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**THEMATIC VISIT ON NATIONAL EXPERIENCES OF ROMA SELF-RELIABILITY AND RESPONSIBILITY TO PARTICIPATE IN SOCIETY AS ANY OTHER CITIZEN (EDUCATION, LABOUR MARKET, SPORTS ETC.)**

**Kharkiv, Ukraine, 25-27 June 2019**

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**THEMATIC REPORT**

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**Endorsed by the CAHROM by written procedure on 31 December 2019**

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<sup>1</sup> 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 and Ashkali; c) Eastern groups (Dom/Garachi, Lom/Bosha 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.

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## 1. INTRODUCTION

### Background and context of the thematic report and visit

The CAHROM thematic visit on national experiences of Roma self-reliability and responsibility to participate in society as any other citizen (education, labour market, sports etc.), hosted by Ukraine in June 2019, was attended by experts from Estonia, Greece, the Netherlands, North Macedonia, Poland, the Slovak Republic and the European Centre for Minority Issues (ECMI).

**Self-reliability** can also be termed as **self-reliance**. Some definitions include: *“Reliance on one’s own capabilities, judgment, or resources; independence”*<sup>2</sup>, *“reliance on one’s own efforts and abilities”*<sup>3</sup>. The second key word in the title of this thematic visit is **responsibility**, or more precisely responsibility to participate in society as any other citizen. In the context of marginalised, vulnerable and often impoverished groups such as Roma and Travellers this theme needs to be approached in a constructive and holistic manner, involving both the stakeholders and the duty bearers and a common definition of the terms self-reliability and responsibility must be found. When designing national Roma Integration strategies and Action Plans all kinds of finger-pointing and blaming must be avoided if the discussions are to be productive and fruitful.

Some countries refer in their National Roma Integration Strategies (NRIS) to developing and sustaining the existing self-reliability and self-reliance of the Roma communities with the concepts of **“empowerment”**<sup>4</sup>, **“empowering action”** or **“Roma autonomy”**. The empowerment of a Roma person or group of Roma people means the process of giving Roma an ability, power or status regarding the implementation of the NRISs and utilising practices that make most of these innate abilities enabling Roma to develop these abilities further.

**Moving from passiveness to pro-activeness.** The thematic visit identified examples of good national practices to promote and increase self-reliability and responsibility of Roma and Traveller communities and of how some Roma communities have achieved it either through personal involvement or with the support of NGOs and national policies and programmes.

#### 1.1 The notion of conditionality

The contractualisation of social benefits has emerged in most European countries in the past 30 years. A recent increase of the conditionality of social aid in every domain concerned by social aid can be observed in Western European countries aiming to limit access to social benefits. But what kind of conditionality helps to break the circle of poverty? Which is the correct method to efficiently counter poverty and social exclusion?

Clasen and Clegg (2007)<sup>5</sup> considered the welfare conditionality in its broadest sense. They considered first that *“individual right to social benefits have always and everywhere been conditional in some ways and conditionality is as such a cornerstone and basis of risk management in welfare states. Secondly, however there are several dimensions as well as range of possible ‘levels’ and ‘levers’ of conditionality in social policy, and differing balances between these levels and levers can tell us something potentially important about the pattern of risk management that is institutionalized in and through important social policies. Evidence of variation can thirdly generate benchmarks for assessing the direction and scope of change in the comparative analysis of welfare reform”*.

<sup>2</sup> The Free Dictionary Online: <https://www.thefreedictionary.com/self-reliant>

<sup>3</sup> Merriam-Webster dictionary online: <https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/self-reliance>

<sup>4</sup> Collins dictionary online: <https://www.collinsdictionary.com/dictionary/english/empowerment>

<sup>5</sup> Clasen, J. and Clegg, D. (2007) Levels and levers of conditionality – measuring change in mature welfare states

A policy that formulates condition of conduct can encompass also condition of circumstance, and category.

Clasen and Clegg proposed a framework to characterize different patterns of policy provisions and regulations in welfare states. They identified levels of conditions operating within welfare states which may govern an individual's access to social security. The purpose of their discussion was to offer insights into the qualitative shifts in the relationship between social rights and responsibilities that define the quality of social citizenship in different settings, at different times. This framework is based on the analysis of the degree of conditionality of national social programmes. This approach reminds us that very few rights are 'unconditional' in our Welfare States nowadays and those conditions are created to limit those rights to social security. In their framework, Clasen and Clegg identify three 'levels' or types of conditions operating within welfare states which govern an individual's access to social security, which are:

### 1. Conditions of Category

The first condition to receive social rights is always membership of a defined category of support: age, disability, unemployed and so-on. Even universal rights do not abolish 'categorical gateways': universal health care is of course only available to the sick, and only citizens, or people who have a permit of residence can benefit from it. Those categories are not static which means that depending on social and political context, they can be more inclusive or more restrictive. Those categories are useful for politicians, who can modify them to reform their national system of social protection.

### 2. The Conditions of Circumstances

The condition of circumstance is the secondary type of condition which can be interpreted as eligibility and entitlement criteria for:

- The entry and temporary residence in a country
- Entitlement to claim social benefits
- Acquisition of permanent residence or citizenship

If we take, for instance, social insurance benefits, legislation has long included rules regarding the extent to which and how the claimants' work history determines their individual and their family's access to benefit rights. It will vary depending on the number, value and contributions and/or full days of labour that are required in a given time period to open access to these benefits. The conditionality of individual access varies greatly between the 'beveridgean'<sup>6</sup> and 'bismarckien' systems. However, even within similar welfare conditionality systems, there are varying degrees of conditionality.

Another example can be made about the right of residence which determines the access to social benefits. The residence-based criteria for determining entitlement to claim social benefits on the basis of residence can be more or less restrictive. For instance, in Sweden, access to social benefits is granted to non-EU migrants on the basis of one year of legal residence, be it temporary or permanent. In other countries such as Germany and the Netherlands, non-EU migrants who have temporary residence are also, in principle, entitled to some social benefits. However, claiming those benefits can be used as grounds for the non-renewal of residence status and for refusing applications for permanent residence. In this case the eligibility criteria for permanent residence is in effect restricting access to social benefits. In other countries such as UK, permanent residence is required of most non-EU migrants in order to claim social benefits, the conditions of access to permanent residence thus being a lever for restricting access to those provisions.

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<sup>6</sup> Beveridgean' welfare is associated in social policy literature with tax-funded, redistributive social support and flat-rate benefits in contrast to 'Bismarckean' schemes based on earnings-related benefits and contributions that reinforce established social structures.

The residence-based criteria can also limit the claim of social benefits for EU citizens. Indeed, an EU citizen has right to residence in another country if he/she has enough financial resources and social protection. Concerning the first criteria, it has been interpreted in different ways by the European Court of Justice depending on particular cases. In recent years, the Court seems to have restricted the access to social benefits for passive EU migrants, who do not work, and do not have enough financial resources in order to combat ‘Social dumping’<sup>7</sup>.

### 3. Condition of Conduct

The third and final level of conditionality, namely the condition of conduct, is subsequent to the conditions of category and circumstances and comes into effect once the eligibility for benefits has been established and serves to regulate the ongoing receipt of benefits. It depends on the behaviour requirements imposed to the beneficiary by legislative or administrative guidance.

This is the case for example when the renewal of individual residence permits is linked to having a job. Another example can be made for an EU citizen for whom economic independence is a condition of eligibility for permanent residence. This is the form of conditionality that has been recently developed in line with the discussion about the “new welfare state”.

One classical example of this type of conditionality is the case of unemployment. In order to receive their unemployment benefits the beneficiaries may be obliged to prove their actual job search activities or participation in training programmes or have to agree to specialized counseling. Another one is the conditionality of family benefits to promote good parenting (such as the conditionality on the payment of Child Allowances based on school enrollment). Others are the modification of conditions for accessing certain health benefits to produce healthy lifestyles choices or the conditioning of providing housing and housing benefits based on good financial and housing records and neighbourliness and the absence of “anti-social behaviour”.

As for the other conditions, they are present in varying degree across European States and can be more or less restrictive. The conditionality of social benefits and other forms of concrete aid) such as the Food Banks) can also limit their abuses but also influence individuals and groups positively by making people’s behaviour more responsible. These kind of conditionalities which aim at influencing human behaviour and formulating a condition to human capital investment, have been applied to Roma and Travellers in Europe, and will be analysed in this report. Hence, we will take an example in the second part about public policies which aim to change human conduct through cash-transfers or in-kind transfers bearing in mind that a policy that formulates condition of conduct can encompass also condition of circumstance and category.

#### 2.1 Conditional Cash Transfers (CCTs)

The Cash Transfer is cash assistance, given in exchange of a certain behaviour, using positive incentives. In most cases CCTs mean provision of cash assistance to the poor and certain vulnerable groups which fall within that category. Cash transfers can be a cheaper vehicle to deliver benefits than in-kind benefits. Their use is based on the assumption that they do not distort consumer choices, preferences and freedoms. A conditional cash transfer (CCT) can be used as a tool for reducing the gap in educational outcomes between Roma and Non-Roma and can in this case be understood as:

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<sup>7</sup> Social dumping is a practice of employers to use cheaper labour than is usually available at their site of production or sale. In the latter case, migrant workers are employed; in the former, production is moved to a low-wage country or area. The company will thus save money and potentially increase its profit. Systemic criticism suggests that as a result, governments are tempted to enter a so-called social policy regime competition by reducing their labour and social standards to ease labour costs on enterprises and to retain business activity within their jurisdiction.

*“the provision of money to poor families which undertake specified verifiable actions, CCTs in general aim to exert an immediate effect on poverty by raising income while at the same time contributing to a longer-term reduction of poverty by improving beneficiaries’ future potential to earn a living, in so doing contributing to a drop-in demand for such benefits.”<sup>8</sup>*

And according to Megyesi (2016) this kind of social policy measures can be seen as:

*“non-contributory cash subsidies incorporating behavioral incentives to steer individuals in the direction of more appropriate or desired behaviour”<sup>9</sup>.*

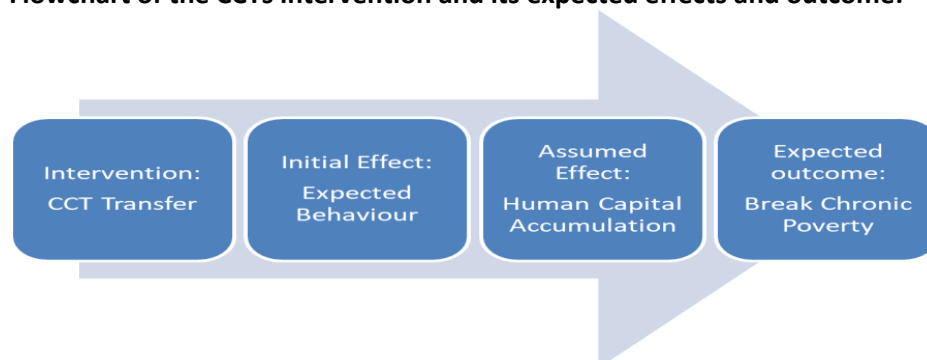
CCTs encompass conditions of conducts, conditions of category and conditions of circumstance but aim to change human conduct to combat poverty. In some conditional policies, one is eligible to receive cash transfer under social criteria. Then, once eligible, one will continue to receive this aid if one’s conduct is in line with the mandatory criteria of the policy.

CCTs programmes have two main objectives:

- Immediate poverty relief through provision of cash transfers
- Long-term poverty reduction by linking transfers to incentives for investments in human capital (co-responsibilities).

The CCTs touch various fields. They tend to be developed in Europe overall regarding child and family allowance. In child and family allowance, schooling-related criteria appears to be among the most common requirements of CCT-programmes in Europe<sup>10</sup>. These operate mostly with negative incentive: cash transfers will be withheld, entirely stopped or reduced if the conditions related to the children’s compulsory schooling attendance are not respected. A positive incentive is found mostly in relation to post-compulsory schooling, where families can be eligible for family benefits if their children are in full-time education and have gone over the age limit of standard eligibility<sup>11</sup>.

#### **Flowchart of the CCTs intervention and its expected effects and outcome:**



#### **CCTs programmes in the field of child and family welfare**

In the field of child and family welfare, CCTs-programmes exist in various areas, from allowance to improved infant health schemes to post-compulsory school grants. For example:

<sup>8</sup> Roma Education Fund (2009), Working Paper 4 on ‘Assessing Conditional Cash Transfers as a Tool for Reducing the Gap in Educational Outcomes Between Roma and Non-Roma’. Page 6.

<sup>9</sup> Megyesi, M. (2016), ‘Conditional cash transfers in high-income countries and their impact on human capital accumulation’, *United Nations Conference*. available at: <https://www.un.org/esa/socdev/egms/docs/2016/Poverty-SDGs/Tarki-paper.pdf>

<sup>10</sup>European Commission, *final report (Volume I) on Conditional cash transfers and their impact on children*, June 2014, page 7

<sup>11</sup> idem

## Infant health programmes and school attendance programmes

Children from disadvantaged families amass significant cognitive deficits before they reach school age. In addition, kindergarden attendance of the children from socio-economically disadvantaged families presents various advantages: it affects the development of the child, its place in society, level of educational attainment, and employment opportunities<sup>12</sup>. Aiming at breaking the circle of poverty and to prevent early school leaving, some CCTs-programme aim to improve participation in Kindergarten. According to the available data there are no such programmes in the hosting or partner countries for kindergarden level.

## CTTs programmes in the Labour Market field

The Cash transfer specialised in the labour market insertion of Youth or adults are spread in Latin America and Caribbean<sup>13</sup>. CCTs in labor market aim to provide better access to economic opportunities and quality employment, and thus promote social inclusion of those seeking a way out of poverty<sup>14</sup>. Nevertheless, they seem to be rare in Europe.

## The case of 'public work' in Bulgaria, Hungary and Slovakia

Different kinds of public work-programmes have long been used by European governments to address unemployment and provide important social assistance to people in need whilst providing a boost to community infrastructure and services<sup>15</sup>.

The concept of 'public work' links social assistance benefits to work activity in local communities. It is interesting because it focuses on youth or adults in the labour market and not on pupils or students. In Europe, most CCTs-programmes are linked with education and school attendance. Concretely, training and jobs are subsidised with national funds, with the administration and delivery devolved down to the level of local authorities or individual Mayors. It is interesting because, both are benefitting from the aid: the worker and the mainstream society. However, the mutual benefits could be questioned because there are also situations in which Roma may face discrimination and ill treatment when participating in active labour market measures and feel that their families benefit very little or not at all from these measures in the long run. This is the case for example when they may face serious childcare issues during labour market measures or when the family's finances suffer because of being sent far away from home for work. Other criticism towards active labour market measures is the nature of the offered work. Not all work improve real labour market skills and employability of Roma. Roma may also feel exploited as cheap labour if their actual labour market orientations do not correspond with the work offered.

In Bulgaria, Hungary and Slovakia these kinds of programmes have been a significant feature of training/employment made available to Roma. Large scale measures like these turn the local state into the employer of last resort and arguably also helps to conceal the true levels of unemployment among Roma populations.<sup>16</sup> For example, in Hungary in 2016, the average number of those employed in public works was 223 470 or 41.6% of all registered jobseekers and 4.9% of all employed people in Hungary<sup>17</sup>.

This kind of public employment and training schemes have been widely criticised for their bad overall results and low efficiency in reintegrating people into the primary, open labour market, for poor targeting and because they absorb funds from other, more useful and efficient labour market tools and for providing a lower income than

<sup>12</sup> EUROSTAT website, *Early childhood and primary education statistics*. Online: [https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/index.php?title=Early\\_childhood\\_and\\_primary\\_education\\_statistics](https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/index.php?title=Early_childhood_and_primary_education_statistics);

<sup>13</sup> ECLAC/ILO, report on 'the employment situation in Latin America and the Caribbean: conditional transfer programmes and the labour market', May 2014. Online : [https://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---americas/---ro-lima/documents/publication/wcms\\_244281.pdf](https://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---americas/---ro-lima/documents/publication/wcms_244281.pdf). Page 13

<sup>14</sup> idem

<sup>15</sup> European Commission, *report on 'Public works: how can PES contribute to increasing their value as an activation tool?'*, October 2013, page 5

<sup>16</sup> Conditional Cash Transfers to Improve Education and Health: An Ex ante Evaluation of Red de Protección Social, Nicaragua, [University of York](https://www.york.ac.uk/), page 25

<sup>17</sup> Fruzsin A., European Social Policy Network, *Reforms to the Hungarian public works scheme*, ESPN Flash Report 2017/42, June 2017

the minimum wage<sup>18</sup>. The work and training offered in this kind of programme has generally been very limited in scope and additional value according to researchers at the University of York. Given the actual lack of wider employment opportunities, some respondents, however, viewed such schemes positively. Others saw these locally implemented schemes, which regularly employed mainly Roma workforce, as further maintaining the status quo by cementing both Roma' dependency on public welfare and the ability of Mayors to exercise control over them. The offer was often viewed as being limited in its scope and long-term value<sup>19</sup>. Future policies should therefore aim at ensuring the availability of a wider range of programmes that look beyond the low skilled or manual training that currently seems to dominate this kind of work provision<sup>20</sup>. For example, Hungary started reform regarding the provision of active labour market work in 2017 in order to better facilitate transition to the primary labour market. However, it is too soon to deliver an evaluation on the effects of this reform at grassroots level.

### **The CCT programme targeted towards unemployed youth in North Macedonia**

The creation of a CCT-programme for employing young people from social assistance households in North Macedonia presents an intriguing project in Europe. The European Centre of Vienna has published a study on this programme, outlining the existence of active labour market programmes in North Macedonia, and the impact of this specific CCT programme on increased employability among beneficiaries.

In general, CCTs are considered to be passive labour market programmes. In 2015, there was an extension of the beneficiaries of CCTs programme in North Macedonia: apart from young people from households which are dependent on social and financial assistance and CCT beneficiaries, other vulnerable groups targeted now include also the following categories: young people (19-26) that have been children without parents and parental care, family members of households that are beneficiaries of continuous financial assistance or child supplement; victims of family violence accommodated in shelters, persons who were beneficiaries of state stipends in the last 15 years; young people up to 29 years of age whose overall household income per household member is lower than 50% of the average wage.

The new design of the programme meant in practice that: *“The new call added two additional payment modalities: the possibility of combining 6 months of financial transfer, and 60 months of exemption for payments of social contributions, or 6 months of financial transfer plus 36 months of exemption from paying social contributions and income tax. The latter payment modality obliges employers to keep the person from vulnerable social group for additional 12 months. The estimated coverage of this programme for 2016 is 166 persons”*<sup>21</sup>.

According to the report of the European Centre of Vienna, a few challenges come to immediate attention:

- The programme itself is focused exclusively on providing direct financial transfers in the form of a net salary for the vulnerable categories of workers or net wage/tax exemptions for the potential employers. However, taking into consideration the educational profile and the duration of the unemployment of beneficiaries, it is questionable why the CCTs are solely focused on direct provision of short-term jobs rather than on long-term skills improvement and/or upgrading both the educational and job level of the unemployed;
- In a country where there is a large informal sector and where social insurance funds face serious liquidity issues, social contribution exemptions as well as income tax exemptions do not contribute to the overall improvement of economic and social standards;

<sup>18</sup> idem

<sup>19</sup> Conditional Cash Transfers to Improve Education and Health: An Ex ante Evaluation of Red de Proteccion Social, Nicaragua, [University of York](#), page 26

<sup>20</sup> Conditional Cash Transfers to Improve Education and Health: An Ex ante Evaluation of Red de Proteccion Social, Nicaragua, [University of York](#), page 26

<sup>21</sup> Gerovska Mitev, M. (2017), 'When active is Passive: Conditional Cash Transfers and Employment Creation in Macedonia', in Scoppetta, A., Leichsenring, K., & Stamatiou, W. (eds.), *Innovative Approaches in Labour Market Policy and Health and Long-Term Care in Eastern Europe: Compilation of workshop papers*, Vienna, Austria: European Centre Vienna. Page 17. Online :



- Finally, the programme's coverage cannot enable to sufficiently contribute towards improvement of employability among potential beneficiaries<sup>22</sup>.

To conclude, according to Paul Stubbs, *"We need to undertake a prior in-depth socio-economic analysis of potential costs and benefits of CCT programmes, for the public budget, and for the socially vulnerable population in the country"*.<sup>23</sup>

#### Strength of CCTs programmes:

- A single instrument which can achieve multiple objectives relating to health, education, nutrition, and employment;
- Mean-tested programmes allow to target very vulnerable people;
- CCTs present lower transaction costs than in-kind benefits;
- Thanks to CCTs, people are free to choose how and when to use the benefit;
- CCTs programmes can be a quick response to a crisis
- Their impact are mainly positive<sup>24</sup>.

#### Weaknesses of CCTs programmes:

- How can targeting be designed to be sufficiently flexible and resistant to outside influence?
- Should all transfers be conditional?
- Should demanded side interventions wait until the supply is fully adequate? Do transfers have undesirable effects on people's decisions to seek work, or provide incentives to have more children?<sup>25</sup>
- Are these programmes taking into account all parameters relating to poverty? i.e. when children cannot attend school because of the long-distance from house to school, because of their clothing, etc.
- We do not know exactly the impact and effectiveness of such programmes. The impact of CCTs programmes is not easily detectable, especially in situations where there is an already developed social protection system, as in Europe<sup>26</sup>. Literature analysis of CCT's impact shows important constraints related to their effects in employment.
- What is the impact of different kinds of CCTs programmes on education?

Some critics have been formulated also by Peter Dwyer in 2017 and can be useful for us to understand better the negative side of CCTs programmes regarding Roma minorities:

- Conditionality of welfare state can create tension about inactive mobile EU citizen in European Law;
- It has eroded the potential of de-commodified social rights, 'granted on the basis of citizenship rather than performance' to deliver substantive welfare for disadvantaged citizens;
- The use of conditionality to activate and recommodify vulnerable people who are increasingly seen as 'passive and irresponsible shirkers' rather than rights-bearing citizens, serves as a case study of how many states have responded to the realities of global competition by asserting work obligations over social rights. Conditionality and competition have combined to negatively reconfigure the ways in which incapacity and the welfare rights and work responsibilities of vulnerable people are conceived and understood<sup>27</sup>.

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<sup>22</sup>Ibid, page 18.

<sup>23</sup> Study on Conditional cash transfers and their impact on children, European Commission

<sup>24</sup> The World Bank (2003), En breve n°36 on 'Conditional Cash Transfer Programmes: an effective tool for reaching the poorest and most vulnerable'. Online:

<sup>25</sup> Idem

<sup>26</sup> Gerovska Mitev, M. (2017). *Op.cit.*

<sup>27</sup> Dwyer, P. (2017), 'Rewriting the contract? Conditionality, welfare reform and the rights and responsibilities of disabled people', in: Horsfall, D. & Hudson, John, *Social Policy in an Era of Competition: From Global to Local Perspectives*,

Over the past decades, the welfare state tends to have shifted from passive to an active welfare state, involving more the society. The states clearly prioritised responsible individual behaviour over rights sending all their citizen's a clear message: "no rights without responsibilities"<sup>28</sup>. By doing so, the welfare state has become a conditional welfare state, and a focus on 'conduct conditionality', concept developed by Clasen and Clegg, has conditioned the social benefits system/aids into a lever for changing behaviour. CCTs programmes illustrate perfectly this trend that largely developed since 90s in Latin America, Asia, and Africa and now seems to have appeared widely across Europe (EU and OECD countries) since 2000s.

In developing countries, many of the similar CCTs programmes have already been evaluated and the evidence from the first wave of these programmes suggested that these programmes might have helped reduce poverty among programme participants and at national level<sup>29</sup>. It has been proved they increased school attendance and enrolment but the effects on educational outcomes (degree attainment/tests scores, or later earnings) have proved to be mixed<sup>30</sup>. Indeed, the impact of CCTs programmes depends strongly both on their institutional and policy context<sup>31</sup>.

In addition, there are many differences between developing countries and European ones, regarding child poverty, policy and institutional context. Hence, the transferability of a programme may be limited and in practice the local and regional approaches must be drafted taking into account the social and political context in which the programme will be implemented. To identify the success or failure of a CCT programme, we have to evaluate each programme separately, and we cannot identify general positive or negative impact. At least, no research has yet been published on it.

#### **Impact of CCTs programmes regarding Roma minorities:**

Only one CCT programme in the world has defined its target population in ethnic terms and it was in Japan. There are no CCTs developed especially for Roma and Travellers. However, many CCTs programmes developed in Europe are aiming at breaking the circle of poverty and function in particular in regions where Roma communities are important.

Nevertheless, despite of the lack of data and the complexity of the analysis of the impact of CCTs programmes, CCTs developed **in the education field** in Eastern and Central European countries have not met with the well-documented successes of their counterparts from outside Europe<sup>32</sup>. CCTs lack of success in improving the educational outcomes of the Roma may be due to various reasons:

*"Roma are more likely to face various forms of discrimination in general, and segregation in particular. As a result of residential and school segregation, issues of supply constitute a greater constraint for Romani families than for impoverished majority families. Thus, in order for CCTs for education, which are usually focused only on demand-side issues, to succeed in reducing the gap in educational outcomes between Roma and non-Roma, a quantitatively and qualitatively adequate supply of education must be secured for Romani beneficiaries."*<sup>33</sup>

In the labour market field, some people have criticised the case of public works schemes, which regularly employed an overwhelmingly Roma workforce as a measure which maintains and cements both Roma'

<sup>28</sup> Giddens, A. (1998), *The Third Way: The Renewal of Social Democracy*. Cambridge: Polity Press.

<sup>29</sup> Saavedra, J. E. (2016), 'the effects of conditional cash transfer programmes on poverty reduction, human capital accumulation and wellbeing', United Nations. Online: <https://www.un.org/esa/socdev/egms/docs/2016/Poverty-SDGs/JuanSaavedra-paper.pdf>. Page 1.

<sup>30</sup> Idem

<sup>31</sup> Idem

<sup>32</sup> Roma Education Fund (2009), working paper 4 on 'Assessing Conditional Cash Transfers as a tool for reducing the gap in educational outcomes between Roma and non-Roma'. Page 7

<sup>33</sup> Idem

dependency on public welfare and the ability of Mayors to exercise control over them<sup>34</sup>. These public work programmes appeared to be the main programmes available to unemployed Roma. In Hungary, around 35 000 Roma had been working in the public works scheme since its inception in 2012. The country report made on Hungary shows that the conditional approach did not enable people to enter the mainstream labour market, rather it appeared to trap people in an “unemployment-benefits cycle”<sup>35</sup>. The Slovak Country report criticised the ‘radicalised’ nature of such programmes, and the disproportionate involvement of Roma in such schemes, which lead to a concentration of Roma within low skilled sectors of the labour market<sup>36</sup>. According to Dwyer, the conditionality of welfare state which linked basic rights to activity in the paid labour market, can exacerbate the social exclusion of those who are not in paid employment or training<sup>37</sup>.

Concerning the other types of CCTs programmes in the labour market field, research is scarce, and there are no real impact assessments leading to a good overview of the capacity of these programmes to improve labour market insertion of Roma people.

There is a direct correlation between an effective participation of national minorities in public life and increased self-reliability and responsibility. It would be wrong to either blame the stakeholders or the duty bearers for the ambient lack of self-reliability and responsibility. In order to achieve self-reliability and responsibility to participate in society as any other citizen, it is evident that active citizenship is required. But one must learn how to become an active citizen and this starts with education. This is why a holistic approach is needed and fundamental issues such as education, but also employment and housing which are interlinked must be addressed in parallel because in order to understand the importance of active citizenship, a minimum level of education is essential.

Active citizenship remains a major challenge due to passiveness or the lack of motivation to participate due mostly because of the lack of equal opportunities, awareness, information, interest in public and political processes, ownership of rights and processes and the wide scope of institutional discrimination against Roma.

## **2. NATIONAL PRACTICES AND GOVERNMENTAL INITIATIVES ON NATIONAL EXPERIENCES OF ROMA SELF-RELIABILITY AND RESPONSIBILITY TO PARTICIPATE IN SOCIETY AS ANY OTHER CITIZEN (EDUCATION, LABOUR MARKET, SPORTS, ETC.)**

### **2.1 Ukraine (host country)**

The Ukrainian Strategy for Roma Inclusion will end in 2021 and some shortcomings such as the lack of information about the number of Roma in Ukraine, insufficient state funding, heavy reliance on international donors as well as Roma and non-Roma NGOs and especially the lack of consultation with the Roma community have been identified as main challenges in its implementation.

The new strategy will be developed in cooperation with international organisations, other governmental agencies and ministries and with the active participation of Roma NGOs and communities. The Inter-agency workgroup on ethnic policies and freedom of consciousness may be reinstated as a State service and function on a new model. They will meet in the autumn of 2019 together with active Roma NGOs and associations to discuss the 2021-2030 Roma Strategy. The Inter-Agency is to be made up of 5 working groups engaged with Ukrainian

<sup>34</sup> Brown, Philip, Dwyer, Peter James [orcid.org/0000-0002-2297-2375](https://orcid.org/0000-0002-2297-2375), Martin, Philip et al. (1 more author) (2014) Roma Matrix Interim Research Report. Research Report. University of York, York, page 35

<sup>35</sup> Idem

<sup>36</sup> idem

<sup>37</sup> Dwyer, P. (2004) ‘Creeping conditionality from welfare rights to conditional entitlements’, *Canadian Journal of Sociology*, vol. 29, n°2, pp. 265-87.

Roma organisations. The approximately 120 Roma organisations have been approached but only half are active and have responded to the call. That said, the organisation of Roma activity has increased in the past 5 years, especially the Roma women's movement. However, although NGOs have become real partners to the State, it is important that the Inter-Agency does not solely delegate the work to Roma NGOs and rely on them to reflect on what has been done. Ministry officials also need to reflect on the strategy so that the relevant parts of the ministries and governmental agencies can take ownership of it.

The new strategy should also secure State funding for the Inter-agency workgroup in order to ensure appropriate staffing. The on-going and longstanding issue of the understaffed Special Secretariat on Roma issues, which currently has only two staff members, must be avoided if the strategy and ensuing action plan are to be effective.

In recent years, work on the protection of Roma rights has intensified in Ukraine in accordance with the Strategy for Protection and Integration of the Roma National Minority for the period up to 2020, approved by the Presidential Decree of 08.04.2013 No. 201, and the Action Plan for the Implementation of the Strategy, approved by the Decree No. 701 of the Cabinet of Ministers of Ukraine dated 11 September 2013.

At the national level, the work of state bodies on the protection of Roma rights is coordinated by the Interagency Working Group, established in accordance with the Resolution of the Cabinet of Ministers of Ukraine No. 993 of 25.11.2015. The Interagency Working Group includes representatives of ministries, other central executive bodies, deputy heads of regions and Kyiv city state administrations.

Organisational support for the work of the Interagency Working Group is provided by the Department of Religions and Nationalities of the Ministry of Culture of Ukraine together with the Secretariat of the Interagency Working Group (hereinafter referred to as the Secretariat). The latter was formed as a temporary advisory body of the Ministry of Culture.

There are five permanent profile working groups within the Inter-agency Working Group, which are:

- 1) law enforcement and migration issues
- 2) housing
- 3) education and culture
- 4) social protection and health
- 5) organisational and information support

The Kharkiv region undertook a mapping exercise to assess more accurately the number of Roma living in the region to allow for more targeted and customised inclusion policies. The mapping was carried out by the Kharkiv National-Cultural Society "Romen" in partnership with the Kharkiv Regional Centre for Social Services for Family, Children and Youth and financed by international donors. It was a door to door exercise based on mutual trust between the communities and the representatives of the Roma NGO and local authorities. The estimated number of Roma in the Kharkiv region is 50 000 which is well over the number indicated in the 2001 national census which stated that there were 47 000 Roma in all of Ukraine. The positive experience and result from this mapping project should be shared with other regions of Ukraine such as Odessa and Uzhhorod so that it can be reproduced and eventually lead to a more accurate estimation of the Roma population in Ukraine. It should be noted that in addition to this geographical mapping exercise the Ministry of Regional Development has carried out field missions on housing issues supported by Roma NGOs.

On the issue of **conditionality of benefits**, according to the Code of Ukraine on Administrative Offenses, Article 184 "Non-fulfilment by the parents or the persons who are replacing them, responsibilities for the upbringing of children", the evasion of parents or persons who replace them from the fulfilment of the obligations provided by law to ensure the necessary living conditions, education and upbringing of minors entails the prevention or imposition of a fine of 50 to 100 tax-free minimum incomes. The same actions committed repeatedly within a

year after imposing an administrative penalty result in a fine of one hundred to three hundred tax-free minimum incomes of citizens.

An event is scheduled to take place at the end of 2019 in Uzhhorod gathering many Roma representatives and deputies and it could be an excellent platform to discuss and debate the new strategy. At the level of the working groups, national projects of various directions are coordinated:

- a project of consolidation of the efforts of representatives of Roma organisations for solving Roma's problems through the development of state documents, in particular a new Strategy for the Protection and Integration of the Roma National Minority in the Ukrainian society for the period after 2020;
- the «Media without bias» project, launched in March 2019 as the part of the Ministry of Information Policy's communication campaign "We are different, but we are united." It aims to protect and strengthen national unity and the level of tolerance in Ukrainian society, as well as to counteract the spread of hate speech in the information space. Representatives of different nationalities, including Roma, became participants in the project;
- the project of creating of the Algorithm for joint actions of public authorities and public associations of the Roma in case of identification of natural settlements of Roma in one or another area. The Helsinki Human Rights Union, as well as the Ministry of Culture, the Ministry of Internal Affairs, the National Police, the Ministry of Social Policy participated in the development of this project;
- a project of popularisation of the experience of the All-Ukrainian Foundation "Step by Step" on the introduction of teaching assistantships in pre-school and general secondary education, where Roma children are studying, etc.

In order to strengthen the interaction between the executive authorities, local self-government bodies and the Roma public associations in resolving issues related to integration Roma into the Ukrainian society, the Secretariat of the Interagency Working Group monitors the current state of cooperation. At the local level, over the last three years, about three dozen projects have been implemented, mainly aimed at addressing the educational and cultural needs of Roma, as well as providing legal assistance. The projects were realised by Roma organisations with the support of the authorities, which provided resources for the implementation of these projects. Moreover, the initiative to establish cooperation in the overwhelming majority of cases was represented by representatives of NGOs.

In order to increase the effectiveness of the state policy on ensuring the rights of the Roma national minority, the regional state administrations and the city councils, which are often co-operated with Roma non-governmental organisations (NGOs) at the local level, need modern tools - appropriate forms of public activity that would enable the Roma population to be involved in social policy processes in local communities.

Establishing cooperation between state and local authorities and Roma organisations is supported by international donors, in particular the Roma Programme of the International Renaissance Foundation, the UN-Women Programme and others.

## 2.2 Estonia (partner country)

In Estonia social benefits are mainly universal benefits and there are only few examples of conditional cash transfers targeted to families with children<sup>38</sup>. One example of a conditional benefit is the **Child Allowance**, paid to the parents of the children until the child turns 16 years of age, it is for those who continue their studies until they finish school, or until the end of that school year during which they turn 19 years of age. The amount of the

<sup>38</sup> European Commission, Synthesis report on Conditional cash transfers and their impact on children, October 2015, page 14

allowance depends on the size of the family: if the family has one or two children, the allowance will be 60€ per child per month; if the family has three or more children, it will receive 100€ per child per month<sup>39</sup>.

Unfortunately, there is no published evidence whether these transfers have targeted investment in children in a cost-effective way. The implementation of CCTs would require monitoring the parents' behaviour, but this would be very expensive for local governments. The capacity of local governments varies considerably in Estonia and may hinder the implementation of more comprehensive benefit schemes<sup>40</sup>.

There are also **study allowances**<sup>41</sup> scheme for low income families. It is a needs-based study allowance and conditional on the students' achievements. Study allowances are divided into a basic and a special allowance. The basic allowance is paid on the basis of the study results of the student, the precondition being that the student has not exceeded the standard period of study of the curriculum<sup>42</sup>.

### 2.3 Greece (partner country)

Greeks of Roma origin constitute an integral part of the Greek population and are not considered as a minority. They are Greek citizens and enjoy the same civil and political rights enshrined in the Constitution and the laws of the country, such as right to vote and stand as a candidate, right to assembly and association, freedom of expression. However, poor living conditions and lack of fulfillment of basic needs leading to inadequate housing, health and hygiene, exacerbated by their social status, cultural diversity, difficulties to integrate and an absence of political participation, make the Roma subject to discrimination and create conditions for their exclusion from many societal activities trapping them into a vicious circle of poverty.

The Greek State has identified the following problems:

- Lack of basic housing and proper living conditions for some of the Roma population
- Difficulties in accessing the labour market and consequently lack of stable income
- Incomplete participation in the educational system
- Considerable health problems
- Insufficient enjoyment of basic human rights

Therefore, it is essential for the government and municipalities to intervene in some spheres of the societal life and services in order to end social exclusion of the Roma population, improve their social and economic situation and promote their social, educational and professional inclusion.

In order to promote Roma integration and inclusion the Government of Greece established in 2016, the **Special Secretariat on Roma Social Inclusion** by means of law 4430/2016 (OG 205/A/A/31.10.2016) under the authority of the Minister of Labour, Social Security and Social Solidarity, responsible for Social Solidarity issues. However, this Special Secretariat was **abolished in 2019** by Presidential Decree 84/17.07.2019 and the relevant competences were transferred to the General Secretariat of Social Solidarity and Against Poverty, following the parliamentary elections of 7 July 2019. Due to this administrative change the Secretariat is currently going through a transitional period. However, the priorities of its work should remain the same and are as follows.

<sup>39</sup> Republic of Estonia website, Kinds of family allowances, Online: <https://www.sotsiaalkindlustusamet.ee/en/family-and-child-protection/kinds-family-allowances>. Consulted on 22/05/2019

<sup>40</sup> European Commission, Synthesis report on Conditional cash transfers and their impact on children, October 2015, page 14

<sup>41</sup> Republic of Estonia, Study allowances and state grants, Online: <https://www.hm.ee/en/activities/higher-education/study-allowances-and-state-grants>. Consulted on 22/05/2019

<sup>42</sup> European Commission, Synthesis report on Conditional cash transfers and their impact on children, October 2015, page 17

- Configuration of guidelines for each policy area related to the social inclusion of Roma and proposing policies to the General Secretariat of Social Solidarity and Against Poverty.
- Close cooperation with other competent Ministries and relevant bodies at both national, regional and local level and with private entities for the design and implementation of interventions regarding Roma issues and for the coordination and interdisciplinary monitoring of policies for Roma, such as access to education, employment, health care and housing.
- Further development of the GIS system for the documentation, monitoring and evaluation of policies and the parallel mapping of the characteristics of the Roma population living in camps and settlements cut off from the wider urban and social fabric.
- Provision of guidance and technical support to stakeholders for the design and evaluation of interventions regarding Roma issues and the conduction of workshops and events for this purpose.
- Carrying out field surveys and studies on the living conditions of the aforementioned vulnerable social groups and the problems associated with housing, education, health and work.
- The collection of any information or elements required for shaping a national policy for the aforementioned vulnerable social group from any public or private body dealing with Roma issues.

These strategic objectives are to be served via three individual general objectives, as follows:

- (a) Ensured and Guaranteed provision of housing
- (b) Development of complex social intervention support services in the areas of employment, education, health and social integration
- (c) Development of social dialogue and consensus, through social empowerment and participation of the Roma themselves.

In 2017, the Special Secretariat on Roma Social Inclusion, as the competent coordination authority, had already forwarded the necessary legislative provisions, so as to facilitate the implementation of action for the improvement of housing conditions<sup>43</sup>. This legislative framework on housing assistance, planned in cooperation with the Local Government according to the mapping of the Special Secretariat and the typological category of the camps, includes the following:

- Organised Areas of Transitory Relocation (Housing Complexes designed according to Social Housing Principles) - Managing Bodies
- Improving living conditions, mainly Hygienic Infrastructure & Environmental Conditions
- Basic Infrastructure
- Rent subsidy

In Greece there was a reform of the family benefits scheme in 2018. The purpose of this reform was the consolidation of existing **family/child benefits** into a single, new and means-tested ‘Child Benefit’ scheme which focuses more on needs and on improving equity and fairness<sup>44</sup>. In addition, the budget reserved for the Child Benefit scheme has been increased by 40% compared to the annual budget of previous family benefits schemes. However, in 2017, the government stopped the allowance for low-income families with children up to 19 years of age attending compulsory education in public school, and the allowance for unprotected children living in families with very low income<sup>45</sup>.

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<sup>43</sup> Article 159 of law 4483/2017 (OG 107/A/31.07.2017) aims at facilitating the housing assistance provided to Roma. In addition, the Joint Ministerial Decision (R.F.RO64/OG/412 B'/07.02.2018) as amended by means of R.F.oik. 28586/283/22.05.2018 – OG 1924/B/30.05.2018) Joint Ministerial Decision, defines the necessary details for the implementation of the above mentioned law by creating the legislative framework for the purpose of facilitating the procedures, as defined by paragraph 10 of the article 159 of Law 4483/2017.

<sup>44</sup>ESPN Flash Report 2018/28, *New reform of the family benefits scheme in Greece*

<sup>45</sup> idem

This allowance is attributed to families with unmarried and dependent children. "Dependent" means children from the marriage, adopted children or legally recognized children, if they are unmarried and not older than 18 years of age, or 19 when they are in secondary education and in no case after the age of 24 if they are students. In addition, dependent children are children with an invalidity rate of 67% and above, as well as orphans when both parents have died.<sup>46</sup>.

The benefits are then means-based and beneficiaries must fulfill specific income criteria and the amount of the allowance depends on the needs of the families. The amount of the allowance decreases as family income increases. The benefit is paid on a bi-monthly basis and based on a condition of submission of a yearly income tax declaration<sup>47</sup>.

There are also conditions funded on category (i.e. to be legal and permanent residents during the last 5 years prior to their application etc.).

Child allowance is granted to the following categories of persons if they are legally and permanently resident in Greece during the last 5 years prior to the year of filing the application as evidenced by the submission of income tax returns of their own or their spouses or their parents if they themselves they were not liable for a tax return and their dependent children are in Greece:

- (a) Greek citizens permanently resident in Greece,
- (b) Greeks living abroad who live permanently in Greece and hold a relevant card,
- (c) citizens of Member States of the European Union residing permanently in Greece,
- (d) citizens of the countries belonging to the European Economic Area (Norway, Iceland and Liechtenstein) and Swiss citizens permanently residing in Greece,
- e) recognised refugees who reside permanently in Greece,
- (f) stateless persons,
- (g) beneficiaries of the humanitarian regime,
- h) citizens of other countries who are legally and permanently resident in Greece.

A child's allowance is exempt from any tax, in the form of a levy or retention in favor of the State or a third party, including the special solidarity levy, and does not count on the total, actual or imputed family income unless explicitly provided for by the legislative framework for financial protection for social protection.

By Joint Ministerial Decision No. GEO / D22 / 11/2705/58, signed by Deputy Minister of Social Solidarity Theano Photiou and Finance Minister, Mr George Houliarakis, governs all the details of the Child Benefit Award procedure.

For the purposes of determining the level of benefits for the beneficiary families, there are three categories based on family income and there is a significant gradation from the third child onwards (after that the benefit sum for each child is double compared to the earlier children).

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<sup>46</sup> idem

<sup>47</sup> idem



The **Social Solidarity Income** (Law 4389/2016, art. 235) welfare programme tackles poverty and social exclusion. It is targeted at households living in extreme poverty. The programme is based on three pillars: a) income support; b) interconnection with social inclusion services; and c) interconnection with activation services aimed at integrating or reintegrating the beneficiaries into the labour market and social reintegration.

#### Accession Criteria at SSI/KEA

Households applying for Social Solidarity Income can be included in the programme if they meet all three accumulated categories of criteria:

1) Income criteria 2) Property criteria 3) Residence criteria

If any one of these criteria is not met, then the household cannot join the programme. The guaranteed amount is defined as follows:

200 EUR per month for a single-person household  
 100 EUR for each additional adult member (i.e. 50% added to the basic amount)  
 50 EUR for each minor member (i.e. an additional 25% added to the basic amount)

The half-yearly income may not exceed €5,400, irrespective of the number of household members. The total taxable value of the household property must not exceed in total €90,000 for the first person, increased by €15,000 for each additional member of the household and with an overall ceiling for each benefiting unit of up to €150,000. A maximum deposit amount is €14,400, regardless of the composition of the household.

## 2.4 The Netherlands (partner country)

Since 2013 the Netherlands has had an Advisory Committee on Participation and Emancipation of Sinti and Roma. It was established by the Secretary of State to advise on the assessment of grant applications. The Advisory Committee consists of Sinti and Roma members who share their expertise, experience and advice with the department in order to increase the chances of success of the implementation of promising projects and activities for Sinti and Roma. It gives Sinti and Roma a voice in the assessment of concrete proposals that have direct consequences for their communities. With the help of these resources, the intention of the Netherlands' Roma integration measures is to enable Sinti and Roma to strengthen their position in society and to become self-reliant. The state grants enable Sinti and Roma to have the opportunity to set up a foundation and to give something back to the community through self-conceived projects and activities, many of which have already offered positive results for the Roma communities.

There are a number of special projects strengthening the Roma participation and ownership of the measures supporting integration, including the "het Doven project" or "Deaf project". This very small project is run by a Roma woman from Kosovo who lives in the Netherlands. She supports deaf Roma in the Netherlands by first providing herself with the necessary knowledge and then transferring it to other deaf people. It is a special project because there is nearly no one taking the initiative to support this group. Most of the time Roma people do not talk about the deaf, it is a taboo subject. This is just one of many other great projects which, thanks to the grant, have emerged.

Additionally, there will soon be a government-run pilot project to support Roma adolescents' participation in education and labour. The intention is to use Roma mediators to support this.

The aim of these projects is to strengthen advocacy and representation and lead the beneficiaries towards a better social position. It should be mentioned that the NGOs are mainly made of unschooled people and this is commendable.

### **Tegenprestatie in the Netherlands<sup>48</sup>**

Since 2010, the Netherlands has not distinguished Roma and Travellers in any of their general social policies<sup>49</sup>. However, to illustrate the conditionality of social benefits for Roma and Travellers, we can take the example of the “Tegenprestatie” programme. Under this programme, the municipality may require a person to engage in civic work in order to receive social assistance benefits. A quid pro quo is an unpaid socially useful activity usually of limited duration and scope. It may not be work for which one is normally paid<sup>50</sup>. It is a ‘civic contribution’ that Dutch people are required to make when in receipt of social assistance benefits. Within many of the Dutch municipal authorities to which responsibility for delivering welfare conditionality is devolved, people can fulfil their civic contribution requirements through voluntary work, informal caring responsibilities or other useful activities. This may induce language, and physical training or work on personal issues around physical, mental or financial impairments. Supporters and service providers linked to Tegenprestaties programme emphasise the positive support available and a more ‘human investment’ approach to welfare conditionality designed to enhance wider social inclusion beyond simple inclusion in paid employment that is central to the ‘work-first’ conditionality that dominates in the UK and elsewhere<sup>51</sup>. While there is certainly shared ground in respect of the reciprocity that exists in both systems, and right to social assistance clearly come with contingent individual responsibilities in both cases, important differences in how welfare conditionality is implemented are evident (Dwyer 2017).

## **2.5 North Macedonia (partner country, no written contribution)**

North Macedonia has health and education mediators in 10 municipalities and the ROMACTED programme is quite active. A resolution has recently been adopted on housing and employment and a new mapping tool in the form of an interactive map on Roma communities was presented at the end of July 2019.

On 5 July 2019, the Prime ministers from Western Balkan countries, of which North Macedonia, endorsed the Poznan declaration<sup>52</sup>, with a new commitment regarding alignment of Roma inclusion policies with the future enlargement of the European Union.

### **Child allowances: North Macedonia**

The first generation of CCTs introduced a monthly subsidy for students in secondary schools from households that are social and financial assistance beneficiaries. As secondary education is obligatory in Macedonia, it was targeted mainly towards impoverished Roma families, which have higher drop-out rates, and which are not able to follow up their education for socio-economic reasons. The amount of the allowance was around 12.000 MKD per child, per year (17% of the average per-capita consumption). 7.500 high-school students were supported by this project. The World Bank, in reports published in 2009 and 2013<sup>53</sup>, evaluated the impact of this programme,

<sup>48</sup>Rijksoverheid website, Vraag en antwoord, Online: <https://www.rijksoverheid.nl/onderwerpen/bijstand/vraag-en-antwoord/wat-is-de-tegenprestatie-in-de-bijstand>. Consulted on 22/05/2019

<sup>49</sup>Hiah, J. & Knijn, T (2018), ‘Country report on the current and historical minoritization of Roma minorities in the Netherlands’. Online: <https://ethos-europe.eu/sites/default/files/ethosd5.2netherlands.pdf>

<sup>50</sup> idem

<sup>51</sup>Dwyer, P. (2017), ‘Rewriting the contract? Conditionality, welfare reform and the rights and responsibilities of disabled people’, in: Horsfall, D. & Hudson, John, Social Policy in an Era of Competition: From Global to Local Perspectives

<sup>52</sup> Declaration of Western Balkans Partners on Roma Integration within the EU Enlargement Process ([Poznan Declaration](#))

<sup>53</sup> World Bank (2013), Report on ‘Activation and Smart Safety Nets in FYR Macedonia: Constraints in Beneficiary Profile, Benefit Design, and Institutional Capacity’.

World Bank (2009), Project information Document, Conditional Cash transfer.

and argued that it was rated as moderately satisfactory. Based on their research, the programme seemed to have a positive impact on attendance school but not on enrolment. No hard evidence have been found. Hence, the project has been restructured and expanded to cover implementation of the new CCT programme on youth employment<sup>54</sup>.

## 2.6 Poland (partner country)

According to the 2011 census there are 16,723 persons of Roma origin in Poland (in the 2002 census there were 12,731 declared persons of Roma origin). The unofficial estimates vary between 20,000 to 25,000.

In Poland, Roma are not a socially active group. This results from the fact that for ages Roma were isolating themselves and, for an equally long period of time, they were marginalised by the majority society. The situation changed after 1989 when the first independent Roma organisation emerged. However, following a few years of initial activity in this community, stagnation set in again. In general, the group, which is relatively small (ca. 25,000 people) did not play a major role in building civil society in Poland.

The situation improved at the turn of the millennium when, in 2000, the National and Ethnic Minorities Department was established within the Ministry of the Interior and Administration. One of its first tasks was to develop a programme for Roma. The programme was, in fact, initiated by three leaders of the Roma community in the Małopolskie Voivodeship. Following numerous meetings and consultations with Roma organisations in 2001 a pilot programme was adopted in the voivodeship with the largest Roma community. In the years to follow, state aid measures continued under the subsequent strategies (2004-2013 and 2014–2020).

A total of more than 120 Roma organisations are registered in Poland. However, only a few of them are really vibrant and more professional, several are active locally, usually in their place of residence, and some do not function at all. Twelve Roma organisations took part in the first year of the nationwide programme (2004), while currently about 55 Roma NGOs are active.

It could be speculated that this programme encouraged the Roma society to be more active by giving them a real chance to act for the benefit of their society. This does not mean, however, that for the last two decades since the first government programme, the situation of Roma NGOs has continuously improved. Since 2004, several dozens of Roma NGOs have been established and continue their activities. Today, the progress has come to a standstill. Only those active for decades are present, no new entrants, with certain exceptions, and new (genuine) leaders have emerged. However, important exceptions include organisations set up by young, educated Roma, such as *Harangos* in Kraków, *Romano Waśt* in Radom, *Sawore* in Kraków or *Jaw Dikh* in Czarna Góra. They are established by Roma tertiary graduates, some of them employed in public administration. However, they also face certain challenges on the part of Roma, who are not always willing to accept this kind of ‘novelty’ diverging from ‘tradition’.

In smaller towns, the beneficiaries of Roma NGOs’ activities are usually limited to the local Roma community, or even to one, albeit broad, family circle. This sometimes results in a lack of cooperation with families belonging to competing circles, leading, for example, to activities being carried out only by members of one association/family. In larger cities, such as Kraków, Roma NGOs are active on a broader scale covering the majority of the local Roma society.

<sup>54</sup> Gerovska Mitev, M. (2017), ‘When active is Passive: Conditionnal Cash Transfers and Employment Creation in Macedonia’, in Scoppetta, A., Leichsenring, K., & Stamatiou, W. (eds.), *Innovative Approaches in Labour Market Policy and Health and Long-Term Care in Eastern Europe: Compilation of workshop papers*, Vienna, Austria: European Centre Vienna. Page 17. Online : [https://www.researchgate.net/publication/315767563\\_When\\_Active\\_is\\_Passive\\_Conditional\\_Cash\\_Transfers\\_and\\_Employment\\_Creation\\_in\\_Macedonia](https://www.researchgate.net/publication/315767563_When_Active_is_Passive_Conditional_Cash_Transfers_and_Employment_Creation_in_Macedonia)

Despite the relatively high number of organisations participating in the programme, visible trends can be observed. Cultural events, usually one-day festivals, Roma days, the celebrations of the International Roma Day, etc., are the most popular activities. They are recurring events with no long-term effects. That said, some NGOs are active in other key areas affecting the Roma such as health, labour, housing and education.

Since 2016, the demographic programme for child allowances “Family 500+” has been active. Families receive 500 PLN per month (approx. €115) per child (up to the age of 18). It is additional financial support, beyond the regular social benefits, it is not included in the household’s income as it may limit other social benefits. This mainstream programme significantly improved the economic status of the Roma families – thanks to the numerous children in the family – and it allows to receive monthly an amount which, in practice, is equal to minimum wage.

### **Health**

Despite the initial reluctance due to the taboo surrounding the body, Roma NGOs are rather willing to engage in health-oriented projects and, for example, vaccinate children. Out of 24 health-oriented tasks in this area, 13 (54%) were implemented by the local authorities and 11 (46%) by NGOs.

### **Labour**

Out of 27 tasks in this area, 14 (52%) were implemented by the local authorities and 13 (48%) by NGOs.

Public works in Poland have been used for many years. The most recent public works programme dates from 2004, but was modified in 2009 to correspond with EU regulations. It accounts for a relatively small share of active labour market policies (ALMP) spending and participants (3% and 0.6% respectively in 2011). The local Public Employment Services (PES) has a central role in the implementation of the programme, from the initial stage to the rollout process<sup>55</sup>. In case of the Roma community additional possibility for public works is offered within the Roma strategy – several projects are realised on the local level: local self-government hires Roma employees for temporary contracts. This solution can be (and in practice is) combined with the housing debts of the Roma families; this enables both: activation on labour market and allows to payback the housing debts that - in consequence - enable Roma families the application for housing subsidies from the welfare offices.

### **Housing**

As for housing-oriented activities, Roma people usually live in council housing units and therefore, contractors are the local governments. The Roma, however, participate in the commissions selecting the flats to be renovated, report renovation needs and the situation of individual families, prioritising them for receiving help, for example, on the grounds of chronic diseases, invalidity or having many children, the overcrowding of flats, etc. This is not a commonly employed practice although many local governments work that way. At the outset, the method had some weak points as it was sometimes used to antagonise the local Roma society, but the model worked pretty well. Of the total of 344 tasks implemented in 2017, 139 (40%) were implemented by NGOs under the Integration Strategy, with 104 (30%) implemented by Roma NGOs.

### **Education**

In 2017, out of 249 educational tasks, 134 (54%) were implemented by the local authorities and 115 (46%) by NGOs.

The educational projects most often are limited to running community centres. They are sometimes paradoxically called ‘integration centres for Roma’, which is somehow adequate: they are supposed to integrate, but are often limited to Roma children with a small group of their non-Roma peers. This is because they are often run by Roma NGOs, which focus on supporting their own community. These are not fully professional centres.

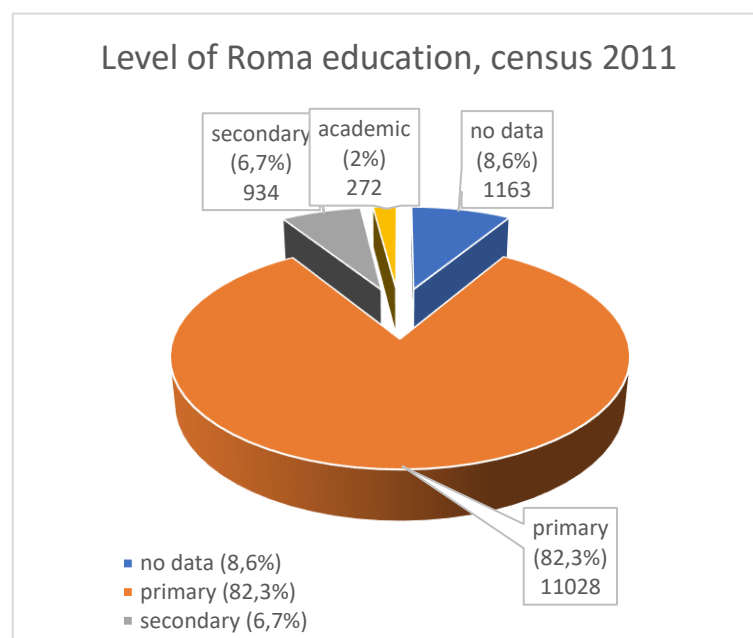
<sup>55</sup> European Commission, *report on ‘Public works: how can PES contribute to increasing their value as an activation tool?’*, October 2013, page 28

They more often serve as ‘nurseries’ or ‘clubs’. They do not focus on informal education to the extent required for the children. Sometimes, non-Roma teaching staff are reluctantly taken on or even dismissed for expecting too much from the children. Educational activities at community centres are often limited to musical workshops, with children bands being their flag products. Other forms of artistic expression are rarely used (with the exception of NGO *Sawore*), for example theatre plays for children, which stimulate children’s intellectual potential (as the children memorise their lines, create stage sets, learn how to interpret texts, etc.).

In exceptional cases, Roma NGOs implement strictly vocational projects under the Integration Strategy (besides vocational training projects under the European Social Fund (ESF)). A good, although rare example, is the cooperation between a Roma NGO and a local landscape park. For several years, the latter employed Roma people, while the Ministry of the Interior and Administration funded the purchase of the tools needed by the Roma NGO.

### Conclusions

The main barrier to social and civil activities of Roma is their lack of education. According to the 2011 census, 92% of Roma in Poland have not received secondary education, half of whom did not complete their education.



In fact, these educational deficiencies prevent Roma from effectively and efficiently pursuing social activities. In short, Roma are not competitive on the market when it comes to services provided by non-governmental sector in the educational, cultural, social, political areas, etc. They lack comparable qualifications and competences that would allow them to make full use of the existing opportunities. Although Roma NGOs have been engaged in the Integration Strategy for many years now, they can hardly be said to have been developing their competences each year.

Even more importantly, the payments of aid funds for Roma made them dependent on the body granting the funds. In a nutshell, Roma NGOs mainly benefit from competitions held by the Ministry of the Interior and Administration and hardly ever from competitions launched by other state entities. Some benefit from competitions announced by local authorities, but this is not the rule.

Despite years of the Integration Strategy, Roma have not established contacts with non-Roma NGOs. The rare alliances are rather accidental and do not give rise to lasting cooperation either for Roma or other excluded

groups / groups at risk of exclusion. For this reason, non-Roma local societies perceive Roma NGOs as acting only for the benefit of their own community, which in fact is the case, with the exception of festivals, which inevitably are meant for the majority society.

Another problem, indicated by almost all European countries, lies in leadership. Roma in Poland belong to traditional Roma societies. Instead of democracy, they use the model of gerontocracy. In practice, this means that young and educated Roma, in general, have no real influence over the Roma society. This does not exclude exceptional cases, such as the above-mentioned NGOs set up by young and educated Roma. As a rule, though, Roma NGOs are limited to their own family circles, broad as they may be. Therefore, even in towns with small Roma population there may be two competing Roma organisations.

Experts from around Europe stress the existence of a huge gender gap in terms of active participation in the Roma community. Although the Roma community in Poland is very patriarchal, it is the women who, in fact, more actively implement various projects. This does not mean, however, that they lead the organisations (about 10 Roma NGOs in Poland are led by women). However, for years now women have been behind the relative success of the Roma Strategy. 75% of Roma school assistants are women. Through their work, they play a major and active role in a broadly understood education, while changing the negative image of Roma. In addition, female assistants most frequently effectively extend their local partner base by effectively cooperating with schools and also, for example, educational departments.

The growing atrophy in this culture resulted in the disappearance of traditional leadership structures – the ‘heads of Roma communes’, whose decisions used to be binding for the whole local community. Today, the heads of organisations are not necessarily the most influential members of the local Roma society. Sometimes such organisations are even led by those who are ‘excluded’ by the ‘Roma King’ from their society, which hampers the cooperation between the organisation and the other Roma. Once, a Roma organisation had to abandon a large vocational project, funded under the ESF, because it was led by a person excluded by the ‘Roma King’, and other participants were therefore also at risk of being excluded from the Roma society.

All these factors are not conducive to a smooth process of turning Roma into regular citizens. However, it should be stressed that the awareness, qualifications and competences of Roma, even if still limited, have improved significantly over the last two decades. The major barrier for Roma to be fully engaged in civic activities is their lack of education and thus adequate competences to face competition and effectively implement various actions.

### **Advantages and disadvantages of the Roma strategies**

#### **Advantages:**

- direct involvement and participation in the strategies as beneficiaries and participants, starting with 12 Roma NGO in 2004 to approx. 55 participating in 2017
- Gaining qualification in planning, budgeting and implementing projects, cooperation with authorities of different level (central/regional/local)
- Changing of the image of Roma from negative to more positive thanks to the activities run by Roma themselves (NGOs, Roma school assistants, mutual cooperation, etc.)

#### **Disadvantages:**

- Dependency on the funding of the Ministry of Interior (coordinator of the Roma strategies)
- No /small activities in relations to other donors (as others non-Roma NGOs)
- No stable cooperation with non-Roma NGO; cooperation in cases of „difficult” projects, like those funded from European Funds (ESF)

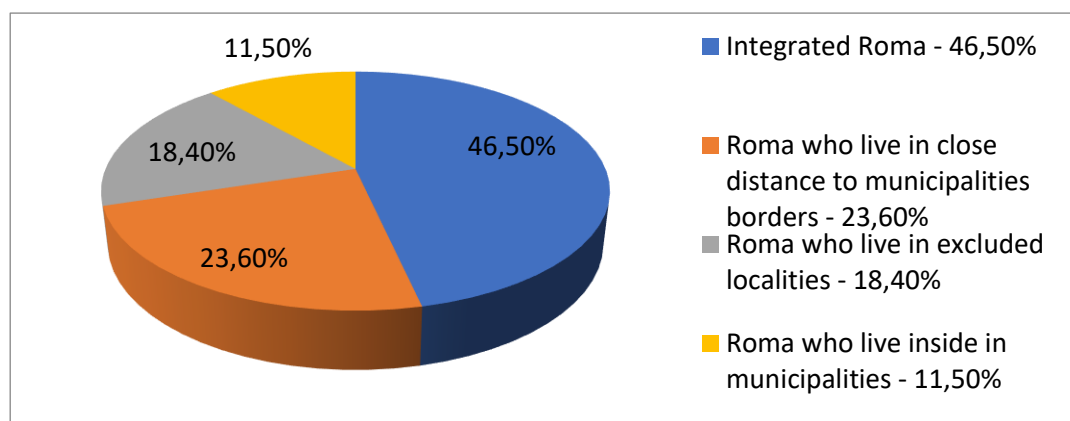
### Observations concerning the Roma NGO sector in Poland:

- Out of approximately 120 registered Roma NGO only around 50 are really active on the ground
- Out of approximately 120 registered Roma NGO only 10 are run by Roma women – even if Roma women are more active than men
- Lack of more advanced competences & qualification
- Lack of functioning in a wider NGOs network
- Lack of stable non-Roma NGO partners within the Roma strategy on local level
- Some tendency to self-isolation
- Activity of Roma women sometimes limited by the male community
- Dependency on one donor (Ministry of Interior and Administration)
- The most popular projects realised by Roma NGOs include festivals, dance and music groups, etc.

### 2.7 Slovak Republic (partner country)

According to the latest estimate, the Slovak Republic has a Roma community of around 500,000<sup>56</sup> (9% of the population). 1070 (37%) of the 2890 Slovakian municipalities have Roma population, however, the 2013 Atlas of Roma communities<sup>57</sup> clearly showed that most Roma are concentrated in the Eastern part of the country which are the least developed districts. These Least-Developed Districts (LDD) are a part of the agenda of regional policy of the Slovak Republic. The legal foundation for the problematics of LDD is the Law on Support of Lagging Regions (Act No. 336/2015 Coll.) which aims to work against the polarization between LDD and other parts of Slovakia. Roma needs should be taken into account when introducing new approaches of the Least Developed regions in Slovakia<sup>58</sup>.

Another thing that needs to be taken into account is the internal polarization of the Roma communities. The Integration dispersion level of Roma in Slovakia according to the Atlas of Roma Communities in Slovakia 2013 (based on the data concerning 412,000 Roma) was the following:



<sup>56</sup> European Commission website on Roma Integration in Slovakia [https://ec.europa.eu/info/policies/justice-and-fundamental-rights/combating-discrimination/roma-and-eu/roma-integration-eu-country/roma-integration-slovakia\\_en](https://ec.europa.eu/info/policies/justice-and-fundamental-rights/combating-discrimination/roma-and-eu/roma-integration-eu-country/roma-integration-slovakia_en)

<sup>57</sup> Slovakia (2013) Atlas of Roma communities, Powerpoint presentation of the key findings is available at: [https://www.rcc.int/romaintegration2020/romadecadefold/documents/2.%20isc%20meetings/25%2025th%20Meeting%20of%20the%20ISC\\_September%202013%20\(Montenegro\)/Presentations/Atlas%20of%20Roma%20communities%20in%20Slovakia.pdf](https://www.rcc.int/romaintegration2020/romadecadefold/documents/2.%20isc%20meetings/25%2025th%20Meeting%20of%20the%20ISC_September%202013%20(Montenegro)/Presentations/Atlas%20of%20Roma%20communities%20in%20Slovakia.pdf)

See also: Škobla, D. & Mušinka, A. (2013) informative Powerpoint presentation on the Atlas of Roma communities, available at: [https://www.ceit.sk/IVPR/images/IVPR/2016/skobla\\_prezentacia\\_brusel\\_atlas.pdf](https://www.ceit.sk/IVPR/images/IVPR/2016/skobla_prezentacia_brusel_atlas.pdf)

<sup>58</sup> Husar, M & Finka, M. & Sokol, T. & Ondrejicka, V. (2019) New approaches to the Development of the Least developed Regions in Slovakia, available at: [https://www.researchgate.net/publication/331314119\\_New\\_Approaches\\_to\\_the\\_Development\\_of\\_the\\_Least\\_Developed\\_Regions\\_in\\_Slovakia](https://www.researchgate.net/publication/331314119_New_Approaches_to_the_Development_of_the_Least_Developed_Regions_in_Slovakia)

According to the 2013 Atlas study, there were altogether 804 Roma settlements in 584 municipalities. 246 (30%) of these Roma settlements were inside the villages or towns in 179 municipalities. 40% (327) of these settlements were on the edge of the village/town in 305 municipalities. There are 231 segregated settlements in 195 municipalities, average distance of segregated community from the city being 900 metres and the longest distance being 7 km. In 153 municipalities, the Roma population did not live dispersed among the majority at all – they lived only in fully segregated settlements. In 2013, 17,0% (68,540) of the Roma population in the Slovak Republic still lived in segregated settlements. In general, poor housing conditions and even limited access to water and sewage systems and/or roads were still common.

The Roma minority can be divided into so-called integrated and non-integrated parts. It has been estimated that the integrated part is as large as the non-integrated part. Therefore, the temporary balancing measures targeting integrated Roma should be aimed at promoting their participation in public life, politics, secondary education, higher education, etc., in order to enable them to participate in society from the same "starting point" as the majority. Integrated Roma often suffer from stigma and the "bad reputation" of non-integrated Roma, which puts them at a disadvantage compared to the majority.

According to the 2013 Atlas survey, there were Roma Community centres in 125 municipalities but unfortunately 19 of them were not working. In 66 municipalities there were "hygienic centres" out of which 11 were currently not working. The level of religious Roma activism has been estimated to be high in 81 municipalities. There is field social work available in 279 municipalities (47,7% of all the 584 municipalities with Roma population). In 2013, these services employed 444 field social workers and 422 assistants. In 39 municipalities there were also activities of Roma health care mediators.

The data collection for the Atlas of Roma communities was especially designed and implemented in ways that would best serve the public administration and their need for evidence-based desegregation and integration policy making. The direct political impact of this Atlas was its use as an ex-ante conditionality for distribution of the EU funds for the 2014-2020 programming period<sup>59</sup>.

The Constitution of the Slovak Republic defends the rights of national minorities and ethnic groups. Roma were recognised as a national minority in 1991. The existing Anti-discrimination act should be used to establish different indicators for the discrimination against Roma in the Slovak Republic. At the moment, one of the most pressing minority matters for the Slovakian Roma is that there is no evaluation of the effect of this law concerning them.

The Resolution of the Government of the Slovak Republic on Information on Measures to Strengthen the Application of Marginalised Groups on the Labour Market notes that the basis for the emancipation of marginalised groups of poor living conditions is the employment of the long-term unemployed in the labour market and the corresponding preparation for employment. The same resolution obliges the Deputy Prime Minister for Investment and Informatics to set up an inter-ministerial working group to ensure the sustainability of auxiliary professions funded by the European Structural and Investment Funds by 30 November 2019.

The Slovak authorities have several examples of good practice to increase the self-reliance and responsibility of the Roma community. These examples concern both promoting the political activeness of the Roma and establishing permanent governmental structures in order to ensure Roma participation at different levels of national decision-making.

The proportional representation electoral system allows for minorities, including Roma, to be elected especially at the municipal level. In 2018, there were 40 elected Roma Mayors in Slovakia, but unfortunately, only one Roma

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<sup>59</sup> European Commission (2017) Commission staff working document: The Value Added of Ex ante Conditionalities in the European Structural and Investment Funds, available at: [https://ec.europa.eu/regional\\_policy/sources/docgener/studies/pdf/value\\_added\\_exac\\_esif\\_en.pdf](https://ec.europa.eu/regional_policy/sources/docgener/studies/pdf/value_added_exac_esif_en.pdf)



woman has ever been mayor in the country. Several of the newly elected mayors of Roma origin have a university degree. It is also not uncommon that Roma mayors without secondary or higher education begin to complement it after taking up their duties. In 47 localities, out of more than 1000 localities where Roma live, the Roma population of over 70%. If a common mayoral candidate is selected for these localities, it is likely that the candidate they will be successful. However, there are paradoxes as, for example, in 97% of cases, a mayor of Roma origin is not only a mayor for Roma and vice-versa. There are also villages which have elected the only adult Roma living in the village as their mayor. Another positive trend is the growing number of municipal Roma deputies. Hundreds of local parliamentary mandates can be estimated throughout Slovakia.

Unfortunately, during the last National Parliament 2016 elections none of the ten Roma candidates for parliamentarians of the National Council of the Slovak Republic came to parliament. However, one significant threshold in Slovakia was crossed in May 2019 when Peter Pollák, member of the European People's Party (EPP), was elected as a Member of the European Parliament. He is one of three MEPs of Romani origin. He initiated the political participation training for Roma leaders and support and study programme for the first-time elected Roma mayors.

The Office of the Government Plenipotentiary for Roma Communities was established in 2001. It has a status defined by Article 1 of the Government Plenipotentiary Statute for Roma National Minority Problems: *“The Plenipotentiary designs, coordinates and controls activities aimed at solving the problems of the Roma minority and implements systemic solutions to achieve equal rights and status of citizens belonging to the Roma minority in society. It shall respect the fundamental rights and freedoms guaranteed by the Constitution and the laws of the Slovak Republic, as well as by international human rights treaties.”* Since 2012, the Office has been incorporated into the structure of the Ministry of Interior. It has among other things, implemented several support programmes for municipalities with a high proportion of the Roma population, and offers a helping hand to Roma mayors. Roma take part in implementing national projects and hold positions in the Plenipotentiary Office.

### **The civil society and advocacy work of Roma and non-Roma NGOs**

The role of the civil society and advocacy work of Roma and non-Roma NGOs is important in order to raise awareness of the mainstream society about the issues faced by the Roma community. Some of the most important non-Roma NGOs which address the Roma situation in the Slovak Republic are the Centre for Ethnicity and Culture Research – CVEK, Milan Šimečka Foundation and Association for Culture, Education and Communication. The most active Roma NGOs at the moment include Romano kher, Roma Youth Association, In Minorita (esp. Ma bisteren - Roma Holocaust) and eduRoma. Other institutions which are important for the empowerment and active participation of the Roma in society are media and cultural institutions such as Roma Theater Romathan (in Kosice), Roma Magazine (in the Radio and Television of Slovakia), Roma newspaper (Romani Nevo Lil), Museum of Roma Culture in Slovakia and The National Science Library The National Documentation and Information Centre for Romany Culture. On the yearly basis there are altogether around 8 big Roma culture festivals that gather together masses of Roma and non-Roma.

### **Ongoing national projects under the Human Resources Operational Program (EC)**

1. **National project Field social work** - 19 persons
2. **National project Community Centers** - 8 persons
3. **National Land Settlement Project** – 6 persons
4. **National Project Monitoring and Evaluation** - 5 persons
5. **National project PRIM** - Inclusion project in kindergartens - 13 persons
6. **6. National project School open to all (2017-2019)**, including 130 elementary schools, 50 kindergartens, 275 teacher assistant posts and 172 professional staff: psychologists, special and social educators
7. **National Healthy Communities Project** – promoting community health mediation engaging and educating individuals from target communities for carrying out systematic work on social determinants of health at

community level, in 2019 there were 264 health education assistants, 24 coordinators of health education assistants and 8 Health education assistants in 6 hospitals.

### **Child allowances: Slovak Republic**

Regarding social benefits aiming at influencing the conduct of their beneficiaries, Slovakia has among the family allowances (Childbirth allowance, parental allowance etc.), the Child allowance. It is a social aid which provides benefit to a child receiving compulsory education of up to 25 years of age and the aid amounts 24.54€.

Among conditions to grant the allowance, there is obviously the attendance to school. The school has to confirm the attendance in the academic year following the academic year, in which the child reached 16 years of age, for each academic year, until completing the compulsory school attendance and secondary school or university of the child systematically prepares for future profession through studies. The purpose of this aid is to contribute to education and nutrition of a dependent child (child receiving compulsory education of up to 25 years of age)<sup>60</sup>. It is a CCT programme which was to be earned on the basis of regular school attendance, satisfactory performance, and good behaviour. The Reform of 2011 introduced those last stricter conditions. Those conditions have been criticized, in particular because of its lack of attention to supply-side issues likely to affect school attendance (absence can be due to poor clothing, long distance from school to home, transport, etc.).<sup>61</sup>

## **3. CONCLUSIONS, LESSONS LEARNT, GOOD PRACTICES IDENTIFIED AND ENVISAGED FOLLOW-UP**

### **3.1 *General and country-specific conclusions and lessons learnt:***

#### **3.1.1 General conclusions and lessons learnt**

There was general consensus that there is a need to move away from a vicious circle of blame and discouragement to a virtuous circle of trust-building and co-operation. More precisely, this means moving from dependency and paternalism to empowerment and recognition, from passiveness to pro-activeness stimulating respect for human rights, active citizenship and inclusive implementation of the principles of good governance and of participatory democracy. In order to be able to renegotiate their relationship with the Roma, decision makers must be very aware of the earlier negative tradition of patronizing Roma and limiting Roma liberty and autonomy. Paternalism can also imply that the behaviour is against or regardless of the will of Roma, or also that the behavioural patterns and discourses prevalent among the decision makers express an attitude of superiority. There is an overwhelming feeling of powerlessness which induces the passiveness and ensuing status quo and contentment with the rights they have.

Strategies and action plans should be developed in consultation with all stakeholders, namely national, regional and local authorities, Roma NGOs and the local Roma community to target the actions and activities to the needs of each community. Several national strategies and action plans implemented by the member states are ending in 2019 and 2020, and there is a great opportunity to assess them and identify their shortcomings to address them in the new strategies and action plans. For example, in Ukraine, the next national Roma strategy should assist each Oblast or region to create its own regional strategy based on the regional and local needs of the Roma communities as they may differ from one region to another and even from one municipality to another. Furthermore, to make strategies effective and sustainable, state funding needs to be secured to give it ownership of the Strategy and Action Plan and the state reliance on external and international funding on the implementation of their own NRIs must be reduced.

<sup>60</sup> IOM migration information centre, online: . Consulted on 09/05/2019

<sup>61</sup> Roma Education Fund (2009) op.cit., page 36;

European Commission website, Slovakia – Childcare, Online: <https://ec.europa.eu/social/main.jsp?catId=1127&intPagelD=4761&langId=en>. Consulted on 22/05/2019

Roma inclusion strategies must also take into account the fact that the Roma communities are not homogeneous. According to some member states' statistics, about half of the Roma population is so integrated into mainstream society that they may not want to identify with the Roma community anymore or cannot identify with all of the poverty, segregation and marginalisation-related problems. It is an issue of individualism vs. collectivism and strategies and policies should remember that minority rights are collective rights and universal human rights. Identifying to a group is a personal choice and not necessarily an ethnic issue. Are Roma considered a social or an ethnic group? When considered as a social group they are very often linked to poor and vulnerable groups and some Roma may not want to be perceived in that manner. The younger generation may prefer to be considered as "regular" people rather than be categorised as Roma because that is how they experience their personal everyday reality or because they may fear discrimination. The question "Are Roma ready to be included in society?" seems disputable as everyone longs and wishes for a good quality of life which intrinsically means to be part of society. However, both the non-Roma and Roma must understand that the conditions for social, cultural and economic integration and inclusion are been negotiated throughout the process of doing so and sometimes these conditions have been unreasonable from the point of view of the Roma communities' interests.

The booklet published by the Foundation on Inter-Ethnic Relations "[Lund recommendations – participation of minorities in public and political life](#)"<sup>62</sup> states that:

*"Effective participation of national minorities in public life is an essential component of a peaceful and democratic society. Experience in Europe and elsewhere has shown that, in order to promote such participation, governments often need to establish specific arrangements for national minorities. These Recommendations aim to facilitate the inclusion of minorities within the State and enable minorities to maintain their own identity and characteristics, thereby promoting the good governance and integrity of the State.*

*Individuals identify themselves in numerous ways in addition to their identity as members of a national minority. The decision as to whether an individual is a member of a minority, the majority, or neither rests with that individual and shall not be imposed upon her or him. Moreover, no person shall suffer any disadvantage as a result of such a choice or refusal to choose."*

In countries where Roma are not recognised as national minorities or where national minorities are not recognised at all, self-reliance and responsibility will rely mainly on the civic activism of the said national minority or Roma community as they do not have quotas nor reserved seats in parliament. For example, in Bulgaria, which has signed the Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities, the Turkish minority civic activism is high has led to over 20% of seats in Parliament for 10% of the population. A quota system would have provided fewer seats.

Civic activism is therefore crucial. It starts with the organisation of the Roma and the subsequent knowhow collected to take part in the political process. Participation in public life at the local level can have a more direct impact for the community and indeed, Roma local councillors and mayors are more numerous than parliamentarians. Generally, the relations with local authorities is better and Roma are visible at that level. Unfortunately, many obstacles remain to the full and active participation of Roma in public and political life.

### **Obstacles to civic participation**

**Deeply rooted structural and systemic inequalities and problems** often make it more difficult for Roma to access their rights and, having this in mind, they may not opt to try to defend their rights, and become passive. Activism

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<sup>62</sup> "Lund recommendations – participation of minorities in public and political life" published by the Foundation on Inter-Ethnic Relations

within a democratic set-up gives the Roma ownership of their rights and helps them to move from being passive recipients of rights to active actors of their rights.

As education allows to identify and overcome structural issues these two topics should be addressed in parallel. The discussions of the thematic meeting highlighted the fact that **education** is the founding block for a cohesive society as social consciousness is developed through education.

In many European countries, Roma communities are currently **geographically very dispersed or diasporic and diverse**. Therefore, they may lack group coherence and the social capital of tightly knit and close local communities.

**Poverty** is another obstacle as civic and public participation becomes less of a priority. It also makes the Roma more vulnerable to vote buying so it may sometimes seem like there is a high voter turnout during elections but in reality, it is not for the right reasons. High level of votes for openly anti-Roma and/or anti-minorities and multiculturalism parties in some Roma communities have been observed and this fact could point to vote buying.

**Scarce resources** divide the communities as choices must be made when it comes to priority actions, policies and so on. Therefore, when designing the Roma inclusion strategy, the funding for the implementation and follow-up phases not only need to be secured but also equally distributed.

### 3.1.2 Country-specific conclusions and lessons learnt

#### Ukraine

Close co-operation between the executive authorities, local self-government bodies and Roma NGOs, as well as co-operation between various civil society organisations themselves, plays the key role in the effective enforcement of the rights of the Roma minority.

As the practice of interaction between the executive authorities, local self-government bodies and Roma organisations shows in resolving issues related to the socio-cultural integration of the Roma national minority, the formalisation of this co-operation, fixing it in the form of documents, providing specific tasks and order, is crucial.

Due to the limited resources, the maximum effect in the implementation of specific projects aimed at fulfilling of the socio-cultural needs of the Roma minority is achieved through public-private partnerships, in particular with the participation of international donors.

However, an important concern is the perceived impunity and lack of responsibility of the Roma resulting from the authorities' desire to ensure the human rights of the Roma through positive discrimination, while respecting the state legislation for the Roma population.

The issue of Roma self-realisation and social responsibility is not an issue for only one agency but needs to be addressed in a comprehensive manner. It is, for example, directly related to the provision of Roma housing and documents, employment and education, etc.. The constructive approach to solving the issue is to involve all possible "players" from central to local level authorities, teachers, parents, and NGOs but first of all Roma themselves.

The mapping carried out in the Kharkiv region by the Kharkiv National Cultural Society Romen and the Kharkiv Regional Centre of Social Services for Family, Children and Youth was a good initiative which allowed to

accurately estimate the number of Roma living in the region and implement targeted actions for the local Roma community. This experience in mapping should be shared in other regions of Ukraine.

A national study to estimate the Roma population in Ukraine could be accepted by the wider community and realistically speak about key issues and problems in order to develop relevant policies. However, it is an ambitious and complicated task. Cooperation with other Ministries, social services, health services and schools is needed to better estimate the Roma population. A methodology will have to be developed and a working group created as there are important regional differences and the issues faced by the Roma communities differ. The objective is to try to pilot the model in Kyiv in November 2020 and then deploy it in the rest of Ukraine. However, based on the existing knowledge, it may be difficult to reach precise figures in all areas of the country through this research.

The Ukrainian authorities already include representatives of Roma organisations in the elaboration of action plans or projects concerning them but the Inter-Agency will aim for a higher level of co-operation and participation as it is a national priority. It will be an opportunity for the 120 Roma organisations to take an active role in the Working Groups and sub-committees to develop and implement the new Roma strategy. The authorities envisage to create an interactive map of Roma organisations with their tasks and responsibilities, contact details, etc.

A Council of ethnic and national minorities to place Roma issues among national priorities should be established but choosing the right political moment is critical. The Bill would need to be passed after the parliamentary elections. A coordination council for all the Roma organisations and NGOs would provide a single contact point and avoid tensions and jealousy among the regional contacts.

## **Greece**

Action plans and programmes are not really evaluated, assessed or followed-up. They exist but need to be clearly included in the national strategy with clear indicators and have a managing body to monitor them. The conditionality will be based on a contract between the Roma community and managing body spelling out the rights and obligations of all the stakeholders.

Since 2012, within the European Framework, a holistic approach of the National Strategy for the Roma Social Inclusion has been developed, based on the four main pillars of tackling extreme poverty, taking into consideration the gender dimension, as well as the children's protection and the empowerment of youth in the direction to achieve social and political activeness and participation.

## **North Macedonia**

According to the Government of North Macedonia, the country currently possesses a relatively small but complicated and opaque social assistance system. The Government has already expressed its interest to explore Conditional Cash Transfers (CCT) as a means of streamlining the country's social assistance system, in order to improve the country's performance on education, health and social protection indicators. The government is seeking to improve and rationalise this system, including the introduction of CCTs for poor families to break the inter-generational poverty cycle.

One example of this is “*The Conditional Cash Transfer project*”<sup>63</sup> of 2013 supported by the World Bank and planned for FY09, which:

*“ will aim at alleviating poverty while working towards improving the future opportunities of recipients. This can be done through conditioning existing cash benefits on behaviours that build human capital, such as pre- and primary school attendance, take-up of primary health care, especially during the pre- and peri-natal phases, and attendance of parenting classes, health care of mothers, children and elderly. Target groups are benefit recipients, such as the economically vulnerable (currently receiving the Social Assistance), and parents of children with special needs (receiving the so-called Special Allowance). Through this targeting, CCTs de facto benefit the marginalized, including rural populations, those with special needs and minorities (such as the Roma).*

*Under this project, the Government of North Macedonia seeks to unite a team of international experts and local consultants. International experts are sought in the areas of Social Safety Net assessment, Benefit simulation modeling, Program Administration and Monitoring and Evaluation of the CCTP. Each of the international experts will be supported by a local consultant.”*

## Poland

Despite a programme set up to boost the number of Roma NGOs, in effect only a small number of them are active. Issues include:

- Poor education among Roma is the main barrier for them to accessing public services ‘for their own benefit’ and to working for their society and the common good;
- The tendency to self-isolation limits the cooperation between Roma and non-Roma bodies;
- Inclusiveness of the implemented projects is, in fact, limited;
- The marginal activity among Roma results from the patriarchal nature of their traditional culture, which makes active participation by Roma women impossible/difficult;
- As for the issue of Roma ‘representation’, many ‘leaders’ (who in fact are the heads of ‘family’ NGOs) usurp the (exclusive) right to represent the local Roma society, sometimes without any mandate and even against the given society;
- The establishment of tailored strategies for Roma resulted in the situation where Roma submit applications only to a few state bodies. In Poland, these are the Ministry of the Interior and Administration (programmes for the Roma society in Poland), the Ministry of Family, Labour and Social Policy (under the ESF) and, to some extent, the Ministry of Culture.

Problems with Roma self-reliability and responsibility in Poland are related to the same factors as with other vulnerable and marginalised communities.

- Lack of more advanced competences & qualifications;
- Lack of tradition functioning in a wider NGOs network;

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<sup>63</sup> World Bank (2013) Macedonia Conditional Cash Transfer Project (CCTP), more information and the full report “Restructuring paper on a proposed project restructuring of the Conditional Cash Transfers project loan no. ibrd 7735-mk June 16, 2009 to the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, April 17, 2013 <http://documents.worldbank.org/curated/en/721101468053679319/pdf/778640PJP1000Box377313B00PUBLIC0.pdf>” is available at: <http://documents.worldbank.org/curated/en/721101468053679319/Main-report>

- Lack of stable non-Roma NGO partners within the Roma strategy on local level;
- Some tendency to self-isolation;
- Activity of Roma women sometimes limited by the male community;
- Dependency on one donor (Ministry of Interior);
- The most popular projects realised by Roma NGOs: festivals, dancing and music groups, etc..

### **Lessons learnt in Poland**

- Improvement of Roma self-reliability & responsibility goes through improvement of general education within whole Roma community;
- Support for Roma women is essential as they are the “engine of changes”;
- Creation of the platform for Roma women meetings to discuss the problems can be fruitful;
- Pressure for more integration within the project realised by Roma NGOs should be welcome;
- Creation of a more „friendly” local environment should help.

### **Slovak Republic**

- The regional policy of the Slovak Republic must target more efficiently Least-Developed Districts (LDD) where there is also a high concentration of Roma. The needs of Roma should be taken into account when introducing new approaches for developing these regions of Slovakia and when implementing The Law on Support of Lagging Regions (Act No. 336/2015 Coll.).

## **3.2 Good practices identified at national and international levels**

### **3.2.1 In Ukraine, host country**

- The Spiritually Educational Organisation CHACHYMO was set up about three years ago, partly because of the influx of Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs) in the Kharkiv region, which prompted wider activism and solidarity among the Roma communities. The organisation has about 50 active members from the Roma community in the Merefyan united territorial community. The founders and members are ordinary Roma who aim to improve the living conditions and access to rights of their community and their inclusion into mainstream society. They act as a relay between the local authorities and the Roma community and assist members of the community with administrative issues such as applications for identification documents, health services, housing, schooling to name a few. The building they have built serves as a community centre and a place of worship for the Roma community.

With the support of the International Renaissance Foundation, they organise capacity building sessions on self-governance and teach about the Roma culture. They also work with non-Roma NGOs to understand mindsets and develop relevant policies and actions.

Their initiative is a good example of self-reliability and responsibility and could serve as a pilot project to be reproduced in other regions of Ukraine and Europe. In this regard, they should be supported by the Ministry of Culture of Ukraine, as well as the local authorities and receive training to build up their capacity through existing programmes such as ROMED2 but also study visits to municipalities which took part in the ROMACT or ROMACTED programmes.

- The Inter-agency workgroup on ethnic policies and freedom of consciousness may be reinstated as a State service and function on a new model. They met in the autumn of 2019 together with active Roma NGOs and associations to discuss the 2021-2030 Roma Strategy.

- The Atlas of the Roma Community in the Kharkiv Oblast, prepared by the Kharkiv National Cultural Society “Romen” in partnership with the Kharkiv Regional Centre of Social Services for Family, children and Youth and funded by international donors, was carried out using a methodology which did not require official documents but rather conversations with members of the Roma community, based on mutual trust. This exercise was needed despite the existence of the 2001 national census to provide more precise estimation of the Roma population in the region and develop policies accordingly. A direct result of the Atlas was the provision of official identification documents to those who were lacking them. This is a good practice which deserves to be shared and showcased in other Oblasts in Ukraine.
- The **draft law 9123** on Amendment of Certain Legislative Acts of Ukraine Regarding Recognition as a Stateless Person was registered at the Parliament in September 2018. According to the UNHCR STATELESSNESS UPDATE > Ukraine / SEPTEMBER 2018<sup>64</sup>, 395 stateless or persons at risk of statelessness (25 of them Roma) in the Kyiv and Kharkiv regions were identified and provided with legal support; 412 Roma at risk of statelessness in the Zakarpattya region were identified and provided with legal support; 385 stateless persons or persons at risk of statelessness in the Odessa region (1/3 of them Roma) were also identified and provided with legal support.
- A positive element is that Roma are not in a segregated area in Merefyan and the Kharkiv region because they are not so numerous. But the poor Roma are still concentrated in one neighbourhood.
- Social protection and health care: joint work with Lyiv organisation Ternype.
- Pilot project for Roma job placement and employment in Lyiv. Out of 60 participants, 12 found employment and expressed their wish to stay in the Lyiv region.
- Residential housing projects in Uzhhorod, Kharkiv and Odessa.
- Relocation of a Roma settlement on 16 hectares of land allocated to build private housing and 20 hectares allocated for agricultural projects to create jobs organised by the Ministry of Regional Development.
- Monitoring of how Roma children are involved in education and retain Roma culture.
- Cooperation with around 40 cultural units who deal with Roma art.
- The Ministry of Interior, Ombudsperson and Roma NGOs have developed an algorithm on action needed when encountering an improvised Roma settlement.
- The Chiricli Roma Women Fund NGO is heading the network of contacts with Roma NGOs for information and awareness raising.

### **3.2.2 In partner countries**

#### ***Estonia***

- Training young Roma to become community advocates/mediators/role models;
- Building confidence between state/municipal institutions by individual contacts with different Roma groups;

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<sup>64</sup> UN Refugee Agency (UNHCR) [STATELESSNESS UPDATE > Ukraine / SEPTEMBER 2018](#)



- Recruitment of a Roma mediator in the Valga municipality;
- Supporting the emergence of Roma civil society i.e. engagement of existing national minority umbrella organisations of national minority associations to raise the administrative capacity of Roma organisations;
- Awareness raising projects on Roma history and culture.

### **Greece**

- Housing assistance developed in co-operation with the local government;
- Developing support for early childhood and school-age children through experiential workshops and children's camps organised by the municipalities and NGOs. The objective is to facilitate the process of integration and adaptation to the school environment. The programme lasts 36 months and the target group is children aged 3 to 12 years old and their parents, coming from marginalised social groups, such as the Roma. It is composed of two activities:

**Activity 1: Participation in Children's Camps with Experiential Preparatory Workshops and Thematic Events-Workshops.** The aim is, in the first stage, to prepare the children for their participation in Children's Camps. Experiential preparatory workshops will be carried out well before the start of the camping season each year (3 recurring workshops for the 3 years of financing the operation). In the second phase of the action, children will participate in children's camps aiming at promoting their physical, mental and spiritual cultivation through sport and group life in nature (21 days from mid-June to mid-September). After the end of the camping year of each year and up to the beginning of the new season, thematic events - meetings with the participation of children participating in children's camps as well as of other children and parents will be held at regular intervals (approximately every three months).

**Activity 2: Parent-Child Workshops:** The action concerns workshops involving parents (focusing on mothers) and early childhood children. Indicative workshops:

Parent Schools: group meetings with parents to educate on issues related to their parenting role;

Individual /Family Meetings-Psychological Support: Issues pertaining to each family as an individual case through the recording and assessment of the needs;

Counseling for Medical and Pharmaceutical Care: Counseling and information on medical issues and examinations. Information on necessary vaccinations and support for visits to health centers and / or public health structures;

Women empowerment group in the intervention area;

Creative activities programme for infants: To develop children's skills and prepare them for kindergarten through a grid of activities based on the principles of experiential learning that will allow toddlers to actively engage in the game of knowledge at the first years of their lives;

- **Roma Branches /Community Centers** offer a grid of services according to a holistic approach which include individual, tailored guidance, support, counseling and empowerment as well as information for public services, allowances, employment programmes, educational programmes, etc.;
- The Hellenic Open University offers scholarships to Roma who have completed secondary education.

***The Netherlands***

- The Sinti and Roma Advisory Committee for the participation and emancipation of Roma and Sinti has a voice to make concrete proposals affecting their community;
- Governmental grant scheme for NGOs working on projects which fall within the priorities set out. A committee studies and analyses the grant requests and selects the projects. Grants are renewable yearly subject to a positive evaluation of the project;
- Verslavingszorg (Addiction care) – help Roma with drug addictions.

***Poland***

- Scholarship system for each level of education as long as the child remains in full-time studies, unfortunately the expected success is not achieved as enrolment and academic levels remain low, in 2019 there are two Roma PhD students;
- Network of 92 Roma school assistants (of Roma origin) employed on regular basis (as it is official job in Poland since 2005);
- Offices of the Voivode Plenipotentiaries for national and ethnic minorities (in all 16 regions); in some municipalities (self-government) there are persons dedicated to Roma-related issues;
- Yearly call for application for Roma Integration Strategy – municipalities apply to the Plenipotentiaries for grants and a commission including Roma representatives select of the projects. Yearly budget of 10 million zlotis (approx. €2,5 mln); approx. 400 projects selected yearly;
- Roma related post-graduate studies (Pedagogical University in Cracow);
- Roma-related museums (Tarnow, Warsaw);
- Roma assistants in pre-schools help to increase the success rate in school;
- Support in how to communicate as a lack of education can render people emotional.

***Slovak Republic***

- The University of Economics in Bratislava has a quota for Roma students and prepares them for the entrance exam;
- Peter Pollák, member of the European People's Party (EPP), was elected as a Member of the European Parliament in May 2019. He is one of three MEP of Romani origin. He initiated the political participation training for Roma leaders and support programme for first-time elected Roma mayors. The programme enables them to complete their studies after their election as Mayor;
- Museum of Roma Culture in Slovakia. An important role in increasing the availability of Romani culture and language is played by the Museum Roma culture in Slovakia, which is a specialized component of the Slovak National Museum Martine;
- The National Science Library - National Documentation and Information Centre for Romany Culture was implemented in Prešov in the period 2011-2014. The main objective of the project was to build a documentation and information centre for Roma culture as a new professional national workplace and organisational component of the library.
- In 2005, Mr Vladimír Ledecy, Mayor of Spissky Hrhov launched a government-owned business with the goal of employing local people to improve infrastructure in the area. The municipality gave a \$7 600 loan to Spissky Hrhov Municipal Social Enterprise, enough to hire three workers to make paving stones for the village's crumbling sidewalks. The business paid off the loan after a year and then used the profits to expand into local construction projects, including 100 apartments, a swimming pool and a gymnasium.

More recently, it has diversified into other ventures: a bakery, a sausage-making factory and a lumber-milling operation, with the sawdust providing biofuels for municipal vehicles. The Secretary General of the Council of Europe, Thorbjørn Jagland, visited Spissky Hrhov on 17 October 2018 and met Mayor Vladimír Ledecký. He was very impressed with the major efforts to provide people with necessary services such as running water, heating, electricity and appropriate housing, the disaggregation of schools and the success of the creation of a municipal enterprise which employs Roma in a range of occupations. It shows that political will and determination are as important as sufficient financing to obtain results.

### **3.2.3 In other Council of Europe member states**

Some examples of good practices in other Council of Europe member states based on research by the Council of Europe Secretariat: countries are mentioned as they have proven to be effective and have a concrete impact. They can result from conditionality but also from civic activism or personal endeavours.

#### **Romania**

##### **Family support allowance and conditionality**

- a) Type of programme: income tested benefit, with conditionalities in education
- b) Eligibility conditions: granted to families made of husband and wife who take care of their children, those being up to 18 years old, living and contributing to the household together and earning net monthly income per family member up to 530 lei. The right to family support allowance is established by taking into account the incomes and the assets of the family referred to in the List of assets leading to the exclusion of the right, Annex of the GD no.50/2011. The programme increases the children's education by introducing the school attendance conditionality for school children from beneficiary families; the amount of the allowance can be adjusted or diminished based on their school absences. In a family with several children of school age, if one of the children accumulate unexcused absences in a semester more than 20, the right to the family support allowance will not be suspended for the rest of the family members, will be only diminished because this child will not be taken into account in determining the amount of the family support allowance. By this measure is ensured the right to family support allowance for the other children of that family who will benefit from a financial support if they attend further educational courses.

##### **Social aid and conditionality**

- a) Type of programme: income tested benefit, with conditionalities in performing monthly community work and seasonal activities;
- b) Eligibility conditions: granted to families or single persons with low or no income, in a state of social need, in order to overcome the situation he/she is in. It is established as the difference between the monthly net income of the eligible family or single person and the monthly level of the guaranteed minimum income provided by the law. The right to social aid is established by taking into account the incomes of the family and also the assets of the family referred to in the List of assets leading to the exclusion of the right, Annex of the GD no.50/2011.

In terms of promoting social inclusion, this programme includes incentives to work (increase with 15% of the amount in the situation of eligible persons who are employed) and promotes the principles of responsibility and active participation of beneficiaries by their involvement in the work and actions of community interest. One or more persons able to work from the family entitled to social aid have to perform monthly community work, a monthly number of hours of community work organized by municipalities.

#### **Turkey**

##### **Conditional Cash Transfer (CCT) Programme**

The CCT programme in Turkey has three main components, health, education and pregnancy care support. The conditional education grants are provided to children of the target group conditional on school enrollment, from the first grade through the end of the twelfth grade. Once qualified as beneficiaries, children should maintain at least 80 per cent attendance rate to continue to receive the grant. The grants are higher for girls in order to encourage families to educate their daughters. According to 2019 figures, a primary school student boy receives nearly 6,5 US Dollars per month, whereas a primary school student girl gets nearly 7,5 US Dollar as conditional transfer. For secondary school students the grants are 11 US Dollars and 9 US Dollars for boys and girls, respectively. The health support is provided for the children aged between 0 – 6 years and is approximately 6,5 US dollars per month. The health support is conditional on regular visits to health care center and the completion of vaccinations. Moreover, as of January 2005 health support for pregnant women is also provided, which is conditional upon regular health center visits of pregnant women, encouraging in – hospital deliveries.

Some very good initiatives have been carried out by Roma and non-Roma citizens and yielded great success in achieving self-reliability and responsibility, they include:

### **Hungary**

**Erika Varga, fashion designer:** Erika transforms traditional flowery Roma patterns into bold, modern prints, and aims to use fashion to increase acceptance of the Roma minority in Hungarian society. She launched Romani Design, Hungary's first Roma fashion label, with her younger sister Helena Varga in 2010. Her studio, which works as a social enterprise, organises mentoring programmes aimed at helping more Roma youngsters get into the fashion business. Her clientele includes "socially-conscious", middle-class, non-Roma Hungarians and foreigners who attend the trade fairs where she exhibits her collections. Her small business also relies on funding it receives for its educational projects from public and private donors and other sources.

### **Slovenia**

**Mr Štefan Simončič, President of the Association EPEKA:** Štefan is involved in various projects in the human rights field that fight discrimination and promote inclusion for Roma people and refugees. His association actively participates in the Erasmus+ programme to provide mobility for youngsters, EVS opportunities and training courses for youth workers, through its facilities in Maribor, and its branches in Austria, Montenegro, Serbia, Czech Republic and Turkey.

EPEKA operates under the principles of a social enterprise. They focus on the active inclusion of vulnerable groups in social life and labour market. Their main project is the Roma restaurant Romani Kafenava which also operates under the principles of social enterprise. It invests all earnings into new employment. It is the first Roma restaurant across the European Union.

### **3.2.4 At international level**

The [European Social Charter](#) Article 1 to 19, and in particular article 12 which constrains member states to establish a system of social security and Article 14, which specifies that « *everyone has the right to benefit from social welfare services* ». Article 16 establishes that « *the family as a fundamental unit of society has the right to appropriate social, legal and economic protection to ensure its full development* ». Article 17: « *Mothers and children, irrespective of marital status and family relations, have the right to appropriate social and economic protection* ».

In a recent decision on a collective complaint against Bulgaria, the European Committee of Social Rights found a violation of Art. 16 of the European Social Charter due to the possibility of suspending or terminating family allowance / child benefits because of failure to attend school. Measures of this nature increase vulnerability and deprivation of the people concerned (Roma) and are de facto discriminatory because those (vulnerable) are the communities most (or almost exclusively) affected.

#### **4.4 RECOMMENDATIONS**

This report aimed to analyse how the use of conditionality of social benefits aiming at influencing human behaviour and formulating a condition to human capital investment can increase self-reliability and responsibility. Although there exist many national public policies through cash transfers or in-kind transfers for the provision of social benefits based on conditionalities both the discussions among the participants and the written contributions received highlighted the lack of reliable assessments on the impact of the conditionalities in changing behaviour.

##### **General recommendations**

Member states should raise awareness of their rights and obligations of the Roma as citizens.

Ukraine should support the successful initiative of the Ukrainian NGO CHACHYMO to map the Roma population around the Kharkiv region and reproduce elsewhere in Ukraine. Other member states should draw on this experience to initiate similar pilot projects;

##### **Conditionalities**

In order to measure the reach and impact of national and international public policies relating to social benefits, an equality analysis in Least-Developed Districts (LDD) is needed to avoid polarisation of the population through conditionalities of benefits which would create it.

Some conditionalities have already been abolished in member states, and research should be carried out to determine why. What were the weaknesses encountered? Was a risk assessment carried out?

Conditionalities for birth allowance based on diligent pre and post-natal care are highly effective in ensuring adequate healthcare and preventing the lack of identification documents.

The discussions also revealed the issue of some Roma NGOs and centres' lack of continuity in providing services. A comparative analysis of strength and weaknesses and impact of Roma NGOs and centres, including reasons for closure and lack of continued services, should be carried out to help in identifying solutions.

The advantage of using mediators rather than setting up stricter conditionalities should be examined.

Positive discrimination policies should be instated rather than setting conditionalities for social benefits.

##### **Active labour market measures**

Roma should be taken into account in State-supported schemes for the creation of social enterprises. The Government should also consider promoting entrepreneurship through micro-credits or interest-free loans, build capacity through targeted training for potential Roma entrepreneurs, offer tax incentives for employers to hire Roma and for Roma entrepreneurs, and establish partnerships with local businesses; promote the concept and work of the Roma Entrepreneur Development Initiative (REDI).

Temporary public work schemes and their impact on different Roma communities should be assessed in co-operation with the Roma representatives. Special attention should be paid to avoiding any segregation and exploiting Roma as cheap labour. The accumulation of qualifications should be documented and recognised.

Lack of availability of rehabilitated work should also be addressed. The combination of work and rehabilitative elements should be kept in balance and the programme should ensure a progression in tasks in order to recognise the acquisition of working skills

Awareness should be raised about employment rights and the duty to counter discrimination.

### **Education**

Raising awareness about the importance of education and provide further incentive by:

Granting an education and/or housing allowance for students in higher education (including vocational), renewable yearly on the condition that the student passes to the next academic year;

Offering civic summer camps, after school programmes and school trips for primary and secondary school students organised by NGOs in partnership with the school and the local authorities;

Developing secondary and tertiary education scholarships to Roma students; Paid internship and traineeship programmes especially to Roma students and integrating Roma more widely to the existing programmes;

### **Civic activism**

The starting point for developing the active participation of Roma in public life should be on concrete issues in their living area, everyday life, and discrimination in the access to services.

New Roma associations and organisations should benefit from training and capacity building through study visits and the use of the ROMACT and ROMACTED programmes.

Successful local pilot projects should be disseminated at national level.

Good practices should be mapped and their concrete impact should be assessed.

National strategies provide a framework for Action plans developed at the regional or local level. Action plans need to be adapted to the reality on the field and should be tailored to the needs of the target community. For positive results and concrete impact, a good communication strategy is essential to link the national and local authorities.

Assistance provided within Action plans should be limited in time and stop when the issue is solved.

Tailor- made strategies for each family to help them develop and become self-reliant which do not rely on cash handouts but rather training and capacity building and practical assistance. Social services could offer this service, e.g. vouchers for petrol to get to work, transportation passes, etc. The assistance should be conditioned and reviewed periodically.

**APPENDICES:**

**Appendix 1:** [Programme of the CAHROM thematic visit in Kharkiv, Ukraine, on 25-27 June 2019](#)

**Appendix 2:** [List of experts and participants in the thematic visit](#)

**Appendix 3:** [European and international standards and reference texts](#)

**Appendix 4:** [Examples of joint international cooperation and initiatives on national experiences of Roma self-reliability and responsibility](#)