration.

The political involvement of Roma people should also be encouraged. By creating links between politicians (in particular the mayor) and the Roma community, dedicated activities could foster mutual understanding and confidence in that Roma people are an integral part of the city. Alongside support to register to vote, these actions can also increase their turnout, their capacities to make informed choices and to be represented.



3. Working together with regional, national and EU authorities

Roma people are part of a highly mobile community, not only in terms of moving between different cities in the same country, but often also across different countries. It is therefore crucial to establish good working channels between local and national authorities and links between city strategies and policies at the national level. This can contribute to ensuring a greater degree of coherence across different sets of actions and be more efficient in terms of the management of funds and resources.

This multi-level approach should take a three-fold form, according to local Roma peoples' needs: 1) in partnerships involving authorities across different governance levels for a comprehensive approach to Roma inclusion; 2) in the coherence of actions taken on the basis of local and national level strategies as well as in relation to the EU framework; 3) in combining and creating synergies between different funding pots from the local level to national plans and EU funding instruments, such as ESF+, FEAD and ERDF.

Investing today in Roma inclusion will foster inclusive cities for all tomorrow.



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