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AD HOC COMMITTEE OF EXPERTS ON ROMA AND TRAVELLER ISSUES¹ (CAHROM)

REVIEW OF THE IMPACT, OUTCOMES AND FOLLOW-UP TO CAHROM THEMATIC VISITS AND REPORTS²
(2012-2017)

Document available on CAHROM website: www.coe.int/cahrom
prepared by the Secretariat, Directorate General of Democracy – DGII,
on the basis of 56 answers to a questionnaire

examined by the CAHROM at its 13th and 14th CAHROM plenary meetings
and endorsed by the CAHROM through written procedure

¹ The term “Roma and Travellers” is used at the Council of Europe to encompass the wide diversity of the groups covered by the work of the Council of Europe in this field: on the one hand a) Roma, Sinti/Manush, Calé, Kaale, Romanichals, Boyash/Rudari; b) Balkan Egyptians (Egyptians and Ashkali); c) Eastern groups (Dom, Lom and Abdal); and, on the other hand, groups such as Travellers, Yenish, and the populations designated under the administrative term “Gens du voyage”, as well as persons who identify themselves as Gypsies. The present is an explanatory footnote, not a definition of Roma and/or Travellers.

² See Appendix 1 for statistics. 26 reports have been endorsed by the CAHROM; others are currently being processed.

Introduction to the CAHROM

The CAHROM was set up as an *ad hoc committee* by a decision of the Committee of Ministers in 2011 following the adoption of the Strasbourg Declaration on Roma adopted on 20 October 2010. It is the equivalent of a steering committee; as opposed to *steering committees*, an *ad hoc committee* means that its mandate focuses on a particular topic, i.e. Roma and Travellers.

A similar structure has been existing at the Council of Europe since 1996 when a Group of Specialists on Roma/Gypsies (MG-S-ROM) with a limited number of countries (less than ten) was established. Following a subsequent change in the terminology used at the Council of Europe, the MG-S-ROM was then renamed Group of Specialists of Roma, Gypsies and Travellers in 2002, becoming the Committee of Experts on Roma and Travellers in 2006 until the end of 2010 when it was replaced by the CAHROM.

From 1996 to 2010, thirty meetings of the MG-S-ROM took place and most of the Committee of Ministers' recommendations addressing Roma policies, education, housing, health, employment and travelling sites, which are still valid and sometimes used in revising national Roma integration strategies, were drafted by the MG-S-ROM between 2000 and 2010³.

The decision to transform the MG-S-ROM into the CAHROM had positive effects: whilst the MG-S-ROM was a sub-committee of the former European Committee on Migration (CDMG), the upgraded CAHROM now has direct access to the Committee of Ministers via the Ministers' Deputies Rapporteur Group on Social and Health Questions (GR-SOC). This speeds up the circulation of information and adoption of documents prepared by the CAHROM.

The impetus provided by the adoption of the Strasbourg Declaration and the change of status of the CAHROM increased the interest of member States in its work. CAHROM has become a true pan-European Committee: 41 Council of Europe member States have appointed an expert, i.e. all of the countries having at least a tiny Roma and/or Traveller population. Members come from various backgrounds and line ministries and include persons of Roma ethnic origin. Perfect gender balance is ensured in the Committee: 22 men and 22 women⁴.

Introduction of thematic working methods in the CAHROM

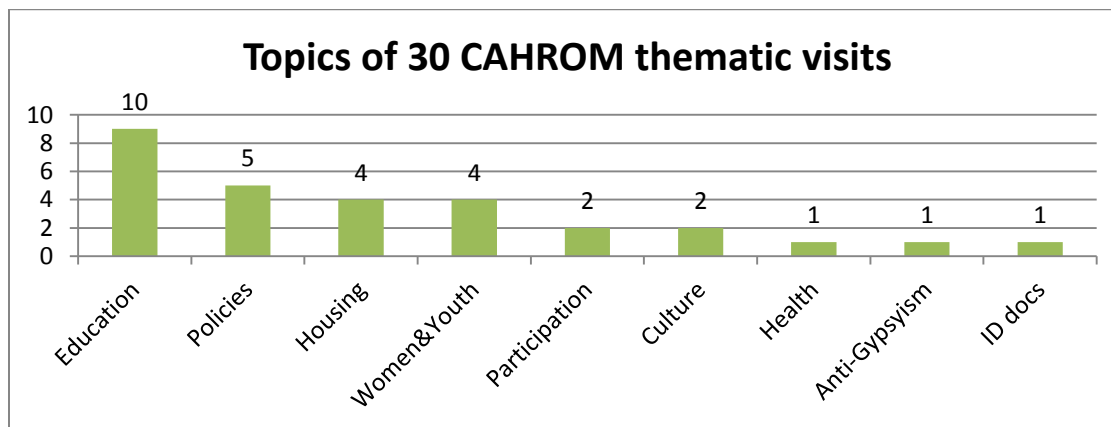
The main development has been the introduction in 2012 of new CAHROM thematic working methods following a first review of its work. Since there is not always sufficient time during plenary meetings to go deeply enough into the analysis and evaluation of the implementation of Roma policies/strategies/action plans, which is part of its mandate, the CAHROM decided to set up thematic groups of experts to exchange good practices and share experiences on very specific topics.

³ Reference texts and tools: <http://www.coe.int/en/web/portal/roma-related-texts>.

⁴ Statistical information collected at the time of the 13th CAHROM plenary meeting in Prague (31 May-3 June 2017). Croatia having the Chair is represented by two members and Belgium has three appointed members.

These thematic groups are composed of experts from of one *requesting country* and of usually three to four *partner countries*⁵, although the number of participating experts per thematic group has recently increased to five or six⁶ to answer the growing interest. Final thematic reports - when approved by these experts - are discussed in parallel working group sessions and endorsed by the CAHROM in plenary meetings. These reports are also examined from different angles by the four CAHROM rapporteurs, namely on gender equality, on Roma youth, on Roma children and on anti-Gypsyism in order to check whether the reports address sufficiently those particular aspects.

Choice of thematic priorities



From the list of CAHROM thematic reports and the countries involved in the thematic groups, one can easily deduce the main priorities and challenges. The most numerous thematic visits were related to *education*, such as combating school drop-out and absenteeism; increasing school attendance, especially of Roma girls; promoting inclusive education as opposed to special or segregated schools; pre-school education, testing systems and diagnoses before entering school, and vocational education and training. *Housing* was another preferred topic with reports addressing social housing, legalisation of informal Roma settlements, prevention of evictions or the provision of halting sites for Travellers.

Past selected topics also include *solving the lack of ID documents, fighting anti-Gypsyism and hate crime, Roma women and youth empowerment and the inclusion of these dimensions in national Roma integration strategies, the participation in advisory and decision-making bodies, or the promotion and protection of the Romani language or other languages spoken by Roma-related communities*. Some of the reports addressed still taboo topics, such as *child/early and forced marriages or human trafficking within Roma communities*. Other reports address more generally the *situation of certain communities, challenges they face and policy responses to their needs, including migrants or eastern Roma groups*. Access to employment, access to justice, the inclusion of Roma history in textbooks, or the development of meaningful policies in member States having a tiny Roma population are among the new thematic priorities identified beyond 2017.

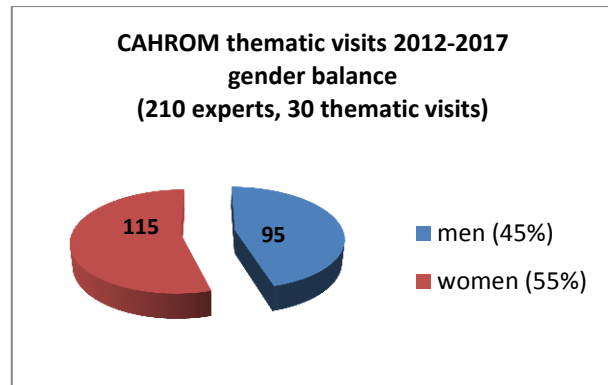
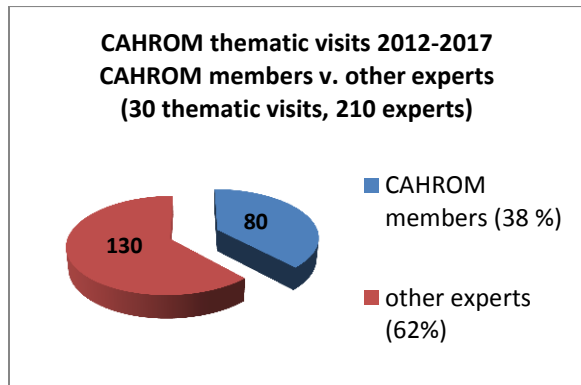
⁵ The *requesting country* which is interested to learn more about a proposed topic (because of a new legislation or policy under preparation or because the topic is already addressed but does not bring sufficient results under the national strategy/action plan) also hosts the visit of the thematic group of experts over two and half days. *Partner country* experts offer their experience in this particular area and share lessons learnt from previous experiences.

⁶ The new CAHROM Terms of Reference 2018-2019 envisages up to six partner countries.

Who are the experts of the thematic visit?

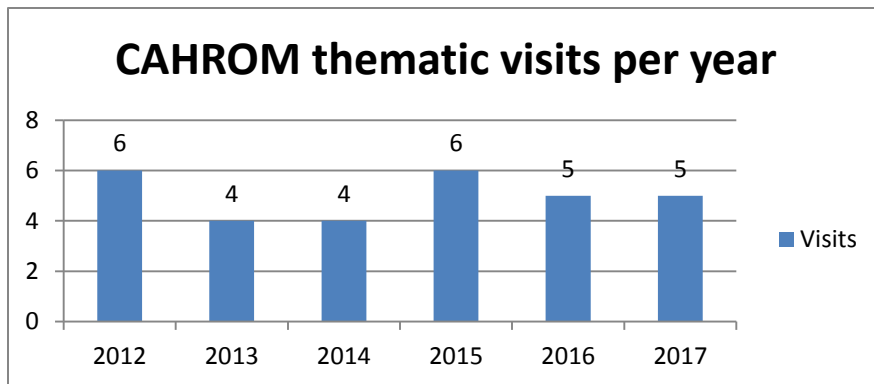
As a general rule, CAHROM members from the hosting country are part of the thematic group though it may also be enlarged to other persons.

Pending the topic of thematic visits, partner countries can be either the CAHROM members themselves or other experts designated by them in case the CAHROM members do not have the necessary expertise to participate themselves on a particular topic. The fact that only 38% of the experts of thematic groups are CAHROM members show that these thematic visits are not regarded as “touristic tours” but the choice of the expert is made on a sound basis. In terms of gender balance, more women (55%) than men (45%) participated in thematic visits.



A growing interest among CAHROM members and member States

By the end of December 2017, 30 thematic visits will have taken place (making an average of five thematic visits per year) involving 37 member States.



The most active of these have been Hungary and “the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia” (with nine participations), Bosnia and Herzegovina, the Czech Republic, Poland and Romania (with eight participations), Croatia, Italy, and the Slovak Republic (with seven participations) and Spain (with six participations). All member States are encouraged to get involved in this thematic exercise. In 2017, Armenia, Azerbaijan, Georgia, Germany, Portugal, the Russian Federation and Ukraine have joined this exercise for the first time. So far only Cyprus, Denmark, Estonia and Luxembourg have not seized this opportunity.

See below a statistical table for statistical information about member States' participation in thematic visits and topics that are the most attractive per member State.

Participations	Member States ⁷	As requesting country	As partner country
9 participations	- Hungary - "The former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia"	(1 x anti-Gypsyism, 1 x education) (1 x housing)	(4 x education, 1 x history, 1 x language, 1 x policy) (1 x housing, 4 x education; 1 x health; 1 x legal status, 1 x policy)
8 participations	- Bosnia and Herzegovina - Czech Republic - Poland - Romania	(1 x policy) (2 x education) (1 x education) (1 x women)	(1 x education; 1 x health; 2 x housing; 1 x legal status, 1 x participation, 1 x language) (1 x anti-Gypsyism, 2 x education; 1 x history, 1 x language, 1 x participation,) (3 x education; 1 x health; 1 x women, 1 x language, 1 x policy) (1 x education; 1 x history, 1 x language, 1 x migration, 1 x participation, 1 x trafficking, 1 x women)
7 participations	- Croatia - Italy - Slovak Republic	(1 x language) (1 x legal status) (1 x education, 1 x history)	(1 x housing; 1 x legal status; 2 x participation, 1 x policy, 1 x youth) (1 x anti-Gypsyism; 1 x migration, 1 x policy, 1 x trafficking, 2 x women) (2 x education; 1 x housing; 2 x language)
6 participations	- Spain	(1 x migration)	(1 x education; 2 x housing; 1 x participation, 1 x women)
5 participations	- Belgium - Finland - Greece - Moldova (Republic of) - Netherlands - Serbia - Slovenia - United Kingdom	(1 x halting sites) (1 x education) (1 x participation) (1 x policy) (1 x education) (1 x housing) (1 x youth) 0	(1 x education, 1 x health , 1 x participation, 1 x youth) (1 x education, 1 x language, 1 x policy; 1 x women) (1 x housing; 2 x policy, 1 x trafficking) (1 x education, 1 history, 2 x women) (1 x education; 1 x policy, 1 x trafficking, 1 x women) (1 x legal status, 1 x migration, 1 x policy, 1 x youth) (2 x education, 1 x language, 1 x policy) (1 x anti-Gypsyism, 2 x education, 1 x halting sites, 1 x women)
4 participations	- Norway	0	(1 x anti-Gypsyism; 2 x education, 1 x participation)
3 participations	- Albania - France - Latvia - Montenegro - Sweden - Switzerland - Turkey	(1 x housing, 1 x trafficking) (1 x education) 0 0 0 0 0	(1 x policy) (1 x migration, 1 x halting sites) (3 x education) (1 x health, 1 x legal status, 1 x migration) (1 x anti-Gypsyism, 2 x education) (1 x halting sites, 1 x education, 1 x language) (1 x education; 1 x health; 1 x policy)
2 participations	- Austria - Bulgaria - Ireland - Lithuania	(1 x language) (1 x health) (1 x participation) (1 x education, 1 x women)	(1 x language) (1 x migration) (1 x migration) 0
1 participation	- Armenia - Azerbaijan - Georgia - Germany - Portugal - Russian Federation - Ukraine	0 0 (1 x policy) 0 0 0 (1 x policy)	(1 x policy) (1 x policy) 0 (1 x language) (1 x education) (1 x policy) 0
No participation yet	- Cyprus - Denmark - Estonia - Luxembourg	0 0 0 0	0 0 0 0

⁷ Only the 41 countries that have appointed a CAHROM member are taken into consideration out of the 47 member States of the Council of Europe (not included in the list are: Andorra, Iceland, Liechtenstein, Malta, Monaco, and San Marino).

Recent developments

One should underline a number of positive developments: since 2015, international observers have requested to join CAHROM thematic visits: this has been the case of the European Commission (DG EAC and DG JUST), FRA, OSCE/ODIHR, OHCHR and ECMI. The Holy See also expressed an interest in becoming involved in the future.

The conclusions of CAHROM thematic reports are now regularly mentioned in ECRI reports; GRETA, the Youth Department, the Gender Equality Division and the Steering Committee of Human Rights (CDDH) make use of CAHROM reports in their own work; EU member States have also shared CAHROM findings at the meetings of EU national Roma contact points. Following the request of CAHROM, supported by the Secretary General and the Committee of Ministers in the Thematic Action Plan for Roma and Traveller Inclusion, several Council of Europe committees and sectors have appointed a rapporteur on Roma (and Traveller) issues, namely the Congress, the CDDH, the CAHENF and the Joint Council on Youth (CCJ). This helps to mainstream the work on Roma issues throughout the Council of Europe and ensures transversal actions.

These thematic working methods have also reinforced cooperation with other Council of Europe sectors, experts committees and monitoring bodies. When preparing background documents for the experts of these thematic visits, the Secretariat includes information about monitoring bodies such as the ECRI, the Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities, the European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages or GRETA. The findings of the Commissioner for Human Rights, as well as the work of the Parliamentary Assembly and the Congress of Local and Regional Authorities, are also taken into consideration. CAHROM has also received proposals for thematic groups from other CoE sectors such as the Youth Department (on Roma youth empowerment and participation) or from the Execution of judgements by the European Court of Human Rights (on the testing systems and diagnoses for Roma children which often results in school segregation or enrolment in schools for mentally disabled).

Review of the impact, direct and indirect outcomes and follow-up of thematic visits

Prior to the 11th CAHROM meeting (Sofia, Bulgaria, April 2016), a questionnaire was circulated by the Secretariat to all experts – whether CAHROM experts or other experts – having participated in thematic groups and visits. The present review is based on 56 replies to this questionnaire. When finalised - this document will be communicated to the GR-SOC for information as it will provide with concrete examples of direct or indirect outcomes of CAHROM thematic visits and reports on practices, policy planning and legal reforms inspired by these thematic visits and reports.

Feedback from the experts – analysis of the replies to the questionnaire

Feedback from the questionnaire has been only positive with all respondents agreeing that CAHROM thematic visits are a very useful tool and meet expectations. The thematic working methods of the CAHROM clearly respond to specific identified priorities and are tailored to requesting countries' needs. They are regarded as a useful tool to exchange experience and good practices.

They provide a unique opportunity for public stakeholders to exchange views, expert opinions, good practices, existing tools, etc. which improve experts' knowledge on the related phenomenon; compare the situation in relevant countries; share information on public policies towards Roma and Traveller issues; and illustrate and clarify many problems related to the respective theme of the thematic visit. The opportunity provided to discuss and examine the issues in question with participants from different professional backgrounds and viewpoints was considered to be especially interesting.

Thematic visits and reports are a precious source of the most recent data available and developments occurring in the respective countries. In addition, by uploading the reports to the Council of Europe CAHROM public web site⁸, the wider public obtains more detailed information on the specific phenomena occurring in those countries, as well as Europe in general. CAHROM members should therefore promote this source further, including at national level (ministries and public institutions, civil society, human rights and equality bodies, etc.).

In the case of relatively new, somehow sensitive or taboo themes, thematic visits have provoked (or sometimes even provided a pretext for) broader discussions among public officials, the wider public or the Roma community itself. This was the case in Serbia regarding forced evictions and alternative housing measures; in Poland regarding Roma health mediators where this job is prohibited within the Roma community due to internal cultural obstacles; in relation to vocational education and training, this theme had never been discussed before in such detail and separately from more general discussions on education. Thematic visits can also predict forthcoming challenges, possible threats/opportunities or the desirable direction in which to take public policy.

Thematic visits also show the differences among Roma communities in Europe and the varied challenges facing them. One such example was the thematic visit on school drop-outs and absenteeism of Roma girls (Helsinki, Finland, 2012), a problem which concerns mainly Roma girls usually. However, in the case of Finland, this problem touches predominantly Roma boys.

This thematic visit led to the formulation of future areas of interest and exploration, indispensable for monitoring all of the existing obstacles to improving the situation of the Roma, such as in the case of Roma migrant minors (new arrivals), school drop-outs and absenteeism of Roma boys.

In cases with a more precise theme such as the diagnosis and testing system, the Czech and Polish experts drew attention to the fact that there was not enough time to discuss further the professional details, the most important challenges of psychological diagnosis and ways of improving the process of diagnosing of children from other cultural backgrounds whilst respecting the neutrality of tests.

Nonetheless, different views were expressed about the participation of various national stakeholders in the thematic visits. While their contributions and insights were appreciated, some respondents would have preferred to have time for longer, open, discussions between experts and NGOs without the presence of governmental officials.

⁸ <http://www.coe.int/en/web/portal/cahrom>.

These differing views show that Roma issues remain sensitive and are not always discussed fully and openly. This may be due to both public and non-governmental stakeholders feeling under pressure. In a few cases, these CAHROM thematic visits might have been wrongly perceived by some public actors as "monitoring visits" which underlines the importance for organizers of the visits to brief local participants, officials and civil society, invited to meet the experts about the real nature of these visits. It could also signify a demand for a more professional and in-depth approach of the issues at stake instead of presenting "too general" information.

Translation of CAHROM thematic reports

In several cases, respondents think that there is no need to translate the reports into the national languages, the English or French versions being sufficient due to common knowledge of those languages among the stakeholders (e.g. Belgium and Hungary).

In some cases however, reports from the visits in which the relevant countries took part have been translated or will be, once finalised, into the national languages (e.g. Bulgaria and Poland). In Poland, the report on child/early and forced marriages within the Roma communities in the context of the promotion of gender equality has already been translated into Polish and was presented in September 2016 at a forum of the Roma Team of the Joint Commission of the Government and National and Ethnic Minorities and uploaded to the Ministry of Interior and Administration website.

Reports on topics of potential interest and importance to a particular country such as early marriages, the protection and promotion of languages spoken by Roma and trafficking within Roma communities will be translated as well, even if the respective country did not participate in the visit (e.g. Poland).

The respective reports were only translated into the national languages in Bosnia and Herzegovina (social housing for Roma and legalisation of Roma settlements and houses), Croatia (promotion and protection of languages spoken by Roma) and Serbia (solving of legal status of Roma from ex-Yugoslavia and their lack of personal identity documents). Bosnia and Herzegovina will translate the forthcoming reports from the visits in which their expert will participate. Additionally, Serbia translated the reports into Romani, the only country to do so.

Latvia translated the main conclusions only (school attendance of Roma children, in particular girls, and inclusive pre-school education).

The need to translate reports into Romani was highlighted, notably by the Republic of Moldova and Romania.

The translation of the relevant reports into the national languages will extend the availability of the data and analysis presented therein to a wider public (journalists, researchers, students, NGOs, including Roma NGOs, local authorities, etc.), and ensure access to information about other Roma groups and other countries' situations in a given area.

Distribution of the CAHROM thematic reports

In the majority of cases, the endorsed reports were distributed among all the participants taking part in the respective thematic visit, as well as the relevant national institutions, officials and researchers. In addition, in Bosnia and Herzegovina and Poland, the reports and conclusions of the thematic visits will also be presented to the official Roma representative bodies.

Use of the CAHROM thematic reports

In a few cases, reports were directly used in the preparation or the revision of National Roma (and/or Traveller) Integration Strategies (NRIS)/Action Plans (e.g. Albania, Croatia, Finland, Italy, Lithuania, Slovenia, Ukraine). The recently revised Albanian national strategy for the integration of Roma and Egyptians quotes the CAHROM thematic report on social housing and the conclusions of this thematic visit have been taken into consideration in the new draft law on social housing. The latter – not yet adopted by the Albanian parliament – proposes the introduction of a quota system for Roma in the provision of social houses inspired by “the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia”, a clear result of the exchange of practices that took place in Tirana in April 2013. The Republic of Moldova is another positive example where most of the recommendations of the thematic group of experts’ visit in 2012 have been integrated in the National Action Plan for Roma (a new action plan is under preparation). Finland and Lithuania have both introduced as a cross-cutting issue and/or reinforced the gender component of their revised NRIS (following the CAHROM thematic visit to Lithuania). Croatia, Serbia and Slovenia did the same for the youth component (following the CAHROM thematic visit to Slovenia). Ukraine already announced that the CAHROM thematic group of experts, held in Kyiv in April 2017, will contribute to the drafting of their new national Roma action plan.

Most of the reports were mainly used as food for thought or as an impulse for developing further discussions at national level (e.g. Bulgaria) or for following the situation in other countries (e.g. Italy). In most cases, the reports and their conclusions are partly discussed at national level, among the NGOs (e.g. Republic of Moldova) or other public non-governmental entities (e.g. the Czech Republic).

In the case of Croatia, for the first time ever, both Romani Čhib and Boyash Romanian were equally addressed during the thematic visit to Zagreb and Medjimurje on the promotion and protection of languages spoken by Roma. Recommendations were taken into account for the development of minority languages’ curricula, together with the experts and representatives from the Ministry of Science, Education and Sports in Croatia. The conclusions of the CAHROM thematic report were shared with the Committee of Experts of the European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages, helped finding a proper terminology in Croatia for the language spoken by the Boyash minority and eased some tensions around this issue between Croatia and Romania. The language topic was further debated in March 2017 with the participation of nice countries at a thematic visit hosted by Austria in the European centre for Modern Languages) which reflects high interest of countries in Roma culture-related issues.

Report recommendations (such as those included in the report on solving the legal status of Roma from ex-Yugoslavia and their lack of personal identity documents, Italy, 2014) were used on several public occasions. This was the case in Croatia during the round table on Roma with status problems organised

in November 2014 by the UNHCR and the leading Croatian NGO dealing with the status issue. The same report was mentioned during the public presentation of the survey on “Everyday life of Roma people in Croatia” organised in Zagreb in October 2014 by the UN agencies in Croatia (UNDP, UNICEF and UNHCR). Some of the CAHROM thematic reports were discussed at meetings of the EU National Roma Contact Points.

Even if they are not used directly, reports or conclusions and information are circulated in many ways among the national stakeholders as a source of information.

Lessons learned, good practices identified and follow-up events

In general, most respondents believe that the examples of good practices presented during the visits and in reports can present possible solutions for their own countries. This may be in “the general direction” (Roma women empowerment in Spain) or else in a more concrete way (for example, in Bosnia and Herzegovina regarding the employment of Roma in “the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia”; the attitudes and approaches of Bosnia and Herzegovina and Spain towards social housing inspired Serbia; Croatian examples of youth policy inspired Slovenia which paid a follow-up visit to Croatia to learn more about their practice; the Finnish good practice (a survey on the situation of Roma women serving their sentence in penal institutions and their subsequent reintegration into society) was introduced into the Lithuanian Action Plan for Roma integration 2015-2020. In addition, the Spanish ACCEDER project presented during the thematic visit on Roma women’s empowerment and the gender dimension of Roma inclusion policies/strategies (Lithuania, 2014) has been replicated in Italy and, under the Italian format, introduced a gender perspective and specific actions for Roma women in Spain.

The exchange of good practices can also highlight gaps in national policy (for example, a lack of youth engagement in the case of Ireland). With sensitive issues such as early or forced marriages, existing examples reveal the urgent need of involving the Roma community itself in combating the negative phenomena; they can also provide concrete inspiration for modifying psycho-diagnostic processes (for example, the thematic visit on testing systems and diagnoses for Roma children with allegedly mild mental disabilities, Hungary, 2016) or know-how (as was the case in Tallaght, Ireland, with the medical service for new arrivals from Romania highlighted during the thematic visit on the empowerment and participation of Roma and Travellers in advisory bodies and consultation mechanisms with a focus on Roma women and youth, Ireland, 2016).

Whilst some good practices (such as Roma mediators and the United Kingdom’s Forced Marriage Unit) offer possible structural solutions, in some cases these are not transferable (due to a lack of political will, resources or other obstacles, including internal bans). However, it is still good to be aware of such solutions. Good practices concerning social housing, especially those based on lessons learned in Spain, can also provide a lot of inspiration which is particularly important taking into account that this area still faces a huge demand for improvement in many European countries.

Other practices presented were highly estimated examples of institutional safeguards preventing improper psychological diagnostics in a context of over-representation of Roma children in the special school system (such as an equal opportunities officer, appeal possibilities, culturally neutral tests, etc.).

However an important obstacle identified in this field is the financial state support available for children with disabilities that is often, or may be, the (undesirable) economic incentive for Roma families with low or unstable incomes.

Other concrete examples include the following: the Belgian example of local youth councils and youth ambassadors; Roma youth clubs in Serbia; Roma education incubators in Slovenia, the Finnish practice of individualised career guidance and incentives to choose employment rather than social benefits within the Roma community; the Norwegian electronic dictionary Norwegian-Romanes which exists as an application to mobile phones; etc. The Slovak practice of mapping Roma settlements will serve as a model for similar mapping planned by the Croatian Government Office for Human Rights and Rights of National Minorities for 2017; moreover, the Slovak Republic's Romani language curriculum and the Austrian practice of teaching the Croatian language in Austria are considered as good examples in developing the teaching of languages spoken by Roma in Croatia.

A study visit to the UK Forced Marriage Unit – identified as a good model - was organised in December 2017 as a concrete follow-up of the CAHROM thematic visit addressing child and/or forced marriages within Roma communities (Romania, April 2015). Experts from Finland, France, Greece, Ireland (GRETA Chair), Italy, Poland and the United Kingdom took part in this study visit.

In reply to the questionnaire regarding lessons learned and good practices identified, I was stated that thematic visits can be evaluated as a good source of practical solutions, a presentation of effective direction to be taken or at least a means of information sharing for national policy makers or grassroots level practitioners. Greece in particular pointed out that the thematic visits are a very good chance for discussing and exchanging opinions and expertise among experts due to the small size of the groups and the synthesis provided. The thematic reports as deliverables of the visits constitute rich sources of updated information (e. g. legislation, challenges, needs, problems, policies, measures, best practices, etc.) that can be easily used by decision makers. The competent Special Secretariat on Roma Inclusion in Greece is therefore willing to use and distribute the reports further.

Experts' further contacts

Whilst the majority of answers do not show that there has been any clear contact between experts, what can be observed is a kind of transnational cooperation in a few cases: the Republic of Moldova, Bulgaria, Lithuania, Finland and Romania on early marriages; countries from Western Balkans (Bosnia and Herzegovina, "the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia", Serbia, Croatia and Montenegro), Italy and Ukraine on solving the lack of ID documents; Slovenia and Croatia on youth; Lithuania, Finland and the Republic of Moldova on women; Finland and Sweden with an exchange of experts on school drop outs; and Czech and Polish experts on testing and diagnosis. In addition, Croatian, Romanian, Austrian and Slovak experts are in regular contact to follow up on the thematic visit on the protection and promotion of the languages spoken by Roma.

It was stated in the replies to the questionnaire that CAHROM meetings give the opportunity to discuss (during the plenary and beyond) the results of the thematic visits and further steps to be taken in the related countries. In the case of the United Kingdom, the thematic visit provided a better opportunity

for further contacts with the participants at national level. Examples of direct cooperation with the Roma and/or Traveller community which enable the strengthening of links between the majority society and Roma families are especially appreciated.

Regarding the problem of the lack of IDs and statelessness, Croatian, Italian and Hungarian experts have been cooperating on several occasions. Similarly, in the case of statelessness of Roma women, experts from Croatia and Bosnia and Herzegovina have maintained contact.

Impact of CAHROM thematic visits and reports

In a few cases, extracts from the report become part of a national strategy (for example, Slovenia in the context of youth; Albania in the context of social housing and the Republic of Moldova, Finland and Lithuania in the context of gender, especially as Roma women's access to employment and facilitating Roma girls' access to education). Many of the actions presented already exist in national strategies, such as the system of mediators (Bulgaria, Poland), scholarships etc. In Bosnia and Herzegovina, where the current national strategy will expire this year, and in Serbia, where the Action Plan is currently under preparation, some conclusion from the visits and reports are going to be taken into account and included within the new documents.

The recommendations from reports are part of the wider discussion in many countries and may become references in on-going work. The knowledge obtained from the thematic visits and reports was used on other occasions, often related to cooperation with the EU (country Presidency, reporting, bilateral contacts etc.) and other international entities (accession to international conventions) or during the preparation of other national strategies (such as the national programme for the rights of Roma children in the Netherlands).

In addition, the outcomes of the visits and reports have contributed to the daily work with and for Roma (Bulgaria, Latvia, Republic of Moldova) and are considered in future plans, documents, strategies etc. for the next period. It was also underlined that such visits and reports produce a kind of synergy that has contributed to awareness-raising of the cross-cutting nature of many phenomena that negatively touch Roma (and Traveller) communities, proving that intersectional activity is more efficient.

Possible negative side effects of the visits and reports

Only Poland pointed out the possible negative side effects in terms of culturally-sensitive issues based on its experience in 2010 when a heated discussion on the condition and protection of the Romani language ensued. Sharing information (by uploading reports on a public website) on sensitive or taboo themes (like language teaching or promotion, early marriages, Roma health mediators, etc.) can be (potentially) perceived by traditional Roma communities as an unwanted attempt by the state to influence the core of Romani culture.

Nonetheless, according to the Polish authorities, this kind of information-sharing can raise awareness among the traditional communities of developments within Roma communities in other countries. As such, a proposal for the next thematic visit to be devoted to traditional communities was shared by several other countries during the 11th plenary session of CAHROM.

Proposals for new topics

In response to the questionnaire, many themes for future thematic visits were proposed, including in cross-cutting areas like *education or employment (data collection and measures), women (participation), culture*, etc. The proposal of several themes, already covered in previous thematic visits, clearly shows the need for further follow-up and development of those issues. The proposed topics for future thematic visits can be divided into the areas listed below:

Education

- “second chance” programmes for raising the educational level among Roma (Hungary);
- children and education (Greece, the Netherlands);
- motivational measures/positive experiences for the education of Roma adults with a focus on Roma women/parents (Republic of Moldova);
- evaluation of educational results for Roma and international comparisons (Czech Republic);
- special schools – system(s) of inclusive education for Roma children from socially disadvantaged settings (equality in testing, procedures of insertion/classification into mainstream education, preparation of school staff, learning material, financial support, curricula, organisation of education and supply services, etc. (Slovak Republic).

Roma women and youth

- Roma feminism as an emerging issue (Spain);
- Women’s empowerment in Roma society (Slovenia, Poland);
- Roma Youth (Serbia).

Culture

- the problem of a lack of democratic procedures within the community (Poland);
- situation and prospects of Roma women and girls in traditional communities (Poland);
- cultural obstacles in traditional communities (Poland);
- Roma families in contemporary societies (Poland).

History

- Romani history and culture, curricula/factsheets in textbooks (Serbia, Republic of Moldova);
- genocide against Roma during World War II in school curricula in primary and secondary schools (Serbia, Republic of Moldova).

Discrimination and hate speech

- hate speech (Bosnia and Herzegovina);
- recognising discrimination towards the Roma population (Bosnia and Herzegovina).

Data collection and measurement

- data collection and measurement (Italy);
- international (EU) statistics, their comparability and accessibility (Czech Republic).

Finances

- funding of national Roma integration strategies (Italy).

Mediation

- the role of the mediator and mediator training programmes (Sweden).

National policies and strategies

- National Roma policy/strategies implementation in Council of Europe member States in which the Roma population is relatively small according to official census data (Latvia, Republic of Moldova).

Migration and asylum seekers

- best practices of integration policy for Roma asylum seekers (Republic of Moldova);
- best practices of integration policy for Roma immigrants (Republic of Moldova);
- non-national Roma in Western Europe and how their needs can be tackled from a social perspective (Spain).

Participation

- best practices of Roma inclusion in the empowerment and participation of Roma in local and regional public administration (Republic of Moldova);
- participation of Roma in decision-making processes and respect of their civil rights, for example, election laws, civil registration, etc. (Bosnia and Herzegovina);
- representation of the Roma communities and their role (Spain);
- main area of Roma participation and causes of gaps in other spheres (Spain);
- civic participation of Roma (Poland);
- Human Rights education (Italy);
- rule of law (Bulgaria).

Employment

- access to labour market and environment (Italy);
- effective measures in employment of Roma (Bosnia and Herzegovina).

Human trafficking (Albania, Poland);

Situation of elderly people (Italy);

Travellers' situation (Switzerland);

The role of NGO and their representativeness (Italy);

ID documents (Bosnia and Herzegovina).

A list of CAHROM thematic proposals for 2018-2019 - as agreed by the CAHROM at its 14th meeting (Strasbourg, 24-27 October 2017) - is available on the CAHROM website: <http://rm.coe.int/list-and-composition-of-cahrom-thematic-groups-for-the-years-2018-2019/16807761ac>.

Additional remarks stated in the replies to the questionnaire

- even with increased knowledge available and issues addressed better (such as education, including pre-school education, in strategic frameworks), a thematic visit is still an occasion to look for new solutions and ideas or to highlight possible threats;
- in order to find a structural solution to problems, results and achievements at grassroots level should be examined. Thematic visits should focus on these to ensure a more visible impact;
- the sustainable long-term work, professionalism and service carried out within the Council of Europe to improve the situation of the Roma is appreciated;
- bilateral meetings and regional cooperation should be continued, using the outcomes of the thematic visits;
- there is a need for more interest to be shown towards Traveller communities;
- the possible “controlling attitudes” of NGOs and officials can hinder to some degree open discussions and independent mutual exchanges between experts on defining professional questions and possible solutions. In the case of very professional topics (such as testing) it is hard to quickly explain some technical issues to non-professionals.

Organisational matters

- sometimes meetings are too long and include a lot of visits and information which is hard to absorb during one day;
- local authorities and Roma civil society are sometimes lacking from the programme;
- organisational information (names, address etc., documents) should not be sent out just a few days before the meeting, especially given that a background paper allows better preparation for exchanges with experts from other countries;
- some topics should be followed-up, in professional terms, with a more detailed approach (such as testing and diagnosis);
- the title of the visit should be carefully formulated and reflect the content of the visit, otherwise it risks being misleading (as was the case with empowerment of women and early marriages);
- All invited local speakers on the agenda of the thematic visits should be properly informed by the hosting authorities about the exact topic and purpose of the thematic visit so as to prepare focused presentations, addressing not the situation of Roma in general but the issues related to the theme of the visit;
- Participants from the visiting states should be encouraged to prepare background documents covering the thematic issues and this background information should be circulated to the group of partner countries’ experts prior to the thematic visit;
- there is an urgent need to keep to deadlines concerning:
 - o the sending out of background information (possibly prepared by CAHROM members, as the participating experts are not always familiar with national policy, data etc.);
 - o the contribution after the visit, focusing on the topic, delivered by participants, possibly with presentations used during the visit;
 - o the final version of the report, including lessons learned, good practices, conclusions, recommendations, etc.

APPENDICES

APPENDIX 1

[Questionnaire](#) for the review of the impact and follow - up given to previous thematic reports and visits (2012-2015)

APPENDIX 2

List of the thematic visits and experts participating with their answers to the questionnaire



CAHROM Thematic
visit experts list with :

APPENDIX 3

[Lists of CAHROM thematic groups and visits 2012-2017](#)

APPENDIX 4**EXAMPLES OF INFO PREVIOUSLY COLLECTED IN 2013
ON THE IMPACT AND FOLLOW-UP OF CAHROM THEMATIC REPORTS AND VISITS****Impact on policy development****SLOVAK REPUBLIC** (inclusive education of Roma children vs. special schools)

Following the CAHROM thematic report/visit, the State Secretary for Education asked for a meeting with the Plenipotentiary to discuss the thematic report. The conclusions and proposals contained in the CAHROM thematic report have been taken into consideration in the reform of the education system in the Slovak Republic proposed by Mr. Peter Pollak who took office as Plenipotentiary of the Slovak Republic for Roma Community, in October 2012. At the beginning of his mandate, he drafted a document entitled "Roma Reform - The Right Way" in which he has incorporated specific goals for promoting inclusive education for students from marginalised Roma communities. It was decided to create a joint working group of experts that will include the Plenipotentiary Office of the Slovak Government for Roma Community and the Ministry of Education for the development of a national pilot project for inclusive education of children from marginalised Roma communities. Under this project, children who were diagnosed with variant A will be enrolled in mainstream schools in 60 Slovak localities from the school year 2015/2016.

REPUBLIC OF MOLDOVA (role of central, regional & local authorities in implementing national Roma strategies/action plans)

As a result of the thematic report/visit and the *follow-up bilateral cooperation with Romania* - as well as the ROMED programme - the Republic of Moldova has made the necessary legislative amendments to institutionalise community mediators and include them in the list of professions. On 17 July 2013 the Government adopted the Framework *Regulation on the employment modalities and organization of the activity of community mediators in compact and / or mixed communities populated by Roma*. One of the main achievements represents the institutionalisation in 2013 of 15 Roma community mediators who belong to the group of 23 mediators that participated in the *European Training Programme for Roma Mediators (ROMED)*. Their role will be to facilitate communication between Roma communities and public local authorities, to ensure a better access to available public services in the area of health, education, labour and social assistance. According to the provisions of the Action Plan and in the context of current budgetary capacities, financial resources (462.6 thousand MDL) were allocated from the state budget to the budget of territorial-administrative units for the employment of 15 community mediators. At the next stage, for the employment of the next 33 community mediators, the respective proposals were promoted for the inclusion of corresponding financial resources for 2014-2015.