



A PRACTICAL GUIDE

**THE ROMA PEOPLE AND THE USE OF ICT
AS A SOCIO-ECONOMIC AND CULTURAL
INCLUSION TOOL**

Some guidelines

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Lifelong Learning Programme

This is a product of the project “Promoting digital literacy of Roma people toward their active citizenship” funded by the European Commission under the EU LLP Grundtvig Programme.

The project aims at analysing and exchanging good practices on the activation of one of the most excluded minority in Europe, i.e. Roma people, and the role of ICT in this process. The projects aims at increasing awareness on some of the most important challenges Europe is facing nowadays, such as social exclusion of Roma people that hinders social cohesion, digital divide among European citizens, and the lack of awareness of rights and duties European citizens are entitled to.

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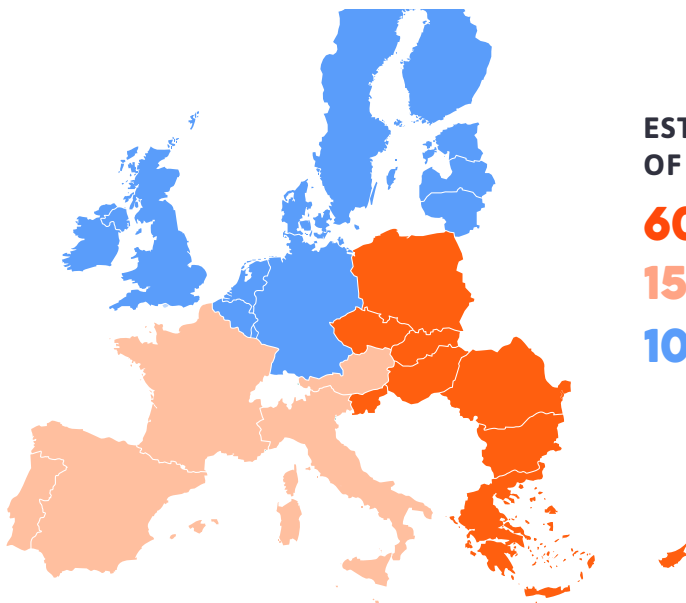
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1. INTRODUCTION

→ **The Roma people are the largest category of the minority groups in Europe. The Council of Europe deems that the Roma populations in Europe comprise about 11,155,000 units.**

Romania is the country with the largest number of Roma people (1 million, 800 thousand units). Significant data have also been recorded in Spain, where the members of the Roma people are about 800 thousand, as too in Hungary and Bulgaria where there are between 700 thousand and 750 thousand units.



ESTIMATED BREAKDOWN OF ROMA POPULATION IN EUROPE

60% - 70%

15% - 20%

10% - 15%

It is estimated that between 60% and 70% of the total European Roma people live in the Carpathian-Balkan region, between 15% and 20% in the south-west of Europe (the Iberian peninsula and France) and the remaining 10/15% in the rest of Europe.

1. INTRODUCTION

In many of its documents, the European Commission distinguishes between the Roma people on the basis of the type of settlement and legal status:

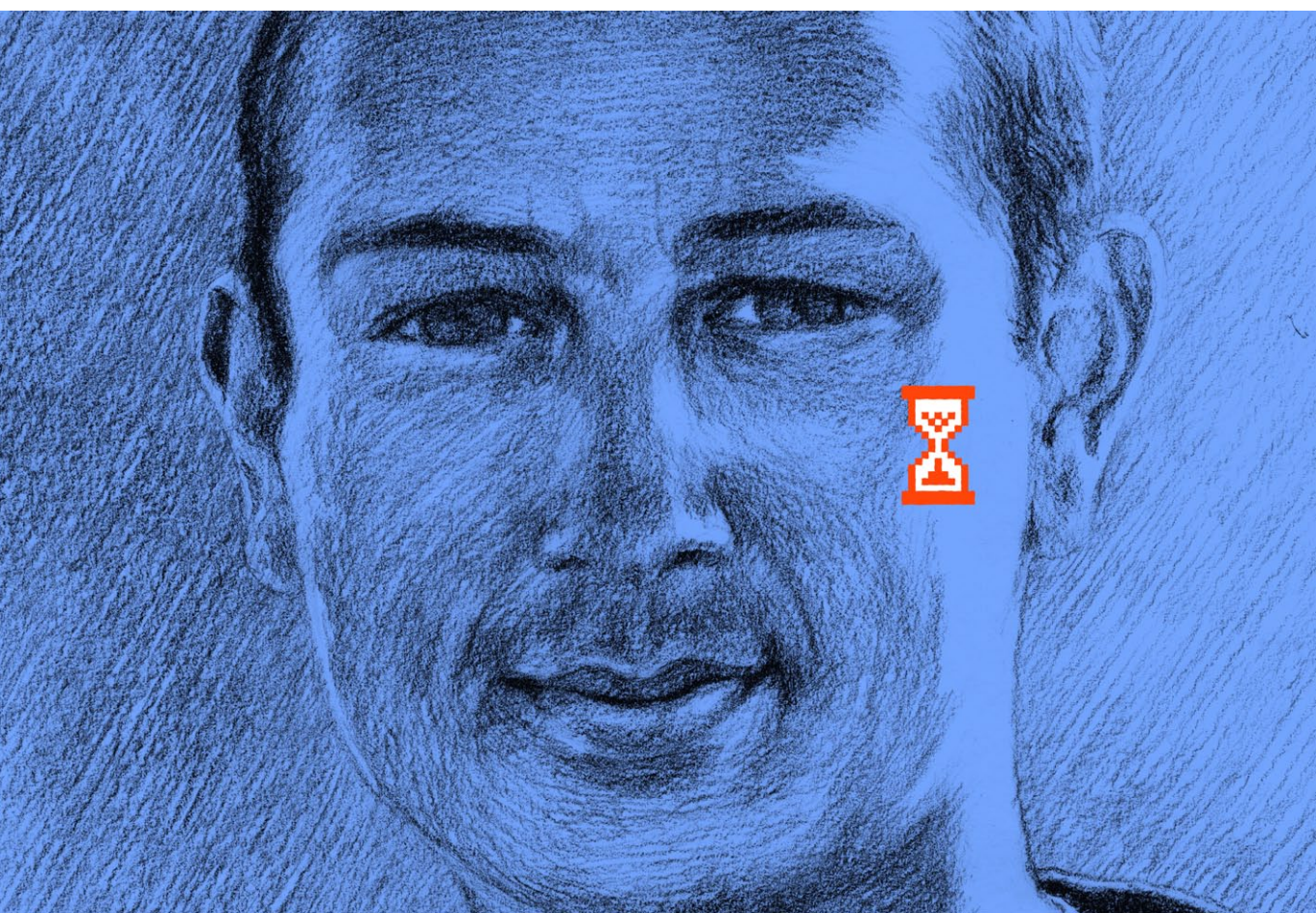
1. Communities that live in a high-density urban/suburban setting in highly deprived conditions, at the margins of mainstream society.
2. Communities that live in rural areas, in isolated villages and separate from the main cities.
3. Nomadic communities with the nationality of a European member country.
4. Nomadic or sedentary communities composed of non-European nationals, refugees, stateless persons or applicants for asylum.

These four categories are present in most of the EU member countries in different degrees. It is interesting to note that, although the number of persons nomadic who live in nomadic communities is decidedly smaller than ones living in settled communities, nomadism continues to be considered a characteristic of this community.

Although they represent an important minority within Europe, and one which in the majority of cases is stably settled, the Roma communities continue to live in extreme hardship with regards to housing, education and welfare, with living standards that are decidedly lower than the majority of the population, albeit in different degrees according the different countries. In particular, data regarding the Roma's living conditions

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are worrying and describe a condition of spatial segregation which in turn has a negative effect on access to education, employment and health. In absolute terms, approximately 852 thousand Roma live in housing that are ranked lower than the minimum conditions, or in huts, although the differences between the EU countries are rather marked and Spain records the best results (Fundacion Secretariado Gitano, 2009:25). The difficulties identified in each of these spheres (housing, education, welfare) in turn give rise to a vicious circle and situations of social exclusion. This situation can be historically



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traced back to prejudices, stereotypes and absence of political commitment in favour of effective social inclusion. In this regard, the Council of Europe has stated that, although the Roma people have the same rights and duties as the rest of the population, they form a group that is, in fact, underprivileged and particularly vulnerable to social exclusion, poverty and discrimination. A special mention must be made of the female population, which is exposed to greater risk, as recognised by the majority of the EU member states.

Given the heterogeneous composition of the Roma populations, it is clear that the actual number of communities in Europe cannot be considered univocal, or definitive.

According to the Open Society Foundation's report "No Data – No Progress" (June 2010), within the framework of the Decade of Roma Inclusion, 2005-2015: "The lack of data on Roma communities remains the biggest obstacle" to assessing their living conditions and analysing the impact of relevant national measures and policies. As highlighted in the document: "Without disaggregated statistics it is difficult to set goals, to determine the tools for pursuing these goals, and to assess the impact of each single decision. A better knowledge of the Roma world is necessary for breaking the vicious circle of ignorance and prejudice: ignorance generates prejudices, and prejudices foster ignorance."

A delicate issue of no easy solution regarding data collection is due to the fact that the only tool possible for attributing Roma identity to a given person is self-report. The census system of self-reporting is prone to considerable underestimation. As

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soon as the Roma escape their condition of social deprivation, they practically disappear from the statistics. The reason for this is that in the majority of cases, with the exclusion of stateless persons, the fact of being Roma is no longer recorded in any document (rental contracts, labour contracts and school registers only require nationality) and often, even though it might be requested, the Roma origin is not mentioned to avoid any possible (and probable) discrimination.

And this is another way with which the stereotype that identifies the Roma as condemned to ostracism continues to be strengthened.

→ ***It would be desirable, therefore, that in the future we try to address the issue of data collection in a more thorough, sociologically refined way than we have until now, in order to obtain all the necessary elements for devising involvement strategies for the Roma communities and improve their standards of living, while at the same time safeguarding the fundamental values of their ancient and unique culture.***

As already mentioned, apart from the discrepancies found in the data, the Roma people are the largest minority group in Europe, but their legal recognition as a minority is still very far from representing a model in European countries, and this surely must be one of the reasons for the poor success of the initiatives implemented for the communities and for their continuing condition of exclusion.

1. INTRODUCTION

The legalisation of the RSC communities, stateless persons in particular, and their official recognition as a minority is surely an **overriding priority** in order to be able to proceed along the path to a full integration of these populations in Europe.

On April 16 2015, the European Parliament acknowledged that the phenomenon of antigypsyism still exists in Europe and proposed considering April 15 as the date of commemoration of the Roma genocide during World War 2. ■



2. THE NEW EUROPEAN STRATEGY

- Europe has worked hard on the subject of Roma integration: from the nineties until today 9 Resolutions, 7 Directives, 2 Decisions, 1 Regulation, 4 Conclusions, 2 Communications have been published, together with the launch of numerous specific initiatives (creation of a Task Force, setting up of the 2005-2015 Decade for the Inclusion of Roma People, report of the European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights - FRA, the Roma education fund).

2. THE NEW EUROPEAN STRATEGY

The intensification of EU interest in the Roma minority groups, substantiated by the significant number of documents on the subject, stems from the need to deal with the impact prompted by the free movement of persons due to the increase in migratory flows towards the west, but especially to the enlargement of the EU to 27 countries, thanks to which millions of Roma have become EU citizens.

The Community debate culminated in the EU Framework for National Roma Integration Strategies, the Community framework within which all European countries are committed to promoting the inclusion of the Roma communities, uniting both national and European forces.

Moreover, by 2009 the Europe Union had already approved the **10 Common Basic Principles on Roma Inclusion which should guide national policies at all times and be a fixed reference point for the adoption of best practice.**

→ THE 10 BASIC PRINCIPLES RECOMMEND:

1. *Constructive, pragmatic and non-discriminatory policies*
2. *Explicit but not exclusive targeting*
3. *Inter-cultural approach*
4. *Aiming for the mainstream*
5. *Awareness of the gender dimension*
6. *Transfer of evidence-based policies*
7. *Use of EU instruments*
8. *Involvement of regional and local authorities*
9. *Involvement of civil society*
10. *Active participation of Roma.*

2. THE NEW EUROPEAN STRATEGY



As well as stating these principles, the Commission has provided operating guidelines on how to implement each one. For each principle we have to ask ourselves: "How can we achieve this?"

For example, the Commission recommends the following with regard to the first principle:

1. Do not base policies on pre-conceptions but on the actual situation.
2. Make use of studies, surveys, visits, and **the involvement of Roma people** or experts, etc.
3. Promote such an approach to all actors.
4. Make sure that EU values (human rights, dignity, non-discrimination, etc.) are respected.
5. Take into account the socio-economic inequalities experienced by the Roma and support equal opportunities/equal access of Roma people. ■

3. A LOOK AT PREVIOUS EXPERIENCE

→ *In spite of the European Commission's attempt to identify a new intervention strategy and address the resources allocated to the Roma to projects of certain success, results have so far been limited in number and of scarce visibility, with the one exception of Spain where there is a particularly large and organised gypsy community.*

The Acceder project was set up by the Roma Secretariat Foundation to facilitate access to the labour market for the Roma population. There are 87,000 registered users and 2,000 training courses, and it is one of the few positive models in action today. However, it is difficult to transfer to countries where the communities are smaller and cannot rely on consolidated traditions.

The areas of interventions identified within the European Strategy are four: **education, employment, health and housing.**



With regard to education, funds have been used in all countries, above all to increase the number of Roma children going to school, which still today is much lower than that of other children of the same age. In many cases, this does

3. A LOOK AT PREVIOUS EXPERIENCE

not merely involve failed training, educational deficiency or choices that result in negative results, but out-and-out truancy, a total lack of schooling and not just deficiency of schooling.

Despite the difficulties involved with data collection in this area, the data we have on Roma community schooling in Italy are emblematic of this situation which, as mentioned, is present in all European countries, albeit in different degrees.

The estimated number of Roma minors in Italy is approximately 70,000: given this data, the fact that only 11,500 students were at school in 2013-2014 is worrying and a sure indication of lack of integration.

Naturally, those same experts that prepared the Ministry of Education report warn that the data regarding the presence of minors are certainly not complete as in many cases presence is not explicit and so escapes statistical detection. However, such a wide gap, 11,500 over 70,000 students present, is a sure sign of an extremely high rate of truancy, especially in the 14-16 year age group.

At the base of the schooling data regarding Roma minors presented above it can be seen that the efforts of national authorities, and not only Italian authorities, have been focused on policies of inclusion in school.

Given the importance of education in our knowledge-based society, this no longer seems sufficient:

3. A LOOK AT PREVIOUS EXPERIENCE

→ *As well as concentrating on minors of compulsory school age, it is also necessary to give greater attention to young and older adults. We are referring to the recovery of adult illiteracy, and especially for women, secondary education programmes and professional training for young and older adults in a vision of life-long learning, of permanent education.*

As an example of the Roma's poor schooling, there is the case of a number of Roma women who have been *Italian citizens for generations* and who were included in the regional Lombardy project "Certifica il tuo Italiano" (Certify your Italian) in courses of L2 Italian for foreign adults, since they had difficulty in reading and writing Italian and were fluent only in the spoken Romani language.

Education, employment and new technologies:

The 2006/962/EC Recommendation of the European Parliament and of the Council of 18 December 2006 identified 8 key competences for lifelong learning and citizenship:

1. Communication in the mother tongue
2. Communication in foreign languages
3. Mathematical competence and basic competences in science and technology
4. Digital competence
5. Learning to learn
6. Social and civic competences
7. Sense of initiative and entrepreneurship
8. Cultural awareness and expression

3. A LOOK AT PREVIOUS EXPERIENCE

These competences, which also include **digital literacy**, are a combination of knowledge, skills and attitudes appropriate to the context. Key competences are those which all individuals need for personal fulfilment and development, active citizenship, social inclusion and employment.

These key competences are essential in a knowledge-based society and provide workers greater flexibility for adapting faster to a continuously changing and increasingly more interconnected world. Furthermore, these competences are of primary importance to innovation, productivity



3. A LOOK AT PREVIOUS EXPERIENCE

and competitiveness and contribute to the motivation and satisfaction of workers and work quality. The key competences should be acquired:

- By young people at the end of their compulsory education and training, to prepare them for adult life, especially working life, while at the same time forming a basis for future learning.
- By adults throughout their lives, via a process of development and updating of their skills.

The acquisition of the key competences combines well with the **principles of equality and access for all.**

This reference framework applies above all to disadvantaged groups who require support in order to fulfil their educational potential. Examples of such groups include people with poor basic competences, young people who have dropped out of school, long-term unemployed, disabled persons, migrants, and also Roma, especially women.



More recent documents on the Roma condition clearly show that **we still have a long way to go to ensure the key competences for active citizenship for the Roma population and it requires greater attention and determination from national governments.**

3. A LOOK AT PREVIOUS EXPERIENCE

It is understandable that in such a dire situation of marginalisation and stigmatisation as the one described by the European Community, the enforcement actions implemented by the governments focus on addressing extreme situations and dealing with basic needs, and it is obvious that the **extreme deficiency of education and sub-standard housing conditions are major obstacles to the acquisition and use of new technologies.**

- **Nevertheless, we can say that the lack of new projects regarding digital literacy for the Roma community can also be attributed to the tendency of continuing to provide traditional social insertion programmes and to the difficulty of breaking away from deeply-rooted stereotypes.**
- **The involvement of the communities in the design of ad hoc programmes could help to identify alternative paths that focus on digital literacy competences especially as an access key to education and employment, key requirements for active citizenship.**

For example, experience gained within this project suggests that the problems related to the lack of interest shown by young Roma in the use of the Net in all its potential (and not just use of social networks as often happens), are not only logistic.

- **Of course, logistic situations (inability to have internet connection in the camps or to have private space inside the dwellings) contribute to this substantial lack of interest, but there are other reasons connected to culture and values that are worth looking into from the sociological and psychological point of view, and especially together with the Roma representatives.**

3. A LOOK AT PREVIOUS EXPERIENCE

During an interview made within this project, a teacher reported how a stable and socially recognised job was highly sought after but deemed so unattainable by young Roma as to make all personal investment seem futile.

→ *We suggest that projects that through the acquisition of highly technical competences in the digital field are able to offer concrete and immediate job opportunities be developed. Such projects could become a source of remotivation and commitment.*

Of course, the current economic crisis does not provide for much of an optimistic outlook, but it is also true that the existing resources could be exploited and addressed more effectively.

→ *In these cases, co-planning should not only regard the Roma associations but must also involve the employers' associations in a protected network. ■*

4. A REPERTOIRE OF PROJECTS

→ *As part of the Grundtvig project “Promoting digital literacy of Roma people toward their active citizenship”, a study of the best practices conducted within the European context identified four projects that are specifically aimed at facilitating access to new technologies and sustain the acquisition of digital literacy competences*

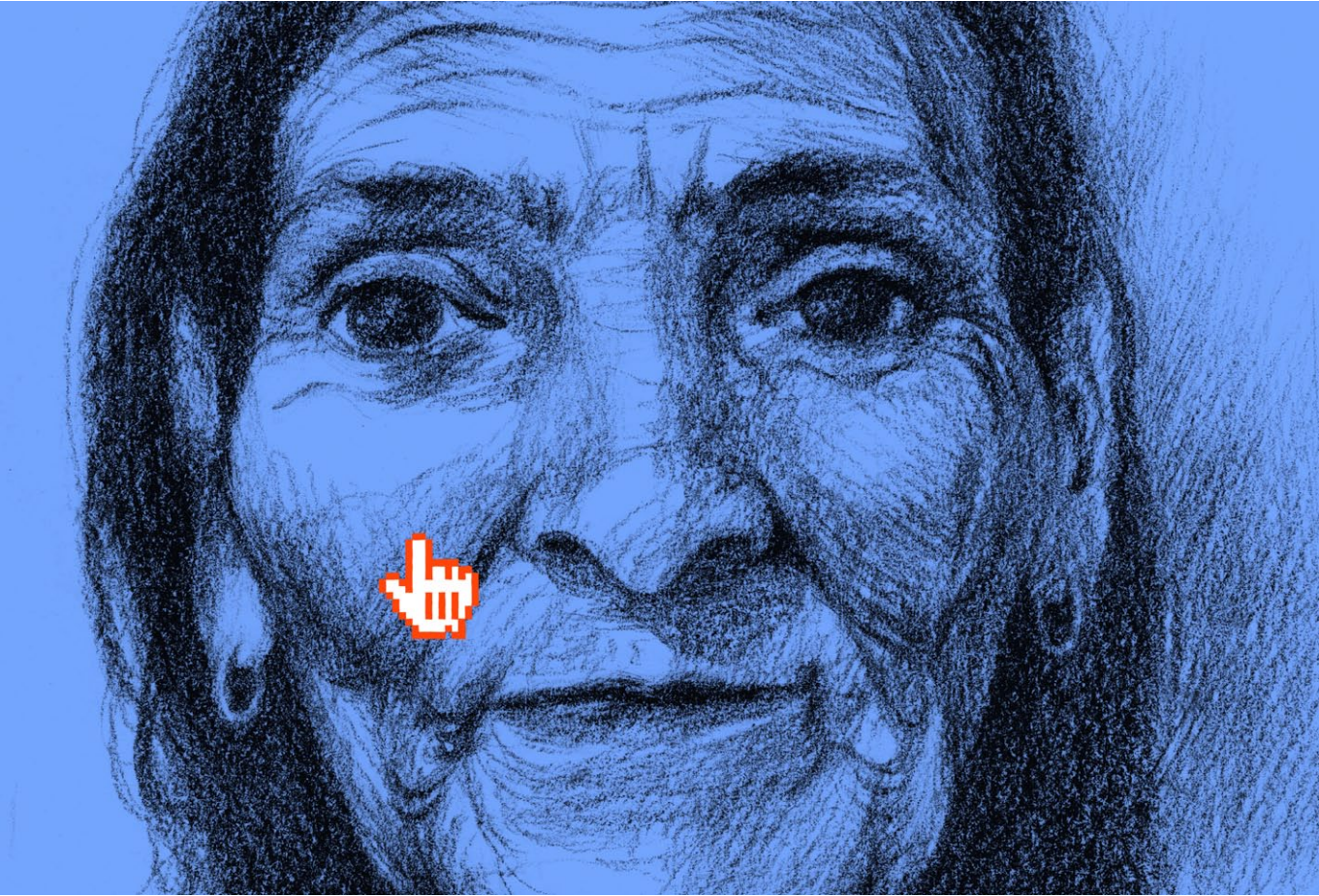
1. BOOSTING LABOUR-MARKET ACTIVITY THROUGH DIGITAL LITERACY

Project coordinator Hungary, Bódva Valley Association of Roma Women in Public Life.

Main aim of the project: 600 persons, 300 Roma beneficiaries involved in digital literacy training, guaranteed internet access during the programme, promoting knowledge on labour-market and business, mentoring guaranteed for the target group. Specific project objectives: to make computer and internet accessible in everyday life for the 18-59 year-old vulnerables living in the Edelény microregion.

Specific project activities: recruiting 600 persons; accredited training for 7 persons as IT mentors; advising on labour-market issues and starting businesses in the participating settlements; customer service; consultancy.

Target group: 18-59 year-old vulnerable people.



2. ROMA WOMEN AND ICT ROMI.NET

Project coordinator Spain, Secretariado Gitano Foundation

Main aim of the project: 80% of Roma Women have no access to ICT, and they do not have the possibility to use a computer, reducing their integration opportunities. The main aim is to develop specific actions to reduce the digital gap and promote the use of ICT among Roma Women.

Specific project objectives: to develop a training programme for trainers in specific telecentres for Roma Women, develop FSG own telecentres network, develop a curriculum which fits with

4. A REPERTOIRE OF PROJECTS

Roma Women's needs, facilitate access to ICT for women in Roma areas, improve the use of ICT and computers in daily life, develop materials adapted to Roma Women and ICT.

Specific project activities: setting up an initial training programme for women e-facilitator, 20 women have been trained as ICT e-facilitators during 2 months, including a blended course in collaboration with a partner; advertising 11 telecentred, fully equipped, computers, lan, printers, etc. in different cities of Spain, developing a course to introduce Roma women to the use of ICT everyday, including services, main daily activities, internet security etc, (at least 33 courses have been implemented during the life of the project).

Target group: 300 Roma women.

3. INTERNET PUBLIC ACCESS CENTRE (CAPI) PAMPANICO, LA FUENTECICA Y LOS ALMENDROS

Project coordinator Spain, Secretariado Gitano Foundation
Main aim of the project: to ensure access to technology and digital literacy to Roma who are living in underserved areas, extending the use and benefits of ICT.

Specific project objectives: to increase participation of the Roma in the use of the Internet, office software and instant messenger software, including e-administration; support Roma children in their homework using computers after school; improve accessibility for improving employment; become a referent centre in the neighbourhoods building a network with local social organizations; provide skills to and qualify Roma adults on ICT issues.

Specific project activities: workshops and courses, video

4. A REPERTOIRE OF PROJECTS

courses (youtube), free access to the telecenter, openoffice courses, English courses (basic and advanced), projection of videos, movies.

Target group: 2,219 Roma people.

4. 'JUMP IN THE TRAIN FOR A BETTER WORLD' – ICT SUPPORT FOR ROMA PEOPLE



Project coordinator Croatia, Public Library Fran Galovic

Main aim of the project: the main contribution of “Public Library” to the social inclusion of vulnerable social groups in local communities is based on the platform of human equal rights to information.

Improving living conditions and promoting social inclusion through information and communication

technology (ICT) training, Public Library Fran Galovic is developing skills in the Roma community and building trust and respect between Roma and Croatian children in the town of Koprivnica in northern Croatia.

Specific project objectives: to improve the life chances of deprived Roma children through formal and informal forms of education as the way to easier inclusion into the local community and society in general; integrate young Roma people and adults into the social environment to respect, protect, support and enhance their national, cultural, educational, social, and all other personal and economic rights and interests.

4. A REPERTOIRE OF PROJECTS

Specific project activities: children and young people using the computer and internet for web-surfing and social networking, doing homework, preparing PowerPoint presentations for school lessons, learning the Croatian language, basic computer training and information literacy for young Roma adults.

Target group: Roma children and young adults.

SOME COMMENTS ON THE PROJECTS REALIZED

It is not surprising that the projects, which involved many users, and in particular women, were undertaken in Spain, since this country is surely the one where the Roma community has the greatest numbers and where there have already been highly successful projects both with regard to housing and access to employment.

Even though limited to minors, the Croatian project that involved libraries was interesting

→ ***Libraries represent an existing public service network and can easily become a reference point and provider of educational services, even those services aimed at adults. ■***

5. DIGITAL LITERACY AND THE ROMA POPULATION: SOME GUIDELINES

→ *In order to ensure a successful dissemination of digital literacy competence among the Roma community, the issue has to be approached from different angles, from the most obvious, the logistics angle, to the more complex, which require the activation of social and productive networks.*

1. Starting with the issue of the difficult logistical and housing situation (lack of suitable private space, difficult connection), it is important to provide incentives for access to existing public structures (use of libraries, centres for young/old people) and /or to favour the opening of Internet points close to the settlements and manage them together with the communities. Here, different modules for the ECDL licence may be offered, together with simple introductory modules to new technologies, especially aimed at young women.

2. There should be mediation at the relational and cultural level, and not only at the information and communicative level. Projects, for example, which offer higher education to girls or the insertion of adult women in jobs must carefully consider

5. DIGITAL LITERACY AND THE ROMA POPULATION: SOME GUIDELINES

that this means proposing actions that can provoke or give rise to fears of significant changes in the ways of interpreting the traditional division of social work between genders and generations within the family or the family clan. Providing strong cultural mediation can prevent failures, which are frustrating not only for the recipients, but also for the operators.

3. Projects should be co-designed together with the communities: all pro-Roma initiatives should be designed together with the Roma communities, not only for obvious reasons of democracy and recognition of active citizenship



5. DIGITAL LITERACY AND THE ROMA POPULATION: SOME GUIDELINES

rights, but also because, as already mentioned, it is necessary to bear in mind the cultural factors and the importance of the extended family, the clan and the community in Roma life. Projects experienced as external initiatives that are provided by the non-Roma society without the participation of the community risk failure.

4. Professional training programmes should be co-designed together with the Roma community, the local authorities and employers' associations. They should be structured so as to alternate between school and work time, and provide training in professional competences, digital literacy included, which can immediately be put to good use in innovative sectors.

5. Projects aimed at the recovery of education and professional training with elements of digital literacy for adolescent mothers with young children should be made available, providing grants and services for transportation, babysitting and mother-child preventive healthcare. The participation of the fathers and the parents is also important.

6. The continuation of the education and training of young Roma men and women should be supported via grants and work bursaries, aid to families and via the above-mentioned measures, especially with regard to the innovative sectors (audio technicians, web graphics, CAD designers, car mechanics, etc.). ■

ANNEXE: THE JOB VALUE PROJECT.

AN EXAMPLE OF BEST PRACTICE

The experience that we are presenting as best practice is an initiative of integration into employment in line with the aforementioned Common Basic Principles on Roma Inclusion, and its distinctive characteristics are:

- *It was co-designed with the Roma community.*
- *The establishment of operative best guidelines, conceived to carry out projects for the Roma community.*

WORK VALUE PROJECT¹

The Work Value project was set up following an agreement between the Lombardy Region and the Ministry of Labour and Social Solidarity for the development of a programme of interventions for the integration of Roma communities in employment, to be achieved via resources from the Fund for Social Inclusion allocated by the Government in 2008.

Based on the results of the studies conducted on the Roma communities in Lombardy², the project team immediately decided to give special priority to the preparatory phase and use the co-design and research-action methodology.

¹ For a detailed description of the project and its main results see: F. Marcaletti (edited by), *Valore Lavoro: integrazione e inserimento lavorativo di rom e sinti*, Fondazione Ismu, Regione Lombardia, Osservatorio Regionale per l'integrazione e la multietnicità, Milano, 2010

² Ambrosini M., Tosi A. (eds) (2007), *Vivere ai margini. Un'indagine sugli insediamenti rom e sinti in Lombardia*, Milano, Osservatorio Regionale per l'integrazione e la multietnicità, Fondazione Ismu-Regione Lombardia.

Ambrosini M., Tosi A. (eds) (2008). *Favelas di Lombardia. La seconda indagine sugli insediamenti rom e sinti*. Rapporto 2008, Osservatorio Regionale per l'integrazione e la multietnicità, Fondazione Ismu-Regione Lombardia, Milano.



The preliminary investigation was made via an excursus of existing literature, both through a review of the documentation on best practices in employment integration in Italy, and through the cooperation of privileged institutional witnesses and witnesses from the private social sector operating in Lombardy. The preliminary investigation made it possible not only to identify the types of actions required with greater precision, but also to choose the most reliable partners for the conduction of the experiments with full knowledge of the facts. In order not to disperse the available funds, the project interventions were concentrated only on two areas, which differ for the number of Roma settlements and their economy: Mantua and Milan.

With these considerations in mind, the project did not initially choose any particular job sectors, nor strict intervention procedures, but, once the project governance and its fundamental principles had been precisely defined, it provided space for a flexible design of the activities according to the prevailing needs that arose from the two areas (Milan and Mantua).

As mentioned, the adopted procedure was that of **co-design**, which is one of the most innovative procedure that the public sector has available today for the implementation of positive actions in the social context.

The procedure used attempted to satisfy the need to integrate the Roma through interventions that relied not so much and not only on the distribution of economic resources, but on a more

wide-ranging concept shared between the territory and the associations (including Roma and Sinti associations) active in these areas. The project uses the **mentoring** tool on two levels:

- Mentoring to partner bodies, responsible for the area projects
- Mentoring for the final beneficiaries of the actions

The first type of mentoring had the objective to provide support to the area project operators throughout the project: from the conceptual phase to the final report. In this way, the public bodies were able to work with more peace of mind, maintaining continuous contact with the leading authority, the Region, thanks to the intermediary function of the mentor. This made it possible to overcome the inevitable in-progress difficulties and to make adjustments to the projects without particular red tape problems or difficulties with the final report.

The second type of mentoring, better defined as accompaniment to the persons involved in the various activities, involved the entire area project and was universally agreed to be essential for the achievement of results.

The following activities were carried out within the Work Value project:

1. The implementation of four area subprojects in collaboration with project partners made up of associations and cooperatives which were already active in the chosen areas and with previous experience in this field (Caritas, Opera Nomadi, Sugar Drom, Casa della Carità).
2. Assignment and direct administration of nine work

bursaries for young persons in compulsory training programmes and female workers in retraining programmes, carried out by the ISMU foundation in collaboration with the Community of Sant'Egidio.

3. Together with the Agency for Training, Professional Orientation and Jobs of the Province of Milan (Job Caffè), the design and creation of an employment guide with over 1,200 copies distributed throughout Lombardy.
4. In collaboration with Job Caffè, implementation of a programme for the assessment of the competences and job orientation for ten Roma mediators. During the programme, the Roma mediators learnt to write their CV using the European template, and acquired the basic competences necessary for using the computer for editing purposes, storing and sending documents.
5. Publication of a presentation volume of the project results.
6. Operator awareness-raising (photographic documentation, seminar, joint development of recommendations, distribution of work guidelines and the presentation volume of the project results).

AREA PROJECTS

Four area projects were developed within the Work Value project.

“Ironing and tailoring” project, developed by Caritas Ambrosiana in Milan and Rho, introduced a classroom and on-the-job training course for a group of Roma women. Within the same project, a workshop activity entitled “Taivè. Un filo per l’integrazione” was launched in Milan, where 8 Roma women were occupied in ironing and sewing activities every day.

“Arts and Crafts of Roma and Sinti Women and Young People” project, a tailoring workshop for the production of clothing and accessories run by Opera Nomadi: 12 Roma women were involved in this project, who also benefit from a training course (including Italian), support and guidance.

“Pallets” project, developed by Cooperative IES (Impresa Etica Sociale) of the Casa della Carità in the field of the production of pallets, with the maintenance and consolidation of four existing workers, and the insertion of another four young Roma/Sinti.

“Mengro Labatarpe” project, (Our Work), developed in the Mantua area by Sucar Drom, an association that has introduced two schemes, one in support of independent activities traditionally carried out by the Sinti with the objective of enhancing and legalising the working activities of the purchasing, transportation and sale of iron goods in conformance with the regional laws and regulations. The other scheme provides support programmes for employees. The latter intervention includes support for the integration in the workplace of Sinti women, providing individual programmes of social and professional training, with specific attention given to the family context.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the experience gained in the Work Value Project, **18 recommendations** for guaranteeing the success of the support actions offered to the Roma have been identified.

1. Full dignity and access potential to all work insertion programmes should be recognised to the Roma and Sinti people of working age. In this perspective, attitudes that tend to emphasize the “in principle” difficulties of Roma and Sinti in undertaking ordinary work access programmes should be uprooted as they constitute prejudice.
2. It is necessary to reaffirm the need to fully apply and/or reinforce the anti-discrimination laws so that it will be possible to carry out effectively feasible job support schemes which will give full access to the opportunities available in the labour market. This also means investing resources in the dissemination of non-discrimination practices in the various employer associations and trade unions.
3. An increased awareness of the complex implication of the job insertion schemes programmes is required for all the parties concerned: the Roma and Sinti, the institutions (and their services), the social services and the private social sector organisations. This in order to achieve the removal of obstacles (especially those of a bureaucratic-administrative nature), which hamper full access to jobs.
4. More generally, the support action provided by the agencies working on the territory in close contact with the more vulnerable sectors of the Rom and Sinti populations becomes a strategic issue. This in order to facilitate the social inclusion programmes via a thorough assessment of the most appropriate channels for access to employment success made for each individual case, both for the ordinary programmes, and the more “protected” ones.



Empowerment and training

5. While recognising their social disadvantage, we cannot reduce the integration of Roma and Sinti insertion into employment to merely a problem of labour regulations, i.e. into a problem of correspondence between “theoretical” job demands and job supplies from a vulnerable and particularly weak component of the population with regard to marketable skills on that same job market.

6. The work integration programmes should be approached by encouraging mediation efforts that aim to increase – within the context of empowerment – awareness and autonomy in the individuals involved.
7. The training programmes aimed at consolidating and increasing existing knowledge and competences must necessarily enhance the mix between what has already been acquired by the adult individual in formal and informal contexts, and how much he or she is able to learn in prevalently non formal learning paths.
8. Experience suggests that great value may be given to on-the-job training and to the acquisition of professional competences in simulated/protected work situations.
9. Where so required, skills assessment and recognition/certification of the skills and knowledge possessed may be included as part of the training programmes, especially for adult individuals.
10. Formal training programmes are suitable for younger individuals who have recently completed their compulsory education and so for this reason a return to school would be risky.

Conditions, procedures and places of work integration

11. Work integration programmes for Roma and Sinti people must necessarily include a careful assessment of the possibility of enhancing, sustaining and consolidating forms of activities that have already been performed (including traditional activities), and in particular, those that can be more easily formalised in light of the laws in force. All this in full respect of the potential and aspirations of the individual.

12. Work integration programmes should be defined within their contexts and must consider the significant influence exerted by legal status and social condition, including housing and family conditions, and the division of labour between sexes and generations
13. Work integration programmes should aim to enhance the personalisation of the measures of interventions and should be organised in such a way as to be modular, gradual and flexible with respect to the times and methods assigned for the achievement of objectives.
14. Work integration programmes should be conceived with the collaboration of all institutional, public and private social parties, including all the services involved and creating synergy and collaboration strategies between the parties.
15. The resulting work integration programmes should aim to enhance the entire range of possible opportunities in the labour market: employee, self-employed, setting up a business, “protected” work environments (social cooperatives). The latter can prove to be problematic since language minorities are not recognised in the same way as other weak categories which benefit from insertion such as socio-workers in qualifying working and training contexts (also linked with local authorities), as are those under the domain of the type B social cooperatives.
16. In the same way, we recommend the extension of work integration opportunities in “protected” employment areas such as those run jointly by the public authorities (especially local authorities) and the private social sector (third sector agencies).

Methodological implications

17. From the methodological point of view, the work integration programmes should be strictly supervised by reliable figures of reference that provide constant support and at the same time act as an element of continuity of the programmes themselves.
18. The adoption of a design logic for the interventions that involve the public, private and private social bodies to the greatest extent possible (including the Roma and Sinti associations), constitutes an indisputable element of added value, and even more so, a success factor for the social inclusion measures centred on job support. ■