

Evaluation of ROMACTED Phase II Programme

External evaluation

Final evaluation report

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Acronyms

ADI-ROM	Committee of Experts on Roma and Traveller Issues
CAG	Community Action Group
CDADI	Steering Committee on Anti-discrimination, Diversity and Inclusion
CNC	Computer Numerical Control
CoE	Council of Europe
CSO	Civil Society Organisation
DAC	Development Assistance Committee
DVV International	German Adult Education Association
EC	European Commission
ECRI	European Commission against Racism and Intolerance
EU	European Union
FCNM	Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities
GIZ	German Development Cooperation
ICJ	International Court of Justice
IPA	Instrument for Pre-Accession Assistance
İŞKUR	Izmir Metropolitan Municipality and Turkish Employment Agency
IWG	Institutional Working Group
JAP	Joint Action Plan
BAM	Bosnian Convertible Mark
LAP	Local Action Plan
MENA	Middle East and North Africa
MoU	Memorandum of Understanding
MTG	Municipal Taskforce Group
NGO	Non-Governmental Organisation
NRCP	National Roma Contact Point
OECD	Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development
OSCE	Organisation for Security and Co-operation in Europe
R	number of responses
SO	Support Organisation
UN	United Nations
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNHCR	United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees
UNICEF	United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund
UNSCR	United Nations Security Council Resolutions
USAID	United States Agency for International Development

1. Executive summary

Background

The joint European Union/Council of Europe ROMACTED Phase II - Promoting good governance and Roma empowerment at local level Programme was launched in January 2021 building on the methodologies, activities and experiences of the previous interventions. Its key objectives are as follows:

to build up political will and sustained policy engagement of local authorities to enhance democratic local governance and to build up capacity and stimulate the empowerment of local Roma communities to contribute to the design, implementation and monitoring of plans and projects concerning them.

The Programme is being implemented in 78 cities/municipalities in seven Beneficiaries – Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Montenegro, North Macedonia, Serbia, Türkiye and Kosovo.* The target groups include local public administrations (elected representatives and relevant administrative officials) and Roma communities from selected municipalities.

Methodology

The external evaluation aimed to (i) assess the overall relevance, coherence, effectiveness, efficiency, impact and sustainability of the ROMACTED Phase II Programme and (ii) identify lessons that the Council of Europe, European Commission and other stakeholders could learn from its implementation, including sustainability of results achieved.

The evaluation has reviewed the activities carried out within the ROMACTED Phase II Programme implementation and planning between 1 January 2021 and 31 December 2024 with a focus on the overall processes in the seven Beneficiaries and case studies from Bosnia and Herzegovina, Montenegro, Serbia and Türkiye.

Qualitative methods of data collection consisted of semi-structured remote and in-person interviews with representatives of the ROMACTED Programme management team and experts involved in the process of developing and implementing the Programme approach. Field visits to eight municipalities in four Beneficiaries were conducted - Konak and Akhisar in Türkiye, Kostolac and Pirot in Serbia, Tuzla and Doboje in Bosnia and Herzegovina and Bijelo Polje and Berane in Montenegro. During the visits, interviews and focus group discussions with a wide variety of stakeholders were undertaken. In total, 158 stakeholders were interviewed.

The data and evidence collected during field visits were used to develop eight case studies to allow for an in-depth analysis of implementation mechanisms capturing essential field elements and contextual information and clearly illustrating achieved results and outcomes.

Quantitative data collection was based on an online survey that was conducted among all 78 cities/municipalities involved in the Programme to elicit their views on the relevance, effectiveness, efficiency, impact and sustainability of the Programme and its activities. In total, 82 respondents completed the survey, and the full analysis of the survey can be found in a separate annex.

Data collection tools were accompanied by a documentary analysis of relevant primary and secondary materials, including Programme and municipal documentation and relevant strategic and legislative materials. All information and data collected were triangulated, synthesised and collated into a compilation of findings that were used as a basis for formulating lessons learnt and recommendations to further support the Roma integration and empowerment at the local level.

* This designation is without prejudice to positions on status and is in line with UNSCR 1244/1999 and the ICJ Opinion on the Kosovo Declaration of Independence.

Key findings

The Programme is highly relevant to the needs of Roma communities and local authorities in the Beneficiaries while strongly reflecting strategic priorities and documentation in the area of Roma integration. The Programme also fully reflects the strategic importance and relevance in relation to EU accession processes and directly contributes to achieving of the declared Roma integration objectives.

The coherence of the Programme is high. The Programme has established/strengthened connections with key national authorities in the Beneficiaries, mainly through the National Roma Contact Point engagement. Interviews confirmed this co-operation is open and effective and contributed to increased visibility of the importance of Roma integration.

The Programme has helped bring together the national level and the local governmental side and establish a platform for further co-operation. Its internal and external coherence is high as the Programme design fully reflects the experience and learning from previous actions and it has successfully established and utilised links and synergies with numerous organisations and initiatives.

The overall effectiveness of the Programme and its activities is extremely high. Most of the Programme output and outcome indicators have exceeded their defined target values; the overall output and outcome achievement rate reached 201% and 190% respectively.

Survey data corroborated high effectiveness of the Programme and its activities; survey respondents highlighted strengthened relationships and networking among local institutions and their increased commitment to include the Roma community in decision-making processes at the local level.

The field visits confirmed the positions of local facilitators as fundamental in mobilising the Roma community, facilitating and guiding the processes between the municipality, the Roma community and local actors and keeping the momentum of the Programme. It is positive that the Roma representation of local facilitators reached 79% in the Beneficiaries.

The overall efficiency of the Programme is satisfactory. As of 31 December 2023, the budget absorption level reached 67% of the allocated resources; the contracted value was at the level of 81%. Given the fundamental role of ROMACTED facilitators, the associated funds are deemed too low and not proportionate in relation to the scope of facilitators' field work.

The Programme budget does not readily show resources against individual activity types; for instance funds expended on capacity building activities can only be roughly estimated. Financial resources for the small grants' scheme and post-COVID recovery projects did not reach sufficient levels of spent and contracted amounts before the end of 2023 and the full absorption of the allocated sum is unlikely.

From the financial management perspective, efficiency of the Programme is low given the identified inconsistencies in data reporting and a lack of clarity in relation to specific budgetary resources.

The calculated values of planned and ongoing efficiency confirmed that the allocated financial resources were used efficiently and with significant cost-effectiveness as more results have been achieved than originally planned.

The overall impact of the Programme is high; it has been instrumental in stimulating the empowerment of the Roma through their engagement in new structures and decision-making processes at the local level. From the perspective of municipalities and local authorities, increased co-operation and deeper understanding of Roma concerns have been reported together with increased capacity to prepare and implement actions targeting Roma integration.

The Programme has developed several adaptable models of good practice concerning the principles of Roma Responsive Budgeting, planning for vulnerable groups, guidelines for the

development and monitoring of LAPs at the local level and many others. Allocation of local funds in line with the principles of Roma Responsive Budgeting in the amount of 1.37 million EUR represents a significant achievement further increasing the impact and sustainability of Programme activities.

The overall sustainability of the Programme is high. The element of establishment of CAGs, IWGs and MTGs was effective and interviews confirmed that sustainability prospects of these structures are good.

Coaching municipal administrations and local authorities had lasting positive effects, with local partners directly applying new skills. Roma community capacity building was also successful, with increased skills in community assessment and prioritisation skills, and voicing the outcomes and negotiating their suggestions for LAPs/JAPs.

Survey data confirmed high sustainability of the Programme, but at the same time, further investments are required to address more complex issues, such as housing and infrastructure in Roma neighbourhoods.

Gender mainstreaming was primarily ensured through active participation of women in CAGs reaching the average of 55% across all Beneficiaries. Additionally, several activities targeted specifically Roma women addressing for instance women's economic empowerment.

Higher women's representation was also encouraged among local facilitators, for Phase II it amounted to 41% across all Beneficiaries. However, the Programme lacks systematic tracking of women's participation in Programme activities.

Participation and inclusion of vulnerable groups, in particular Roma women, youth and Roma returnees was emphasised through all stages of the Programme. Programme materials encourage inclusive and non-discriminatory language and approach to all groups. However, ROMACTED has encountered certain challenges in increasing participation and inclusion of Roma returnees.

Key recommendations

The Programme implementation at the local level is its distinctive added value that directly affects levels of ownership and accountability, and subsequently, sustainability prospects of the outcomes achieved. It is therefore recommended to apply this approach in future initiatives targeting Roma integration together with the participatory methodology that has a positive impact on the capacity of local municipalities and empowerment of Roma communities.

In relation to the Programme Logframe, it is recommended to adopt a more ambitious approach in defining the target values of output and outcome indicators in the future. The set values of numerous indicators for the current Programme have been significantly exceeded and a more realistic outlook in quantification of objectives is required.

To increase the efficiency of the Programme, it is recommended that the Programme budget is set up in a way that allows straightforward and accurate monitoring and performance oversight. The immediate and planned expenditure against key Programme activities should be visible and easily accessible, e.g. through monthly financial reporting and reprofiling based on planned and implemented actions. The results-based Programme budgeting with clear costs of specific outcomes will provide cost-benefit evidence for decisions on the ongoing Programme implementation.

Given the critical role of the local facilitators in the Programme, it is recommended to allocate substantially more budgetary resources to their work and related activities to reflect their scope of work. Additionally, accurate and systematic data tracking and recording will further strengthen the Programme efficiency.

In relation to impact, diligent promotion of the achieved positive outcomes in terms of Roma empowerment at the local level is recommended. Similarly, to maintain a long-lasting impact of

the numerous models of good practice that have been produced and published within the Programme, their broad dissemination is equally important.

As the critical state of the infrastructure of Roma neighbourhoods might limit the positive outcomes of initiatives targeting capacity building, good governance and multi-institutional co-operation, it is recommended to look for opportunities to align the funding to promote Roma empowerment and inclusion with direct infrastructure investments to help address the complex issues the Roma population in the Beneficiaries face.

To enable targeted support in the future, it is recommended to conduct an auditing exercise to identify a snapshot overview of the present status of the political will and commitment of the municipalities and their local institutional partners to continue in Roma integration and empowerment measures in a participatory way without the external impetus of the Programme. Additionally, this activity will help determine which municipalities require follow-up activities, for example by providing support in upscaling of successful projects or practical proposal writing.

To utilise the significant breadth of relevant partnerships and contacts formed by the ROMACTED management team both at the national and local levels in the Beneficiaries, it is recommended to identify opportunities to sustain this institutional knowledge of the Council of Europe so that the team's deep understanding of the complexities and challenges at the Beneficiary level is actively used in the future.

2. Background

The Council of Europe (CoE) and European Union (EU) recognise the importance of adopting European and national policy frameworks for the integration of Roma² as well as the significance of policy measures at the local level to achieve progress in the social inclusion of Roma in education, health, employment and housing. It is at the local level where the social exclusion is most visible and where practical steps to minimise it are required.

One of the major challenges in effective implementation of Roma inclusion policies adopted at the European and national level is the gap of understanding and political will at the municipality level. Therefore, supporting the local engagement, commitment as well as capacities are priorities of recent investments. At the same time, for their effective implementation, Roma communities need to be active participants and equal partners reflected in good governance approaches and inclusive local democracy.

The initial efforts to improve communication and co-operation between Roma and public institutions (school, healthcare providers, employment offices, local authorities, etc.) started in 2011 with the ROMED1 programme aiming to train mediators around Europe to reduce the gap between Roma communities and public institutions. Subsequently, the ROMED2 programme emerged investing in local processes aimed at enhancing the participation of Roma in local decision making. Since 2013, a joint CoE/EU joint programme ROMACT - Building up political will and understanding of Roma inclusion at local and regional level has been implemented aiming to build the capacity of local authorities to develop and implement plans and projects for Roma inclusion based on the specific needs and priorities of local marginalised Roma communities.

From the experience and methodologies of these two programmes, the ROMACTED Programme Phase I – Promoting good governance and Roma empowerment at local level resulted. It focused on building the political will and engagement of local authorities to enhance democratic participation and empowerment of local Roma communities and directly assisting local authorities in strengthening their capacity to design and implement projects through domestic and external funds. The programme was implemented in seven Beneficiaries (61 municipalities) in the Western Balkans and Türkiye from 1 May 2017 till 31 December 2020.

In January 2021, the **ROMACTED Phase II - Promoting good governance and Roma empowerment at local level** was launched building on the methodologies, activities and experiences of the previous interventions. Its key objectives are as follows:

to build up political will and sustained policy engagement of local authorities to enhance democratic local governance and to build up capacity and stimulate the empowerment of local Roma communities to contribute to the design, implementation and monitoring of plans and projects concerning them.

These objectives are to be achieved through the following outcomes:

- to empower the Roma community - at the individual level (assisting people to practice their basic rights and to expand their capacity and skills), as well as at the community level (assisting people to get organised to voice out their interests around community problem solving);

² The term “Roma and Travellers” is used at the CoE to encompass the wide diversity of the groups covered by its work in this field: on the one hand a) Roma, Sinti/Manush, Calé, Kaale, Romanichals, Boyash/Rudari; b) Balkan Egyptians (Egyptians and Ashkali); c) Eastern groups (Dom, Lom and Abdal); and, on the other hand, groups such as Travellers, Yenish, and the populations designated under the administrative term “Gens du voyage” as well as persons who identify themselves as Gypsies. This is an explanatory footnote, not a definition of Roma and/or Travellers.

- to improve and expand the institutions' commitment, capacities, knowledge and skills in working for Roma inclusion, putting in practice the concepts of good governance;
- to contribute to the preparation of the local development actions that aim to improve the quality of life for Roma and to reduce the gap between Roma and non-Roma, including in relation to mitigating the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic.

The Programme is being implemented in 78 cities/municipalities in seven Beneficiaries – Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Montenegro, North Macedonia, Serbia, Türkiye and Kosovo.* The target groups include local public administrations (elected representatives and relevant administrative officials) and Roma communities from selected municipalities.

* This designation is without prejudice to positions on status and is in line with UNSCR 1244/1999 and the ICJ Opinion on the Kosovo Declaration of Independence.

3. Methodology

The external evaluation of the joint European Union/Council of Europe (EU/CoE) ROMACTED Phase II Programme aims to (i) assess the overall relevance, coherence, effectiveness, efficiency, impact and sustainability of the ROMACTED Phase II Programme and (ii) identify lessons that the CoE, EC and other stakeholders could learn from its implementation, including sustainability of results achieved.

The evaluation has reviewed the activities carried out within the ROMACTED Phase II Programme implementation and planning between 1 January 2021 and 31 December 2024 with a focus on the overall processes in the seven Beneficiaries and case studies from Bosnia and Herzegovina, Montenegro, Serbia and Türkiye. The evaluation report will contribute to the orientation and development of CoE and European Commission's activities in the field of Roma inclusion in general as well as of its joint programmes.

The evaluation was undertaken between March and December 2024. Its methodology was guided by the Terms of Reference that formed a basis for the development of an **evaluation matrix** (annex 7.12) structured around selected OECD/DAC evaluation criteria of relevance, coherence, effectiveness, efficiency, impact and sustainability and corresponding qualitative and quantitative data collection and analysis instruments. For assessment of Programme output and outcome indicators' achievement, the reference date of 31 December 2023 was used in line with the latest narrative report on the Programme implementation.

Desk research

The evaluator conducted a documentary analysis of relevant primary and secondary materials, including:

- **Programme documentation** – Description of the Action, Programme Logframe, Inception Report, progress reports, financial reports, Methodological Handbook, Indicative Workplan, Communication Plan, Programme website, local baseline surveys, available reports, statistics, including the media and visibility outputs of the Programme;
- **municipal documentation** – memoranda of understanding, action plans and strategies, small grants' scheme projects and other relevant documents developed at the local level;
- **relevant strategic and legislative materials** – CoE Strategic Action Plan for Roma and Traveller Inclusion (2020-2025), the Strasbourg Declaration on Roma, Thematic Action Plan on Roma and Traveller Inclusion (2016-2019), CoE Protecting the Rights of Roma and Travellers, Roma and Traveller Inclusion: Towards a New EU Framework Learning from the Work of Equality Bodies, EU Roma Strategic Framework for Equality, Inclusion and Participation for 2020-2030 and other relevant strategic and legislative documentation.

Data collection

Qualitative methods of data collection consisted of **semi-structured remote and in-person interviews** with representatives of the CoE ROMACTED Programme management team and experts involved in the process of developing and implementing the Programme approach.

The Terms of Reference specifies the selection of four Beneficiaries (Bosnia and Herzegovina, Montenegro, Serbia and Türkiye) targeted in this evaluation based on geographical and demographical considerations and institutional commitment of the Programme and therefore, field visits to the following municipalities were conducted (two municipalities per Beneficiary):

- Konak and Akhisar in Türkiye;
- Kostolac and Pirot in Serbia;
- Tuzla and Doboj in Bosnia and Herzegovina;

- Bijelo Polje and Berane in Montenegro.

During the visits, **in-person interviews and focus group discussions** with a wide variety of stakeholders were undertaken:

- Programme field staff – Project Officers;
- municipal representatives of the City Halls;
- representatives of Support Organisations (SOs);
- representatives of local Community Action Groups (CAGs);
- representatives of local Institutional Working Groups (IWGs);
- representatives of relevant local Roma non-governmental organisations (NGOs);
- representatives of European Union Delegations;
- National Roma Contact Points (NRCPs).

The full list of interviews and focus group discussions can be found in annex 7.9. In total, 158 stakeholders were interviewed. Despite repeated efforts, interviews with the NRCP and SO representatives in Türkiye were not possible to arrange.

The data and evidence collected during field visits were used to develop **eight case studies** to allow for an in-depth analysis of implementation mechanisms capturing essential field elements and contextual information and clearly illustrating achieved results and outcomes. The case studies investigate different modalities of the Programme in different contexts and examine the impact of particular challenges and drawbacks on the implementation and the progress and results achieved. They can be found in annexes 7.1-7.8.

Quantitative data collection was based on an **online survey** that was conducted among **all 78 cities/municipalities** involved in the Programme to elicit their views on the relevance, effectiveness, efficiency, impact and sustainability of the Programme and its activities. The questionnaire was translated into Albanian, Bosnian, Serbian, Montenegrin, Macedonian and Turkish. The online survey was distributed to municipalities' key contacts on 7 June 2024 with a note to distribute it further among its members of staff that were directly involved in Programme activities. An email reminder to complete the survey was sent on 21 June 2024; the survey was closed on 28 June 2024. In total, 82 respondents completed the survey, and the full analysis of the online survey can be found in a separate annex.

All information and data collected were triangulated, synthesised and collated into a compilation of findings (chapter 4). Based on the findings, conclusions and factors contributing to the results achieved that could be applicable in similar projects/contexts were identified (chapter 5) and clear and forward-looking recommendations were formulated (chapter 6). Case studies based on the field visits to four Beneficiaries can be found in annexes 7.1-7.8. All literature and document review references are listed in annex 7.10.

4. Findings

The following chapter begins by detailing relevance of the Programme for intended target groups and stakeholders involved. The next sections focus on the Programme coherence, effectiveness to evaluate the fit between the chosen means and intended effects and efficiency. The final sections review the impact and sustainability of the Programme and its activities; cross-cutting issues of gender mainstreaming and human rights approach are also considered.

While addressing the evaluation questions outlined in the evaluation matrix (annex 7.12), the evaluator put emphasis on the assessment of the evaluation criteria as a whole rather than answering questions individually. The analysis in the following subsections tackles all evaluation questions and presents the findings in a continuous and coherent text. This approach allows making the content more accessible and avoiding discussions on dividing lines between individual evaluation questions.

4.1 Relevance

The ROMACTED Phase II Programme is **highly relevant to the needs of Roma communities and local authorities in the seven Beneficiaries**. Following on from Phase I, the stakeholder analysis in Beneficiaries had been tested and verified; the original 61 municipalities involved in Phase I continued into the next phase with the addition of 17 new municipalities. These were selected based on a set of predefined criteria, an initial assessment by external experts, and a review of relevant stakeholders, including EU Delegations and government representatives. Subsequently, municipal and community needs assessments were conducted to identify the most critical concerns.

Interviews with EC representatives confirmed that the Programme's focus on empowerment of Roma communities for democratic participation addresses one of the most critical priorities related to Roma inclusion. The Programme design **strongly reflects related strategic priorities and documents** as they are increasingly emphasising the importance of creating capacities within Roma communities and their active engagement.

Similarly, interviews with CoE representatives corroborated high relevance of the action and they view its focus at the local level as the key added value of the Programme. Although the context, challenges and priorities differ across the municipalities that represent this local dimension, the Programme offers enough **flexibility for a targeted and relevant approach**. To achieve this, active communication and links created between the NRCPs (represented by national ministries in charge of implementation of Roma strategies in the Beneficiaries) and EU Delegations' representatives are viewed by them as constructive and helpful.

The ROMACTED methodology translates the strategic objectives of the CoE *Strategic Action Plan for Roma and Traveller Inclusion 2020-2025* into its activities by combating antigypsyism and discrimination in its diverse forms by raising awareness (e.g. through capacity building activities), ensuring inclusion of the Roma in decision-making processes (e.g. by forming local structures such as CAGs and by involving local Roma NGOs and Civil Society Organisations) and by improving implementation of local level strategies and policies (e.g. through assessment activities and capacity building of municipal staff and Roma community members on the principles of Roma Responsive Budgeting).⁴

The Programme also fosters practical implementation of the *10 Common Basic Principles on Roma Inclusion* by active involvement of regional and local authorities through the formation of CAGs, IWGs and Municipal Taskforce Groups (MTGs) (principle 8), active participation of the Roma (principle 10) by encouraging their involvement in public life and active citizenship and aiming

⁴ CoE. 2020. *Strategic Action Plan for Roma and Traveller Inclusion 2020-2025*.

for the mainstream (principle 4) by raising awareness on direct and indirect discrimination.⁵ Similarly, it closely aligns with principle 11 (human rights, cultural diversity and social cohesion) of the CoE *of Good Governance* by combating social exclusion and discrimination.⁶

To allow the target groups to observe tangible results and outcomes of the ROMACTED methodology in practice, the Programme element of small grants' scheme and post-COVID recovery projects is regarded as highly desirable and relevant, also increasing the sense of ownership of individual beneficiaries (municipalities and Roma communities). This view was noted by EC, CoE and EU Delegations' representatives as well as municipal and Roma community members.

Another important example of high relevance of the Programme was pointed out by the interviewed EC representatives, namely in expanding the objectives of the post-COVID recovery projects to add mitigation of consequences of natural hazards following the earthquake in Türkiye in 2023. This approach has further enhanced the relevance and targeted support provided through the action.

Interviewees from all four sample Beneficiaries emphasised that the ROMACTED methodology is highly relevant as it purposefully addresses issues of marginalisation, limited access to local services, and the lack of participation of Roma communities in municipal affairs and decision-making. The participatory approach ensures that Roma communities are involved in the process of identifying and prioritising their own needs, discussion with the relevant municipal services during the Municipal Taskforce meetings, leading to development of Joint Action Plans (JAPs) that include appropriate measures to address them. In this sense, the community is able to be the driving force of their own change. The high number of Roma facilitators (79%) has substantially supported this (more details are included in the Effectiveness chapter).











Interviews and focus group discussions confirmed that the Programme has enabled the Roma communities to collaborate with municipal institutions, in many cases for the first time, and participate in structured meetings with them. From the municipal perspective, the specific value of the Programme approach lies in capacity building opportunities to design, prepare and implement targeted actions and projects as pointed out by their representatives.

Survey data confirm high relevance of the Programme set up in relation to the needs of the municipalities involved as well as those of local Roma communities. Additionally, they also feel the Programme is conducive to bringing together relevant local actors. The overview of their responses is stated in the following table.

⁵ EC. 2009. *The 10 Common Basic Principles on Roma Inclusion*.

⁶ CoE. 2008. *12 Principles of Good Governance*.

Table 1: Online survey responses in relation to Programme relevance

Are the programme activities tailored well to the needs of your municipality?			
		Answers	Ratio
yes, to a great extent		53	65%
yes, to some extent		28	34%
no, to little extent		0	0%
no, to no extent		0	0%
I do not know/I am not sure		1	1%
Are the programme activities tailored well to the needs of the Roma community in your municipality?			
		Answers	Ratio
yes, to a great extent		54	66%
yes, to some extent		26	32%
no, to little extent		2	2%
no, to no extent		0	0%
I do not know/I am not sure		0	0%
Do the programme activities enable engagement with the relevant local stakeholders in your municipality?			
		Answers	Ratio
yes, to a great extent		46	56%
yes, to some extent		34	41%
no, to little extent		1	1%
no, to no extent		1	1%
I do not know/I am not sure		0	0%

Source: Online survey

The specific value of the Programme is in its methodology. Rather than providing direct financial resources to the municipalities involved, it supports them in building their capacities and skills in understanding the importance of engagement with the local Roma community, assessing jointly their critical needs, bringing together relevant actors and identifying solutions to addressing them either through synergies created with other initiatives or by identifying other funding opportunities and designing, writing and implementing targeted projects.

The ROMACTED methodology is structured in four key steps with clear outputs (e.g. structures and documents created); interviews and online data confirm its high relevance and usability. Questionnaire results corroborate this finding nearly unanimously – 52% of respondents (R=43) are *very satisfied* with the methodology, 43% of them (R=35) are *satisfied* and 5% (R=4) remain *neutral*; no negative responses were recorded.

In relation to **preparing the process** (step 1), all respondents state that local institutions in their municipality understand the need to integrate the Roma population and 96% of them (R=79) feel they are committed to this process. They regard the initial mapping of institutions and stakeholders as conducive to strengthening co-operation with them and the established multi-institutional structures as helpful (96%, R=79).

In **assessing needs and prioritising** (step 2), 98% of respondents (R=80) state that assessment activities helped them identify the roots of marginalisation of the local Roma community. The subsequent methodology action, the Community Priorities List, is also viewed as important.

The following methodology part, **adopting a Joint Action Plan** (step 3), has caused some disagreeing comments, in particular in relation to the frequency of its preparation and its integration into the municipal development plan. Detailed responses are shown in the table below.

Table 2: Online survey responses in relation to the Adopting a Joint Action Plan step

Aspects of the ROMACTED Programme methodology	Strongly agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly disagree	I do not know/not relevant
Adopting a Joint Action Plan					
The process of adopting a Joint Action Plan in our municipality was effective.	34	45	1	0	2
The process of preparing a Joint Action Plan in our municipality is undertaken on a regular basis.	32	42	6	0	2
The adopted Joint Action Plan has been integrated into the development plans of the municipality.	33	40	7	0	2
The adopted Joint Action Plan has been translated into specific actions aiming to increase the integration of the Roma population in our municipality.	35	44	1	0	2

Source: Online survey

Similarly, the last step of the Programme methodology, **funding and project implementation** (step 4), has not been successfully applied by all municipalities. While 95% of respondents (R=78) *strongly agree/agree* that their municipality has successfully implemented actions arising from the JAP and at the same time, 94% of respondents (R=77) *strongly agree/agree* that the Roma community has been involved in their implementation, there are three respondents that *disagree* and two respondents that *strongly disagree* with these statements.

Relevance from the EU integration/accession perspective

The Western Balkan Beneficiaries voluntarily adopted the *EU framework for national Roma integration strategies up to 2020* which primarily aimed at tackling the socio-economic exclusion of Roma in the EU and enlargement area by promoting equal access to education, employment, health and housing. Subsequently, in 2019 they committed to concrete improvements of the situation of Roma in these aspects by the time of their accession by adopting the *Declaration of Western Balkan Partners on Roma Integration within the EU Enlargement Process*. The Declaration constitutes a specific political agenda of the Western Balkan Beneficiaries to continue and enhance efforts for full equality and integration of Roma with a set of defined objectives which are directly linked with key performance indicators to assess progress within the enlargement process.⁷

As confirmed through interviews with EU Delegations' representatives as well as NRCs in the visited Beneficiaries, the **ROMACTED Phase II Programme and its objectives strongly reflect the agreed Roma integration objectives of the Declaration**, and Programme activities directly contribute to their achievement, for instance in relation to the following aspects:

- the non-discrimination objective including institutional and hidden discrimination – the Programme targets this through various awareness raising activities;

⁷ Declaration of Western Balkan Partners on Roma Integration within the EU Enlargement Process. 2019.

- support of public budgeting related to Roma integration for mainstream and targeted policies – through participative development of JAPs and local strategies and capacity building focused on the principles of Roma Responsive Budgeting;
- support to use available donor funding, including Instrument for Pre-Accession Assistance to advance the status of Roma – through capacity building for municipal staff to design, develop and implement targeted projects.⁸

In 2021 and 2022 respectively, all Western Balkan region partners approved new Roma inclusion strategies and action plans for the next five to ten years aiming to align with the new *EU framework on Roma inclusion, equality and participation 2020-2030*.⁹ The core of the ROMACTED Phase II Programme is in line with priorities of the new framework, specifically under the objective 3 *promote participation through empowerment, cooperation and trust* by encouraging participation of Roma in political life at local and regional levels.¹⁰ This objective and its associated targets are directly supported by Programme activities in promoting good governance and Roma empowerment at the local level as well as in building up political will and sustained policy engagement of local authorities.

Interviews with EU Delegations' representatives and NRCs in the visited Beneficiaries corroborated the **strategic importance and relevance of the Programme in relation to EU accession processes and achieving the declared Roma integration objectives**. They confirmed that while the respective Beneficiaries have developed detailed strategic frameworks and related documentation at the national level, their implementation is not monitored and reported on methodically and, in many cases, associated action plans are not accompanied by adequate financial resources. Therefore, the value of the Programme is demonstrated in its direct contribution to national Roma integration strategies through connecting with the municipal level and having a positive impact in local communities. Additionally, as transpired through these interviews, a co-operation link between the national and municipal levels is generally minimal or absent in the visited Beneficiaries and the ROMACTED Programme has managed to partly substitute this connection that is crucial for successful implementation of any nation-wide initiatives and actions.

It can be concluded that the ROMACTED Phase II Programme is highly relevant in supporting European and national policy frameworks for Roma integration at the local level as part of EU accession processes. The Programme design resonates strongly with the objectives set out in the governmental commitments and their achievement at the Programme level will contribute directly to their systematic progress required for the EU accession.

The relevance of the Programme is high.

The Programme is highly relevant to the needs of Roma communities and local authorities in the Beneficiaries while strongly reflecting strategic priorities and documentation in the area of Roma integration. Interviews, focus group discussions and online survey data confirm that the ROMACTED methodology offers a structured approach to Roma integration with sufficient flexibility and adaptability for a targeted and relevant approach.

The Programme fully reflects the strategic importance and relevance in relation to EU accession processes and directly contributes to achieving of the declared Roma integration objectives. The implementation at the local level is considered the key added value of the Programme by all interviewed stakeholders.

⁸ Declaration of Western Balkan Partners on Roma Integration within the EU Enlargement Process. 2019.

⁹ EC. 2023. *EU Support to Roma Integration in the Western Balkans*.

¹⁰ EC. 2020. *EU Roma strategic framework for equality, inclusion and participation for 2020-2030*.

4.2 Coherence

External coherence

The ROMACTED Phase II Programme has **established/strengthened connections with key national authorities**, specifically through the NRCP engagement. This has proved effective to ensure high relevance of the Programme in relation to national strategic documents and action plans. As pointed out in the Relevance section, the Programme is fully in line with national Roma integration objectives and directly contributes to their achievement. As interviews with NRCPs confirmed, this co-operation helped raise awareness of Roma as citizens. Through regular communication, the respective Ministries and the CoE were able to discuss potential synergies and links. Additionally, the joint events enabled to promote the importance of Roma integration, and the outcomes already achieved.

Interviews with NRCPs highlighted that the Programme has been extremely effective in providing the direct link to the local governments' level that is often absent. While the visited Beneficiaries have national Roma integration strategies in place, their implementation is not monitored closely and communication with the local level is not sufficient. On the other hand, municipalities appreciated the support and assistance in translating national frameworks to local strategies and action plans that are fully reflective of their specific circumstances and needs. Additionally, the field visits indicated that ROMACTED served as a gateway for co-operation with other stakeholders, for instance for facilitators when seeking new connections and links with local and national NGOs and institutions.

Overall, the Programme has therefore contributed to bringing together the national and local governmental side and perspective and to establishing a platform for further co-operation. The collaboration with the Ministry for Human and Minority Rights and Social Dialogue in Serbia, Ministry for Human Rights and Refugees in Bosnia and Herzegovina and Ministry for Human and Minority Rights in Montenegro and the respective CoE offices was assessed as good and open. One of the challenges cited during interviews was the lack of adequate budgetary resources allocated for Roma integration at the national level and the related absence of systemic solutions to address complex issues, for instance the inadequate state of housing of Roma communities. Combining direct investment contributions with the ROMACTED approach of capacity building of municipalities and Roma communities would have provided more long-lasting and sustainable effects.

The Programme has also invested efforts in building external coherence with other stakeholders (such as UN agencies, World Bank, Regional Cooperation Council, Roma Entrepreneurship Development Initiative, Roma Education Fund, European Roma Institute for Arts and Culture, USAID, etc.) to reinforce the action rather than to create parallel structures at the national/local level. Some of these synergies were part of the ROMACTED design stipulating the common ground for co-operation. The work on intersectional discrimination and empowerment of Roma returnees in Albania, North Macedonia, and Serbia (joint work with the UNDP and World Bank) is an example of such an activity.

In the field of Roma Responsive Budgeting (in line of local development and principles of good democratic governance), a synergy with the Roma Integration Phase II project was established in 2021/2022, implemented by the Regional Cooperation Council and funded by the EU and Open Society Foundations. This co-operation provided foundation for further development of the guidelines on responsive budgeting at the local level. Furthermore, the co-operation between the Programme and UN Women in North Macedonia has resulted in capacity building of local administration and Roma community on gender responsive budgeting, considering the lens of specific priorities of Roma women.

The co-operation with Roma-led and pro-Roma CSOs was essential to ensure inclusion of all relevant actors in the process. The civil society was an active agent in co-ordinating local action

with the network of community members and facilitators, implementing small grants' scheme projects on behalf of the partner municipalities, and also implementing specific activities¹¹ within the framework of the CoE Strategic Action Plan for Roma and Traveller Inclusion (2020-2025).

The Programme has successfully created and utilised **links and synergies with other organisations and initiatives**, for example:

- the Roma Integration Office/Regional Cooperation Council supported the Roma Responsive Budgeting workshops in Serbia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Montenegro and North Macedonia;
- several synergies with the UN agencies were created – e.g. with UNDP in Serbia, Albania and North Macedonia – *Strengthening national and local systems to support the effective socio-economic integration of returnees in the Western Balkans*, UNHCR and UNICEF in Montenegro;
- ROMACTED is part of the EU/UNDP RELOAD 2 Programme Advisory Group in Serbia and Montenegro;
- co-ordination of activities with UNDP and World Bank regarding the establishment of the National Platform for Roma returnees in North Macedonia;
- co-operation with several NGOs and CSOs was established – e.g. HELP and the Red Cross in Montenegro, Otaharin in Bosnia and Herzegovina;
- co-operation with the OSCE on the platform of Roma NGOs in Bosnia and Herzegovina;
- meetings, info sessions and collaboration with the European Roma Institute for Arts and Culture, GIZ and the World Bank in Serbia;
- in Türkiye, several sessions with the Union of Municipalities of Türkiye were held regarding the transformation of funds and the role of municipalities after the earthquake in 2023;
- various knowledge sharing events and workshops were organised with the Türkiye Human Rights and Equality Institution, the Joint Platform for Human Rights and Association for Monitoring Equal Rights in Türkiye;
- collaboration with relevant ministries as required – e.g. the Ministry of Labour and Social Welfare, Ministry of Finance;
- knowledge sharing and human rights approach discussed with Roma Dialogue Network partners, the Joint Platform for Human Rights.

Case studies offer additional references to Roma integration initiatives and actions implemented at the local level.

Internal coherence

The ROMACTED Phase II Programme has made several connections with other CoE and EU initiatives, implemented by the CoE. The Programme methodology was **developed from experience and lessons learned from the implementation of previous actions** such as the ROMED1 and ROMED2 Programmes, ROMACT and ROMACTED Phase I Programmes. In particular, the Programme has continued its activity in 61 municipalities involved in the previous phase, which was advantageous for the maintenance of CAG, IWG and MTG structures (as demonstrated by case studies).

Monitoring reports of ECRI and the FCNM provided inputs for the design of the ROMACTED Phase II Programme, and in turn the Programme has contributed to fact-finding of ongoing monitoring cycles (i.e. Serbia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, and Montenegro). Several activities implemented under the ROMACTED Phase II Programme included awareness-raising of relevant CoE Committee of Ministers' recommendations, such as the inclusion of the history of Roma and/or Travellers in school curricula and teaching materials, equality of Roma and Traveller women and girls, and on Roma youth participation. Moreover, ADI-ROM/ CDADI members were in many cases

¹¹ For instance, introduction to the concept of antigypsyism to local administration in Bosnia and Herzegovina.

the National Focal Points or NRCs from the relevant ministries (Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Montenegro, North Macedonia) and engaged in both the Expert Committee and the ROMACTED Phase II Programme.

Synergies with the CoE Youth Department are also evident, for example, training sessions carried out in the ROMACTED Programme have adapted and utilised training material developed by the Youth Department. In addition, CAG members participated in Youth Department activities at the European level, such as Roma Youth Together seminars. Other European level events in which ROMACTED stakeholders participated included the bi-annual CoE Dialogue with Roma and Traveller Civil Society meetings and the CoE International Roma Women's Conference.

The Programme implementation mechanism as the joint EU/CoE initiative was also assessed positively. The interviewed EU Delegations' representatives regarded this co-operation as effective and their attendance at stakeholder meetings and events proved beneficial and conducive to increasing the visibility of the action and the EU as well. While EU Delegations did not have a formal oversight of the Programme, interviews in the visited Beneficiaries confirmed that regular communication with CoE Project Officers enabled them to gain a sufficient overview of the implementation progress and results achieved. During these interviews, it was evident that they were aware of the context and specific challenges of individual municipalities; they could also cite several examples of successful small grants' projects and their outcomes. At the same time, EU Delegations' representatives confirmed that their working relationship with the CoE was highly collaborative and complementary.

Following the recommendations from the external evaluation of Phase I, co-operation with the Joint Programme Horizontal Facility was reinforced during the ROMACTED Phase II to enhance internal coherence. The Programme has established **synergies with other ongoing EU interventions** in the visited Beneficiaries, in particular:

- inputs were provided for the monitoring body of the CoE *European Commission against Racism* (ECRI) in Serbia, Bosnia and Herzegovina and Montenegro;
- co-operation with the *Block the Hatred – Share the Love!* campaign in 2022, respectively in Serbia (a workshop with 40 CAG representatives organised in Belgrade), Bosnia and Herzegovina (an event took place in the City of Bijeljina) and in Montenegro (a primary school workshop organised in Tivat);
- involvement within the joint EU/CoE programme Horizontal Facility II for the Western Balkans and Turkey 2019-2022 through the action on *Preventing and Combating Trafficking in Human Beings in Serbia* and *Preventing and Combating Trafficking in Human Beings in Bosnia and Herzegovina*;
- HFIII Action on *Protection of freedom of expression and the media in Bosnia and Herzegovina – PROFREX*;
- partnership with the Combating Hatred and Intolerance in Montenegro project – presentations of the *Report on the Situation of Roma and Egyptians in Montenegro* organised;
- in cooperation with the HFIII action *Quality Education for All*, Inclusion Day was celebrated in Montenegro in 2022 and 2023 (in Podgorica and Niksic);
- ROMACTED Programme in Montenegro joined the HFIII action *Strengthening Accountability of the Judicial System and Enhancing Protection of Victims' Rights in Montenegro* in organising a round table *Right to free legal aid* and celebration of the International Human Rights Day in 2023;
- through collaboration with the Horizontal Facility II for the Western Balkans and Turkey 2019-2022, Action *Fostering Women's Access to Justice in Turkey*, CSOs were brought together on the occasion of the International Day for the Elimination of Violence against Women in Türkiye in 2022;
- in the framework of the *Innovating Democratic Participation at the Local Level in Bosnia and Herzegovina* project, *Platform of Exchange* event was organised gathering

representatives of 24 local authorities focusing on human rights-based decisions and policies and showcasing good practice examples implemented at the local level;

- co-operation with UNICEF and the Ministry of Labour and Social Policy on providing free access to pre-school education in several municipalities in North Macedonia;
- *Enhancing Human Rights Protection in Bosnia and Herzegovina through Hate Speech Training* organised under the framework of the project *Enhancing institutional capacities on freedom of expression and information in Bosnia and Herzegovina* funded through the voluntary contribution of the Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency.

Interviews with ROMACTED Programme team members demonstrated that local CoE offices are conducive to identifying links and synergies with other joint EU/CoE initiatives as they gather approximately 25 persons collectively overseeing the management of 10-15 projects in each field office. Particularly in Phase II, an accent on identifying synergies within EU interventions was considered a good addition by the interviewed stakeholders.

Overall, in relation to internal coherence the ROMACTED Programme was perceived by all interviewed EU Delegations' representatives as highly successful. Anecdotal statements include high praise of co-operation and communication with the CoE team in Belgrade, the representative in Türkiye regarded ROMACTED as the most effective amongst all ongoing actions in this region, in Bosnia and Herzegovina, the fact that it is the only Programme being implemented at the local level and at the same time, directly employing members of the Roma community as local facilitators was particularly emphasised.

The coherence of the Programme is high.

The ROMACTED Phase II Programme has established/strengthened connections with key national authorities in the Beneficiaries, mainly through the NRCP engagement. Interviews confirmed this co-operation is open and effective and contributed to increased visibility of the importance of Roma integration.

The Programme has helped bring together the national level and the local governmental side and establish a platform for further co-operation. Its external coherence is high as it has successfully established and utilised links and synergies with numerous organisations and initiatives.

Similarly, internal coherence is excellent as the Programme design fully reflects the experience and learning from previous actions. Interviews confirmed the implementing structure and relations with respective EU Delegations are effective and conducive to identifying complementarities with other CoE and EU initiatives.

4.3 Effectiveness

The objectives of the ROMACTED Phase II Programme are defined in the Logframe Matrix which states the intended effects at the level of Programme outputs and Programme outcomes with the related indicators and their target values to be achieved by the end of the Programme implementation in December 2024. The Logframe also includes the baseline values of indicators achieved during the Phase I of the Programme and the value achieved as of 31 December 2023.

Effectiveness from the output indicators' perspective

The key Programme outputs are defined as below:

- local authorities have increased their institutional commitment to inclusion of Roma concerns in local plans and budgets (output 1);
- Roma populations in local municipalities covered by the Programme have enhanced their participation in local policy and decision making (output 2);
- successful local development actions have contributed to improve the quality of life for Roma and to reduce the gap between Roma and non-Roma (output 3);
- concrete measures and plans are established to reduce the negative impact of the COVID-19 crisis in the Roma communities (output 4).

The set of indicators allocated to the **expected outputs** follows closely the ROMACTED methodology and the individual activities of the Programme. Table 6 demonstrates their **extremely high effectiveness** as the achievement rate does not fall below 73% - as in case of the indicator *Number of Roma returnees participating in the CAGs* (achieved value of 11 against the defined target of 15). There are only six other indicators where the achieved value is lower than 100% and the average achievement rate across all indicators is 201%.

For output 1, the Programme has managed to effectively establish the necessary structures within the municipalities, namely MTGs and IWGs and increase their institutional commitment to support the Roma inclusion. In particular, the IWG establishment was very effective as the defined target of 48 was exceeded by further 26 IWGs (74 IWGs in total, 154% achievement rate). However, the related data are not consistent as the individual Beneficiaries' ROMACTED at a Glance documents state 75 IWGs successfully established and functioning. An overview with participation numbers at the Beneficiary level is provided in the table below.

Table 3: Overview of IWGs at the Beneficiary level

Beneficiary	Number of IWGs set up and functioning	Number of IWG members on average	Total number of IWG members	Women's representation
Albania <i>10 municipalities in Phase II</i>	10	9	90	<i>data not available</i>
Bosnia and Herzegovina <i>12 municipalities in Phase II</i>	12	6	77	<i>data not available</i>
Montenegro <i>8 municipalities in Phase II</i>	8	10	77	<i>data not available</i>
North Macedonia <i>15 municipalities in Phase II</i>	13	11	140	54%
Serbia <i>13 municipalities in Phase II</i>	13	14	199	<i>data not available</i>
Türkiye <i>10 municipalities in Phase II</i>	9	10	90	<i>data not available</i>
Kosovo <i>10 municipalities in Phase II</i>	10	5	50	<i>data not available</i>
Total/average	75	9	723	<i>data not available</i>

Source: ROMACTED at a Glance, ROMACTED Programme management team ,evaluator's own processing

Considering the number of functioning IWGs against the number of municipalities at the Beneficiary level, the results are satisfying and positive – there are only two municipalities in North Macedonia and one in Türkiye without a respective IWG. This was a case of municipalities where an MTG had been formed and worked independently and an IWG was deemed not necessary. The women's representation in IWGs was not recorded at the Beneficiary level as public officials with relevant decision-making power were targeted, regardless of their gender.

The MTG formation was similarly successful with the achievement rate of 95%. Similarly to IWGs, the representation of MTGs across the municipalities involved in the Phase II is balanced and adequate. All municipalities are covered with a functioning MTG structure with a few exceptions in Bosnia and Herzegovina, Montenegro, North Macedonia and Türkiye. The women's representation was not recorded at the Beneficiary level; by the end of 2023, approximately 114 Roma women took part in MTG meetings. However, data inconsistency has been identified – while the ROMACTED Phase II 3rd Progress Report declares 74 MTGs as established and functioning, the ROMACTED at a Glance documents state two different figures of 70 and 73. In relation to MTGs, representation of Roma women was also assessed by a specific indicator. As of 31 December 2023, the achieved value reached two women per an MTG (the target value was defined as one). For instance, in North Macedonia, the Roma women's representation in MTG was much higher at 54%.

Table 4: Overview of MTGs at the Beneficiary level

Beneficiary	Number of MTGs set up and functioning	Number of MTG members on average	Total number of MTG members	Women's representation
Albania <i>10 municipalities in Phase II</i>	10	12	120	21%
Bosnia and Herzegovina <i>12 municipalities in Phase II</i>	11	7	77	38%
Montenegro <i>8 municipalities in Phase II</i>	6	12	72	19%
North Macedonia <i>15 municipalities in Phase II</i>	14	7	102	52%
Serbia <i>13 municipalities in Phase II</i>	13	11	143	20%
Türkiye <i>10 municipalities in Phase II</i>	10	9	90	44%
Kosovo <i>10 municipalities in Phase II</i>	10	6	60	25%
Total/average	74	9	660	31%

Source: ROMACTED at a Glance, ROMACTED Programme management team, evaluator's own processing

Given the importance of the municipal capacity assessment in the ROMACTED methodology, the achieved value of the related indicator (*Number of municipal capacity assessments collected*) is satisfying – 67 municipalities have completed this milestone before the end of 2023.

For output 2, 114 CAGs have been established and functioning with the sufficient number of representatives, including women and young people. As per the overview below, there is no municipality without a respective CAG structure and in Montenegro, Serbia, Türkiye and Kosovo, there is more than one CAG per municipality, most notably in Serbia where 41 CAGs have been formed across 13 municipalities. For instance, in Pirot, three CAGs are active with specific ones for youth and women. The total number of CAG members differs across various documents – while the calculation based on individual Beneficiaries' ROMACTED at a Glance documents equals 1,017 members, the Regional Outlook at a Glance document states the total CAG membership as 1,564.

Table 5: Overview of CAGs at the Beneficiary level

Beneficiary	Number of CAGs set up and functioning	Number of CAG members on average	Total number of CAG members	Women's representation
Albania <i>10 municipalities in Phase II</i>	10	8	90	56%
Bosnia and Herzegovina <i>12 municipalities in Phase II</i>	12	10	110	55%
Montenegro <i>8 municipalities in Phase II</i>	10	9	91	51%
North Macedonia <i>15 municipalities in Phase II</i>	15	13	195	53%
Serbia <i>13 municipalities in Phase II</i>	41	8	311	50%
Türkiye <i>10 municipalities in Phase II</i>	15	10	150	80%
Kosovo <i>10 municipalities in Phase II</i>	11	6	70	31%
Total/average	114	9	1,017	54%

Source: ROMACTED at a Glance, evaluator's own processing

73 out of 78 municipalities have completed the Capacity Needs Assessment and developed Priority Lists before the end of 2023. There were five municipalities from Phase I that did not re-assess their needs as the previous assessment was still highly relevant. The related Priority Lists in these municipalities had already been included in Local Action Plans designed until 2025 and a new assessment would be redundant.

The ROMACTED Phase II has been very effective in providing training to Roma community members as 2,342 individuals were trained against the defined target of 550 (426% achievement rate).

Within output 3, 56 JAPs have been developed/revised and as the defined target did not expect this output for all 78 municipalities involved, the expected value of 53 was slightly exceeded. Overall, 33 JAPs include allocation of relevant budgetary resources which represents 59% of the JAPs developed/revised. Considering the number of municipalities, Montenegro, North Macedonia and Serbia are the most successful Beneficiaries in this regard. In Kosovo, JAPs were not developed as the municipalities had already successfully developed the Local Action Plans (LAPs). Therefore, the Programme contribution concentrated on making the process more participatory and bringing Roma, Ashkali and Egyptian communities' representatives into these discussions. In Albania, all seven municipalities from Phase I continued developing new LAPs during Phase II independently with inputs from the communities; LAPs in three new municipalities in Phase II have been successfully developed and adopted. In Bosnia and Herzegovina, seven LAPs have been developed and adopted with further four to be adopted before the end of 2024. The preparation of small grants' projects was extensive and 152 projects against the target of 78 were developed (195% achievement rate).

The effectiveness of output 4 is slightly lower as only 23 out of the expected 30 plans for post-COVID-19 actions have been developed; the implementation of the related actions is good (105% achievement rate).

Full details of the target and achieved output indicators' values are listed in the table below.

Table 6: Overview of the Programme output indicators as of 31. 12. 2023

Expected outputs	Indicators	Achieved (31.12.2023)	Target value	Achievement rate
Local authorities have increased their institutional commitment to inclusion of Roma concerns in local plans and budgets	Number of MoUs/letters of commitment signed	78	78	100%
	Number of municipal contact points delegated by the Mayors	78	78	100%
	Number of IWGs established and functioning	74	48	154%
	Average number of IWG members	10	5	200%
	Number of municipal capacity assessments collected	67	78	86%
	Number of trained municipal staff on needs and benefits, IPA funds and Roma Responsive Budgeting	681	175	389%
	Number of consultation meetings of relevant services with the Roma community members	461	78	591%
	Number of MTGs established and functioning	74	78	95%
	Frequency of MTG meetings	1	0.5	200%
Roma populations in local municipalities covered by the Programme have enhanced their participation in local policy and decision making	Number of CAGs established and functioning	114	78	146%
	Average number of CAG members	15	5	300%
	Average number of women	6	2	300%
	Average number of Roma young people in the CAG	6	1	600%
	Number of Roma returnees participating in the CAGs	11	15	73%
	Number of Capacity Needs Assessment templates completed	73	78	94%
	Number of Priority Lists drafted based on the identified needs and priorities	73	78	94%
	Number of trained Roma community members	2,342	550	426%
	Average number of Roma in MTGs	6	2	300%
Number of Roma women in MTGs	2	1	200%	
Successful local development actions have contributed to improve the quality of life for Roma and to reduce the gap between Roma and non-Roma	Number of Joint Action Plans drafted/Local Action Plans revised and submitted for approval	56	53	106%
	Number of Joint Action Plans that include Community Priority Lists	71	53	134%
	Number of Joint Action Plans which include the allocation of relevant budgetary resources	33	35	94%
	Number of short-term and medium-term actions implemented	133	78	171%
	Number of small grants scheme projects prepared	152	78	195%
	Number of public health natural disaster management/environmental plans adopted for JAPs which include these measures	30	30	100%

Expected outputs	Indicators	Achieved (31.12.2023)	Target value	Achievement rate
Concrete measures and plans are established to reduce the negative impact of the COVID-19 crisis in the Roma communities	Number of plans for post-COVID-19 actions developed	23	30	77%
	Number of post-COVID-19 actions implemented in partner municipalities	82	78	105%

Source: ROMACTED Phase II 3rd Progress Report, evaluator's own processing

Effectiveness from the outcome indicators' perspective

The overall objective of the ROMACTED Phase II Programme is defined as follows:

- to build up political will and sustained policy engagement of local authorities to enhance democratic local governance and to build up capacity and stimulate the empowerment of local Roma communities to contribute to the design, implementation and monitoring of plans and projects concerning them.

Within the Logframe, there are two related indicators allocated to this objective, namely:

- number of decisions and practices relevant to Roma inclusion and situation in municipalities changed – the achieved value is recorded as 31 but as there is no target value defined, it is not possible to state the achievement rate;
- financial allocation for action and plans relevant to Roma inclusion and empowerment - similarly to the outcome indicator above, the achieved value of 86 cannot be measured against the defined target value. A notable success has been achieved in Bosnia and Herzegovina where more than 400,000 EUR have been allocated to Roma issues across 12 municipalities.

Additionally, there are three specific objectives defining the **expected outcomes** of the Programme:

- improving and expanding the institutions' commitment, capacities, knowledge and skills in working for Roma inclusion, putting in practice the concepts of good governance;
- empowering Roma community - at the individual level (assisting people to practice their basic rights and to expand their capacity and skills), as well as at the community level (assisting people to get organised to voice out their interests around community problem solving);
- contributing to preparation of the local development actions that aim to improve the quality of life for Roma and to reduce the gap between Roma and non-Roma including in relation to mitigating the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Within specific objective 1, the effectiveness of coaching and training of municipal staff and its application in practice is considered. The number of trained individuals during Phase II is significantly higher than expected with the achievement rate of 254% - 699 persons trained with the target value of 275. Although included as an outcome indicator, this captures the achievement of outputs – i.e. the number of persons attending the training rather than the relevance and usefulness of the training for individuals and their further practice. The effectiveness of capacity building activities from the outcomes' perspective has been indicated through the online survey results, for instance all respondents *strongly agree/agree* that their understanding of issues related to social inclusion has improved, 98% of respondents *strongly agree/agree* that their knowledge and practical skills in planning and implementing actions and projects as well as in communication and co-operation with the Roma communities have improved.

The target value of the indicator *Number of adaptable models of good practices published and disseminated* has not been achieved yet although it may be estimated that the target value will be reached during the last year of the Programme implementation.

The level of institutional understanding concerning the Roma communities and their inclusion has been assessed as *from sufficient to good* - this rating is based on the regular reporting of Project Officers also taking into account the reporting from the SOs.

To support the empowerment of Roma communities (specific objective 2), the Phase II of the Programme has been extremely effective in providing training to their members and in total, 2,342 persons have been trained. The same indicator is included for measuring outputs' achievement and while this is extremely positive in terms of the achieved outputs (i.e.

demonstrating what was accomplished), this indicator does not reflect the achieved results (i.e. the actual value of the training for the target group).

Similarly, the activities of CAGs in developing lists of needs and priorities can be also considered very successful and effective in relation to the achieved outputs – the target value of 55 lists has been exceeded by additional 100 lists produced.

The defined indicators for specific objective 3 have been achieved/over-achieved in most cases. From the ROMACTED methodology perspective, the number of priorities integrated into Local Development Plans of the municipalities is considerable and the value of the related indicator has been exceeded (161%). The development of six guidelines on Roma Responsive Budgeting against the expected number of seven is considered very successful given this is one of the crucial yet challenging outcomes of the Programme. In Albania, a Monitoring and Evaluation Guide of the LAPs was also developed as part of the content curriculum in partnership with the Albanian School of Public Administration. Additionally, Roma Responsive Human Resources Management Guide was prepared to complete the guidance to local level inclusion of Roma and Egyptians.

The overall effectiveness of achieving expected outcomes is **extremely high** as demonstrated by the large number of indicators significantly exceeding their target values; the average achievement rate is 190%. A detailed overview of the target and achieved outcome indicators' values is listed in the table below.

With the distinctive number of output and outcome indicators being exceeded, it may be concluded that their target values have been set cautiously and a more ambitious approach might have been applied (in this relation, see recommendation 1). On the other hand, given the extent of unpredictable external factors affecting the implementation of the Programme and its success (e.g. the wider political developments and their impact at the municipality level, the uncertainty of post-COVID-19 adjustments and shifts), an overly optimistic approach could have been considered unsuitable.

Table 7: Overview of the Programme outcome indicators as of 31. 12. 2023

Expected outcomes	Indicators	Achieved (31.12.2023)	Target value	Achievement rate
To build up political will and sustained policy engagement of local authorities to enhance democratic local governance and to build up capacity and stimulate the empowerment of local Roma communities to contribute to the design, implementation and monitoring of plans and projects concerning them <i>Overall objective</i>	Number of decisions and practices relevant to Roma Inclusion and situation in municipalities changed	31	N/A	N/A
	Financial allocation for action and plans relevant to Roma inclusion and empowerment	86	N/A	N/A
Improving and expanding the institutions' commitment, capacities, knowledge and skills in working for Roma inclusion, putting in practice the concepts of good governance <i>Specific objective 1</i>	Number of municipal officials coached/trained and working on the measures developed to address the needs of the Roma communities in the selected municipalities	699	275	254%
	Level of institutional knowledge and understanding concerning the Roma community and their inclusion and related legislative and policy issues among the representatives of the selected municipalities	from sufficient to good	good	N/A
	Number of adaptable models of good practices published and disseminated	40	50	80%
Empowering Roma community - on the individual level (assisting people to practice their basic rights and to expand their capacity and skills), as well as on the community level (assisting people to get organised to voice out their interests around community problem solving) <i>Specific objective 2</i>	Number of Roma community members trained	2,342	550	426%
	Number of lists of needs and priorities agreed and provided to LA by CAGs	155	55	282%

Expected outcomes	Indicators	Achieved (31.12.2023)	Target value	Achievement rate
Contributing to preparation of the local development actions that aim to improve the quality of life for Roma and to reduce the gap between Roma and non-Roma including in relation to mitigating the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic <i>Specific objective 3</i>	Number of Joint Actions Plans prepared or Local Action Plans revised and submitted for approval to the Mayor/Local Council	55	53	104%
	Number of priorities from the Joint Action Plans integrated into the Local Development Plan of the municipality	113	70	161%
	Number of Guidelines on Roma Responsive Budgeting at local level prepared and disseminated	6	7	86%
	Number of projects developed and funded by the programme or other funds	153	78	196%
	Number of post-COVID-19 actions/projects prepared and implemented in the Roma communities	96	78	123%

Source: ROMACTED Phase II 3rd Progress Report, evaluator's own processing

Survey data confirm high effectiveness of the Programme. At the output level, the overall responses were positive in assessment of the available financial and personnel resources, its management as well as co-operation with the CoE (further details are stated in the table below). 94% of respondents (R=77) feel their overall expectations of the ROMACTED Programme and its activities have been met.

Table 8: Online survey responses related to Programme processes and management

Statements	Strongly agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly disagree	I do not know/not relevant
The process of setting up the ROMACTED field process in our municipality was efficient/cost-effective.	31	46	2	1	2
The resources (financial and personnel) for the ROMACTED activities in our municipality are adequate.	28	45	6	2	1
The management of the ROMACTED programme at our municipality (including its administration) is effective.	43	37	2	0	0
The co-operation with the Council of Europe is effective and professional.	54	25	1	0	2
My expectations of the ROMACTED programme and its activities have been met.	39	38	1	1	3

Source: Online survey

At the outcome level, all respondents *strongly agree* (R=37) or *agree* (R=44) that the Programme has supported networking among local institutions and relevant stakeholders in their municipality. 96% of respondents (R=78) *strongly agree/agree* that as a result of Programme activities, the municipalities have strengthened existing and/or built new partnerships; two respondents disagree with this statement. One of the key outcomes cited during personal interviews and focus group discussions has also been corroborated by the online questionnaire whereby 98% of respondents (R=80) *strongly agree/agree* that the awareness and understanding of benefits to include the Roma population in the planning of their municipality have increased. Most importantly, 95% of respondents (R=78) *strongly agree/agree* that the commitment of local institutions and authorities to do so has increased in their municipality. Given the complexity of Roma integration and empowerment at the local level conveyed through Programme objectives which primarily focus on the processes of setting up local multi-agency structures, co-operation and capacity building in order to achieve a certain **change of perception** in this regard, this achievement is particularly significant and noteworthy. The field visits confirmed that both CAG and IWG representatives feel fully aware of the need to take shared accountability for addressing Roma concerns which have become visible thanks to Programme activities.

Most of the respondents (89%, R=73) *strongly agree/agree* that as a result of Programme activities, the Roma population in their municipality has been mobilised; five respondents *disagree* with this statement, one respondent *strongly disagrees* with it.

Capacity building

Capacity building activities carried out by local facilitators and consultants were organised for representatives of local authorities (Roma Responsive Budgeting, Participatory Local Strategic Planning, Project Cycle Management etc.) as well as the Roma community (combating antigypsyism, trafficking of human beings, post-COVID recovery measures etc.). Their overview at the Beneficiary level is stated in the table below.

Table 9: Overview of capacity building participation at the Beneficiary level

Beneficiary	Local authority representatives	Roma community representatives	Total number of representatives
Albania	129	189	318
Bosnia and Herzegovina	235	169	404
Montenegro	68	154	222
North Macedonia	154	691	845
Serbia	79	619	698
Türkiye	99	450	549
Kosovo	160	70	230
Total	924	2,342	3,266

Source: ROMACTED at a Glance, evaluator's own processing

Bosnia and Herzegovina has made particular efforts to organise training sessions for representatives of local authorities while participation in Serbia and Montenegro is distinctly lower. However, Roma communities in Montenegro are considerably smaller and reaching out to the wider Roma population is not always possible. On the other hand, participation of Roma community members in training in Serbia is the highest together with North Macedonia while in Kosovo, only 70 participants accessed the training before the end of 2023. The men/women disaggregation of the data was not systematically recorded.

As confirmed through interviews and focus group discussions, the levels of technical, theoretical and inter-personal skills and knowledge necessary to undertake actions in relation to Roma integration differ considerably among the involved municipalities. Despite that, survey respondents confirm the relevance and effectiveness of the accessed training nearly unanimously. Overall, they are happy with the quality, duration and thematic areas of the capacity building including the expertise of the lecturers and quality of materials and resources they used. Most importantly, the degree to which they regard the training as helpful in enhancing their skills and abilities to communicate and co-operate with Roma communities and in planning and implementing actions and projects is very high. Notably, improvement of their practical skills in working with non-Roma with a view to change their mindsets towards Roma marginalisation has been assessed as *very good/good* (98% of respondents, R=58). Full details of their responses are listed in the table below.

Table 10: Online survey responses related to Programme capacity building

Aspects of the coaching/training	Very good	Good	Weak	Very weak	I do not know/not relevant
The overall quality of the coaching/training programme	35	25	0	0	0
Thematic areas covered within the coaching/training in relation to my needs	36	23	1	0	0
Duration and timetable of the coaching/training	30	30	0	0	0
The quality of materials, tools and resources	35	24	1	0	0
The expertise and professionalism of the facilitator/lecturer	41	18	0	0	0
Improvement of my understanding of issues related to social inclusion	36	22	0	0	0
Improvement of my knowledge and skills in planning and implementing actions and projects	39	20	1	0	0
Improvement of my practical skills and abilities to communicate and co-operate with the marginalised Roma community	40	18	0	0	1
Improvement of my practical skills and abilities to communicate and co-operate with non-Roma with a view to change their mindsets towards marginalisation of the Roma population	38	19	0	0	1

Source: Online survey

On the other hand, during the interviews many stakeholders could not recall their attendance and practical experience of the training sessions or could not remember what their content and learning objective was. Based on their responses, it may be presumed that these sessions did not possess an active learning element (which directly increases sustainability of the training effects), and participants' theoretical knowledge did not persist (further details are stated in the Sustainability section).

COVID-19 response

Although mitigation of the COVID-19 crisis was of less relevance during the later stages of the Programme than in 2020 when it was designed, the activities supported concrete measures to reduce its negative impact through post-COVID recovery projects as some of the consequences remained challenging in local communities. Actions aimed to tackle co-operation with the Ministries of Health on the vaccination process, assessment of the levels of vaccination and post-COVID action plans as well as funding of actions through the Programme.

The recovery plans were prepared and submitted for funding by the end of 2022 with the exception of Türkiye where they were launched in 2024. They were required to be in line with the lists of priorities developed and agreed with local Roma communities with an overall aim to contribute to their inclusion. The maximum amount of funding available per municipality was up to 10,000 EUR. For Türkiye, the objectives were expanded to include mitigation of consequences of natural hazards following the earthquake in 2023. Their thematic areas varied with the majority of them focusing on education, health, employment and the overall quality of life.

The ROMACTED's response to the COVID-19 pandemic has been largely evaluated as effective by respondents of the online survey. They state the Programme has helped them successfully mitigate the consequences of the pandemic (91% *strongly agree/agree*, R=75) and the most vulnerable individuals and groups within Roma communities were reached (90% *strongly agree/agree*, R=74). Further details on post-COVID recovery grant projects are stated in the Efficiency chapter.

Support organisations

In the ROMACTED Phase II Programme, eight SOs were successfully contracted to oversee and coordinate the work in the field both with the involved municipalities and Roma communities mainly through the work of local facilitators and experts. The details on the financial resources and efficiency of this element of the Programme are stated in the Efficiency chapter.

Interviews with the ROMACTED Programme management team and representatives of the SOs confirmed effectiveness of this implementing structure that was conducive to utilising the expertise of contracted SOs in relation to Roma and vulnerable groups and activities leading to their capacity building and empowerment. Representatives of the CoE and SOs were in frequent communication, meeting regularly at national meetings and discussions three to four times a year, jointly attending high-level events in the municipalities (e.g. marking the International Roma Day) to ensure visibility and presence of the Programme. Representatives of the SOs in Serbia, Bosnia and Herzegovina and Montenegro viewed the co-operation with the CoE as highly professional and successful, on several occasions referring to their working relationships as those of equal and respected partners. SOs' representatives felt sufficiently engaged in decision-making processes and overall, they were satisfied with the progress achieved in the respective Beneficiaries. Further details can be found in the Efficiency chapter.

Local facilitators

The position of ROMACTED facilitators is crucial within the Programme as they guide and navigate the meetings, discussions of the municipalities and the Roma community through the ROMACTED four-step methodology. Their communication, organisational and networking skills are indispensable as the progress in bringing together various stakeholders relies on them and their capacity.

The Phase II of the Programme tried to encourage higher engagement of Roma facilitators and in some municipalities, assistant facilitators from the Roma community were brought in towards the end of the Phase I. The table below shows the Roma representation among the facilitators at the Beneficiary level reaching 79% on average. This is a positive result and easier establishment of relations and trust with the local community can be presumed. At the same time, it directly supports the employment of the Roma. The lowest Roma representation was recorded in Bosnia and Herzegovina where out of 12 facilitators, only five were from the Roma population.

Table 11: Overview of ROMACTED Phase II facilitators at the Beneficiary level

Beneficiary	Number of facilitators	Number of Roma facilitators	Roma representation
Albania	16	15	94%
Bosnia and Herzegovina	12	5	42%
Montenegro	10	7	70%
North Macedonia	9	9	100%
Serbia	14	14	100%
Türkiye	11	7	64%
Kosovo	8	6	75%
Total/average	80	63	79%

Source: ROMACTED Programme management team

The work and activities undertaken by local facilitators were closely monitored by the SOs that were responsible for the first level of approval of facilitators' reports. Interviews with facilitators in the visited municipalities confirmed that the reporting system is detailed and comprehensive and as such, requires substantial capacity.

Interviews with SOs' representatives highlighted some challenges regards the local facilitators, for instance limited English language skills (required for reporting), or insufficient planning when

predictable factors such as seasonal employment of CAG members were not reflected and considered adequately. In Serbia, several activities targeting the Roma community were taking place in parallel, however, some local facilitators failed to acknowledge this as they lacked the whole picture of other initiatives and potential duplicities. For instance in Kragujevac, a new project for re-qualifications of Roma women was launched at the same time as the Transformative Leadership for Women training was planned (part of synergies between ROMACTED and World Bank). This resulted into confusion among the local Roma who may find it difficult to ascertain the most desired activity.

Focus group discussions in the visited municipalities identified high effectiveness of the local facilitators' position and many municipal, CAG and IWG representatives declared this role as fundamental and indispensable in relation to the Programme implementation and the outcomes achieved. In their opinion, the facilitators' commitment, determination and interpersonal skills are superior to their education. On the other hand, the importance of proactive and open communication was emphasised by representatives of the SOs as the critical attribute the facilitators should possess.

Survey data confirm effectiveness of the local facilitator's role as 93% of respondents (R=76) *strongly agree/agree* he/she assists their municipality in identifying suitable funding opportunities in relation to the actions in the JAP/LAP, there are four respondents that *disagree* with this statement (two respondents from Montenegro, one from North Macedonia and one from Türkiye).¹²

The overall effectiveness of the Programme and its activities is extremely high.

Most of the Programme output indicators have exceeded their defined target values; the overall achievement rate reached 201%. There are only two output indicators where achievement rate is below 80% although their values may have increased during 2024. Particularly, the number of established CAG and IWG structures considerably exceeded the intended target value.

Similarly the effectiveness of the Programme outcome indicators is extremely high as demonstrated by the large number of indicators significantly exceeding their targets; at the end of 2023, the average achievement rate was 190%. In particular, the expected numbers of trained municipal officials and Roma community members overachieved the estimated results.

Survey data corroborated high effectiveness of the Programme and its activities; survey respondents highlighted strengthened relationships and networking among local institutions and their increased commitment to include the Roma community in decision-making processes at the local level.

The field visits confirmed the positions of local facilitators as fundamental in mobilising the Roma community, facilitating and guiding the processes between the municipality, the Roma community and local actors and keeping the momentum of the Programme. It is positive that the Roma representation of local facilitators reached 79% in the Beneficiaries.

¹² Given the marginal values of these data, the cited responses are not representative of the overall implementation of the Programme in the specified Beneficiary; the details are stated solely for illustrative purposes.

4.4 Efficiency

The efficiency of the Programme implementation is reflected in the achievement of defined objectives in relation to allocated financial resources. The overall Programme budget with its individual items is presented in the table below.

Table 12: ROMACTED Programme Phase II budget with the reference date of 31. 12. 2023

Description	Budget allocated in EUR	Budget spent in EUR	Absorption level against budget allocated	Budget spent and committed in EUR	Absorption level against budget committed
Human resources and consultants	3,070,816	2,132,642	69%	2,550,252	83%
Travel	132,000	41,475	31%	42,355	32%
Local office	171,831	133,530	78%	134,374	78%
Other costs and services	422,319	211,466	50%	218,326	52%
Grants for Support Organisations	1,050,000	741,579	71%	979,513	93%
Small grants scheme	457,800	323,061	71%	332,037	73%
Post-COVID recovery grants	770,000	470,903	61%	658,979	86%
Administrative costs	425,234	283,826	67%	344,110	81%
Total	6,500,000	4,338,482	67%	5,259,946	81%

Source: ROMACTED Phase II 3rd Financial Report, evaluator's own processing

The largest portion of the Programme budget (47%) is itemised for **human resources** including the ROMACTED local and international management team, international consultants (not contracted) and local consultants. For the last group, denoting local **ROMACTED facilitators** working directly in the field, 700,000 EUR were allocated which represent mere 11% of the overall budget. The original calculation based on the Phase I with an estimated one day of field work per month for 70 facilitators for the duration of 46 months (amounting to 644,000 EUR)¹³ has been increased to 894,240 EUR to more accurately reflect the needs in the field in the Beneficiaries. As of 31. 12. 2023, 68% of the contracted budget (after its increase) was spent. The remaining amount is likely to be spent during the last year of the Programme implementation. However, given the Programme methodology and the essential role and agenda of the local facilitators in the municipalities, the allocated budget of one day's field work per month is significantly undersized and does not dispose adequate financial resources. The higher allocation allows an increase of less than half a day of facilitator's field work per month, a barely perceptible change. In this relation, see recommendation 6.

It is unexpected that the Programme budget is not broken down by types of activities, for instance the allocated, contracted and spent amounts of financial resources for **capacity building** cannot be clearly ascertained; instead several budget lines contribute to financing it. From the financial management perspective, this is unclear as it hinders systematic expenditure tracking as well as comparison and balance at the Beneficiary level. The Programme management team estimates that as of 25. 9. 2024, '1-1.2 million EUR' was spent on capacity building activities. The cited approximation does not present a sufficient data evidence approach and is noticeably too vague. In this relation, see recommendation 3.

As of 31. 12. 2023, the ratio of **actual expenditure against the allocated budget is 67%** which is satisfactory given that some activities have been postponed (e.g. in Türkiye as a result of the disastrous earthquake in 2023). With the same reference date, the ratio of budget committed (contracted) against the budget allocated is higher - reaching 81%. The Programme management team believes to use the remaining budget before the end of 2024.

From the table above, it is evident that spending has been slower in travel expenses, post-COVID recovery grants and other costs and services namely in publications, studies and research;

¹³ at the daily rate of 200 EUR/day

considerable savings have been made in translation and interpretation services. The **travel cost** expenditure has been lower due to several reasons, for instance events and meetings were organised without the need for travel as more participants were from the same city, additionally grants of SOs also cover reimbursement of local/national travel costs for facilitators, consultants and experts (constituting duplicate allocation of financial resources). Considerable financial resources will be spent on organisation of the Final Conference planned for December 2024 anticipating 200 national and international participants.

Regarding the unspent budget for **publication and translation/interpretation services**, these activities are planned for the final months of the Programme implementation although their full absorption is unlikely.

Grants for SOs comprise 16% of the overall budget (1,050,000 EUR). This allocated amount has not been fully contracted, however, the committed rate of 93% is highly positive. The table below shows that the resources among individual Beneficiaries are balanced irrespective of their geographical size or size of the target groups.

Table 13: Overview of the Support Organisations' grants at the Beneficiary level

Beneficiary	Grants to SOs	Support Organisation name	Ratio against the total grant funding
Albania <i>10 municipalities in Phase II</i>	129,930 EUR	Institute for Romani Culture in Albania	13%
Bosnia and Herzegovina <i>12 municipalities in Phase II</i>	135,150 EUR	Association of Roma Euro Rom	14%
Montenegro <i>8 municipalities in Phase II</i>	149,118 EUR	Young Roma Herceg Novi Civic Alliance	15%
North Macedonia <i>15 municipalities in Phase II</i>	149,950 EUR	Institute for Research and Policy Analysis - Romalitico	15%
Serbia <i>13 municipalities in Phase II</i>	149,955 EUR	Foundation BFPE for Responsible Society	15%
Türkiye <i>10 municipalities in Phase II</i>	134,930 EUR	Zero Discrimination Association ZDA	14%
Kosovo <i>10 municipalities in Phase II</i>	129,600 EUR	Forum for Development and Multi-Ethnic Collaboration	13%
Total			978,633 EUR

Source: ROMACTED Phase II 3rd Progress Report

The grants for SOs were used to cover the following expenses:

- coordination and monitoring of local facilitators and experts active in the field;
- travel costs and per diems of local facilitators and experts;
- event organisation including refreshments and stationery;
- remuneration for one Focal Point within the SO;
- reporting to the CoE.

Interviews with representatives from SOs in Serbia, Bosnia and Herzegovina and Montenegro highlighted that the allocated grants were not sufficient to cover the meticulous work with municipalities. This was partly affected by frequent cycles of elections since 2021 and in many municipalities, significant political and personnel changes occurred. For instance, in Ulcinj, Montenegro three local governments have taken office in the last four years. These political shifts disrupted the continuum of the established contacts and co-operation and had a negative impact

on the field work in the community. As a result, intensive communication, multiple meetings and sessions with municipalities were required from the SOs entailing additional financial resources. At the same time, the monitoring and reporting system was viewed rather time-consuming in relation to the allocated personnel. The SOs were also instrumental in monitoring the preparation and implementation of small grants' projects which required extensive capacity dependant on the experience and skills of the municipalities.

On the other hand, the involvement of SOs in overseeing and coordinating the activities undertaken directly in the field proved effective as they possess extensive expertise pertinent to working with Roma and vulnerable communities. They were able to establish or strengthen their relations with them, work systematically with the municipalities and address any ad hoc issues as required. Considerable efficiency was also achieved by their ability to create synergies with other activities organised in the respective regions. Interviews with SOs' representatives in Serbia, Bosnia and Herzegovina and Montenegro confirmed their outstanding and detailed knowledge of all involved municipalities and their contextual challenges, local facilitators and their individual skills and abilities as well as the progress achieved in relation to JAPs or small grants' projects.

Financial resources for the **small grants' scheme** represent 7% of the overall budget (457,800 EUR) and as of 31. 12. 2023, the amount spent reached 71%, the amount contracted was only slightly higher (73%). The common practice of managing grants' projects is to allow minor over-contracting to counteract a small number of projects not implemented and so ensure the maximum expenditure of allocated funding. In this sense, these figures are too low and will result in unspent resources. In this relation, see recommendation 4.

Before the end of 2023, nine projects were received for Türkiye and 67 projects were implemented in the remaining six Beneficiaries. Their thematic areas were diverse and focused mainly on education, infrastructure, safety and increasing the overall quality of life for vulnerable communities. The maximum amount of grant provided to a grantee (municipality) was 5,000 EUR while each grantee was also required to contribute with either additional financial resources or in-kind contribution. The table below presents an overview of small grants' projects, and their funding provided to individual Beneficiaries.

Table 14: Overview of small grants at the Beneficiary level

Beneficiary	Number of small grants' scheme projects	Funding contracted
Albania <i>10 municipalities in Phase II</i>	9	45,515 EUR
Bosnia and Herzegovina <i>12 municipalities in Phase II</i>	12	60,000 EUR
Montenegro <i>8 municipalities in Phase II</i>	8	39,812 EUR
North Macedonia <i>15 municipalities in Phase II</i>	15	74,503 EUR
Serbia <i>13 municipalities in Phase II</i>	13	69,889 EUR
Türkiye <i>10 municipalities in Phase II</i>	9	43,908 EUR
Kosovo <i>10 municipalities in Phase II</i>	10	49,775 EUR
Total	76	383,402 EUR

Source: ROMACTED at a Glance, ROMACTED Programme management team, evaluator's own processing

Funding for **post-COVID recovery projects** was higher representing 12% of the overall Programme budget (770,000 EUR). As of 31. 12. 2023, the absorption level reached 61% only (caused partly by the delay in implementation of projects in Türkiye); the contracted amount reached 86% of the allocated sum. However, as stated above, to counteract the common risk of failed/discarded projects, the contracted amount should have been distinctly higher (see recommendation 4). Before the end of 2023, ten proposals were received for Türkiye and 68 projects were implemented by the remaining Beneficiaries. During 2024, another project from Montenegro was successfully contracted. The table below presents an overview of these projects and their funding at the Beneficiary level.

Table 15: Overview of post-COVID recovery grant projects at the Beneficiary level

Beneficiary	Number of post-COVID recovery grant projects	Funding contracted
Albania <i>10 municipalities in Phase II</i>	10	103,622 EUR
Bosnia and Herzegovina <i>12 municipalities in Phase II</i>	12	120,000 EUR
Montenegro <i>8 municipalities in Phase II</i>	8	79,950 EUR
North Macedonia <i>15 municipalities in Phase II</i>	15	148,676 EUR
Serbia <i>13 municipalities in Phase II</i>	13	139,474 EUR
Türkiye <i>10 municipalities in Phase II</i>	10	99,000 EUR
Kosovo <i>10 municipalities in Phase II</i>	10	99,684 EUR
Total	78	790,406 EUR

Source: ROMACTED at a Glance, ROMACTED Programme management team, evaluator's own processing

The objectives of implemented projects differed across municipalities as they were based on drafted/developed LAPs and specific needs of local Roma and Egyptian communities. The majority of them aimed to improve their quality of life through actions focused on infrastructure, education and health, therefore their target groups varied accordingly. The overview in the table below shows an estimated number of individual beneficiaries of implemented actions (both small grants and post-COVID recovery projects). The extent of intended beneficiaries depends on the specific scope of the action and some projects may be targeted rather explicitly and directly (e.g. participants or graduates of vocational courses) while others might benefit the whole community through common infrastructure investments (e.g. construction of a sewage network). Nevertheless, a high-level comparison among seven Beneficiaries can be made as per the overview below and based on this, North Macedonia appears to have reached the highest number of individuals; in Serbia, more than one third of individual beneficiaries was comprised by children. Similarly, the initiatives implemented in North Macedonia and Türkiye targeted Roma children to a large extent.

Table 16: Estimated number of the projects' individual beneficiaries and estimated unit cost

Beneficiary	Funding contracted	Estimated number of individual beneficiaries	Estimated unit cost per one individual beneficiary
Albania <i>10 municipalities in Phase II</i>	149,137 EUR	1,126 including 276 children and 107 young people	132 EUR
Bosnia and Herzegovina <i>12 municipalities in Phase II</i>	180,000 EUR	5,120 including 579 children and 30 young people	35 EUR
Montenegro <i>8 municipalities in Phase II</i>	119,762 EUR	3,294 including 655 children	36 EUR
North Macedonia <i>15 municipalities in Phase II</i>	223,179 EUR	8,698 including 1,198 children and 140 young people	26 EUR
Serbia <i>13 municipalities in Phase II</i>	209,363 EUR	5,771 including 2,173 children	36 EUR
Türkiye <i>10 municipalities in Phase II</i>	142,908 EUR	1,156 including 856 children and 19 young people	124 EUR
Kosovo <i>10 municipalities in Phase II</i>	149,459 EUR	4,754 including 184 children and 140 young people	31 EUR
Total/average unit cost	1,173,808 EUR	29,919	39 EUR

Source: ROMACTED at a Glance, ROMACTED Programme management team, evaluator's own processing

The table above also demonstrates an estimated unit cost of implemented actions per one individual beneficiary calculated by using their contracted resources. Based on this comparison, the highest efficiency was reached by projects implemented in North Macedonia and Kosovo while the costliest activities were undertaken in Albania. Overall, the funds of more than 1.1 million EUR were beneficial to nearly 30,000 individuals and given their scope and character, long-lasting effects of these projects may be expected. In-depth examples of some of these initiatives together with their sustainability prospects are illustrated in eight case studies in annexes 7.1-7.8.

Efficiency of the Programme management

The **financial management** of the Programme is undertaken at the central level by the Programme Manager. The evaluator did not have access to detailed financial outputs with the exception of the ROMACTED Phase II 3rd Financial Report which does not provide sufficient details on the actual expenditure per Programme activities. From the overall budget statement, it cannot be ascertained how much resources have been allocated and successfully contracted and spent per activities or outputs (e.g. capacity building, local facilitators' remuneration) or indeed, what funding has been allocated to individual Beneficiaries.

Similarly, the ROMACTED Phase II 3rd Progress Report does not readily provide these details. The same applies to information regarding the small grants and post-COVID recovery grants – specific details on how much resources have been allocated and spent across the individual Beneficiaries are not stated in the report.

Interviews with the ROMACTED management team revealed that the financial management of the Programme is rather meticulous given the large number of budget lines for repeated small items (e.g. remuneration of local facilitators which is processed periodically based on their trimestral reports) requiring considerable administrative capacity. It is positive that the financial processes are linked with the Programme **reporting system** to ensure transparency, accuracy and achievement of intended outcomes. The online system collects information and data at three levels of management i) from the Project Officer at the Beneficiary level, ii) from the Focal Point and iii) the Local Facilitator both at the municipal level. Its aim is to record all local initiatives, progress, successes achieved, and challenges encountered on a quarterly basis. The Programme Manager is able to access the information at all reporting levels and therefore monitor the implementation closely in addition to regular communication and meetings.

The added value of the reporting system lies in its archiving character as it records the steps undertaken during the Programme implementation at the Beneficiary level and serves as a database to enhance the institutional memory. It proved particularly helpful for new personnel appointed to the Programme to gain in-depth understanding and insight into the activities undertaken. Further efficiencies are gained from the annual reporting perspective as its structure follows the Programme Logframe and all the required data are collected on one platform.

Despite the existence of a complex monitoring system it must be noted, however, that numerous inconsistencies have been identified during the evaluation process. The numerical data provided within the ROMACTED Phase II 3rd Progress Report do not align with those stated in other documents (e.g. ROMACTED at a Glance, the Programme Logframe) and clarification from the Programme team was required. Similarly, data format is not streamlined which suggests a lack of a systemic approach. For instance, while for some Beneficiaries, data on *an approximate number of Roma women participating in CAGs* are present, other include *a number of Roma women on average*. Additionally, data concerning women's participation are not systematically tracked and estimated figures are given instead (e.g. 'around 35%'). In this relation, see recommendation 5.

As already indicated above, the budget reporting is not clear as the individual budget lines do not clearly follow the key Programme aspects (e.g. capacity building). As the Programme budget is not results-based, there is lack of cost-benefit evidence for decisions on its ongoing implementation. Furthermore, interviews confirmed certain confusion about the financial resources among some Project Officers who were unclear on the allocation and actual expenditure within their specific Beneficiary. This has a negative impact on planning of the activities at the Beneficiary level as well as the central level as any overspent in one area (or Beneficiary) is only noted retrospectively and must be compensated in another. This reactive approach cannot be considered efficient from the management perspective and more effective budget controls and monthly expenditure projections are required (see recommendation 3). Unfortunately, this had a direct impact on the implementation of Programme activities, for instance in Türkiye, no field work could be undertaken by local facilitators on several occasions due to absence of contract extensions. In some individual cases, these periods were extensive amounting to approximately 20 months between 2021 and 2023. Considering the funds for local facilitators were allocated for 46 months, this presents nearly half of their duration. This was caused by the complex bureaucracy of the CoE/EU which has significantly extended the processes of reporting approval and reimbursements.

In relation to reporting and management, the geographical location of the ROMACTED management team is assessed as highly efficient. While some members of the team are based centrally at the CoE office in Strasbourg, the Programme Manager is located in Belgrade, Serbia within reach of the Western Balkan Beneficiaries reducing the cost/time required for monitoring

visits. The location of ROMACTED Project Officers in the respective capital cities is critical for effective coordination and communication at the national level. These local CoE offices are conducive to identifying links and synergies with other initiatives (more details are stated in chapter 4.2). In this relation, see recommendation 2.

Since 2021, the ROMACTED team has been relatively stable with no exceptional staff turnover. Several of the team members have been promoted within the Programme which is positive for retaining the institutional knowledge. On the other hand, the appointment of the Project Officer in Türkiye has posed challenges as the offered remuneration rate was not deemed sufficiently competitive given the economic difficulties and the related ultra-high inflation in the country. Similarly, the personnel changes in Albania have partly slowed down and diluted the efforts and progress already achieved.

Efficiency from the Programme indicators' perspective

The efficiency of the Programme implementation can be assessed by the achieved measurable effects considering the level of achievement of defined outputs and outcomes in relation to allocated financial resources. These can be quantified through the Programme indicators as defined in the Logframe. The following section therefore focuses on the assessment of selected Programme indicators (those that are viewed as essential and most representative of the Programme objectives) and their allocated funds.

Based on the allocated and spent financial resources, the table below shows the calculation of two categories of efficiency:

- **planned efficiency** – as a ratio of allocated funds and target values of selected output and outcome indicators;
- **ongoing efficiency** – as a ratio of used financial resources and achieved values of selected output and outcome indicators.

As the implementation of the Programme has not finished and the rate of resources as well as indicators' values will increase, these calculations are indicative. A more accurate calculation will be possible after the full completion of the Programme.

Table 17: Planned and ongoing efficiency of ROMACTED Phase II

Indicator	Target value	Achieved (31.12.2023)	Indicator achievement rate	Budget allocated	Planned efficiency	Budget spent (31.12.2023)	Ongoing efficiency
Number of CAGs established and functioning	78	114	146%	700,000 EUR	8,974	610,093 EUR	5,352
Number of IWGs established and functioning	48	74	154%		14,583		8,245
Number of MTGs established and functioning	78	74	95%		8,974		8,245
Number of Capacity Needs Assessment templates completed	78	73	94%		8,974		8,357
Number of Priority Lists drafted based on the identified needs and priorities	78	73	94%		8,974		8,357
Number of Joint Action Plans drafted/Local Action Plans revised and submitted for approval	53	56	106%		13,208		10,895
Number of trained municipal staff on needs and benefits, IPA funds and Roma Responsive Budgeting	175	681	389%	<i>data not available</i>	N/A	1,100,000 EUR*	1,615
Number of trained Roma community members	550	2,342	426%				470
Number of projects developed and funded by the Programme or other funds	78	153	196%	457,800 EUR	5,869	332,037 EUR	2,170
Number of post-COVID-19 actions/projects prepared and implemented in the Roma communities	78	96	123%	770,000 EUR	9,872	658,979 EUR	6,864

Source: ROMACTED Phase II 3rd Progress Report, communication with the ROMACTED Programme team, evaluator's own processing

*estimated amount of financial resources spent on capacity building activities as of 25. 9. 2024 provided by the ROMACTED Programme management team

Planned efficiency represents the expected value of unit costs at the time of projecting the target values of measurable indicators. It is clear from the above table that the target values for the number of trained municipal staff and Roma community members were not designed ambitiously considering their current achievement rate of 389% and 426% respectively and an overly cautious approach in defining the target values was applied.

For all stated indicators, there is an obvious decrease in the recalculated costs per unit of the indicator from the planned efficiency to the ongoing efficiency, particularly for the following indicators:

- number of CAGs established and functioning – ongoing efficiency of 5,352 against the planned efficiency of 8,974;
- number of IWGs established and functioning – ongoing efficiency of 8,245 against the planned efficiency of 14,583;
- number of projects developed and funded by the Programme or other funds - ongoing efficiency of 2,170 against the planned efficiency of 5,869;
- number of post-COVID-19 actions/projects prepared and implemented in the Roma communities - ongoing efficiency of 6,864 against the planned efficiency of 9,872.

In cases where the ongoing efficiency is significantly below the level of planned efficiency (as above), this indicates high cost-effectiveness of the implemented interventions. As all the above indicators exceeded their target values, this may mean that the achievement of the projected results was achievable even with lower financial resources. However, as the Programme implementation has not finished and the actual expenditure will increase, these values are indicative only and their representativeness will increase with the increasing rate of spending of financial resources.

For the remaining indicators describing other aspects of the Programme such as the number of MTGs established, number of Capacity Needs Assessments, Priority Lists and JAPs drafted/developed, the planned and achieved values of unit costs are nearly identical which shows good projection of budgetary resources in relation to these activities. Based on the calculations above, it may be concluded that the used **financial resources are adequate to the Programme objectives** defined by measurable indicators, and they are **used efficiently** as more tangible results have been achieved than expected; these are demonstrated through the exceeded indicators' values.

The overall efficiency of the Programme is satisfactory.

At the end of 2023, the budget absorption level reached 67% of the allocated resources; the contracted value was at the level of 81%. The largest portion of the Programme budget (47%) was itemised for human resources including the Programme management team, consultants, experts and local facilitators. Given the fundamental role of ROMACTED facilitators, the associated funds are deemed too low and not proportionate in relation to the scope of facilitators' field work based on real needs in communities.

The Programme budget does not readily show resources against individual activity types; for instance funds expended on capacity building activities can only be roughly estimated.

Grants for SOs were used efficiently and interviews confirmed high effectiveness and added value of the work of contracted SOs.

Financial resources for the small grants' scheme and post-COVID recovery projects did not reach sufficient levels of spent and contracted amounts before the end of 2023 and the full absorption of the allocated sum is unlikely. The delay in implementation was partly caused by the later launch of projects in Türkiye; some municipalities had to request extension of the projects' implementation period.

From the financial management perspective, efficiency of the Programme is low given the identified inconsistencies in data reporting and a lack of clarity in relation to specific budgetary resources. The hiatus of non-extension of local facilitators' contracts in some municipalities has negatively affected the implementation of the Programme and its activities, particularly the crucial field work.

The calculated values of planned and ongoing efficiency confirmed that the allocated financial resources were used efficiently and with significant cost-effectiveness as more results have been achieved than originally planned.

4.5 Impact

The results and effects of Programme activities on individual target groups of municipality representatives and Roma community members have been described in detail in the Effectiveness section (chapter 4.3). The exceeded values of output and outcome indicators as well as the anecdotal evidence from field visits to eight municipalities serve as direct and tangible proofs of high relevance as well as effectiveness of the Programme and its activities and despite several challenges affecting the implementation (e.g. political developments, the earthquake in Türkiye), it is conducive to short-term as well as long-term impact as defined in the Programme Logframe.

Based on interviews, focus group discussions and survey data, the following **aspects** of the ROMACTED Phase II Programme have been highlighted **as instrumental in stimulating the empowerment of the Roma**:

- raising awareness and understanding of Roma concerns at the municipality level, i.e. Roma concerns becoming more visible;
- involvement of local Roma communities in Programme activities including consultations, needs and priorities' assessments and targeted actions and projects;
- increased co-operation and participation of local stakeholders;
- enhanced capacity of the municipality in preparing and implementing specific actions and projects.

Survey data unequivocally confirm the expected impact of the Programme. While overwhelmingly positive, there are a few respondents that have not yet observed the desired effects in their local community. Also, the majority of respondents selected the category *agree* rather than *strongly agree*.

92% of respondents (R=76) *strongly agree/agree* that the Programme has had a positive effect on empowering the Roma community at the individual level (people expanding their skills and knowledge) as well as the community level (people able to voice their interests around community decision making). Considerable efforts of the Programme were targeted to capacity building on Roma Responsive Budgeting which was found beneficial by respondents – 89% of them (R=73) *strongly/agree* that it has contributed to better allocation of local funds in this regard.

Interviews and focus group discussions agreed that Programme activities were effective in increasing the **extent of Roma participation in decision-making processes**, namely through the processes of co-operating with municipalities and local authorities, playing a distinctive role in preparation of LAPs/JAPs for Roma integration and navigating the concrete actions for improvement of the quality of life in Roma neighbourhoods. The Effectiveness section corroborates this through measurable evidence-based data and calculated achievement rates in forming the CAG, IWG and MTG structures, developing JAPs and capacity building participation.

The implementation of small grants' projects and post-COVID recovery projects instigated co-operation between the municipal administration and local Roma communities and in some cases, it has led to continuous collaboration and proactive sourcing of funding for further initiatives. This Programme aspect has helped the Roma better understand the municipal procedures and their limitations (e.g. urban planning and municipal versus metropolitan competences); municipal and institutional officials gained better understanding of the everyday reality and challenges Roma communities face. In this sense, the rather limited funding of these projects did not reduce their positive effects and the case studies in annexes 7.1-7.8 offer numerous examples of a positive impact of these actions at the individual as well as the institutional level.

In this relation, however, it must be noted, that considering the achieved outcomes and their potential, online survey respondents and interviewees feel strongly that more financial resources should be provided for direct investments and actions implemented for local Roma communities. While they appreciate the ROMACTED methodology that provides them with tools to identify and

facilitate other avenues for a suitable funding, they feel the opportunities in this regard are limited and municipalities might struggle to access them.

In observing **long-term effects of the Programme**, survey respondents were more likely to be reserved in their assessment, for instance while 41% of them (R=34) *strongly agree* and 51% *agree* (R=42) that ROMACTED Phase II has contributed to the improved quality of life for Roma in their community, there are two respondents that *disagree* and one that *strongly disagrees* with this statement. Probing this aspect further, the vast majority of respondents (96%, R=79) are able to specify concrete examples of real improvement in education, housing, employment or health for their local Roma community; two of them cannot identify any (one respondent from Montenegro, one from North Macedonia).¹⁴

As a result of Programme activities, most respondents *strongly agree/agree* (91%, R=75) that social inclusion of the Roma community in their municipalities has increased and the gap between Roma and non-Roma has been reduced. Interviews and focus group discussions corroborated this finding, and the interviewed stakeholders feel it is the direct result of the established structures of CAGs and IWGs, the role of the local facilitator and targeted capacity building of municipality and community representatives. Prior to the Programme, many Roma community members felt that their concerns and issues were invisible to the municipality and there was no common desire and will to break this barrier on either side. Through the capacity building element and nurturing the dialogue between the communities and local authorities, desired effects lie in the **change of perception**, i.e. in understanding and awareness of local actors to work collaboratively and take shared accountability. Therefore, it is assessed highly positively that municipality respondents of the online questionnaire already see concrete results in their local area. Responses of Roma representatives during the field visits were of the same nature. In this relation, see recommendation 8.

On the other hand, not all online survey respondents agree with the statement that the Programme has contributed to a reduced level of discrimination and antigypsyism in their municipalities – although 85% of respondents (R=70) *strongly agree/agree*, there are six respondents that *disagree* with this (one from Kosovo, Montenegro, North Macedonia and Serbia and two respondents from Türkiye).

As mentioned above, interviews, focus group discussions as well as the online survey indicate a **high impact of the Programme**. For sustaining its positive long-term effects, it is extremely encouraging that 95% respondents (R=78) *strongly agree/agree* that in their municipality there exists a strong commitment of local institutions and actors to actively continue co-operating with the Roma community and they have developed structures to continue with these activities and support the engagement with the local Roma community after the Programme has finished (91% of respondents, R=75). More details on sustainability are available in chapter 4.6.

The overall satisfaction with the Programme is correspondingly high – 54% of respondents (R=44) are *very satisfied*, 39% (R=32) *satisfied* and the remaining 7% (R=6) remain *neutral*. An open question prompting their suggestions and recommendations for the future yielded strong demand for continuation of the Programme. Respondents emphasised the need for initiatives related directly to Roma communities to support their inclusion at the local level. Respondents' suggestions include the following ideas:

- more involvement of Roma parents;
- further trainings on project writing and communication skills;
- gender equality activities;
- increasing grant amounts and providing more investment funding;
- emphasis on education of Roma children;

¹⁴ Given the marginal values of these data, the cited responses are not representative of the overall implementation of the Programme in the specified Beneficiary; the details are stated solely for illustrative purposes.

- training opportunities for deficient occupations as per the local needs;
- exchange of experience with other municipalities.

The positive impact of the ROMACTED Programme is also reflected in systemic solutions that were created as **adaptable models of good practice**, for instance:

- Monitoring Matrix for the Evaluation of the National Action Plan for Roma Social Inclusion 2021-2025 in Bosnia and Herzegovina (development of the tool financed under the Ordinary Budget of the CoE/Roma and Travellers Division);
- Successful Experience from the Municipality of Berane Related to the Enrolment of Children in Kindergartens - transferred to Herceg Novi and Nikšić in Montenegro;
- Risk Plan for Vulnerable Groups at the Local Level in North Macedonia;
- Manual of Transformative Grassroot Leadership in Serbia (in co-operation with the World Bank);
- Municipal Guidelines on COVID-19 Recovery Measures and the Matrix in Kosovo;
- Municipal Guidelines and Template for LAPs Targeting Natural Disaster and Socio-Economic Recovery at the Local Level in Türkiye;
- Guidelines for Developing Local Action Plans for the Social Inclusion of Roma and Egyptians in Montenegro;
- Monitoring and Evaluation Guide of the Local Action Plans in Albania;
- Guidelines on Roma Responsive Human Resources Management in Albania.

While it is positive that such a high number of transferrable models of good practice have been published, it will be equally important to effectively manage their dissemination and publicity during the Programme implementation to ensure their outreach and practical utilisation by municipalities (recommendation 7).

Distinctive contribution to the long-lasting impact of Programme activities has been achieved through **allocation of local funds in line with the principles of Roma Responsive Budgeting**. During 2023, significant budgetary resources were allocated in the local budgets amounting to **1,368,639 EUR**. The overview at the Beneficiary level is provided in the table below.

Table 18: Overview of specific budgetary allocation in local budgets at the Beneficiary level

Beneficiary	Specific budgetary allocation in the local budgets
Albania <i>10 municipalities in Phase II</i>	446,078 EUR
Bosnia and Herzegovina <i>12 municipalities in Phase II</i>	417,718 EUR
Montenegro <i>8 municipalities in Phase II</i>	45,309 EUR
North Macedonia <i>15 municipalities in Phase II</i>	45,863 EUR
Serbia <i>13 municipalities in Phase II</i>	214,959 EUR
Türkiye <i>10 municipalities in Phase II</i>	142,907 EUR
Kosovo <i>10 municipalities in Phase II</i>	55,805 EUR
Total	1,368,639 EUR

Source: ROMACTED Phase II 3rd Progress Report

Given these funds are specifically ring-fenced for the implementation of actions targeting Roma inclusion at the local level, these outcomes are highly positive, particularly in Albania and Bosnia and Herzegovina. Therefore, they represent a systemic solution that significantly enhances the impact as well as the sustainability of Programme results (more details on sustainability are included in chapter 4.6). Application of Roma Responsive Budgeting relied on the availability of the related training and also on publishing of respective guidelines as below:

Guidelines for Roma (and Egyptian) Responsive Budgeting at the Local Level

- Albania – a revised version published in 2022;
- Bosnia and Herzegovina – line budgeting implemented at the local level, *Supporting mechanisms to Roma inclusion with special reference to the practice of allocating local funds for inclusion measures* – published in 2022;
- Montenegro – as of October 2024, the guidelines have been finalised and are in the process of final proofreading and designing;
- North Macedonia – as of October 2024, the guidelines have been finalised and are in the process of final proofreading and designing;
- Serbia – published in 2024.

It is evident that the wide-ranging effects of the Programme described above encompass positive **impact on empowering the Roma community both at the individual** (the Roma expanding their capacity and skills through awareness raising and training sessions) **and the community level** (the Roma able to organise to voice their concerns around the community decision-making processes thanks to ongoing coaching provided by local facilitators and CAG/IWG/MTG participation).

Similarly, evidence indicates that the multi-faceted impact is present at the municipal side too – interviews and focus group discussions confirmed **individual as well as institutional impact on the commitment of municipal officials** through direct co-operation with the Roma community and other local partners.

The results chain of the Programme is based on the assumption that through targeted expertise and resources, relevant capacity development interventions will be offered to the involved municipalities and local Roma communities. This will lead to an enhanced dialogue between Roma and public institutions warranting deeper understanding of the challenges and realities of the Roma population on one side and on the other hand, awareness of the planning and implementation processes addressing them. As a result, more transparent and inclusive development of local services can be expected with targeted measures to Roma integration. Thanks to these inputs, activities, achieved outputs and outcomes, the results chain assumes the long-term impact of enhanced social inclusion of Roma and recognition of Roma rights.

The analysis above along with conclusions of the Relevance and Effectiveness sections confirm that the **results chain of the Programme has been defined correctly** and the targeted assistance of capacity development of both primary target groups has achieved the expected outcomes. The participatory approach is intrinsically built within Programme activities to strengthen the citizen action at the local level and at the same time, it is viewed as the ultimate goal of citizen-centred services.

It may be therefore concluded that the Programme has **created conditions contributing to combating discrimination and antigypsyism at the local level** and prospects of lasting changes for the target groups in the involved municipalities. Given the complexity of the challenges the Roma communities face and the limited implementation period, the Programme did not have an ambition to create systemic changes at the national level, however, continuation of its efforts in combination with diligent promotion of the achieved results, its methodology and successful models of good practice including the principles of Roma Responsive Budgeting¹⁵ is the right approach to enhance democratic local governance and stimulate Roma empowerment. The case studies in annexes 7.1-7.8 offer illustrative examples of positive impact of the Programme both at the individual and institutional level.

The overall impact of the Programme is high.

Interviews, focus group discussions and online survey results confirm that the Programme has been instrumental in stimulating the empowerment of the Roma through their engagement in new structures and decision-making processes at the local level. From the perspective of municipalities and local authorities, increased co-operation and deeper understanding of Roma concerns have been reported together with increased capacity to prepare and implement actions targeting Roma integration.

The Programme has developed several adaptable models of good practice concerning the principles of Roma Responsive Budgeting, planning for vulnerable groups, guidelines for the development and monitoring of LAPs at the local level and many others. Their promotion and effective dissemination will be critical to ensure wide outreach and lasting impact.

Allocation of local funds in line with the principles of Roma Responsive Budgeting in the amount of 1.37 million EUR represents a significant achievement further increasing the impact of Programme activities.

Positive impact both at the individual and community level has been recorded for all target groups. The Programme has created conditions contributing to combating discrimination and antigypsyism at the local level through increasing the Roma empowerment and commitment of municipalities and local authorities.

¹⁵ Rome Responsive Budgeting was a concept developed by the Regional Cooperation Council - Roma Integration Phase II.

4.6 Sustainability

According to the ROMACTED methodology, sustainability of the Programme and its results was designed to be achieved through the following aspects:

- strong CAGs as community-based structures;
- sustained commitment of local authorities to continue the co-operation;
- availability of policies and action plans supporting local inclusive processes;
- accessibility of funding at the local level to support community suggestions and local plans.

From the above mentioned factors it is evident that maintaining the commitment and willingness of local governments depends on the proactivity of groups in the Roma community to demand this commitment. As confirmed in the Effectiveness section, the **CAG establishment and functioning** was very successful with the overall number of 114 groups formed. All involved municipalities are covered with at least one active CAG; in Montenegro, Serbia, Türkiye and Kosovo multiple CAGs per one municipality have been created. Focus group discussions and interviews in the visited municipalities demonstrated that CAG members intend to continue with their activity and regular meetings after the Programme has finished at the end of 2024. The case studies illustrate individual examples of eight municipalities where commitment of CAG members have been more pronounced after the implementation of specifically targeted actions and small grants' projects. The role of an astute local facilitator in identifying the most influential representatives of the Roma community that will display determination to act on behalf of the wider community proved essential. In addition to the examples from the case studies, interviews with Project Officers in the visited Beneficiaries suggest that the majority of the established CAG structures will continue in their activity and their sustainability prospects are good.

Similarly, the **establishment of IWG and MTG structures** has been effective (75 IWGs and 73 MTGs formed). While many local institutions are legally obliged to co-operate, interviews demonstrated that ROMACTED has significantly strengthened their relationships and provided a much needed structure for their mutual collaboration. Examples in the case studies highlighted several challenges in commitment of the municipality and local authorities, however, sustained efforts and tangible results of practical actions have contributed to overcoming them.

The appointment of the key Municipal Contact proved particularly important as on some occasions, it enabled continuity of the Programme, for instance during leadership and personnel changes post elections. Frequent elections at local and national levels have affected the implementation of the Programme as it relegated Roma integration efforts and at the same time, the process of taking office disrupted the continuum of established communication. Some interviewees pointed out that certain local authorities displayed satisfactory level of commitment, however, it has not been reflected in their meeting attendance. Frequent changes of individual representatives appointed to IWGs/MTGs posed another challenge. In this case, formal delegation of responsibility to act on behalf of an institution within the IWG structure proved helpful. Similarly to CAG structures, focus group discussions with IWG representatives in the visited Beneficiaries suggested strong intention in continuing their structured co-operation even without the external impetus provided through the ROMACTED Programme. In this relation, see recommendations 10 and 11.

The key learning feature of ROMACTED **capacity building** consisted of the coaching process on a wide range of issues related to social inclusion of the Roma – how to design targeted measures in an effective and sustainable way, how to plan and implement actions, how to apply for domestic and external funding. This ongoing coaching element was designed to increase the knowledge as well as practical skills of the **municipal administration and local institutions**. In practice, this was undertaken through the whole cycle of the ROMACTED methodology with the support of local facilitators and external experts and consultants when more technical expertise was required. At the same time, soft skills development was crucial so that the municipal administration and local

institutions learned how to communicate and co-operate between themselves more effectively, how to communicate with the Roma community, how to gain deeper understanding of their everyday reality and discrimination they encounter. Therefore, sessions on discrimination, antigypsyism and social inclusion were of high importance too.

Interviewees confirmed that the continuing coaching on both the practical skills in undertaking structured integration measures and applying and promoting inclusive approaches have been extremely effective in the involved municipalities. While the technical skills of planning Roma integration actions need to be repeated at least in one more cycle so that they become adopted systematically, the awareness raising element of the importance of social inclusion seems to have been already internalised by many municipalities. The concept of social inclusion was not new to them, however, concrete examples of excluding practices showed them how to apply the theoretical notion of equality and non-discrimination in practice. This **critical change of mindset** transpired during most interviews, focus group discussions and online survey results and as such, **creates an essential and firm prerequisite for sustaining the positive change in the future.**

For the Roma community, the capacity building concentrated on their empowerment to become active and informed citizens, mainly through their ability to undertake community needs assessment, develop community priority lists and negotiate their ideas and suggestions for the JAPs/LAPs. As a result, the participatory principle is both applied as a strategy in guiding and coaching the Roma through these processes while bringing them together with the municipal and local authorities, and at the same time, participatory planning of resources is viewed as the intended objective of citizen-centred services.

The role of local facilitators to guide CAG members through these procedures and meetings with municipal representatives was pivotal in their capacity building so that they were confident to voice their concerns, demands and be part of decision-making processes. Interviews confirmed that it had a positive effect on accountability of CAG members to actively seek solutions through co-operation and team working. It was a common occurrence during discussions with CAG representatives that they openly appreciated the supportive approach, skills and guidance of their local facilitators and explicitly regarded them as fundamental in their activism and development.

The case studies illustrate several examples of exceptionally committed CAG members that have become mobilised not only for the purposes of the ROMACTED structures but beyond, e.g. by forming a Roma NGO. Focus group discussions with CAG representatives highlighted that they intend to continue with their activism beyond the ROMACTED implementation. Interviews with respective local facilitators confirmed that sustainability prospects of these CAGs are promising.

In addition to the ongoing coaching, the Programme has organised several **other training and informative sessions** for the municipalities, local authorities and the Roma population. For instance, workshops on the topics of Project Cycle Management, Participatory Local Strategic Planning, Roma Responsive Budgeting, antigypsyism, combating hate speech, discrimination against Roma women in healthcare, social protection and child protection rights, domestic violence and many others. Their attendance was high – 924 local authority representatives, 2,342 Roma community representatives (further details are stated in the Effectiveness section).

For any capacity building and skills development to be sustainable, immediate opportunities to apply the gained knowledge and learning must be created. Following any training, it is essential for trainees to use new skills and knowledge directly in practice. While some of the topics mentioned above do not require follow-up sessions because in character, they focused on awareness raising rather than building a particular skill, other areas such as Project Cycle Management or Roma Responsive Budgeting require an opportunity to practice and apply them in practice. Interviews showed that usefulness of these training activities was limited. On several occasions, the interviewed stakeholders could not recall their attendance and practical experience of the sessions or could not remember what their content and learning objective was. Based on their responses, it may be presumed that these training sessions did not possess an active learning

element (which directly increases sustainability of the training effects), and participants' theoretical knowledge did not persist.

At the same time, the interviewed stakeholders repeatedly expressed demand and need for practical training sessions on project management, implementation and strategic planning. However, financial resources of municipalities are limited, and their organisation is not likely to continue without external support.

The adoption of jointly developed **JAPs/LAPs** is another factor contributing to increased sustainability of the Programme and its outcomes. As analysed in the Effectiveness section, 56 JAPs were developed as of 31 December 2023; it is likely that this figure has further increased during 2024. The formally adopted JAPs/LAPs pose a structured direction for the implementation of actions addressing Roma inclusion at the local level. As already mentioned in the previous section, the **budgetary resources of 1.37 million EUR allocated in the local budgets significantly affect the sustainability prospects of Programme results** as they indicate commitment to implement actions specifically focusing on Roma inclusion.

In addition to guidelines on Roma Responsive Budgeting, several other adaptable **models of good practice** have been prepared and published proportionally increasing sustainability levels of the Programme. However, to warrant high sustainability, their dissemination and visibility in their outreach and actual utilisation by municipalities will be decisive.

The implementation of small grants' scheme projects and post-COVID recovery projects also contributed to higher sustainability of the Programme. It has instigated co-operation between municipal institutions and the Roma community which in some cases continued to further collaboration and proactive sourcing of funding to address Roma integration at the local level. The case studies in annexes 7.1-7.8 provide numerous examples of such an outcome.

Survey data confirm good sustainability of the ROMACTED Programme. 74% of online survey respondents (R=61) are confident about sustaining Programme's positive effects, 26% of them (R=21) are not sure, no negative responses were recorded. The following measures were stated as specific examples how this will be ensured:

- during the Programme, mechanisms and structures for co-operation with local stakeholders have been established and maintained and the respondents are committed to their continuation;
- capacity training accessed through the Programme has had a long-term effect on their skills and knowledge which they since have applied and will do so in the future;
- the Programme has raised awareness of the importance of Roma integration and of the need for shared accountability;
- specific financial resources have been allocated in the municipal budget to contribute to improving the quality of life for the local Roma community;
- through the small grants' scheme and post-COVID recovery projects, investment initiatives were implemented, and their results will be utilised in the future – for instance, renovation of a pre-school classroom has improved teaching conditions and increased children's attendance, a newly equipped Roma Cultural Centre will continue to be used by the local community, a refurbished Women and Children's House will be maintained and operated by the municipality.

The case studies offer additional examples of sustaining the positive effects of the ROMACTED Programme at the local level. They also noted that significant investment funding is required to address complex issues in relation to Roma integration such as housing and Roma neighbourhood infrastructure investments across the Beneficiaries (see recommendation 9).

The overall sustainability of the Programme is high.

The element of establishment of CAGs, IWGs and MTGs was effective and interviews with Project Officers in the visited Beneficiaries confirmed that sustainability prospects of these structures are good.

Coaching municipal administrations and local authorities had lasting positive effects, with local partners directly applying new skills. Roma community capacity building was also successful, with increased skills in community assessment and prioritisation skills, and voicing the outcomes and negotiating their suggestions for LAPs/JAPs. The case studies illustrate several examples of mobilisation of the Roma community at the local level.

A key factor contributing to Programme's sustainability was budget allocations for Roma inclusion actions, totalling 1.37 million EUR by the end of 2023, with Albania and Bosnia and Herzegovina being particularly successful. Numerous good practice models were developed, however, their future dissemination and visibility are crucial for broader adaptation.

Survey data confirmed high sustainability of the Programme, but at the same time, further investments are required to address more complex issues, such as housing and infrastructure in Roma neighbourhoods.

4.7 Cross-cutting issues

Gender mainstreaming

Within the ROMACTED Phase II Programme, gender mainstreaming was primarily ensured through active participation of women in CAGs so that their needs, priorities and viewpoints are brought forward, discussed and addressed. Roma women's participation across all seven Beneficiaries is demonstrated in the table below.

Table 19: Women participation in CAGs at the Beneficiary level

Beneficiary	Number of CAGs	Number of CAG members	Number of Roma women	Women's representation
Albania	10	90	50	56%
Bosnia and Herzegovina	12	110	60	55%
Montenegro	10	91	46 ¹⁶	51%
North Macedonia	15	195	103	53%
Serbia	41	311	157	50%
Türkiye	15	150	120	80%
Kosovo	11	70	22	31%
Total	114	1,017	558	55%

Source: ROMACTED at a Glance, evaluator's own processing

It is evident that in most cases, the Roma women representation is good and on average, it represents the desired half of all participants, in Kosovo it reaches one third only. Case studies illustrate several examples of Roma women's active participation not only in CAG structures but more widely in their activism to support social inclusion of their communities.

In addition, some activities were implemented specifically for Roma women, for instance the Kayaloğlu ROMACTED Vocational Support Course implemented by the Akhisar Municipality in Türkiye. In Türkiye, a local women's rights NGO, The Flying Broom Association, was also approached to identify the needs of Roma women at the local level.

Noteworthy examples of initiatives targeting women and young girls at the Beneficiary level include a Training of Trainers specifically for Roma women organised in Serbia in close coordination with the World Bank, *Transformative grassroots leadership and economic empowerment of Roma women/returnees*. The training scheme was designed to enhance the capabilities of grassroots leaders in advocating for gender equity and fostering inclusive and peaceful communities by building essential competencies and skills and raising awareness. It was also accompanied by a pilot training on *Economic empowerment of Roma women and Roma women returnees*. In North Macedonia, a joined action of municipalities against gender-based violence *UniTE! Invest to prevent violence against women and girls!* was organised.

In Bosnia and Herzegovina, a Roma women component is included in all LAPs across all municipalities involved in the Programme and numerous workshops and sessions targeting specifically Roma women were organised, for instance on immunisation, early marriages, discrimination, sexual and reproductive health, gender-based and domestic violence and children's rights. Individual cases of targeted Roma women support include a certified CNC training in the municipality of Prnjavor, establishment of a new NGO led by Roma women in the municipality of Doboj, one Roma woman engaged as a Municipal Liaison Officer, two Roma female CAG members in Tuzla have become adherents of the National Minorities Council at the state level and furthermore, there are three Roma female MTG members running as candidates in the local elections in October 2024.

¹⁶ For Montenegro, this number includes Roma and Egyptian women.

In Montenegro, a special CAG was formed in Podgorica-Camp Konik gathering exclusively women. In Bijelo Polje, CAG members were predominantly women and a few of them formed a Roma focused NGO, others have become mediators in the field of social inclusion.

Roma women's participation was also encouraged in capacity building activities organised in the municipalities which typically included workshops on Roma sensitive budgeting at the local level, combating antigypsyism, trafficking of human beings, post-COVID recovery measures and other topics. The overview of Roma women participation across all seven Beneficiaries is shown in the table below.

Table 20: Roma women participation in capacity building activities

Beneficiary	Participation of Roma community members	Participation of Roma women	Women's representation
Albania	189	95	50%
Bosnia and Herzegovina	169	59	35%
Montenegro	154	85	55%
North Macedonia	691	59	9%
Serbia	619	216	35%
Türkiye	450	103	23%
Kosovo	70	50	71%
Total	2,342	667	40%

Source: ROMACTED at a Glance, evaluator's own processing

Roma women's participation in ROMACTED Phase II capacity building activities is lower than in their CAG representation with the average level reaching only up to 40%. In particular, the numbers are low for North Macedonia and Türkiye.

During Phase II, a higher number of women facilitators was encouraged as one of the tools for better outreach towards women at the local level. The Evaluation of the ROMACTED Phase I Programme noted an unbalanced representation of women facilitators, especially in North Macedonia.¹⁷ In Phase II, the women's representation among the contracted facilitators is good (41% on average) with the exception of Bosnia and Herzegovina where it reaches 17% only.

Table 21: Overview of ROMACTED Phase II facilitators at the Beneficiary level

Beneficiary	Number of facilitators	Number of female facilitators	Women's representation
Albania	16	8	50%
Bosnia and Herzegovina	12	2	17%
Montenegro	10	4	40%
North Macedonia	9	5	56%
Serbia	14	6	43%
Türkiye	11	5	45%
Kosovo	8	3	38%
Total/average	80	33	41%

Source: ROMACTED Programme management team

Survey data suggest a positive perception of respondents towards the Programme's support of gender equality and mainstreaming and 88% of them (R=72) *strongly agree/agree* that this has had a positive effect on the engagement of women in their municipality; six respondents *disagree* with this statement.

¹⁷ Ferrari, H., Schweighöfer, B., Simic A. 2022. *Evaluation of the ROMACTED Phase I Programme*.

From the Programme management perspective, the Logframe does not encourage systematic tracking of women's participation in Programme activities. While it continuously records the average number of Roma women in CAGs and MTGs, the associated target values are rather low (two women on average for a CAG, one woman on average for an MTG). Additionally, while the ROMACTED at a Glance documents offer these data, their format is not unified which suggests a lack of a systemic approach to data tracking in this regard. While for some Beneficiaries, data on *an approximate number of Roma women participating in CAGs* are present, other include a *number of Roma women on average*. Similarly, the numbers of Roma women participating in capacity building activities are not precise and instead, instances of a vague note ('around 35%') are stated.

Human rights approach

In addition to focusing on various human rights themes, the CoE strives to implement its projects and programmes in line with the four principles of the human rights approach – participation and inclusion, equality and non-discrimination, accountability, and transparency and access to information addressing them in all phases of project management.

Initiating and planning phase – broad stakeholder engagement was undertaken to ensure no vulnerable groups were left behind. In particular, the inclusion of Roma women, youth and Roma returnees was sought. Roma-led/pro-Roma CSOs were also engaged not only during the planning phase but also for the duration of the implementation to co-ordinate and monitor actions at the local level bringing an added value to the Programme. Similarly, the objectives of the ROMACTED Phase II Programme fully reflect and target the inclusion and participation of different vulnerable groups with a special emphasis on Roma women, youth and returnees.

While the Programme outcome indicators are not sensitive to gender and other potential inequalities, there are four output indicators reflecting these concerns:

- average number of women in CAGs;
- average number of Roma young people in CAGs;
- number of Roma returnees participating in CAGs;
- number of Roma women in MTGs.

Further details on the effectiveness of their achievement can be found in section 4.3. In relation to the Programme design, sensitive financing targeting Roma-related groups is among the essential components to address institutional and systemic inequalities.

Implementation phase – as already indicated above, participation and inclusion of all stakeholders with a focus on vulnerable persons was emphasised throughout the implementation of the Programme with an emphasis on Roma women, youth and returnees.

Women's participation in Programme activities has been good and more details are stated in the Gender mainstreaming section above. In relation to youth, six Roma youth representatives are part of the local structures on average. In Serbia, some CAGs were devoted specifically to youth resulting in some of the small grants' projects tackling youth issues – allocation of a specific space for youth gatherings and educational activities in Aleksinac. In North Macedonia, a summer youth camp was organised, in Bosnia and Herzegovina, the Programme helped the establishment of the first Roma youth CSO in Travnik. Additionally, several CAG members and facilitators took part in the Roma youth political seminar in December 2023 in the European Youth Centre in Budapest (organised by the Roma and Travellers Team). The case studies illustrate further examples of involvement and collective empowerment of youth at the local level.

The component of re-integration of Roma returnees was addressed through co-operation with the UNDP and the World Bank. Representatives of Roma returnees were engaged in North Macedonia, Serbia and Kosovo and up to 33 returnees were part of the CAG structures in these three Beneficiaries. However, interviews indicate that the Programme encountered certain challenges in increasing participation of returnees. In Kostolac, Serbia, a specific CAG representing returnees

was established although interviews confirmed that co-operation with them posed challenges caused by their frequent migration.

Within the framework of CoE Strategic Action Plan for Roma and Traveller Inclusion in co-operation with the ROMACTED Phase II Programme, a situation analysis *Capacity assessment for providing support to returnees focused on Roma men and women in 14 local self-governments in Serbia* was developed providing an overview of accessibility and capacities at the local level for providing various forms of support to returnees in the process of reintegration into the social and economic life of local communities. Together with a summary of the strategic and normative framework regulating migration management policies, it considers the availability and capacities of public institutions in the field of education and social welfare, employability and employment and the returnee reintegration process.¹⁸

In Montenegro, there are no official data on the number of Roma returnees although there is an indication that they are not significantly high. During the Programme, meetings with relevant institutions were held (e.g. the Bureau for Refugees, UNHCR) in order to establish co-operation and gather information on the status of Roma returnees. In some municipalities in the northern parts of Montenegro, targeted sessions with this target group were organised to find out more details regarding their specific challenges and needs and refer them to relevant institutions accordingly.

The Programme operates in line with the principles of good governance to support national, regional and local level authorities in their efforts towards improving the social and economic situation of Roma in the Western Balkans and Türkiye. Furthermore, all actions are in line with the CoE Strategic Action Plan for Roma and Traveller Inclusion (2020-2025), the Strasbourg Declaration on Roma, CoE Protecting the Rights of Roma and Travellers, Roma and Traveller Inclusion: Towards a New EU Framework Learning from the Work of Equality Bodies, EU Roma Strategic Framework for Equality, Inclusion and Participation for 2020-2030 and other relevant strategic and legislative documentation. Programme materials and activities ensure a non-discriminatory and sensitive language and approach to all groups and no discrimination on basis of age, sex, sexual orientation is present.

Monitoring and evaluation phase – as already mentioned above, the Programme aims to record and monitor the project implementation from the perspective of vulnerable persons, in particular Roma women, youth and Roma returnees. At the level of output achievement, the Programme has been very effective in engaging women and Roma women in CAG and MTG structures as well as Roma youth. While the Logframe was conducive to systematic tracking of these groups, some gaps have been identified in monitoring women's representation and participation (further details are stated in the Gender mainstreaming section above).

Gender mainstreaming was primarily ensured through active participation of women in CAGs reaching the average of 55% across all Beneficiaries. Additionally, several activities targeted specifically Roma women addressing for instance women's economic empowerment.

Higher women's representation was also encouraged among local facilitators, for Phase II it amounted to 41% across all Beneficiaries. However, the Programme lacks systematic tracking of women's participation in Programme activities.

Participation and inclusion of vulnerable groups, in particular Roma women, youth and Roma returnees was emphasised through all stages of the Programme. Programme materials encourage inclusive and non-discriminatory language and approach to all groups. However, ROMACTED has encountered certain challenges in increasing participation and inclusion of Roma returnees.

¹⁸ CoE. 2022. *Situation Analysis: Capacity assessment for providing support to returnees focused on Roma men and women in 14 local self-governments in Serbia*.

5. Conclusions and lessons learnt

5.1 Conclusions

Relevance

- The Programme is highly relevant to the needs of Roma communities and local authorities in the seven Beneficiaries while strongly reflecting strategic priorities in the area of Roma integration.
- The Programme fully reflects the strategic importance and relevance in relation to EU accession processes and directly contributes to achieving of the declared Roma integration objectives. The implementation at the local level is considered the key added value of the Programme by all interviewed stakeholders.

Coherence

- The Programme design fully reflects the experience and learning from previous actions, and it has helped bring together the national level and local governmental side and establish a platform for further co-operation.
- Its external and internal coherence is high as it has successfully established and utilised links and synergies with numerous organisations as well as identified complementarities with other CoE and EU initiatives.
- The stakeholders from the visited municipalities demonstrated keen interest in networking with their peers from other municipalities, however, they felt the current flow of learning and experience between them is limited.

Effectiveness

- The effectiveness of the Programme output and outcome indicators' achievement is extremely high as most of their defined target values have been exceeded. Particularly, the number of established CAG and IWG structures considerably exceeded the intended value; similarly the expected numbers of trained municipal officials and Roma community members overachieved the estimated results.
- Survey respondents highlighted strengthened relationships and networking among local institutions and their increased commitment to include the Roma community in decision-making processes at the local level.
- The field visits confirmed the positions of local facilitators as fundamental in mobilising the Roma community, facilitating and guiding the processes between the municipality, the Roma community and local actors and keeping the momentum of the Programme.
- The field visits highlighted high effectiveness of the CoE Programme management team and their highly professional and supportive relationships with actors at the national as well as the local level.

Efficiency

- The calculated values of planned and ongoing efficiency confirmed that the allocated financial resources were used efficiently and with significant cost-effectiveness as more results have been achieved than originally planned.
- Given the fundamental role of ROMACTED facilitators, the allocated funds are deemed too low and not proportionate in relation to the overall Programme budget and to the scope of facilitators' field work.

- The Programme budget does not readily show resources against individual activity types; for instance funds expended on capacity building activities can only be roughly estimated.
- Financial resources for the small grants' scheme and post-COVID recovery projects did not reach sufficient levels of spent and contracted amounts before the end of 2023 and the full absorption of the allocated budget is unlikely.
- Efficiency of the Programme from the financial management perspective is low given the identified inconsistencies in data reporting and a lack of clarity in relation to specific budgetary resources. The hiatus of non-extension of local facilitators' contracts in some municipalities has negatively affected the implementation of the Programme and its activities, particularly the crucial field work.

Impact

- Interviews, focus group discussions and online survey results confirm that the Programme has been instrumental in stimulating the empowerment of the Roma through their engagement in new structures and decision-making processes at the local level. As a result, the Programme has created conditions contributing to combating discrimination and antigypsyism at the local level through increasing the Roma empowerment and commitment of municipalities and local authorities.
- The Programme has developed several adaptable models of good practice concerning the principles of Roma Responsive Budgeting, planning for vulnerable groups, guidelines for the development and monitoring of LAPs at the local level and many others. Their promotion and effective dissemination will be critical to ensure wide outreach and lasting impact.
- Allocation of local funds in line with the principles of Roma Responsive Budgeting in the amount of 1.37 million EUR represents a significant achievement further increasing the impact of Programme activities.

Sustainability

- Survey data confirmed high sustainability of the Programme, but at the same time, further investments are required to address more complex issues, such as housing and infrastructure in Roma neighbourhoods.
- A key factor contributing to the Programme's sustainability was local budget allocations for Roma inclusion actions, totalling 1.37 million EUR by the end of 2023, with Albania and Bosnia and Herzegovina being particularly successful.

Cross-cutting issues

- Inclusion of vulnerable groups is fully reflected in the Programme design; Programme materials encourage inclusive and non-discriminatory language and approach to all groups.
- The Programme lacks systematic tracking and reporting on women's participation in Programme activities.

5.2 Lessons learnt

As outlined in the previous chapters, the Programme demonstrates high relevance, coherence, effectiveness, impact and sustainability and the factors listed below have contributed to the results achieved. Their application in similar projects/contexts could enhance their success. General principles of effective project development and implementation are considered essential and prerequisite and therefore are not included in the list below.

Programme design

- Interviews with a wide range of stakeholders including the EC, CoE, EU Delegations, NRCs, municipalities, local institutions and Roma community representatives unanimously agreed that the implementation of the Programme at the local level is its distinctive added value that directly affects levels of ownership and accountability, and subsequently, sustainability prospects of the outcomes achieved. The clear focus on implementing Roma integration actions that are in line with the national strategies and frameworks yet fully reflect contextual circumstances and specific challenges and possibilities is the right approach to this complex agenda and might be applicable and transferrable to other initiatives too. The participatory methodology has a positive impact on the capacity of local municipalities as well as the involvement and empowerment of vulnerable Roma communities.
- The inclusion of direct financial resources that enable implementation of concrete and targeted measures and actions agreed through joint discussions and LAPs is critical so that the involved stakeholders and the wider community are able to see tangible and concrete results of their efforts and practical solutions to existing problems. It has a tremendous effect on their motivation and subsequent determination to persist and continue in their activism.
- The presence of the CoE and SOs is viewed as important both for the municipalities as well as the Roma community. The joint events and visibility tools are therefore crucial. At the same time, field visits identified a genuine interest of local stakeholders in external feedback on their progress and future direction.
- The joint municipal and community assessment activities have proved useful in identifying local issues and challenges and through detailed prioritisation of planned actions to address them, a sense of ownership and accountability has increased for all actors involved. This approach is deemed effective and could be replicated/adapted in other contexts.
- The selection of respected and trusted SOs is critical in ensuring that the right approach is adopted when working with the Roma community. In some Beneficiaries, the Roma population has grown hesitant and reserved towards external consultants and organisations as they have had a negative experience with activities and sessions conducted without their best interests and needs in mind.

Working with Roma communities

- The inclusion of local facilitators as key actors to facilitate the establishment of CAG structures is essential. Thanks to their interpersonal and communication skills and trust built within the Roma community, they are able to identify the most proactive and influential persons for the CAG and contribute to its commitment and determination. This has a positive impact on the sense of ownership of the Programme and its results among the Roma community.
- The role of local facilitators to guide CAG members through municipal procedures and meetings with municipal representatives is pivotal in their capacity building so that they

are confident to voice their concerns, demands and be part of decision-making processes. It has a positive effect on the accountability of CAG members to actively seek solutions through co-operation and team working.

Working with municipalities

- Identification of the primary Municipal Contact within municipal organisational structures helps combat leadership and personnel changes potentially caused by local elections. In several municipalities, the steadfast approach of the Municipal Contact enabled continuity of the Programme and the agreed direction of Roma integration efforts.
- Formal delegation of responsibility to represent an institution within the IWG structure proved effective and conducive to higher levels of accountability as the IWG attendance and subsequent actions were seen as explicit job duties.
- Identification of IWG members with adequate decision-making responsibilities and authority within their respective institutions is important to ensure progress and adoption of the agreed processes and actions in practice.

6. Recommendations

The relevance, coherence, effectiveness, impact and sustainability of the ROMACTED Phase II Programme and its activities are high. The undertaken interviews with a wide selection of stakeholders and the online survey among all municipalities involved in Phase II clearly manifested positive outcomes for primary target groups of municipal administration and Roma communities. The Programme has **created conditions contributing to combating discrimination and antigypsyism at the local level.**

The Programme has enabled positive changes in the involved municipalities by **stimulating the empowerment of Roma** through their engagement in new multi-institutional structures and decision-making processes at the local level. At the same time, the Programme has been crucial in contributing to increased co-operation and deeper understanding of Roma concerns together with enhanced capacity to prepare and implement actions targeting Roma integration.

Given the benefits of the Programme evidenced in the previous chapters, **it is recommended that further funding for its continuation in new municipalities is allocated** so that its effects are facilitated to a wider breadth of individual and institutional beneficiaries.

While the Programme has managed to achieve impressive results, targeted efforts to promote good governance and Roma empowerment at the local level **should be continued.** For that purpose, the following recommendations drawn from the implementation of the ROMACTED Phase II Programme might be helpful:

Effectiveness

For the CoE:

1. Adopt a more ambitious approach in defining the target values of output and outcome indicators in the future. The set values of numerous indicators for the current Programme have been significantly exceeded and a more realistic outlook in quantification of objectives is required.

For the CoE:

2. Identify opportunities to utilise the considerable knowledge and experience of the ROMACTED management team, in particular the long-serving CoE Project Officers. They have managed and successfully maintained a breadth of relevant partnerships and contacts both at the national and local levels which represent significant institutional knowledge of the CoE. With their deep understanding of the complexities and challenges at the Beneficiary level, they represent a critical source of information and insight for any future Roma integration initiatives.

Efficiency

For the CoE Programme management team:

3. Ensure the allocated Programme budget is set up in a way that allows straightforward and accurate monitoring and performance oversight. The immediate and planned expenditure against key Programme activities should be visible and easily accessible, e.g. through monthly financial reporting and reprofiling based on planned and implemented actions. The results-based Programme budgeting with clear costs of specific outcomes will provide cost-benefit evidence for decisions on the ongoing Programme implementation. An overview of budgetary resources at the level of Beneficiaries should also be immediately available to Project Officers so that balance of resources is maintained and any underspent/overspent is immediately flagged and reflected in the ongoing Programme implementation.

For the CoE Programme management team:

4. To counteract the common risk of failed/discarded small grants' projects, invest more efforts into contracting of the allocated budget to ensure maximum expenditure of the funding available. Subsequently, monitor the ongoing projects' implementation closely so that the unspent resources are promptly allocated to other grantees or a new call for proposals is published.

For the CoE Programme management team:

5. Ensure the data reporting is accurate and systematic, and inconsistencies are avoided. For instance, achieved values of output/outcome indicators in the Programme Logframe should align with those reported in any other Programme documentation. Similarly, the tracking system should be conducive to consistency in relation to outputs and outcomes without any language variations.

For the CoE:

6. Given the critical role of the local facilitators in the Programme, allocate substantially more budgetary resources to their work and related activities. The originally allocated budget of one day's field work per month is significantly undersized and does not reflect their scope of work which often requires repeated efforts in initial mobilisation of the community as well as in maintaining the continuum during any leadership and personnel changes in municipal administration. While the implementation at the local level is instrumental, it is sensitive to any political changes either at the local or national level directly affecting the extent of local facilitators' work. The assigned budgetary resources should reflect this.

Impact

For the CoE Programme management team:

7. To maintain a long-lasting impact of the numerous models of good practice that have been produced and published within the Programme, their active promotion and broad dissemination are equally important. Identify systematic and ongoing mechanisms of their promotion to ensure their outreach and utilisation across the Beneficiaries.

For the CoE Programme management team:

8. The Programme has achieved manifold positive outcomes in terms of Roma empowerment at the local level. Promote them diligently among a wide range of stakeholders as they have potential to serve as a strong motivational and learning tool. A case study form might be appropriate for this. Even though the Programme implementation is due to finish at the end of 2024, systematically promote the results it has achieved in the involved municipalities to further enhance the visibility and importance of Roma empowerment and inclusion.

Sustainability

For the EC/CoE:

9. Look for opportunities to align the funding to promote Roma empowerment and inclusion with direct infrastructure investments to help address the complex issues the Roma population in the Beneficiaries face. The critical state of the infrastructure of Roma neighbourhoods might limit the positive outcomes of initiatives targeting capacity building, good governance and multi-institutional co-operation.

For the CoE Programme management team:

10. While the field visits identified numerous positive examples of multi-institutional co-operation and successful outcomes for local Roma communities that are likely to continue/be sustained albeit in a reduced format, it cannot be expected that all

municipalities involved in the Programme have achieved the same level of progress and success. Therefore, an assessment exercise should be undertaken by the respective Project Officers in close collaboration with SOs to determine which municipalities require follow-up activities, for example by providing support in upscaling of successful projects or practical proposal writing etc. This audit of municipalities' end results and progress achieved will be helpful for targeting any future actions more effectively and efficiently.

For the CoE Programme management team:

11. Further to the point above, the auditing exercise could include a snapshot overview of the present status of the political will and commitment of the municipalities and their local institutional partners to continue in Roma integration and empowerment measures in a participatory way without the external impetus of the Programme. The thorough knowledge of local facilitators might be instrumental in this regard. The understanding of the current sense of ownership might be again helpful for planning and implementation of any similar initiatives in the future.

7. Annexes

7.1 Case study Konak, Türkiye

Introduction

Konak is a municipality and district of Izmir Province in Türkiye with the population of 370,662 and estimated Roma population of 78,000 with more than 90,000 inhabitants being at risk of poverty.¹⁹ Based on the ROMACTED baseline survey conducted in 2021, the school attendance of children was low caused by the lack of role models and encouragement from the family, a lack of financial resources to pay for school expenses and also existing prejudice of teachers, classmates and their parents towards the Roma children.²⁰

At the same time, the school infrastructure as well as the quality of education in Roma neighbourhood schools was not adequate lacking recreational space, sport fields and social activities to ensure their well-being and integration into the education system.

Only 15,600 Roma inhabitants were estimated to have income from work and illegal housing presents a major issue in the municipality concerning approximately 70% of households.²¹ On the other hand, there is a well-equipped health centre in the proximity of the Roma community financed by the Ministry of Health.

The municipality had been active in supporting Roma citizens and their socio-economic integration and in 2019, the Mayor of Konak was awarded the prize as the most Roma friendly mayor in Türkiye.²²

Implementation of the ROMACTED methodology

The inception phase for ROMACTED Phase II progressed promptly as the Konak municipality had already been included in the Phase I of the Programme. This experience helped them plan more effectively with the sustainability factor in mind right from the outset.

The introductory meeting with the municipality was held on 27 July 2021 and it confirmed willingness and commitment of the municipality to be active partners in relation to the ROMACTED methodology. Shortly after, the **Community Action Group** was created with 20 members out of which six were women. As several interviewees pointed out, the CAG in Konak has strong relations among the Roma neighbourhoods and they are able to voice out problems and difficulties to municipality representatives. Interviewed stakeholders feel that due to the voluntary character of the CAG structure, committed and passionate members are required. While it is important to strengthen the CAG structure, it is also vital to include new members on an ongoing basis and pay attention to task assignment and the progress achieved.

The local facilitator also emphasised the importance of encouraging CAG members to actively participate and voice their ideas. The role of the local facilitator to motivate, observe, follow up and advise as necessary seems of critical importance, in particular during initial phases of the group establishment. As confirmed by the local facilitator, at this stage, the Konak CAG needs less guidance and close facilitation than in 2021. Following interviews and focus group discussions, the structures as well as processes seem well established and individual members are well aware of their roles and responsibilities.

In 2021, the **Institutional Working Group** was created and in addition to municipal directorates such as the Social Services Directorate, Education Directorate, Sports Directorate and Police

¹⁹ CoE. 2021. *ROMACTED baseline survey for Konak*.

²⁰ CoE. 2021. *ROMACTED baseline survey for Konak*.

²¹ CoE. 2021. *ROMACTED baseline survey for Konak*.

²² The campaign *The most Roma friendly mayor* is part of the IPA funded project *Joint Initiative to Empower Roma Civil Society in the Western Balkans and Türkiye*.

Directorate, it also includes the Mayor's Office, the Izmir Metropolitan Municipality and Turkish Employment Agency (İŞKUR). In the same year, the **Municipal Taskforce Group** was established bringing together diverse local stakeholders, for instance the Konak Municipality, Research and Development Unit, Directorate of Cultural Affairs, Directorate of Women and Family Affairs, Directorate of Constructions, Directorate of Public Relations, Directorate of Technical Services, Directorate of Social Aid Affairs, Directorate of Media Promotion, Directorate of Public Relations.

While meetings of these groups were held monthly initially, their frequency decreased particularly before the end of 2023 when no CAG, IWG nor MTG meeting was held. On the other hand, it was encouraging to see that the Mayor took a personal interest in the Programme and was supportive of its activities. Following the local elections in March 2024, the new Mayor has reassured of her commitment to Programme objectives. This is an important prerequisite for creating municipal capacity within its internal structures and directorates to actively commit to Programme objectives and allocate necessary personnel resources accordingly.

A particular challenge the interviewed stakeholders emphasised is the frequent change of assigned representatives from certain public institutions. It disrupts the continuity and stability of the group structure as it requires constant rebuilding of new working relationships and trust. To address this, these public institutions were approached to establish a closer dialogue and co-operation.

As a result of municipal and community **assessment activities**, access to education and employment were prioritised from the short-term perspective with a specific focus on Roma girls and women. Additionally, combating the increasing drug addiction in Roma neighbourhoods has continued to be critical. Urban transformation and housing were objectives the municipality and local partners wanted to address in the long-term perspective. Following intensive neighbourhood visits to establish the most acute needs and demands, four neighbourhoods in Konak were selected for targeting the ROMACTED activities. Thanks to the well-established contacts, the ROMACTED facilitator has built good co-operation with local family health centres, school principals, imams and muhtars.

It is unfortunate that following the assessment activities in the municipality, the momentum that had been successfully built slowed down due to the absence of contract extension for the local facilitator. Altogether, it was nearly for nine months that the local facilitator did not have his contract extended. At this point, CAG members did not feel sufficiently self-reliant to continue with their activities independently.

As interviewees pointed out, the Roma population feel hesitant and distrustful towards the municipality therefore it is positive that the local CAG is able to act as a bridge between these two sides. At the same time, they need to see progress in their efforts albeit in small actions and individual cases so that the sense of accomplishment may be shared with the Roma community and serve as an example of change being a possibility. As confirmed during interview discussions, the relationship with the municipality seems effective as in general, they have adopted responsive behaviour towards the problems and challenges the local Roma neighbourhoods face.

The Konak municipality has developed a local action plan for Roma inclusion, the Protocol for Collaboration with **Roma Civil Society Organisations**, however, there is no budget allocated for Roma-specific activities and the Roma community is included within the vulnerable groups' budget. A portion of the budget was used for the International Roma Workshop organised by the Konak Municipality in co-operation with local Roma CSOs. Public, private, and civil society organisations, along with members of the Roma community, participated in the workshop. The event featured intense discussions on the topic from both national and international perspectives. The workshop consisted of three sessions and a report gathering their learnings and recommendations was published by the municipality and is intended to be used as a roadmap for Roma policies and projects implemented in Konak in the future.

The active relationship between the Konak municipality and local Roma CSOs is also corroborated by the signed Memoranda of Understanding (MoU) with 11 local organisations; activities for the Roma population are carried out within the framework of these agreements.

The economic crisis manifested through the high inflation and increased living costs have affected the most vulnerable communities in the country. As confirmed by interviews, the general welfare programme supporting those in need fail short of the specific needs of Roma communities and more targeted support is required for marginalised groups. Additionally, the earthquake in February 2023 had an impact on the whole country and highlighted the importance of local governments in disaster management. Like other municipalities, the Konak municipality mobilised to support earthquake victims, and they sent aid trucks to the region, particularly to provide essential items such as food, hygiene products, and cleaning supplies. Although the exact number is unknown, some earthquake victims have migrated to the Konak district of Izmir and rental houses were secured for them.

In 2023 and 2024, the Programme has been affected by the local and parliamentary elections. The municipalities are inadvertently part of the campaigns, and interviews confirmed that the political polarisation and tensions between opposition-led municipalities and state institutions were evident. During the election campaigns, Roma issues were sidelined and instances of negative attitudes towards Roma representatives in parliament were also manifested.

The **challenges** the Roma face in the Konak municipality do not differ from those elsewhere in the country, namely discrimination in access to education, housing, health and employment. These barriers contribute to further problems while the pandemic has had a prolonged impact on the rise of unemployment. Interviewed stakeholders agreed that these problems cannot be solved by short-term projects and therefore the ROMACTED methodology targeted at municipal actors and their understanding, motivation and capacity was crucial. While the municipality is able to tackle isolated practical issues such as buying school uniforms for children in need or minor house repairs in urgent cases, the support provided by municipal resources or donations does not meet the needs of all Roma children and their families. The situation in healthcare is similar - although medical examinations are free, few Roma families can afford to buy the prescribed medicine as recommended by the medical staff. Additionally, priorities in Roma neighbourhoods have changed recently and many of them face increased death rates caused by drug addiction (including children and young people).

As part of the ROMACTED Phase II **small grants'** scheme, the Konak municipality implemented two short projects. The first one, Young Roma Baristas, targeted young Roma people between the ages of 18 and 30 for a barista training. With close co-operation with a local Roma youth association, the project was designed to address the high levels of youth unemployment in the community. As the economy of Konak is based mostly on the services sector, there is sufficient demand for baristas in the food industry as more coffee shops are being opened in the area. The expected number of 20 trained young people was achieved. The sustainability of the project is considered satisfactory given its limited scope (a three-month training for 20 young people) and funding (5,000 EUR). At the end of the training, 19 participants (11 men, 8 women) successfully received their final certificate which will be helpful for finding employment. Additionally, the training proved popular among young people and the coffee machine purchased through the grant project will be used for trainings in the future. The importance of this action was confirmed by the Konak Mayor attending the closing event.

The second short project, Roma Music School, focused on Roma children and their low school attendance and increased substance addiction. The Konak municipality together with the Roma Culture Centre designed the project to address these issues by motivating Roma children between the ages of 13 and 18 to try and experience music education for duration of eight months. The trainings proved extremely popular and successful among the local community, in particular the clarinet lessons. The expected number of 16 students was achieved. The sustainability of the action is good as the music instruments purchased will be used for future music education and the

municipality is currently exploring options for the music school to sustain its operation. It is planned to specialise on the clarinet education to reflect its immense popularity during this short project.

All interviewed stakeholders agreed that both projects were particularly effective and popular among the Roma community and are looking for funding options to continue with similar interventions. For most of them, they serve as a specific example of the ROMACTED Phase II Programme in the local area. They view the concrete results as a successful test of the right approach and demand from the target groups (in both cases, young Roma people) and are committed to scale it up. The ROMACTED methodology proved helpful in providing them with skills to apply for similar funding opportunities and implement them within their internal capacity. However, many interviewees agreed that the already limited number of available grant schemes has decreased substantially in the last few years.

Results

As the Konak municipality had been involved in the ROMACTED Phase I Programme, the relationships including inter-institutional ones are well established and appear effective. Numerous activities supporting the local Roma community have been organised and many of them were prompted as original ideas during IWG or CAG meetings, for instance:

- the International Roma Day events on 8 April each year – these are organised at the main square bringing together the majority and Roma population through various vendor tents, music performances and speeches by community leaders;
- cheap bread booths – arranged for vulnerable communities during and after the COVID-19 pandemic; originally there were none of these located in Roma neighbourhoods, currently there are three cheap bread booths operating in Roma neighbourhoods of Konak;
- public concerts arranged by the Konak municipality to support Roma musicians;
- the IWG prepared a policy statement for the Grand National Assembly of Türkiye to support Roma musicians to become part of the National Social Security system as their exclusion made them particularly vulnerable during the pandemic;
- two fully Roma football clubs were established – the original number of 15 members grew to approximately 90 players;
- sewing classes for wedding dresses²³ were created - these classes specifically targeted local Roma women. They proved popular not only because of the work opportunity but for socialising and personal development. As a result, two local NGOs were established by women attending these courses.
- a Roma archive has been created at the municipality to document organised activities and their outputs.

Interviews with IWG representatives identified several areas where the Programme has had a positive impact:

- thanks to the ROMACTED methodology, IWG and CAG representatives have learnt how to turn an idea into action and solve a practical need/issue;
- the true concept of teamwork and partnership – individual's commitment and enthusiasm cannot substitute the need for relevant partners and joined efforts;
- the municipality proved to be the right point where solutions to local issues should be sought and as a result, they are tailored to specific circumstances and needs (as opposed to national strategies for Roma integration that are difficult to implement at the local level).

²³ Izmir, Konak is one of the centres of mass bridal dress production in Türkiye.

For CAG representatives, positive effects focused on the following aspects:

- Programme activities enhanced their capacity and skills to voice their interests, needs and demands and as a result, to contribute to solution-seeking and decision-making processes;
- many anecdotal examples of women's empowerment were cited as they felt more confident and assertive after the new opportunities to work and socialise outside their immediate family circles were created;
- through an active role in Programme activities, CAG representatives felt they were setting a positive example and a role model for their children who are perceptive to their parents' efforts and actions, thereby widening their life choices and possibilities.

Conclusions

While the Programme has instigated numerous successful activities supporting the local Roma population and inter-institutional relationships are well established, there are several challenges that cannot be solved at the local level and without adequate funding. For instance, the widespread drug addiction with its related problems and impacts on education, employment and health is one of such issues. Additionally, the conditions posed by the political framework including funding restrictions most municipalities currently face are not favourable. On the other hand, the frequent turnover of staff appointed to participate in IWG meetings is an internal obstacle that needs addressing.

Overall, all interviewees were satisfied with the ROMACTED methodology and despite difficulties encountered (e.g. facilitator's contracts not being extended sufficiently promptly), they regard it as the right approach to support the integration of the Roma population and improving their life conditions.

All interviewed stakeholders see the implementation of two short projects as the key achievement of the Programme. They are seen as highly successful albeit not sustainable without additional funding. The reason why the interviewees perceive the short projects as the key outcome might be caused by its concrete and tangible results (e.g. number of trained participants) as opposed to a rather abstract (and long-term) notion of multi-agency working, taking collective responsibility for resolving community issues and working towards a shared mission.

7.2 Case study Akhisar, Türkiye

Introduction

Akhisar is a municipality and district of Manisa Province in Türkiye with the population of 173,026 and estimated Roma population of 8,000²⁴ concentrating in four neighbourhoods. According to the baseline survey conducted in 2021, the official numbers showed all children of school age as enrolled in school, however, the school attendance was low reaching only 30% of the official figure.²⁵ The infrastructure and quality of education were considered adequate and comparable with other schools in the region.

It was estimated that 50% of Roma had income from work as they face considerable discrimination in access to the labour market. Roma women, more specifically, seem in many aspects restricted to housekeeping jobs only. Similarly to Konak, illegal housing presented a major issue in the municipality concerning approximately 60% of households. Furthermore, staggering 95% of Roma dwellings were not connected to public utilities.²⁶ Family doctors and healthcare professionals were accessible to Roma communities with a well-equipped health centre financed by the Ministry of Health.

Implementation of the ROMACTED methodology

The Akhisar municipality is one of the new municipalities selected for the Phase II and the first meeting with municipality representatives was conducted in July 2021. The initial contact with the facilitator did not take place until December 2021 and shortly after this, the **Institutional Working Group** was officially established. The average size of IWG membership is ten representatives; their meetings are organised on a monthly basis.

During the implementation of the Programme, its structure comprised representatives from the Social Services, Social and Cultural Services, Public Security Services, Sports and Youth Services, Public Relations Department and Human Resources Department. At the beginning, as confirmed through the interviews, certain resistance from the municipality staff was present as they were not willing to undertake additional work and instances of prejudice against the Roma population were noticed. After a Deputy Mayor with the responsibility for the ROMACTED Programme had been appointed, some minor problems were more readily resolved, and Programme activities were accelerated. The MoU was signed at the beginning of 2022, and an experience sharing visit to Izmir Konak was conducted. Together with the Programme opening meeting in Ankara where the Akhisar municipality representatives had an opportunity to see the progress achieved through the ROMACTED Programme in other regions, these visits have had a positive impact on their motivation and commitment. As the discussions confirmed, IWG representatives were subsequently more willing to identify specific suggestions to local issues and problems.

Similarly, difficulties in Roma neighbourhoods were encountered as local leaders were hesitant to trust the ROMACTED facilitator and the overall dynamics within the neighbourhoods was not favourable towards persons outside them (for instance, with the drug addiction widely spread, the persons involved in drug dealing threatened against any contact with the municipality). As a result, forming of the **Community Action Group** was problematic, particularly in the understanding of the need to take ownership and search for solutions as opposed to merely voicing concerns and challenges. The CAG comprised 16 representatives out of which eight were women. Particular attention was paid to diversity in age, occupation, economic level, gender, education level and disability.

However, difficulties in regular attendance of CAG representatives were noticed and in case of some neighbourhoods, the presence of Roma women was seen as unwelcome. A positive change was observed after CAG meetings began to take place directly in one of the Roma neighbourhoods

²⁴ CoE. 2021. *ROMACTED baseline survey for Akhisar*.

²⁵ CoE. 2021. *ROMACTED baseline survey for Akhisar*.

²⁶ CoE. 2021. *ROMACTED baseline survey for Akhisar*.

to counteract transportation costs which lowered representatives' attendance. This way, more women attended the meetings as well. The CAG membership has now stabilised, and as of June 2024 it comprised ten representatives; their meetings take place on a bi-weekly basis.

Interviews confirmed that for the CAG to be effective, committed and dynamic members are needed. As stated by the local facilitator, it is necessary to constantly observe allocation of tasks and their progress until the CAG structure becomes stronger and more stable. A sense of accomplishment was cited as crucial here to overcome the initial distrust and hopelessness. To further support the continuity and stability of the CAG, its representatives would welcome minor incentives, for instance free attendance at workshops²⁷ organised by the municipality.

The co-operation between the municipality and CAG representatives was relatively slow at the beginning which was also caused by low levels of trust. After the first successful initiatives, albeit small (e.g. distribution of firewood), the group's motivation has increased and so has their attendance and activity in meetings. As a result of their regular meetings and **assessment activities**, housing and access to social services were prioritised with education, employment, health and discrimination being on the long-term agenda. In the subsequent meetings, employment and educational matters were prioritised as the level of drug addiction in Roma communities including young people became more pronounced. In mid-2022, the ROMACTED Programme became fully embraced at the municipal level and the overall engagement increased which was also reflected in the budget allocation for Roma for 2023 within the Social Aid Affairs Directorate. The establishment of this Directorate in 2019 had a positive effect on addressing Roma issues - it represented a designated unit within the municipality structure with assigned accountability (unlike before when a strongly perceived sense of invisibility of Roma agenda at the municipal level was present). At the same time, the position as well as the high level of interpersonal and communication skills of the local facilitator were cited as essential in the process of bridging the Roma neighbourhoods with municipality representatives.

In 2022, **Akhisar Municipality Joint Action Plan for Roma 2022-2025** was developed and approved by the municipality, however, with no budget allocation foreseen. The municipality does not have any other local action plan for the integration of Roma.

No projects had been previously implemented within the Akhisar municipality and a project writing training was provided to municipal officials to develop their skills in applying for IPA or other funds. Within the municipality, there is no designated project unit. Additionally, Project Cycle Management training was organised to increase the technical and administrative capacity.

Similarly to Konak, the Akhisar municipality also provided support in the aftermath of the earthquake at the beginning of 2023, namely a search and rescue team, technical personnel, heavy machinery, ambulances and critical aid such as food, hygiene products and clothing. It also contributed to evacuation efforts in the earthquake zone and over 2,000 people came to Akhisar and were provided shelter as well as psychological support. Many of these activities were mobilised through IWG and CAG meetings and their members actively participated in some of them.

Several **challenges** were encountered during the implementation of the ROMACTED methodology. With Akhisar being a small municipality, its capacities and budget are limited. Therefore, allocation of a budget specifically for Roma issues poses a significant hurdle. Additionally, Akhisar received a metropolitan status²⁸ and some services such as infrastructure and transportation were transferred to the metropolitan municipality. This has caused significant obstacles in tackling the housing priorities of the project (for instance, in the Kayalıoğlu neighbourhood) as the Akhisar municipality does not have necessary competences and authority.

A particular challenge for the CAG operation is the fact that most of its members are seasonal agricultural workers and their attendance tends to be low or minimal during the key seasons.

²⁷ The Akhisar municipality offers a wide range of workshops for its citizens, currently more than 30 classes.

²⁸ The Metropolitan Law No 6360 from 2012 has brought many changes in urban and rural areas.

Moreover, as confirmed by the facilitator and observed during interviews, CAG representatives tend to be hesitant to communicate with public institutions and prefer to delegate this responsibility to the facilitator. Targeted mentoring and guidance are recommended in this regard so as not to diminish the sustainability of this structure.

The Akhisar municipality was inevitably affected by the economic crisis in Türkiye which will have a negative impact on the implementation of the long-term plans of the ROMACTED Programme. The crisis further deepens the poverty among Roma communities given the ultra-high inflation and its knock-on effect on their ability to pay for fuel/heating and food bringing yet more challenges to the already precarious housing situation of the Roma community. The general welfare support system is not sufficiently responsive to their needs and the crucial need for a targeted approach and Roma-specific action plans became more pronounced. Additionally, the focus on the presidential and parliamentary elections in 2023 and 2024 caused further disruption in the implementation of Programme activities. Similarly to the Konak municipality, the positive momentum of the Programme was also negatively affected by the absence of contracts' renewal for the local facilitator who was not able to undertake any field work during this extensive period. This no-contract period occurred twice – in 2022 it lasted for four months, in 2023 for seven months.

The formation of the **Municipal Taskforce Group** coincided with the end of the facilitator's contract and the meetings could start only after several months once the contract was extended. Interviews confirmed that the absence of field work had a negative effect on the commitment and attendance at CAG and IWG meetings and their activities were disrupted. The structure of the MTG is diverse and comprises representatives from numerous municipal directorates, e.g. the Rural Services Directorate, Park and Garden Services Directorate, Directorate of Press and Public Relations, and Resolution Desk, Human Resources and Education Directorate, Directorate of Facilities, Police Department, Social Aid Affairs Directorate, Registrar's Office and many others. The meetings are held regularly once a month. During the interviews, the previous comments regarding the political affiliation of the Akhisar municipality were corroborated and it was confirmed that some of these institutions maintain a reserved attitude towards co-operation with the municipality.

Another challenge affecting the results of CAG and IWG meetings is the scope of their remit and authority. In many areas, the representatives nor their colleagues within the municipality have necessary responsibilities and many activities have to be authorised by the metropolitan municipality. This requires closer co-operation with metropolitan institutions which is however hampered by their affiliation to a different political party.

As part of the ROMACTED Phase II **small grants'** scheme, the Akhisar municipality implemented two short projects. The first one, Kayalıoğlu ROMACTED Vocational Support Course, targeted young Roma women and girls to learn the basics of the hairdressing profession. The project was based on a pressing need to support avenues for job opportunities for Roma women in the Kayalıoğlu neighbourhood and responded to expressed demand from the local community through CAG meetings. In addition to facilitating an educational opportunity ultimately leading to a formal qualification in some cases (the most talented students were directed to public institutions to obtain a certificate of mastery), the course provided much needed space for socialising and to a large extent, also emotional support. The course teacher was skilled at communicating openly with her students and was able to gauge when professional help (psychological or medical) was required. Following her recommendations, two students were successfully referred to professional psychological services arranged by the municipality. The project was implemented for eight months (January 2024 – August 2024) with the expected number of ten students increasing to 20; 15 participants (all women) successfully graduated.

The project is closely interlinked with the second small grant project implemented by the municipality, ROMACTED Children and Women's House. It addressed the need to reduce the drop-out rates of Roma children through providing them a facility and services to support them

academically. In co-operation with the Akhisar Equality and Roma Association, the Children and Women's House enabled Roma children to do their schoolwork, access the Internet, attend tutoring classes as well as carry out sports, social and cultural activities in their neighbourhood. The hairdressing vocational course was also organised in these premises and its accessible location proved critical for its success. Similarly to the previous project, the Children and Women's House created safe environment for local children, young people and women to socialise and benefit from a range of activities. The expected results defined through the number of beneficiaries accessing the services and activities of the house are on track to be achieved and up to 15 children attend the centre on a daily basis.

The visit confirmed the extremely high significance of this centre for Roma women and young girls. They regularly visit it and regard it as their social meeting point within the community and feel highly appreciative of the activities and services it facilitates. It created an important bridge between the local community and municipal representatives which was clearly manifested through their informal and cordial relationships. The municipal staff are familiar with individual life struggles and difficulties of the young girls and are able to communicate with them in a sincerely friendly and encouraging way.

Interviews and discussions confirmed that both projects acted as an enormous catalyst of change for the Kayaloğlu neighbourhood – although not yet manifested in the increased education and employment rates, but in the sense of what is possible when the local community and municipality co-operate and collectively try to address local challenges. CAG and IWG representatives understand that all sides need to play an active role in these changes and processes and collaboration is vital for progress.

The sustainability of these projects is considered good as the municipality will continue with the maintenance and operation of the Children and Women's House after the projects have finished. The relationships that have been built during the short duration of these projects are likely to sustain and have a positive effect on the bridging between the local neighbourhood and the municipality. All interviewed stakeholders agreed that both projects were relevant, popular and effective for the local Roma community and will look for ways how to widen their scope in the future.

Results

Since 2021, the Akhisar municipality has managed to achieve several positive results and outcomes. They were in accordance with the Joint Action Plan adopted in 2022 and based on the Community Priority List, for instance:

- a documentary film about the culture and life of the local ethnic Gypsy groups, such as Roma, Abdal, Loms and Doms was screened to municipal employees;
- school uniforms were provided to 15 children as they were not allowed to enter the school without them and their families could not afford them;
- psychological support was provided on an ongoing basis to 50 young Roma girls;
- municipal personnel attended a Project Cycle Management training;
- stray dogs in the neighbourhood were rounded up twice and a tick and insect check was conducted;
- approximately 35 Roma children, youth and women attended a seaside camp;
- on several occasions, a special vehicle was provided for ill Roma children to transport them to hospital in Manisa province;
- scholarships were provided for two Roma university students (both women);
- clothing donated to the municipality was distributed to those in need in Roma neighbourhoods;
- various urgent ad hoc renovation, furnishing and dietary requirements and needs were successfully addressed.

From the sustainability perspective, the most positive outcomes with a long-term impact include the following:

- the establishment of a local Roma NGO, the *Akhisar Equality and Roma Association*, which closely co-operated with the municipality in implementing both small grants' projects;
- as of June 2024, the municipality employed approximately 30 Roma persons;
- the barrier for the Roma to enter municipal buildings and access its services has started to be overcome;
- the importance of designing and implementing projects within the municipality has been fully recognised and significant steps have been taken in this regard leading to submission of first projects. This has been specifically corroborated and acknowledged by the Mayor.

Conclusions

While the Akhisar municipality had not been involved in the previous Programme phase, it has successfully established all the required structures within the municipality and with various institutions and has built good trust in local Roma neighbourhoods despite initial challenges. The adoption of the JAP in 2022 represented a significant milestone upon which many activities were implemented or initiated. The further necessary step is to allocate a specific budget for the officially signed action plan.

Interviews and meetings confirmed high relevance as well as effectiveness of the joint efforts facilitated through CAG and IWG meetings and while further capacity development in both structures is still required, the initial change of perception and accountability for addressing local issues seem well understood. According to interviewees, discrimination is present, however, at the same time, the activities and efforts already undertaken have had a positive impact in this regard on both the Roma communities as well as the majority.

The prolonged hiatus of non-extension of facilitator's contracts in 2022 and 2023 is a major challenge cited by all interviewed stakeholders as it considerably slowed down the momentum gained by Programme activities and fostered disbelief and disappointment among individuals. The implementation of small grants' projects was particularly important in this relation as it served as a concrete and tangible example of positive achievements at the local level. It has also encouraged the municipality in its ability and skills to undertake similar projects in the future and therefore look for similar funding avenues.

7.3 Case study Kostolac, Serbia

Introduction

Kostolac is a municipality in Serbia with the largest share of Roma (19.5%).²⁹ These data are consistent with the ROMACTED baseline survey from 2021 that stated the overall population of Kostolac as 13,637 with estimated Roma population of 2,659.³⁰ Most of Roma population concentrate in three Roma settlements with a functioning water supply network and a heating network; in 2021, a sewage network was built in 26 streets. It was estimated that only half of the children between six and 15 years attend school, and the school drop-out rate was 15%.³¹ The infrastructure and quality of education were considered adequate and at the same standard as other schools in the area.

It was estimated that only 11% of Roma were employed as they face considerable discrimination; there were no Roma employed in public institutions. Roma women face particular discrimination in their access to the labour market as their role is traditionally seen as a children and home caretaker.

Approximately 380 dwellings were not connected to the sewage system and 15% of Roma households were not able to pay for utilities.³² There is a health centre in close proximity to Roma settlements and the local community also receives outreach medical services.

The municipality of Kostolac has a local action plan for Roma inclusion in place, namely the *Local Action Plan for Social Inclusion of Roma Men and Women for the Period of 2021-2023*. Another EU-funded programme targeting Roma inclusion is currently ongoing in the municipality – *Empowering Local Communities for Roma Inclusion Phase 3* implemented by the Standing Conference of Towns and Municipalities of Serbia. The Association of Coordinators of Roma Issues with the support of NALED is implementing an initiative *Improving the Living Conditions of Roma Men and Women and Other Marginalised Groups*.

Implementation of the ROMACTED methodology

The municipality of Kostolac was involved in the ROMACTED Phase I Programme and was well aware of the intended objectives and outcomes of the Programme. The initial meeting for Phase II was held in June 2021 with municipal and CoE representatives. The municipality was committed to continue building on the positive results achieved in the previous phase and to provide continuum to Roma integration activities as much as possible.

The MoU was signed in November 2021 and given the visibility of the Programme thanks to the Phase I, the establishment of the **Institutional Working Group** was considered smooth with the initial membership of 13 representatives out of which eight were women. The participation was diverse and included the City Municipality of Kostolac, departments of Social Affairs, Education, Sports, Police, Culture and Tourism, sections of Housing, Urban Planning, Local and Economic Development but also the Centre for Social Work, National Employment Service, a local primary school and a health centre, local NGOs and religious communities. As of September 2024, the IWG comprised approximately 15 members while half of them are women.

Similarly, the establishment of the **Community Action Group** was not problematic, and community needs assessment and municipal capacity assessment were undertaken as a joint effort. Since the establishment, the CAG membership size fluctuated and in September 2024, it comprised approximately ten members out of which one third are women. CAG representatives and the local facilitator do not view the frequent changes of membership as worrying as they welcome new ideas and perspectives of new members. However, the stability of the group is

²⁹ Civil Rights Defenders. 2017. *The Wall of Anti-Gypsyism. Roma in the Republic of Serbia*.

³⁰ CoE. 2021. *ROMACTED baseline survey for Kostolac*.

³¹ CoE. 2021. *ROMACTED baseline survey for Kostolac*.

³² CoE. 2021. *ROMACTED baseline survey for Kostolac*.

negatively affected nevertheless, and the much needed continuum is disrupted. Both groups continued to meet regularly and although IWG meetings were not as frequent as those of the CAG, their representatives confirmed their high productivity and action-focused character.

As interviews with municipal and CAG members confirmed, the process of **needs assessment** and identifying priorities was effective due to the involvement in Phase I; the short-term objectives were defined specifically and in detail, for instance providing and distributing hygiene packages and protective masks to families living in Roma settlements, providing firewood to families not connected to the central heating system, assisting primary school students in supplementary classes, raising awareness of the COVID-19 vaccination benefits and supporting community members when applying for employment. The long-term priorities included infrastructure investments that had been long overdue in Roma settlements such as the construction of a sewage network, road infrastructure and construction of children's playgrounds in all three Roma settlements.

The formation of the **Municipal Taskforce Group** was negatively affected by election campaigns that sidelined the momentum of establishing the necessary structures and delayed the development of the JAP by several months. The MTG comprised 12 members with six representatives of CAG and IWG each. The preparation for the Roma Responsive Budgeting process proved challenging as the Kostolac municipality, as part of the City of Pozarevac, was struggling to obtain the required details and information. In the second half of 2022, the drafted **Joint Action Plan** was officially adopted and signed by the Mayor. It includes 14 specific actions with assigned contacts, institutions and a budget. As of September 2024, 11 priorities were fully completed while three were completed partially. During the visit, municipal representatives emphasised that the official adoption of the JAP was a key milestone with which a series of infrastructure investments commenced. CAG representatives confirmed that the defined actions were viewed as top priorities by local communities and believed they would improve the quality of life in Roma settlements – asphaltting streets, construction of a sewage network, renovation of houses and distributing firewood to those without central heating. Two members of the CAG were hired by the municipality as survey enumerators collecting data from the field and two more as assistant enumerators – a significant outcome of a strengthened relationship between the municipality and the local community.

Relevant budget allocations have demonstrated the practical commitment of the municipality to Roma concerns – the amount of 600,000 RSD³³ from 2020 was increased to 1,000,000 RSD³⁴ in 2021 and 2022, 1,500,000 RSD³⁵ in 2023 and in 2024 reaching 3,000,000 RSD³⁶ for the realisation of priorities identified by the CAG.

Regarding the **capacity building** supported through the Programme, a workshop on Project Cycle Management was organised at the end of 2022 with 13 representatives attending. The evaluator was however unable to gauge feedback on the training as only two representatives confirmed their attendance during the visit. Nevertheless, they found it helpful and relevant to their needs as the municipality is committed to looking for opportunities of applying for external funds to address Roma integration concerns in their communities. One municipal representative and ten members of the Roma community were trained in Participatory Local Strategic Planning; two municipal representatives were also trained in Roma Responsive Budgeting. Interviewees were unable to confirm relevance and effectiveness of these training activities.

The relations between the municipality and Roma communities seem very effective given their targeted co-operation since ROMACTED Phase I. The Mayor is particularly committed to providing concrete results and positive changes for lives of citizens in Roma settlements with substantial support of the delegated ROMACTED Contact Point. Frequent elections at the local and national

³³ approximately 5,000 EUR

³⁴ approximately 8,500 EUR

³⁵ approximately 12,800 EUR

³⁶ approximately 25,600 EUR

level have not affected their operation and no significant personnel shifts occurred. Similarly, interviews indicated that communication and co-operation with other local institutions is successful and their involvement in the IWG and MTG has positively affected their commitment and open approach to resolve ad hoc priorities and challenges.

An interesting attribute within the Kostolac municipality is the high number of local Roma NGOs collectively covering a multitude of areas such as culture, arts, education, employment, humanitarian support and sports targeting Roma children, youth, women and the wider Roma population. Within the city municipality, a *Roma Office* was established in 2009 with an active Mobile Team comprising nine persons working in the field and addressing issues of housing, social welfare, education and others.

Cultural and artistic society *Amare Roma* is a group of three volunteers working with approximately 30 children performing in traditional Roma folklore dancing and songs; while they are often invited to other cities, they lack funds for transport and refreshments for children. The *Kenan* NGO does not have a specific focus and is active in Roma integration issues in general, including humanitarian programmes and providing food and basic hygiene packages. Similarly, the *Roma Association of Kostolac* addresses a wide variety of marginalisation issues, including challenges faced by Roma youth. The football club *Rudar Kostolac* gathers predominantly Roma children and as in case of all preceding organisations, it does not have any permanent members of staff but volunteers only.

In addition to the above mentioned Roma NGOs, two organisations targeting women are also active, *Successful Women of Kostolac* and *Association of Women of the County*, that conduct various workshops and activities about women's rights, e.g. topics of domestic violence and early marriages are particularly relevant and have shown progress within the Roma community.

The focus group discussion with NGO representatives clarified that the process of registering an NGO in Serbia is straightforward and does not pose any specific challenges or requirements. The necessary payment for an official approval seal and writing the organisation's statute are deemed expected and adequate. Interviewees have attended training sessions organised by the Government to learn how to develop quality project proposals to apply for resources to be operational. Targeting the same beneficiaries within a small municipality, it is important for these organisations to communicate on a regular basis so as not to duplicate their efforts. Despite an unsuccessful attempt to organise themselves into one larger NGO, their relationship and co-operation seem positive and effective. Their involvement in the structures of CAG and IWG is conducive to shared commitment and developing synergies.

As part of the Phase II of the Programme, the Kostolac municipality implemented two **small grants**' projects. The first one, Small Community Activities for Better Roma Social Inclusion, aimed to address housing, health and hygiene conditions of Roma families and improve playground areas for children. The need to support a number of socially vulnerable families was recognised by the municipal Mobile Team and the CAG and packages of building materials for house adaptation were provided. Their existing living conditions did not allow them to maintain basic personal hygiene; this action had been defined as a priority within the JAP. The degree of social vulnerability was the key criterion according to which the beneficiary families were selected. The project also followed up on the municipality's activity of building two children's playgrounds in two Roma settlements which were now equipped with benches, trash cans and greenery. The municipality also engaged with Roma youth who built fencing around these playgrounds to increase children's safety.

The Kostolac municipality managed the implementation of this project and while originally planned to finish before the end of 2023, the first activity of improving the living conditions for six families has not been completed fully.

The second short project was based on direct support of owners of newly established companies who struggled to adapt their businesses in the aftermath of the COVID-19 pandemic. While the original objective was providing the necessary tools and material to 20 persons, the municipality

increased the budget with its own funds and enabled the outreach to 45 entrepreneurs in total. The second activity targeted primary school children that were negatively affected by the COVID-19 pandemic. The municipality worked closely with school headteachers and teachers that recommended the most talented students from low income families as well as with the Department for Social Work to identify 50 socially disadvantaged students (out of which 30 were Roma students) that received tablets to enhance their educational attainment and learn the basics of informatics. Similarly to the first activity, the Kostolac municipality procured additional funding for this action.

Municipality representatives found the management of these projects meticulous and demanding, however, IWG and CAG interviewees confirmed the process was conducted in a transparent way and with close co-operation of the established structures (CAG, IWG, MTG) and on the basis of existing JAP priorities.

Results

In the Kostolac municipality, the ROMACTED Phase II has provided continuity for co-operation that had been established in the previous phase of the Programme. In addition to the small grants' projects, numerous activities have been implemented to improve the quality of life in three Roma settlements, for instance:

- distributing construction materials to socially vulnerable families along with the provision of construction tools (with municipal funds to extend the grant funding);
- improving road infrastructure in all three Roma settlements, with particular attention to street lighting;
- fencing of two children's playgrounds in different Roma settlements;
- connecting households to the newly built sewage network;
- cleaning and fencing of a wild landfill in the Kanal settlement.

In relation to sustainability, interviewees cited the following positive outcomes:

- relationships and co-operation established in Phase I were strengthened further in a structured way;
- the municipality has adopted a systematic approach to addressing infrastructure deficiencies in three Roma settlements;
- specific budget allocation for Roma integration is now firmly built and embedded in the municipal financial planning;
- the municipality has identified long-term strategic priorities that will contribute to reducing discrimination in the area;
- CAG representatives highlighted their increased self-confidence and pride in their communication skills, problem solving, and positive outcomes achieved through their commitment and engagement.

Conclusions

The involvement of the Kostolac municipality in the previous phase of the Programme has enabled smooth transition to Phase II and prompt setting up of CAG, IWG and MTG structures. The municipality has a very clear picture of how the implemented infrastructure investments have contributed to improved quality of life in Roma settlements and, importantly, how to follow these up with actions focused on education and employment of the Roma. Their clear strategic and long-term planning was visibly demonstrated during the evaluator's visit.

The implementation of the JAP's priorities has been effective and the majority of them have been fully completed. Despite the lack of the Roma Responsive Budgeting being adopted at the national level, the municipality has been regularly allocating ring-fenced funds for Roma integration and the amount has been steadily increasing since 2020.

Interviews confirmed high relevance and effectiveness of the implemented short projects with concrete positive outcomes for Roma settlements. Their sustainability is considered good given

the high level of co-operation and commitment manifested at the municipal as well as the Roma community's side. The high number of local Roma NGOs operating in the municipality and their connection with CAG, IWG and MTG structures further enhance the sustainability of the achieved effects while creating potential for further joint actions. The municipality as well as the NGOs are fully aware of their need to acquire more skills in developing quality proposals when sourcing external funding for the identified needs. They deeply appreciate co-operation with the CoE and mark it as an example of a professional, effective and highly supportive working relationship.

7.4 Case study Pirot, Serbia

Introduction

Pirot is a municipality with the overall population of 57,928 out of which Roma population comprises 2,576 (4.5%), however, unofficial data estimate it at 3,700.³⁷ The largest concentration of the Roma community is in the settlement of Rasadnik with small representations in other settlements and surrounding villages. As per the baseline survey from 2021, the school attendance of Roma children in Pirot was excellent, and the school drop-out rate concerned secondary education only. Primary and secondary schools in the area have adequate conditions and quality with the special support of pedagogical assistants.

It was estimated that only 20% of Roma were employed; most of the Roma worked in the grey economy relying on seasonal jobs and collection of secondary raw materials. Discrimination was seen as a major obstacle in finding a job in most cases with women facing compounded challenges entering the labour market given their low level of education.

Although the Roma live in legalised and urbanised settlements, their facilities were not legalised (concerning 60% of facilities) and 40% of Roma households were not able to pay for utilities.³⁸ There is public transport and good road infrastructure; all health centres in the municipality are well equipped.³⁹

Since the Decade of Roma,⁴⁰ the community empowerment work has begun in the municipality of Pirot with the support of the non-governmental sector. Currently, there are six Roma NGOs carrying out activities and initiatives supporting the Roma inclusion and preserving the Roma identity.

Similarly to the municipality of Kostolac, Pirot is involved in the *Empowering Local Communities for Roma Inclusion Phase 3* programme implemented by the Standing Conference of Towns and Municipalities of Serbia. Additionally, GIZ and the Ministry of Human and Minority Rights and Social Dialogue are implementing the *Inclusion of Roma and Other Marginalised Groups in Serbia* programme in Pirot.

Implementation of the ROMACTED methodology

The Pirot municipality had not been involved in the first phase of the ROMACTED Programme, however, Roma integration initiatives can be traced back to 2002 when the Development Integration Centre was established with the key focus on increasing social inclusion of Roma children in the education process. Many activities have been carried out since then and evidenced progress has been achieved thanks to introducing good practices such as teaching assistants in schools and maintaining after-school clubs to assist children with their homework and study. Other integration initiatives included supporting Roma returnees, housing and employment including entrepreneurship.

The official launch event for all stakeholders taking place in the Palace of Serbia in September 2021 was an effective instigation for establishment of communication channels and Programme contact points. Shortly afterwards, the municipality prompted mobilisation of the Roma community and as a result, three **Community Action Groups** were established in December 2021. Given the multiple CAGs in the municipality, the joint membership is large reaching 36 members out of which 19 are women. Their membership is balanced in relation to age and

³⁷ CoE. 2021. *ROMACTED baseline survey for Pirot*.

³⁸ CoE. 2021. *ROMACTED baseline survey for Pirot*.

³⁹ CoE. 2021. *ROMACTED baseline survey for Pirot*.

⁴⁰ The Decade of Roma Inclusion (2005-2015) was an initiative of 12 European countries to improve the socio-economic status and social inclusion of the Roma people.

urban/rural area representation. In addition to the general one, CAGs specifically for youth and women are active in the municipality.

After the MoU was signed in November 2021, the **Institutional Working Group** was formed with the initial membership of seven representatives (five women). The IWG comprised a spectrum of relevant institutions such as the City of Pirot, departments for Non-Commerce Activities, Urbanism, Housing and Communal Services, Constructing and Inspection Affairs as well as the Centre for Social Work and the Red Cross. The formation of the **Municipal Taskforce Group** was slowed down by national elections and the related campaigns that sidelined other activities in the municipality. The membership comprised nine CAG members and four IWG members.

While the Roma integration agenda had been a particular focus of the municipality before and fully reflected in the Local Action Plan 2019-2021, the most perceptible change can be observed in the relationship with the Roma community. As a direct result of ROMACTED activities, municipal representatives confirmed that channels of communication with the Roma have been significantly strengthened – higher awareness of particular challenges the Roma face has been observed as well as a more open approach and access of the community towards municipal institutions. Special emphasis was paid to antigypsyism and sensitisation of municipal employees through targeted training and workshops. As transpired through interviews and focus group discussions, the commitment of the CAG, IWG and MTG structures is considered good although they experienced several periods of lower engagement and activity during absence of seasonal workers and extended holiday leave.

The **community and municipal assessments** were undertaken jointly, and several following short-term priorities were identified, for instance equal distribution of school supplies, providing furniture for kindergartens, securing co-operation with the local health centre, organisation of education and training activities, street lighting in Roma settlements. From the long-term perspective, the following activities were deemed crucial - opening of a Roma cultural centre, asphaltting streets in one of the Roma settlements, high school and university scholarships for talented Roma students, introduction of the Romani language in schools, establishment of a Youth Health Bank, legalisation of Roma settlements and opening of an employment hub. A specific activity targeting Roma women that was identified as a priority was to provide medical examinations and regular gynaecological examinations to Roma women directly in their settlements.

Based on the assessment activities, the **Joint Action Plan** was adopted in 2022 and as a result, 28 related actions were prepared for implementation. As of September 2024, 21 priorities were fully completed while the remaining ones required more substantial funds or technical solutions (e.g. asphaltting streets). Complementary to priorities identified through joint assessment activities, further areas of intervention were agreed on: establishing an employment hub for Roma people, place for recreation and sports, arrangement and maintenance of the Roma cemetery, construction of social buildings.

There is no specific budget line allocated for the JAP or indeed, any Roma integration initiatives. Instead, the municipality maintains a ring-fenced budget for socially vulnerable groups out of which approximately 60% is directed to the Roma population. To secure funding necessary for the JAP actions, the IWG and MTG structures have to be very proactive and flexible in working with NGOs, lobbying for financial resources of the Pirot City and applying for available grants. A particular advantage in this relation is the fact that the local political leadership has not changed in the last 22 years and considerable continuum and stability are present.

The **capacity building** activities were not conducted on a large scale. As for the municipal staff, three representatives were trained on Roma Responsive Budgeting, one representative on the Participatory Local Strategic Planning. Project Cycle Management training for 16 municipal representatives was also organised in 2022; this was helpful for the application and implementation of small grants' projects.

Within the Roma community, Participatory Local Strategic Planning was attended by 13 persons, three Roma people were trained on antigypsyism and combating hate speech narratives. In 2023, two workshops were organised on raising awareness about discrimination against Roma women in healthcare among older women and the issue of violence against women from the perspective of single mothers. Interviews and focus group discussions could not confirm relevance and usefulness of these training sessions as the participants present did not attend them.

As part of the Programme, two **short projects** were implemented both directed towards refurbishment and establishment of a Roma Cultural Centre. Through a dedicated space for the Roma community directly in one of the Roma settlements, the projects aimed to promote, nurture and preserve the Roma culture and identity through education, information and participation. The coordination group for both projects was diverse and included representatives from the City of Pirot, local Roma NGOs and the Roma community.

Necessary equipment such as a projector with a screen for presentations, film projections, a sound system, microphones, speaker stands, laptops, a photocopier, tables, chairs was acquired to enable a large spectrum of activities including a folklore dance section, a music section, a senior club and an after-school club for children. Special attention was given to promotional activities not only within the Roma community but also among NGOs, experts, educators and volunteers within the region. The local youth was successfully drawn in by being tasked with internal decoration highlighting elements of Roma culture and history (sourcing photographs, framing pictures, writing short biographies, acquiring characteristic decorations). The Roma Cultural Centre was opened in March 2023 with a big opening ceremony with representatives from the municipality, the Ministry for Human and Minority Rights and Social Dialogue and the CoE.

Currently, the Roma Cultural Centre has an active elderly club, a folklore section, a music section and an after-school club for children. During the visit of the centre, representatives of each section were present and through discussions it was evident that they all view the centre as their own shared space. It greatly surpasses the mere senior/dance/music/teaching focus and creates a much valued opportunity for socialising, sourcing support and connections with others. Since the activities were based on the ideas and preferences of the Roma population itself, they regard it as their networking hub catering to needs of the whole community from children, youth, to local Roma NGOs as well as the elderly.

The elderly club gathers approximately 20 members that participate in various sessions and workshops, for instance on digital literacy for elderly and meet regularly twice a week. In co-operation with the *Roma Women from the Rural Area* NGO, they visited a nearby monastery which was much appreciated and viewed as an exciting and socialising event. One of the planned activities is a workshop for young people organised by senior Roma women on the weaving of rugs traditionally produced in Pirot.⁴¹

The folklore section comprises three groups of children based on their age with approximately 100 members in total. The elder children work as volunteers with the younger ones and while they have the necessary technology and space for rehearsals, they are currently sourcing funds for a professional choreographer to work with them on a permanent basis. The folklore section has been successful in attending various municipal events, for instance the festival From Roma People to Their Own City which gathered more than 1,000 visitors and 200 participants.

The music section is considered the local children's favourite with the piano and guitar being the most desired musical instruments to play. Currently, the music section is regularly attended by approximately 30 children.

The after-school club is similarly active with more than 20 children from the first to the fourth grade. Teaching assistants proved effective in being able to relate to children and motivate them through various educational games, quizzes, or technology. Classes typically take place both in the morning as well as in the afternoon with ad hoc weekend sessions as required. The centre has

⁴¹ The Pirot 'kilim' is often referred to as one of the national symbols of Serbia.

registered interest from parents and children to attend supporting classes during the summer break. The premises and laptops are also used for supporting employment activities of parents, for instance by assisting them with completing forms and documentation.

In addition to permanent sections of the Roma Cultural Centre, numerous educational and informative sessions and workshops are organised here based on demand of the local community and activities of local NGOs, for example on domestic violence, human rights, reproductive health, housing energy efficiency etc. The centre is currently in the process of being registered with the municipality of Pirot as a cultural institution.

Overall, through the ROMACTED small grants' projects, an essential centre for the local Roma population has been successfully created and thanks to wide-ranging coordination and collaboration between the Roma community, the municipality and multiple local actors and stakeholders, it effectively serves as a local hub for the disadvantaged population offering them space for targeted services and support as required and desired.

Results

The municipality of Pirot has been successful in implementing the priorities outlined in the JAP and furthermore, several more actions and interventions on an ad hoc basis. In addition to results achieved through the small grants' projects, the following examples of positive outcomes may be highlighted:

- a self-employment incentive subsidy was developed;
- a folklore and a drama section within the Roma Cultural Centre were established;
- more than 50 Roma men and women took part in re-training activities;
- Roma NGOs completed public works projects;
- one female Roma student gained professional experience in the Pirot City Administration's Finance Department;
- one-off financial contribution for Roma students was provided;
- a Delicate Friday event was organised with members of the senior club preparing traditional Roma cuisine with representatives of IWG and CAG attending;
- various workshops were organised in the Roma Cultural Centre - preventing early child marriages and combating human trafficking within the Roma community; a training for women on transformative leadership within the community; celebrating and promoting Roma culture, traditions, and language in honour of the International Day of the Romani Language.

During the focus group discussion with IWG representatives, the following positive results have been emphasised:

- strengthened relationships with the Roma community;
- a multi-agency approach has proved essential in implementing actions focused on Roma integration and inclusion;
- access to education and provision of necessary support to assist in the learning process is fundamental in order to achieve long-lasting changes including parental engagement and mobilisation of children and youth;
- increased adoption of an open and unprejudiced attitude and communication towards the Roma community and their concerns.

CAG members highlighted the following benefits of the ROMACTED Phase II Programme:

- increased self-confidence in voicing their demands and concerns to the municipality;
- targeted support and services to all age groups from primary school children, to youth, parents and the elderly;
- dedicated space for preserving and nurturing traditional dance, music, culture;
- high levels of volunteering among the youth, for instance as teaching assistants, music and dance teachers;

- created a centre for all local Roma NGOs to meet, work together and plan joint activities.

Conclusions

While the Pirot municipality had not been involved in the Phase I of the ROMACTED Programme, Roma integration initiatives have been among its agenda for the last 22 years. The process of establishing the Programme structures of CAG, IWG and MTG was not problematic thanks to the multi-agency approach the municipality had already adopted. As the municipality had been implementing many actions and interventions targeted at Roma inclusion, the ROMACTED Programme provided them with the necessary structure and impetus.

Interviews and focus group discussions confirmed extremely high relevance and effectiveness of ROMACTED activities which culminated in opening of the Roma Cultural Centre in 2023. The centre serves as a busy hub for the Roma population who views it as its own shared space for socialising, support as well as education and information. It is extremely positive how it manages to bring together various age groups, create meaningful links and relationships between them and at the same time, fulfil not only educational/informative aims but also exist as a place where both children and the elderly meet for fun and enjoyment.

Based on the evaluator's visit, the motivation, commitment and practical skills of sourcing available funding from the side of the local facilitator, municipal representatives and local Roma NGOs are a particular advantage that is fully reflected in the positive changes and results achieved in the municipality of Pirot. As one of the interviewees stated, the ROMACTED Programme 'has opened a road to other initiatives and projects', this can be considered the biggest outcome contesting any sustainability concerns after the Programme ends in 2024.

7.5 Case study Tuzla, Bosnia and Herzegovina

Introduction

Tuzla is a municipality with the overall population of 110,979 with the estimated 4,000 of the Roma; approximately 20% of the inhabitants are at risk of poverty.⁴² The Roma population is dispersed across 16 Roma settlements. As per the baseline survey conducted in 2021, the Roma children typically did not attend pre-school education and only 67% of primary age children attended school. The school drop-out reached 25% with the lack of parental interest in education and frequent migration to EU countries being the main reasons. The municipal assessment also stated inadequate quality of education.⁴³

The vast majority of the Roma population was not educated (95%) with no income from work. Housing was a significant issue in Roma settlements as approximately 800 of them were illegal and only 10% were connected to utilities. Only in some Roma settlements, there was access to a health centre or a family doctor with mere 20% of the Roma being registered in the healthcare system.

The municipality had not implemented any projects supporting Roma integration and anti-discrimination; it has been a ROMACTED partner since 2018.

Implementation of the ROMACTED methodology

The Tuzla municipality had been involved in the ROMACTED Phase I Programme and it invested significant funds to support Roma inclusion by addressing communal infrastructure and housing in Roma settlements; it also supported Roma participation in health insurance. The initiation of the Phase II was therefore smooth as the commitment and dedication to Roma integration had already been strong. The MoU was signed in the second half of 2021.

The municipality had previously developed and implemented the Local Action Plan for Roma for 2018-2021 with allocated budgetary resources. One of the initial activities was to assess the achievement of defined goals and determine the next steps.

The formation of the **Institutional Working Group** was slower than expected due to the formality of the process whereby each member had to be officially appointed by their respective municipal department or institution. At the beginning of 2022, the IWG was officially established with seven members (four women) with representatives from the Department for Culture, Sports, Youth and Social Welfare, Tuzla Public Health Centre, Criminal Police Department, Cantonal Public Employment Service, Education and the EuroRom NGO which had successfully implemented various Roma-related initiatives. As of September 2024, the IWG had approximately ten members.

The formation of the **Community Action Group** was smooth as some representatives from Phase I remained active. Initially, the CAG comprised eight members (five women) representing all Roma settlements in the Tuzla municipality; in September 2024, it comprised 15 members. Two of CAG members are well known among the Roma community since they worked as Roma mediators and built trust and good relationships with them. Additionally, several of the CAG members are active in Roma associations and are familiar with procedures and protocol when dealing with local authorities. Their commitment and motivation is strong thanks to their engagement in the Phase I. Also, despite their different age and levels of education, their communication and co-operation is open and effective.

The **needs assessment** was undertaken with substantive support of the EuroRom organisation which enabled structured and focused discussions. CAG members participated in several IWG meetings and as a result, their ideas and suggestions for interventions within the local community were well reflected. Infrastructure investments prevailed among the identified short-term priorities, for instance road construction and sewage system connection in the Musinac

⁴² CoE. 2021. *ROMACTED baseline survey for Tuzla*.

⁴³ CoE. 2021. *ROMACTED baseline survey for Tuzla*.

settlement and water supply channels to prevent flooding in the Mosnik settlement. For long-term priorities, building of a children playground in the Musinac settlement and cleaning of an illegal landfill were agreed on.

On the other hand, the process of establishing the **Municipal Taskforce Group** did not go as planned caused by the absence of municipal representatives at several meetings. The first meeting was organised in 2022 with diverse participation – four municipal representatives, two NGO representatives (*Bolja Buducnost* and *Srecni Romi*) and nine representatives of the Roma community including five CAG members. The formation of the MTG proved helpful for enabling direct access and connection between the Roma population and local institutions in the municipality. The MTG participation increased in subsequent periods and remained between 16 to 20 active members.

Interviews and focus group discussions confirmed that the development of the **Local Action Plan for Roma Men and Women for 2023-2026** was participatory and collaborative between the Roma community, the Tuzla municipality and relevant institutions. Overall, it set out five objectives:

- strengthening the institutional capacities of Tuzla city and local Roma NGOs to address the concerns in Roma communities;
- improvement of employment and self-employment of Roma men and women;
- improvement of housing conditions of the Roma population in the Tuzla municipality;
- improving the availability and quality of healthcare and social care for the Roma population;
- improving the scope of education of Roma and Roma women and preserving the Roma language, culture, and tradition.

For each of the defined objectives, specific measures for action were defined that had been agreed with MTG members. The fact that the document addresses gender-sensitive issues and domestic violence against women is a remarkable and noteworthy milestone. The prepared LAP document was presented to the City Council in February 2023. Its adoption was slowed down by the local elections and the new Mayor taking office. The LAP was unanimously adopted in November 2023 with dedicated funds for its implementation.

The municipality of Tuzla had been allocating budget for implementation of local interventions targeting the Roma community in the past, for instance for 2022, the budget reached 60,000 BAM,⁴⁴ additionally, it also allocated 40,000 BAM⁴⁵ for four Roma associations that are active in the municipality. For 2023, 40,000 BAM was allocated, increasing to 50,000 BAM⁴⁶ for 2024.

The visits and interviews indicated that the major catalyst for change is the local NGO EuroRom and its dedicated employees. While based in Tuzla, it has implemented approximately 350 projects in the area of human rights, housing, healthcare, education and antigypsyism nation-wide and it is a respected and well-known partner at the local, cantonal and central level. Its Executive Director is active as a City Councillor of the City of Tuzla, Chairman of the Commission for the Protection of Rights of National Minorities in the City of Tuzla as well as Chairman of the Committee for Roma at the Council of Ministers of Bosnia and Herzegovina. As the ROMACTED Phase II Focal Point, he is able to benefit from the wealth of strong relationships and networks he has created. It is also important to note that thanks to the wide experience of EuroRom in applying and securing funds both from domestic and international organisations, local and state institutions, the municipality of Tuzla is able to draw on its skills and support in practice as well.

Given the advancement of Roma integration in the Tuzla municipality and the base location of EuroRom, the Programme's ending at the end of 2024 does not pose major risks. In the past few years, the municipality has worked systematically on a multi-agency approach while appreciating

⁴⁴ approximately 30,600 EUR

⁴⁵ approximately 20,400 EUR

⁴⁶ approximately 25,500 EUR

the importance of the ring-fenced budget for Roma integration actions. As the ROMACTED Programme has provided them with a concrete and adaptable methodology, co-operation between various institutions overseeing health, education, housing, social care, employment and Roma communities has brought visible and measurable outcomes and positive changes which in turn motivate the diverse teams to continue with their efforts.

With the ROMACTED as the basis, the IWG, CAG and MTG structures have managed to undertake many other initiatives with the support of the City of Tuzla, local NGOs and other partners. For instance, the municipality compensated for ultrasound examinations for vulnerable groups without health insurance, preventative examinations for breast cancer and colon cancer were undertaken, workshops about the importance of vaccination were conducted, workshops and close communication with parents was effective in increasing the primary school attendance to 100%, the phenomenon of Roma children begging in the streets has been eliminated.

As part of the ROMACTED Phase II Programme, the Tuzla municipality applied for two **small grants**. The first one, the Preservation of Traditional Roma Culture in the Area of the City of Tuzla, focused on the Roma culture support through which it aimed to raise awareness of problems and challenges faced by the Roma and increase visibility and relevance of marking important dates of the Roma history. The implementation was led by the Centre for Roma Culture⁴⁷ and as the first activity, the International Roma Day (8 April) was marked in the City Council with participation of 70 diverse stakeholders and partners, representatives of ministries, local authorities, local NGOs but also by international organisations and the Mayor of the Tuzla municipality. The proclaimed support of the municipality translated into practice as it agreed to allocate financial resources for future activities related to Roma culture, tradition and customs.

Similarly, the International Day of Remembrance of Roma Victims of Genocide in the Second World War (2 August) was marked by holding a roundtable discussion to emphasise the significance of the Roma victims, a historical act that is still not fully recognised. The event took place at the central square in Tuzla with a large number of Tuzla citizens – Roma and non-Roma attending it.

The second project, Let's Preserve the Romani Language – Reduce Prejudice, was implemented by the Centre for Roma Culture in collaboration with EuroRom and focused on preserving and studying the Romani language by developing a handbook on Roma culture, history and customs and organising classes on the Romani language. In total, 20 language classes were held in two elementary schools in Tuzla and at the Faculty of Philosophy at the University of Tuzla. Students' response was overwhelmingly positive, and classes were attended by Roma as well as non-Roma children and young people.

The project also celebrated the World Day of the Romani Language (5 November) by an event attended by linguistic experts, representatives of the Ministry of Education, Tuzla municipality officials including the Mayor and the wider Roma and non-Roma public. A noteworthy significance of this event was demonstrated by bringing together five distinguished Roma scientists as panelists to share their expertise in preservation of the cultural identity of the Roma.

As emphasised during focus group discussions, the small grants' projects were an essential element of the ROMACTED Programme as they provided tangible results to several months' work and co-operation with various partners and the Roma community. Interviews highlighted a significant change of perception whereby municipal officials including senior leadership levels actively participate in Roma-focused celebrations and events declaring their interest and commitment to improve their quality of life; a change that has also manifested in allocating funds to attest this in practice.

⁴⁷ established through the ROMACTED Phase I

Results

In addition to the positive outcomes mentioned above, the multi-agency approach catalysed through the ROMACTED Programme has brought the following outstanding achievements:

- the Centre for Roma Culture, EuroRom and the City of Tuzla established co-operation with the Ministry of Culture, Sports and Youth of the Tuzla Canton, Tuzla Community Foundation and developed a textbook *Angluno Romano – Roma Beginner* for teaching the Romani language;
- in October 2023, the Minister of Education and Science of the Tuzla Canton signed the *Curriculum for the Roma Language with Elements of National Culture*;
- classes of the Romani language were introduced in elementary schools in the area of the Tuzla Canton in September 2024 potentially gauging interest from approximately 600 students;
- the City of Tuzla financially supported the development of the book *Roma Fairy Tales* that were donated and distributed to educational institutions in the Tuzla Canton to support the implementation of the Romani language curriculum;
- the interview with EuroRom representatives highlighted that the progress achieved in the municipality of Tuzla may serve as a good practice example of effective support of the Roma agenda; they will try to systematically apply the approach in other cantons of Bosnia and Herzegovina.

At the individual level of IWG and CAG members, the following aspects and benefits of the ROMACTED Programme were repeatedly highlighted during the evaluator's visit:

- the Programme has helped crystallise their vision in relation to Roma integration and directed them towards a strategic and focused approach;
- a multi-agency approach has proved indispensable since the issues of education, employment, housing and employment are intrinsically interlinked and cannot be addressed in silos;
- IWG and CAG members confirmed their own personal development with regards to communication, collaboration and team working skills;
- a visible change in behaviour and attendance of municipal officials at Roma holidays and celebrations has been observed, their genuine participation is much appreciated and welcomed;
- CAG representatives feel their views, suggestions and perspectives are valued and reflected in practice;
- several individual anecdotal examples of increased self-confidence and pride of being Roma have been noted among the youth.

Conclusions

In the municipality of Tuzla, the involvement in both phases of the ROMACTED Programme is clearly demonstrated by its progress in Roma integration, or in their view in *Roma inclusion*. At the municipal side, it is reflected both in behavioural changes and attitudes such as municipal officials attending Roma events and marked dates celebrations, recognising active members of the Roma community in a respectful and appreciative manner but also in their strategic planning and development of LAPs that are directly supported by necessary budgetary resources. From the Roma community perspective, they feel heard and valued appreciating the visibility of the challenges they face in all aspects of their daily life.

With the exception of the MTG, the formation of CAG and IWG structures was not problematic and the proactive and experienced approach of the EuroRom organisation based directly in Tuzla has been of immense importance and help. The adoption of the LAP with dedicated funds for its implementation on an annual basis is the culmination of ongoing efforts and meticulous and regular communication among diverse stakeholders and partners.

Interviews and focus group discussions confirmed that the ROMACTED methodology offers the right yet highly adaptable approach and philosophy and can be applied by municipalities irrespective of their advancement in Roma integration. Given the progress already achieved in the municipality prior to the ROMACTED Phase II, the local structures were able to focus on preserving the cultural heritage, traditions and customs. The achievements concerning the Romani language classes in the Tuzla canton mentioned above are remarkable.

The municipality, local NGOs and the Roma community seem to be well aware of the issues that need tackling in the coming months and years; their intended focus on Roma youth represents one example of such a direction. Going forward, however, interviewed stakeholders stressed the importance of direct investments and funding required to address some of the underlying issues (e.g. housing conditions).

7.6 Case study Doboј, Bosnia and Herzegovina

Introduction

The overall population of the Doboј municipality is 68,514 with estimated Roma population of 300 (0.4%); there are two Roma communities in the city area.⁴⁸ The municipality did not have any data available concerning education, housing, employment and healthcare of the Roma population and the municipal baseline survey was rather vague.

Interviews highlighted that the level of education is very low among the Roma population; many Roma students do not complete the primary level. As a result, the majority of the community are unemployed with the only source of income coming from collecting secondary raw materials.

The Roma population is concentrated in one settlement with about 45 families living along one street; there are nine additional areas where one to five Roma families live. The infrastructure of their housing is adequate although their premises are illegal which prevents any renovations and reconstruction.

The municipality has been recently involved in the project *Strengthening Trust and Cohesion in Communities in Bosnia and Herzegovina* with the financial support of the Service for Foreign Policy Instruments, *Strengthening the Role of the Ministry of Health in Bosnia and Herzegovina* initiative financed by the Swiss and Swedish Governments and implemented by UNDP in co-operation with the City of Doboј and the *LED in Bosnia and Herzegovina* project implemented by the Caritas Switzerland and Niras consortium on behalf of the Swiss Development Agency in co-operation with the City of Doboј.⁴⁹

Implementation of the ROMACTED methodology

The Doboј municipality is one of the newly added municipalities in Phase II and prior to 2021, Roma integration had not been at the forefront of its priorities. Interviews with municipal representatives confirmed the ROMACTED Programme is first of its kind being implemented. The beginning of the Programme coincided with political shifts at the municipal level and despite the expressed willingness, initial meetings were postponed due to personnel changes. The MoU was signed before the end of 2021 and a **Community Action Group** meeting was held attended by nine Roma persons (six women). To ensure visibility of the Programme and representation of all Roma settlements, numerous community meetings were organised. Special attention was given to inclusion of young people and women in the group.

As there were no CSOs actively engaged in the Roma community development in Doboј, the Roma population was rather passive and not used to voice their concerns and demands and as a result, more efforts (about 10-15 meetings with the community) were required to form a functioning CAG. At the same time, data and information regarding the Roma community and their challenges were limited and the municipality did not develop any strategic materials and action plans in relation to Roma integration. The decision to appoint two local facilitators to work in the Doboј municipality can be therefore commended – one facilitator kept working incessantly with the Roma community while the other concentrated his efforts on facilitating the discussions and communication among the institutions and the municipality. In this relation, the ROMACTED Focal Point from the EuroRom organisation played an essential role too in navigating the processes and procedures.

As mentioned above, it took several meetings with the local Roma community explaining the role and objectives of the CAG structure together with advocating for the development of a local action plan for Roma integration through strengthening the relationship between the Roma population and the municipality. The CAG was formalised in the middle of 2022 with the stable membership

⁴⁸ CoE. 2021. *ROMACTED baseline survey for Doboј*.

⁴⁹ CoE. 2021. *ROMACTED baseline survey for Doboј*.

of six Roma representatives (four women). As of October 2024, the CAG comprised approximately 11 members.

The initial meeting with institutional representatives did not take place before the second half of 2022 with the participation of ten persons out of which five were women. The proactive approach of the ROMACTED Focal Point was critical here in supporting and assisting this process. However, while relevant institutions showed willingness to be involved in the **Institutional Working Group**, they did not formally appoint designated members of staff to represent them and take accountability for the actions agreed. This caused a certain level of impatience among CAG members who were by now familiar with the ROMACTED methodology, and the next steps required (needs assessment, identifying priorities and drafting a LAP). They continued with regular meetings, however, no meetings with municipal and institutional officials took place. The IWG was formalised in late 2022 with representatives from the municipal administration, the Police, Employment Bureau, Centre for Social Work, Public Health Centre and also primary and secondary schools and a kindergarten. At the same time, the **Municipal Taskforce Group** was established covering the municipal administration, Public Health Centre, *Zlatni Tocak* Roma Association, Employment Bureau, all levels of education and six members of the CAG. As of October 2024, the IWG comprised about 12 members with the majority of them being women.

The **needs assessment** was also delayed although discussions about the needs of the community were regularly repeated at each CAG meeting with the housing, employment and assistance in education being among the major concerns. The CAG and IWG membership and participation fluctuated and caused challenges in continuation of the processes and steps stipulated by the ROMACTED methodology. For short-term priorities, provision of food and firewood to the most struggling Roma families was discussed and agreed on as well as provision of clothing and footwear for school children. Among the long-term priorities, reconstruction of several buildings and premises was prioritised, and also construction of a children's playground in the Roma settlement. The preparatory procedures for the development of the **Local Action Plan** for Roma started before the end of 2022 together with the preparation of application forms for two small grants' projects.

During this time, the CAG and IWG membership stabilised and demonstrated sufficient commitment and proactivity; for instance the Social Work Centre informed CAG members about support available through its provision of social services which resulted in a practical action undertaken and CAG members assisted the elderly persons in accessing them. Although the progress was rather slow due to challenges highlighted above, the LAP for Roma was drafted and submitted for the final approval by the Dobož Mayor at the end of 2023. This work was substantially supported by the ROMACTED Focal Point and a CoE expert designated for the LAP documentation.

Given the lack of strategic framework for Roma integration, the Dobož municipality did not allocate targeted financial resources. However, in the municipal annual budget, a specific budget line for minorities (including Roma) was present – for 2022, this amounted to 10,000 BAM;⁵⁰ the same amount was allocated for 2023. As of October 2024, the LAP was in the process of awaiting its adoption by the local government. It comprises four main goals, namely i) improvements in the housing and residential capacity of Roma premises, ii) determining conditions for employment of Roma, iii) improvements in social welfare of Roma and iv) improvements in their access to education. For the implementation of the LAP 2024-2027, 40,000 BAM⁵¹ was allocated annually.

As part of the ROMACTED Programme, several training opportunities were organised for CAG and IWG members and also facilitators. It was evident that given minimal previous involvement in similar initiatives, there was a great need for **capacity building** activities within the Dobož municipality. For instance, the Roma Responsive Budgeting attended by the Municipal Contact Point, Project Cycle Management for 11 MTG members, training on antigypsyism attended by

⁵⁰ approximately 5,100 EUR

⁵¹ approximately 20,500 EUR

eight IWG members and several CAG members detailed the definition, causes, consequences of antigypsyism as well as examples of mobilisation for action from practice. Participants agreed that more efforts should be directed towards reducing stereotypes, prejudices and discrimination against Roma by improving opportunities for their inclusion.

As identified through the needs assessment activities, the **small grants' projects** were targeted at education and healthcare. The first action, Technology in Service of Empowerment of Roma Children and Youth, was implemented in 2023 by the City of Dobož. Its key objective was to assist the educational process of 36 primary school and two secondary school students by providing them with tablets for their school use. Municipal officials and school authorities identified the best model for tablet distribution considering the highest number of enrolled Roma children. The distribution of tablets was accompanied by a monitoring visit by the ROMACTED Focal Point to ensure school headteachers are familiar with the key aim of this assistance whereby the tablets serve as a tool during the educational process in school and are available to the most vulnerable students, not only Roma.

The second action, Fighting Against COVID-19 Continues: Support for Roma Students and Parents in the Aftermath of COVID-19, was implemented for ten months in 2023 by the City Administration. Its objective was to engage a Roma mediator and tutors to increase the attendance rate and attainment of 36 Roma children in elementary schools. The Roma mediator acted as a bridge between the school, students and their parents to keep track of school attendance and provide support to resolve any ad hoc issues. As confirmed during focus group discussions, the Roma mediator proved essential in facilitating communication between Roma parents and the wider Roma community and municipal institutions. In close co-operation between the mediator and the school, 36 students for tutoring were selected and after obtaining their parents' consent, 90-minute tutoring sessions were organised for the duration of ten months within school premises.

At the same time, the project provided 36 school supplies and clothing packages to the most vulnerable students. Two laptops and two one-year scholarships were awarded directly to two Roma secondary school students. The project also targeted adults by including a health component through preventative medical examinations such as thyroid function tests for 20 Roma women, mammography for ten Roma women, prostate ultrasound for ten Roma men and a three-month diabetes blood test for 50 Roma men and women. As part of the project, several informative and educational sessions were organised on reproductive health, the importance of pre-school education and parental engagement and the topics of bullying and discrimination.

Interviews corroborated high relevance of the actions targeting access to education and attainment of Roma students. Through the work of the school mediator and two tutors, significant changes have been observed – Roma children have become better integrated while non-Roma students were introduced to Roma culture and traditions. IWG members confirmed that the impact was visible and both sides have benefitted from joint sessions, workshops and performances. Thanks to out of school activities, children became more motivated; similarly the tablets provided them with excitement and entertainment during the classes at school.

The initiatives focusing on education brought measurable outcomes and positive effects. In primary schools, originally 30 Roma children were registered while this number increased to 60 Roma students attending a primary school regularly. The secondary education is not compulsory and as a result, the majority of Roma children do not continue to this level. While originally, there was one Roma person who completed the secondary school, currently there are three Roma graduates with additional seven students still studying.

Results

In addition to the actions mentioned above, the Doboj municipality in co-operation with local partners have become mobilised and implemented a plethora of initiatives supporting the quality of life of its vulnerable population:

- roundtable discussions and celebrations to mark the International Roma Day (8 April), International Day of the Romani Language (5 November), Roma Genocide Remembrance Day (2 August) with representatives from the Roma community and local institutions were organised during which the Roma flag was raised at the City Council building - in collaboration with a local primary school and the City Library, lectures and performances about the Romani language, culture and history were held. The Romani language was of particular interest to the younger generation as it is not commonly used in the area of Doboj;
- the municipality procured firewood worth 10,000 BAM⁵² in collaboration with the EuroRom NGO to provide practical assistance to 47 most vulnerable Roma families during the winter season;
- the municipality contracted two additional school tutors to assist further 15-20 Roma children – positive feedback from both sides was received and the municipality has agreed to employ school mediators on a permanent basis;
- the Doboj municipality has further supported provision of school supplies packages to additional Roma children; it also distributed 36 sports packages (rucksacks, sports shoes, tracksuits) to school children so that they are able to take part in sporting activities and trainings;
- thanks to collaboration with the Roma mediator, a Roma association *Madara* was established with the financial support of the City of Doboj – a particularly proactive and committed young female CAG member became the Executive Director and works closely with local Roma women;
- the *Madara* association with the City of Doboj successfully applied for grants with the Youth Bank and received funds to equip the *Madara* office with furniture and necessary stationery;
- the *Madara* association with the City of Doboj initiated co-operation with the Red Cross to fund food packages for Roma children on a regular basis and enable nurses to visit vulnerable Roma persons in need of medical assistance; furthermore, co-operation with another organisation was established to provide books and clothing for Roma children;
- as a result of the mobilisation of the Roma community, there are two Roma candidates for City Councillors in the upcoming local elections;
- as of October 2024, there were four Roma persons employed by the City of Doboj;
- co-operation with the Doboj Health Centre and the implementation of health-focused activities have brought major positive results. In combination with previous efforts of the centre, the Doboj municipality is the first in Bosnia and Herzegovina with Roma persons accessing mental health services. In the last three years, they have registered up to 30 young Roma seeking assistance of a psychologist or a speech therapist.

Conclusions

The Doboj municipality had no prior experience of Roma integration projects similar to ROMACTED and it has grasped this opportunity with tremendous results. The initial facilitator's report noted a lack of good relations between the Roma and the municipality, among the Roma from different areas and generally, absence of trust and sense of belonging to community.

While the formation of the CAG, IWG and MTG structures was slow and further challenged by political developments in the municipality, huge efforts of two local facilitators, the ROMACTED Focal Point and the municipal commitment have brought its benefits and have translated into

⁵² approximately 5,100 EUR

numerous actions to improve the quality of life of the Roma and at the strategic level, they are now reflected in the LAP for Roma integration with allocated financial resources which is pending its adoption by the local government.

The evaluator's visit corroborated high relevance of the Programme and its effectiveness as it provided necessary guidance and structure to such an inexperienced municipality as Doboj. Local stakeholders were able to adapt it directly to their needs and focus their efforts on the areas of education and healthcare. Their focused approach have brought measurable and quantifiable outcomes through increased numbers of children attending primary and secondary schools, improved access of the Roma population to medical services including preventative exams. Some of the initiatives instigated by the Programme proved so helpful and effective that the municipality decided to continue with them through their own budgetary resources (e.g. school mediators). Furthermore, mobilisation of the community has brought excellent results in practice and *Madara*, a Roma NGO, was established with the financial support of the City of Doboj. Through this organisation, further funds and grants will be sourced and applied for. Overall, municipal and institutional representatives agreed that their expectations of the Programme have been exceeded.

The examples above indicate that sustainability of the Programme is high since all partners involved are fully aware of the tangible achievements and the structure of the LAP with associated budgetary resources provides the impetus needed for its continuation. Interviews confirmed that stakeholders are aware of the next steps in terms of their capacity building – more training opportunities on project management and grant application are needed, it is necessary to continue with educational and informative sessions targeted at the Roma population and also, stronger focus on Roma youth is intended in the future.

7.7 Case study Bijelo Polje, Montenegro

Introduction

Bijelo Polje is a municipality in Montenegro with the overall population of 46,051⁵³ with the estimated 360 of the Roma and Egyptian population (0.8%) concentrating in four settlements.⁵⁴ The baseline survey conducted in 2021 noted that the quality of housing is not satisfactory with inadequate infrastructure conditions, illegally built facilities and only a small number of legally owned dwellings.

The primary school attendance does not constitute a problem as approximately 85% of children between six and 15 years attend school regularly; the school drop-out rate reaches 10%.⁵⁵ Frequent migration of Roma families and a lack of parental interest in education are cited as the key reasons for leaving school education early. Furthermore, many Roma children are not familiar with the official Montenegrin language and struggle to follow the learning process.

It is estimated that only five out of 360 Roma and Egyptians are employed as they face significant discrimination; the majority of the population does not know how to apply for a job. The municipal assessment states that there are six Roma dwellings not connected to utilities and 25 dwellings are not able to pay for them.⁵⁶ The Roma population uses the services of the only health centre in the municipality of Bijelo Polje and the local community also receives outreach medical services.

It is estimated that nearly 25% of Roma left the municipality in the last five years with 2% returning.⁵⁷ The most common issues they face upon return include the need for social assistance, employment registration at the Employment Bureau and registering children in schools.

The municipality had not been involved in any initiatives supporting Roma and Egyptian integration and anti-discrimination; it has been a ROMACTED partner since 2018.

Implementation of the ROMACTED methodology

The initial meeting for Phase II of the Programme was held in mid-2021 and since the Bijelo Polje municipality had been involved in the previous phase, the **Community Action Group** formation was prompt. The initial membership comprised six Roma representatives with half of them being women; four members remained from Phase I. Their motivation was clear – to improve the quality of life in their settlements as they expressed during a focus group discussion. It is noteworthy to state that Roma women in Bijelo Polje are very active and dominant with their ideas as opposed to Roma men, a statement confirmed by the local facilitator. The MoU was signed shortly afterwards, and regular meetings of the CAG were organised. The relations and general dynamic of the group was reported as excellent; similarly the contacts with the wider Roma community were described as very good.

At the same time, the **Institutional Working Group** and **Municipal Taskforce Group** were established with representatives from the Secretariat of the Local Government, Municipal Roma Office, Centre for Social Work, Ministry of Internal Affairs, Health Centre, Employment Bureau, and a kindergarten, a primary school and local NGOs. While the relations with local authorities were assessed as good, their willingness and commitment was rather low which proved challenging during the initial phases of the Programme. On the other hand, the municipality has a functioning and active Roma Affairs Office that acts as an important connection and coordination element for Roma targeted activities. One of its employees is a Roma woman who feels very committed to Roma agenda and thanks to her position is now able to play an active part in majority of the Office's actions. As of October 2024, the IWG included about 12-15 members who

⁵³ 2011 Census

⁵⁴ CoE. 2021. *ROMACTED baseline survey for Bijelo Polje*.

⁵⁵ CoE. 2021. *ROMACTED baseline survey for Bijelo Polje*.

⁵⁶ CoE. 2021. *ROMACTED baseline survey for Bijelo Polje*.

⁵⁷ CoE. 2021. *ROMACTED baseline survey for Bijelo Polje*.

assessed their relations with the Roma community as good and felt they had improved significantly. They appreciated the ROMACTED methodology in its flexibility that can be adapted directly to their local needs.

The **needs assessment** activities were undertaken jointly, and the following short-term priorities were identified:

- to strengthen the CAG structure by including the most influential and educated members of the local community;
- to increase the enrolment of Roma children in pre-school education;
- to establish support services for students in primary schools;
- to submit a project proposal for land ownership allocation in the Strojtanica settlement;
- to remove temporary landfills and illegal garbage dump near the Strojtanica settlement;
- to address the problem of stray dogs.

The long-term priorities were based on the short-term ones and incorporated quantified indicators, for instance at least 50% of Roma children attending pre-school (later lowered to 30%), at least 90% of Roma children attending primary school, at least 50% of Roma children continuing their education to the secondary level (later revised to 30%). Other long-term objectives included a permanent solution of the housing situation of the Roma population and adoption of a systematic urban plan. Throughout the subsequent meetings and discussions, further objectives were added, for example a shared office space for local Roma NGOs and engagement of Roma mediators in the field of health and kindergarten.

The Bijelo Polje municipality had followed the previous **Local Action Plan for Roma Integration 2018-2022** and as it expired, CAG and IWG members planned to develop a new one. Interviews highlighted that the previous LAP did not fully reflect realistic needs of the Roma community, similarly the allocated budget covered five other LAPs. For the new LAP, there is a separate budget line allocated to the Roma Integration LAP amounting to 7,500 EUR on an annual basis.

The process of facilitating these discussions was accompanied by several **challenges**, namely the local elections in May 2022 and the potential misuse of the Roma agenda in the election campaign and the already mentioned low commitment of the municipality. The wider context of NGO support at the national level also created difficulties for the implementation of the Programme. The Government regularly funds selected NGOs, however, many of them do not possess necessary expertise to conduct activities for Roma integration. In such cases, Roma persons are viewed merely as participants of generic awareness-raising sessions that are not targeted to their needs and interests and as a result, the Roma community has gradually grown hesitant to external consultants and trainees and does not trust them. Furthermore, frequent meetings without tangible outcomes and activities implemented directly for the benefit of the Roma community are not sufficient to keep the momentum and commitment of CAG members and therefore, the delay caused by the external circumstances outlined above posed a major risk in this regard.

One of the actions agreed through ROMACTED structures was the organisation of the International Roma Day celebrations which proved successful – about 70 Roma men and women and 50 non-Roma citizens participated in five different activities. Subsequently, the International Day of the Romani Language (5 November) was marked as well as the International Day for the Eradication of Poverty (17 October).

Within the field of education, an intensive campaign to enrol Roma children in kindergarten was conducted and a mediator for working specifically with Roma children was contracted. This action was successful, and nine Roma children were registered for pre-school. To support this further, the municipality sent an official request to the Ministry of Education to fund transportation to kindergarten to sustain the attendance.

In relation to primary education, a school Roma mediator was pivotal in manifesting the huge benefits of this position in general. Elma Šahman had been working with Roma children for four years as a volunteer acting as a communication bridge between the school and students' parents,

supporting children with their homework, understanding of lessons and assisting them in overcoming the language barrier (most Roma children entering the first grade speak Romani). For her commitment and work, she won the annual Bijelo Polje Award for Volunteer Work (a first Roma woman to get this recognition) and was employed by the Ministry of Education to work as a school mediator on a permanent basis. Elma is one of the most active members of the CAG acting as a member of the IWG structure and a member of the Working Group for the development of the new LAP for Roma integration.

In relation to employment, with the support of the *Roma Movement* NGO and the Employment Bureau, four Roma women were employed as mediators in a kindergarten, the Social Work Centre and the local Health Centre, further two persons were employed with open-ended contracts, additional ten persons were employed with fixed contracts for six to nine months. Furthermore, seasonal employment of Roma in Podgorica and the coastal area have increased to 20 persons.

The CAG and IWG structures were fundamental in improving access to healthcare services for the Roma population. A Roma mediator was employed in the local Health Centre to act as a guide and combat the language barrier so that its services are more visible and accessible to the Roma community. Interviews confirmed the effectiveness of this approach and to sustain it, the municipality applied for assistance with the Ministry of Health to employ a Roma mediator permanently.

The majority of the defined short-term priorities have been solved, for example:

- a project for land ownership allocation in the Strojtanica settlement was submitted, a roundtable discussion was held;
- four children completing the primary school continue in their education and are enrolled at a secondary school. Since the involvement in the ROMACTED Programme, 20 Roma children have graduated a secondary vocational school (out of which 17 were girls). Prior to the involvement in the Programme, there were two Roma graduates only;
- the temporary landfill near the Strojtanica settlement was removed;
- an informative session with the Roma community on the consequences of the COVID-19 virus and the importance of vaccination took place.

Thanks to these initiatives and their positive results, the CAG has become visible across Montenegro and many actors from other areas seek co-operation with it. At the same time, these results have boosted and encouraged Roma's initiative and proactive approach. With the prompt resolving of the issues above, the CAG and IWG agreed on new short-term priorities that are directly linked with the already tried and tested approaches, for instance to secure a permanent Roma mediator at the Employment Bureau and the Social Work Centre by applying at the Ministry of Social Affairs and Care. The planned number of employed Roma persons was increased from four persons by additional ten persons. An initiative to form and register a new Roma Club and to organise a seminar for the Roma on the topic of Public Representation and Advocacy were also added to short-term priorities.

The list of long-term objectives has also been revised and new actions were added, for instance:

- to identify a suitable facility in the Strojtanica settlement for info sessions, trainings, educational programmes, doctor's visits, after-school support to students;
- construction of temporary barracks to relocate five Roma families from their improvised and unsuitable premises that lack water and electricity;
- to create a programme supporting mental health and fight against all forms of addiction;
- to minimise leaving and returning of Roma relatives to and from abroad;
- to look for ways for young Roma men and women to be included in cultural, artistic and sports societies.

As part of the ROMACTED Programme, the Bijelo Polje municipality implemented two **short projects** that were closely interlinked. While the first one, Roma Office in the Municipality Bijelo Polje, focused on obtaining a suitable facility for the Roma Office, the second one, EU for Roma,

Roma for EU, planned to secure the necessary inventory for it. The Roma Office is located in the Strojtanica settlement. Although it is the largest settlement, it is not within the proximity of the remaining three Roma settlements and some individual CAG members did not find this helpful. At the same time, the facility is rather small and can host maximum of six persons. Although it was successfully used for vaccination initiatives and preventative medical check-ups of blood pressure, glucose levels and so on, it is unsuitable for medium to big sessions and workshops. Overall, the interviewed community members were reserved about outcomes of these projects, and in their view, they do not represent the key examples of their co-operation and joint efforts.

Results

As already outlined in the numerous examples above, the Bijelo Polje municipality has been very active in implementing initiatives focusing on improving the quality of life of its Roma citizens. The collaboration at the level of local institutions, the municipality and the local Roma population proved very fruitful, and they were compelled to update and develop their priorities' list with new objectives and actions. In addition to the ones highlighted above, the following results have been also achieved:

- the beneficial role of the Roma mediator in the local Health Centre was further corroborated during a UNICEF project that focused on increasing the vaccination levels in the Roma population. In Bijelo Polje, tremendous results were achieved during one month when the immunisation level was increased by 30%. This was supported by Roma mediators in each Roma settlement, awareness sessions on the importance of vaccination, specialist doctors visiting the community. This action was part of the Health Strategy within the municipal LAP.
- transportation to schools provided for Roma children has had a positive impact on the school attendance. The same approach was followed for pre-school education and given the positive effects, the municipality is currently lobbying for free transportation to both pre-school and primary levels by applying to the Ministry of Education.
- the relationship with the Roma community has significantly improved and so has their involvement in sports, culture and access to education and healthcare;
- as a result of mobilisation of the Roma community, three new local NGOs have been registered in Bijelo Polje and become visible at the national level – *Roma from the North*, *Roma Movement* and *Roma Culture Club RoCK*;
- through the IWG structure, a child with special educational needs with autism was identified. Thanks to the multi-institutional approach and direct collaboration between the local Health Centre and the Centre for Assistance with Developmental Challenges, the boy now attends a primary school where he is supported by a designated teaching assistant.
- as a result of awareness sessions and info workshops, a Roma family have become interested in professional parenting and subsequently, has started to provide foster care.

Conclusions

The Bijelo Polje municipality had been able to draw on its several years' experience of the ROMACTED Programme and has implemented numerous successful initiatives with positive results for the local Roma and Egyptian community. As confirmed during interviews and focus group discussions with municipal officials and CAG members, the Programme has exceeded their expectations and helped them approach Roma integration in a systematic and structured way. Both sides confirmed that communication and coordination had not been as open and regular as it is at present.

Despite minor challenges in the process of formation of CAG, IWG and MTG structures, their multi-institutional approach have brought several significant and measurable outcomes that may be utilised for the further development of Roma integration and empowerment. Within education, the work of school mediators has been extremely effective and as a result, attendance rates in pre-school, primary and secondary levels of education have increased. Similarly in the field of health

and employment, the municipality is able to evidence the positive impact with verified data. The efficiency of the local approach is also demonstrated in the fact that the priorities' list had to be revised with new objectives added. It is also commendable that the new LAP for Roma integration includes dedicated budgetary resources.

Sustainability prospects are good as the new LAP with its allocated funds presents a way forward for improving lives of the Roma community and at the same time, municipal and institutional officials are fully recognisant of the tangible outcomes already achieved. At the same time, Roma representatives have adopted a proactive and steadfast approach in identifying solutions that bring specific benefits for their local community.

7.8 Case study Berane, Montenegro

Introduction

Berane is a municipality with the overall population of 28,739⁵⁸ with the estimated 701 of the Roma and Egyptian population (2.4%) living mostly in four settlements.⁵⁹ As per the baseline survey conducted in 2021, the Roma and Egyptian children typically did not attend pre-school education and only 50% of primary age children attended school. The school drop-out reached 3% with child marriages being the key reason.⁶⁰ The school infrastructure was adequate, and two mediators were employed to support Roma and Egyptian children in the learning process.

Similarly to the municipality of Bijelo Polje, the majority of the Roma and Egyptian population was unemployed; only five persons had income from work. Illegal housing was a major problem concerning 33 dwellings; 80% of Roma and Egyptian households were not able to pay for utilities.⁶¹

Although there is a health centre in the proximity of Roma and Egyptian settlements, about 80% of the population were registered with a family doctor. Estimated 25 families (approx. 125 persons) left the municipality in the last five years with four families (approx. 25 persons) returning.⁶² The most common issues they face upon return include the unemployment, health and social care challenges.

The municipality of Berane developed a Local Action Plan for the Integration of Roma and Egyptians for 2019-2023. The municipality has been involved in two initiatives supporting the Roma and Egyptian integration and anti-discrimination, namely *By Caring against Prejudice* and *Active Measures for the Social Inclusion of Roma And Egyptians in Berane*, both supported by the Ministry for Human and Minority Rights. The Berane municipality has been a ROMACTED partner since 2018.

Implementation of the ROMACTED methodology

The Berane municipality had been involved in the ROMACTED Phase I and the appointment of the Municipal Contact Point was prompt. The municipality had developed the Local Action Plan for the Integration of Roma and Egyptians in the Municipality of Berane 2019-2023. Upon its expiry, a Working Group for the development of a new one was established.

The formation of the **Community Action Group** was rather swift with the initial membership of eight (two women), and the first meetings took place before the end of 2021. The initial trimestral report noted that the local Roma community is divided on many grounds and given the severe challenges the Roma are facing (extreme poverty, few persons employed, low education levels), it is difficult to mobilise the community that needs urgent material support of food, clothing and firewood. While the relations within the CAG were assessed as positive, there was a need to include more influential individuals. Their relationship with local authorities was assessed as good although their commitment was considered low.

As of October 2024, the CAG membership comprised up to 15 representatives. As transpired through interviews and focus group discussions, their key motivation is to help their community as they are best placed to know what the major problems and issues are. They did not express any regret in undertaking this work voluntarily as they see themselves as role models for the younger generation and the wider community. Appreciating the benefits of the common dialogue and open discussion, they intend to continue with these gatherings without the formal requirement stipulated by the Programme.

⁵⁸ 2011 Census

⁵⁹ CoE. 2021. *ROMACTED baseline survey for Berane*.

⁶⁰ CoE. 2021. *ROMACTED baseline survey for Berane*.

⁶¹ CoE. 2021. *ROMACTED baseline survey for Berane*.

⁶² CoE. 2021. *ROMACTED baseline survey for Berane*.

The **Institutional Working Group** was established smoothly with representatives from the municipality of Berane, the local Health Centre, Social Work Centre and elementary schools. While some representatives from Phase I changed, the institutions remained, and it was not too problematic to build individual relationships with new members. In October 2024, the IWG comprised approximately ten members.

At the same time, the **Municipal Taskforce Group** was formed with good representation from the CAG and local institutions. As clarified through interviews and focus group discussions, co-operation among many of these institutions is stipulated by law (e.g. the Social Work Centre is obliged to work closely with local primary schools, similarly the Ministry of Interior must co-operate with the Social Work Centre and the Police), communication and meetings facilitated through ROMACTED provided them with deeper understanding and visibility of underlying issues in relation to the Roma and Egyptian community and as a result, their networking has led to measures and solutions that are targeted more effectively.

The community and municipal **needs assessments** were undertaken in the first half of 2022 and the following short-term priorities were identified:

- further mobilise the Roma community to extend the CAG membership;
- establish a working relationship with institutions dealing with the prevention of begging and women and children abuse;
- submit an initiative to establish a municipal Roma Affairs Office;
- initiate a registration of an NGO protecting Roma women and children;
- increase the vaccination levels in the Roma community;
- explore the reasons behind the unregulated legal status of a large number of the Roma and Egyptian community and research the extent of early marriages;
- undertake various improvement actions in Roma settlements.

The last objective of improvement actions within Roma neighbourhoods applies mainly to the largest Riverside settlement which had been built as an emergency solution for refugees fleeing from Kosovo during 1998-1999. However, years later, the municipality does not have a suitable location where to move these inhabitants, most of them without legal documentation. The illegal status of their dwellings hampers any reconstruction works that are long overdue (electricity, lighting) in this overcrowded and inadequate settlement. The situation is complicated further by its close location to the river Lim which causes regular floods leading to dangerous landslides and outbreaks of infectious diseases.

For the long-term objectives, no further priorities were selected but instead, the short-term ones have been re-formulated with a planned outcome defined – for example, at least two active Roma NGOs established, office space in the Riverside settlement renovated and fully equipped. During the subsequent reporting period, new problematic areas were added such as a lack of school mediators, sewage problems in the Riverside settlement, a lack of electricity and asphalted roads, low pre-school registration levels. Within the priorities' list, ambitious objectives were defined:

- employment or self-employment of at least 20% of Roma and Egyptian population;
- arrangement of legal documents for at least 80% of persons that are in the process of obtaining citizenship;
- construction of new housing units for young married couples;
- engagement of mediators in kindergarten and primary schools;
- six police officers will be accommodated in the Tallum neighbourhood;
- one Roma or Egyptian person will be hired for the period of five months in the shared office in the Riverside neighbourhood.

The local facilitator noted existing tensions between two Roma settlements and decreased level of trust by the local community. Furthermore, external circumstances posed additional challenges triggered by the local elections resulting in a new Mayor taking office and the low commitment displayed by the municipality. Further challenges occurred in 2023 with the parliamentary and

presidential elections taking place. In 2024, further political changes have caused delays in the development of the **Local Action Plan 2025-2028**. Its defined implementation period reflects the current governing situation in Berane with new municipal elections being scheduled for December 2024; the municipality has been without an acting Mayor and Deputy Mayor for four months. There is no allocated budget specifically ring-fenced for Roma and Egyptian integration.

However, the overall co-operation proved effective, and the local facilitator assessed the relations between the Roma and Egyptian community and the municipality as good; municipal commitment and willingness to support integration efforts have gradually improved.

The joint actions targeting education have proved extremely effective. In pre-school education in Berane, a Roma mediator has been hired to overcome language barriers since 2022 when the first pre-school mediator in Montenegro started working. Originally, this was financed by a Roma NGO for the duration of three months, subsequently the municipality took over these expenses and later, municipal efforts to systematise this position by applying to the Ministry of Education to fund it permanently were successful. At the same time, the municipality started organising intensive campaigns to increase the attendance of Roma children in pre-school education by holding informative sessions and workshops for parents. Simultaneously, funds from the Roma Education Fund were used for free transportation to and from kindergarten from all settlements. The results are astonishing – in 2022, 38 Roma children were enrolled in pre-school, in 2023 this increased to 58; in October 2024 there were 62 Roma children attending it regularly. These achievements are remarkable considering the pre-school education is not compulsory in Montenegro. This is an example of an initiative that originated within IWG meetings and discussions, and through its members' proactivity and determination, has now become an integral part of the pre-school system in Berane. In this regard, further long-term benefits may be expected as countless research studies have repeatedly confirmed the huge impact of pre-school education on children's school attainment at the subsequent educational levels.

A similar approach was applied to primary education and in several primary schools in the municipality, school mediators were hired and free transportation to and from school was provided. School mediators have a designated office for their use where children are able to do their homework while waiting for the scheduled van to take them home. Roma children are integrated with non-Roma students. Berane primary schools also benefit from teams designated to deal with drop-outs whereby after children's three-day absence their parents are contacted as well as the Social Work Centre and the Police. This mechanism proved effective in preventing early marriages and was recognised within the LAP as a recommendation for other municipalities. The structure and role of this dedicated team was approved by the Ministry of Education and the Ministry of Human and Minority Rights. Again, the positive influence of Roma children regularly attending primary school extends beyond their educational attainment. Municipal officials emphasised that behaviour of these children has changed – being integrated with and starting friendships with other students, their attitude has become more open and perceptive.

Positive results have been achieved in relation to secondary education too. While during the period of 2014-2019, there were no reported secondary students from the Roma and Egyptian population, in October 2024, there were eight graduates and further 16 students still studying, one of them at a secondary medical school.

Actions targeting Roma employment proved more difficult given the general context of the Berane municipality and its low and underdeveloped status according to the index of development and competitiveness. Despite this, with close co-operation with the Employment Bureau, five Roma and Egyptian persons were employed for two to three months; two Roma women were employed in a primary school for three months, three women were employed for two months with one of them continuing to work as a school mediator.

Various workshops and info sessions with local actors such as the Social Work Centre, Health Centre, Police were held on the following topics:

- importance of healthcare and the impact of the COVID-19 on health and behaviour;
- social protection and child protection rights;
- importance of regular kindergarten attendance;
- informative session on the subject of the Census 2023;
- domestic violence.

As part of the ROMACTED Programme Phase II, the Berane municipality implemented two **small grants'** projects both focusing on adaptation and equipment of a multi-functional facility in the Riverside settlement. Interviews confirmed that these premises are beneficial for providing health services for local community members including informative and educational activities and workshops, vaccinations, paediatrician's visits or assistance with legal documents and forms.

Results

In addition to the achievements highlighted above, there are many other examples of actions initiated through the ROMACTED structures and meetings, for instance:

- illegal landfill in the Riverside settlement has been cleaned, the municipality provided the local community with tools, communal waste is disposed of regularly now;
- during the floods of the river Lim in the proximity of the Riverside neighbourhood, the municipality provided the affected families with basic hygiene and food packages;
- *the Association of Roma and Egyptian Support* NGO together with the Social Work Centre and the local Orthodox Church (the association *Kolo srpskih sestara*) donated clothes and shoes for the residents of Riverside and Talum;
- after a tragic accident with a young Roma girl drowning, the Berane municipality cancelled a planned concert that was due to take place over three consecutive days and declared one day of mourning instead. This had a profound effect on the Roma community who felt commiserated with and an equal part of the wider local population.

In terms of individual and institutional benefits, the direct link between the Berane municipality and the Roma and Egyptian community was highlighted as key. It is unfortunate that the local government is unstable with the leadership changing regularly as it is one of the biggest risks associated to sustainability of these efforts and initiatives.

Conclusions

The Berane municipality has continued successfully with the multi-agency approach established in the Phase I of the Programme and the initiation of the subsequent Phase II was smooth. While the interest and commitment of the municipality had been good, the implementation was hampered by frequent political shifts and changes at the governing level.

Nevertheless, the required structures of CAG, IWG and MTG were established successfully and based on their ideas and suggestions, outstanding outcomes have been achieved. Most notably in the field of pre-school education in which Berane is the first municipality incentivising this level of education across the whole Montenegro. Intensive campaigns and persistent efforts in securing mediators and free transportation are reflected in increased pre-school participation rates. Similar results have been achieved in primary and secondary education.

The LAP for Roma and Egyptian integration has been drafted and is awaiting its official adoption in January 2025 after the appointed local government is in place following the municipal elections at the end of 2024. The unstable political situation poses major risks to sustainability of the outcomes already achieved, however, systemisation of the positions of mediators might counteract it.

Given the complex challenges of the Roma and Egyptian population in Berane in view of its historical development, it is important that the municipality is able to source direct investment funds to address the most severe issues, for instance relocation of the inadequate Riverside settlement.

7.9 List of interviews and focus group discussions

Konak municipality, Türkiye	
Focus group discussion with IWG representatives 10. 6. 2024	
7 representatives	
Focus group discussion with CAG and local Roma NGOs representatives 10. 6. 2024	
7 representatives	
Akhisar municipality, Türkiye	
Focus group discussion with IWG representatives 11. 6. 2024	
11 representatives	
Focus group discussion with CAG representatives 11. 6. 2024	
4 representatives	
Interview with the Akhisar Mayor 11. 6. 2024	
2 representatives	
Interview with a local NGO representative 12. 6. 2024	
2 representatives	
Visit to Kayalıoğlu Children and Women's Home 12. 6. 2024	
9 representatives	
Other interviews in Türkiye	
2 interviewees (ROMACTED Programme management team, EU Delegation to Türkiye)	
Kostolac municipality, Serbia	
Interview with the Kostolac Mayor 10. 9. 2024	
3 representatives	
Focus group discussion with CAG and IWG representatives 10. 9. 2024	
14 representatives	
Focus group discussion with local NGOs representatives 10. 9. 2024	
7 representatives	

Piroć municipality, Serbia
Focus group discussion with the Piroć municipality and IWG representatives 12. 9. 2024
8 representatives
Focus group discussion with CAG representatives - Visit to the Roma Cultural Centre, Piroć 12. 9. 2024
17 representatives
Other interviews in Serbia
5 interviewees (ROMACTED Programme management team, Ministry for Human and Minority Rights and Social Dialogue, EU Delegation to Serbia, Foundation BFPE for Responsible Society)
Tuzla municipality, Bosnia and Herzegovina
Focus group discussion with the Tuzla municipality representatives 24. 9. 2024
4 representatives
Focus group discussion with IWG representatives 24. 9. 2024
10 representatives
Focus group discussion with CAG representatives 25. 9. 2024
7 representatives
Doboj municipality, Bosnia and Herzegovina
Interview with the Doboj Municipality Contact Point 26. 9. 2024
2 representatives
Focus group discussion with IWG representatives 26. 9. 2024
9 representatives
Focus group discussion with CAG representatives 26. 9. 2024
6 representatives
Other interviews in Bosnia and Herzegovina
5 interviewees (ROMACTED Programme management team, Ministry for Human Rights and Refugees, EU Delegation to Bosnia and Herzegovina, Euro Rom)

Bijelo Polje municipality, Montenegro	
Focus group discussion with the Bijelo Polje municipality representatives 9. 10. 2024	
5 representatives	
Focus group discussion with IWG, Roma NGOs and other local actors 9. 10. 2024	
8 representatives	
Focus group discussion with CAG representatives 9. 10. 2024	
7 representatives	
Berane municipality, Montenegro	
Focus group discussion with the Berane municipality representatives 10. 10. 2024	
5 representatives	
Focus group discussion with IWG, Roma NGOs and other local actors 10. 10. 2024	
10 representatives	
Focus group discussion with CAG representatives 10. 10. 2024	
6 representatives	
Other interviews in Montenegro	
5 interviewees (ROMACTED Programme management team, Ministry of Human and Minority Rights, EU Delegation to Montenegro, Young Roma, Civic Alliance)	
Programme level interviews	
6 interviewees (Council of Europe, DG NEAR)	

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7.11 Evaluation team

The evaluation was conducted by a **senior expert** who meets the qualification requirements and offers additional assets, highly relevant to this assignment.

Mrs Lucia Ulbrikova of ERUDIO has sound evaluation and review analysis expertise not only due to her recent evaluation assignments but also thanks to her more than seven years' experience in the Department for Education and the National College for Leadership of Schools and Children's Services (United Kingdom). She has excellent analytical, reporting and communication skills, dealing with various stakeholders, designing, implementing and assessing projects and programmes. Since 2019 when she joined ERUDIO, Lucia has evaluated major EU-funded interventions of social inclusion of Roma communities in Slovakia (e.g. within the Operational Programme Human Resources 2014-2020 funded through the European Social Fund). Lucia has been working on various evaluation and research assignments, often as a team leader, for instance for the European Commission, Cedefop, the Ministry of Education of the Slovak Republic, DVV International and the CoE.

ERUDIO is a research and consultancy company based in Prievidza, Slovakia. The expertise of the company covers mainly the sectors of education, employment, social policy and culture, with a profound competence in evaluation, monitoring, policy analysis and participative programming. Many projects include human rights aspects and interventions directly supporting refugees, migrants, displaced persons, Roma and other vulnerable groups.

Since its foundation in 2003, ERUDIO has successfully completed around 100 assignments in 17 countries in Europe, Central Asia and the MENA region, working for global actors such as the European Commission, the United Nations, and the CoE, for national and regional governments as well as for local organisations. Since 2016, ERUDIO is a member of the European Network for Social and Economic Research.

7.12 Evaluation matrix

Evaluation questions	Evaluation sub-questions	Measure(s)/ Indicator(s)	Data collection instruments/ Data analysis	Data sources
RELEVANCE				
1. To what extent did ROMACTED Phase II respond to the needs of the Roma communities and local authorities in the Beneficiaries, including through support to financial planning, small grants and COVID-19 mitigation measures?	1.1 To what extent are the Programme objectives relevant and adequate?	Relevance of Programme activities in relation to defined Programme results: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Local authorities have increased their institutional commitment to inclusion of Roma concerns in local plans and budgets ○ Roma populations in local municipalities covered by the Programme have enhanced their participation in local policy and decision making ○ Successful local development actions have contributed to improve the quality of life for Roma and to reduce the gap between Roma and non-Roma ○ Concrete measures and plans are established to reduce the negative impact of the COVID-19 crisis in the Roma communities 	Desk research Interviews/focus group discussions <i>Qualitative data analysis – narrative analysis</i>	Programme documentation Relevant EU strategies, documents CoE Programme Management Team CoE experts Representatives of EU Delegations Representatives of NRCPs
	1.2 To what extent did ROMACTED Phase II meet the development and planning needs of the relevant authorities, including fund allocations, for their overall work with Roma communities? Have any gaps been identified?	Alignment of Programme activities with the needs of target groups Participation of municipalities and local institutions in the Programme Participation of the Roma community in the Programme	Desk research Interviews/focus group discussions Online questionnaire <i>Qualitative data analysis – narrative analysis, intervention logic, case study approach</i> <i>Quantitative data analysis</i>	Programme documentation CoE Programme Management Team CoE experts CoE Programme Field Staff Representatives of all municipalities involved Representatives of CAGs Representatives of Support Organisations Representatives of other local actors as relevant
	1.3 What was the demand from target groups to take part in the Programme (municipalities, local institutions)?	Participation of municipalities, local institutions, the Roma community in the Programme	Desk research Interviews/focus group discussions	Programme documentation CoE Programme Management Team CoE Programme Field Staff

Evaluation questions	Evaluation sub-questions	Measure(s)/ Indicator(s)	Data collection instruments/ Data analysis	Data sources
			<i>Qualitative data analysis – narrative analysis</i>	
2. How significant is the Programme for building up capacity and stimulating the empowerment of Roma communities in the Beneficiaries?	2.1 How significant are the Programme activities for individual target groups?	(Self)assessment of the importance of Programme activities	Desk research Interviews/focus group discussions Online questionnaire <i>Qualitative data analysis – narrative analysis, intervention logic, case study approach</i> <i>Quantitative data analysis</i>	Programme documentation CoE Programme Management Team CoE experts CoE Programme Field Staff Representatives of all municipalities involved Representatives of CAGs Representatives of Support Organisations Representatives of other local actors as relevant
	2.2 Was ROMACTED relevant to the EU integration process?	Alignment of Programme activities with the pre-accession process and requirements	Desk research Interviews/focus group discussions <i>Qualitative data analysis – narrative analysis</i>	Programme documentation Relevant EU strategies, documents CoE Programme Management Team Representatives of EU Delegations Representatives of NRCPs
COHERENCE				
3. To what extent did ROMACTED use synergies and interlinkages with other interventions carried out by Roma NGOs, relevant domestic authorities, and international stakeholders? (External coherence)	3.1 How did the Programme implementation ensure complementarities with other interventions?	Evidence of complementarity with other interventions Effectiveness of awareness raising activities Strength and diversity of partnerships	Desk research Interviews/focus group discussions	Programme documentation Relevant EU strategies, documents CoE Programme Management Team CoE experts Representatives of Support Organisations Representatives of other local actors as relevant
	3.2 Have any synergies at local, national and/or international level been identified and utilised?	Evidence of synergies with other interventions Unexpected effects identified	<i>Qualitative data analysis – narrative analysis</i>	
4. To what extent did ROMACTED use synergies and interlinkages with other programmes, projects and	4.1 How did the Programme implementation ensure complementarities with other interventions?	Evidence of complementarity with other interventions Effectiveness of awareness raising activities Strength and diversity of partnerships	Desk research Interviews/focus group discussions	Programme documentation Relevant EU strategies, documents CoE Programme Management Team CoE experts

Evaluation questions	Evaluation sub-questions	Measure(s)/ Indicator(s)	Data collection instruments/ Data analysis	Data sources
actions implemented by the Council of Europe and the EU, and other donors? (Internal coherence)	4.2 Have any synergies at local, national and/or international level been identified and utilised?	Evidence of synergies with other interventions Unexpected effects identified	<i>Qualitative data analysis – narrative analysis</i>	Representatives of EU Delegations Representatives of NRCPs
EFFECTIVENESS				
5. To what extent has the Programme implementation been successful?	5.1 To what extent have the Programme outputs been achieved?	Level of achievement of defined Programme outputs	Desk research Interviews/focus group discussions Online questionnaire <i>Qualitative data analysis – narrative analysis, intervention logic, case study approach</i> Quantitative data analysis	Programme documentation CoE Programme Management Team CoE Programme Field Staff Representatives of all municipalities involved Representatives of CAGs Representatives of Support Organisations Representatives of other local actors as relevant
	5.2 What progress has been made towards the achievement of the expected outcomes?	Level of achievement of defined Programme outcomes: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ CAGs established and functioning ○ joint action plans developed and being implemented ○ capacity training delivered ○ small grant projects opportunities identified and being implemented ○ institutional knowledge in relation to the Roma community and their inclusion increased 		
	5.3 What are the reasons for the achievement or non-achievement of the expected outcomes?	Level of achievement of defined Programme outcomes Identification of factors affecting the Programme implementation		
	5.4 What internal and external factors have affected the project implementation?	Internal and external enabling and hindering factors		
	5.5 To what extent did the involvement of the Support Organisations contribute to the effectiveness of the Programme?	The extent of impact of the expertise of the Support Organisations selected through a call for grants on the Programme implementation in individual Beneficiaries		
	5.6 How effective was the contribution of local facilitators to the overall process throughout four steps of ROMACTED methodology?	The extent of impact of local facilitators and their ability to identify key protagonists and opportunities in the local field on the Programme implementation in individual Beneficiaries		

Evaluation questions	Evaluation sub-questions	Measure(s)/ Indicator(s)	Data collection instruments/ <i>Data analysis</i>	Data sources
	5.7 To what extent did the COVID-19 response provided by the Programme contribute to the recovery measures in the Roma communities?	Effectiveness of the support provided to respond to budgetary challenges related to the COVID-19 recovery		
	5.8 How did the post-COVID-19 response reach the most vulnerable individuals and groups within the Roma communities?	Effectiveness of the support provided to the most vulnerable target groups		
6. How did the Programme Beneficiaries and target groups benefit from the implementation of ROMACTED Phase II?	6.1 What were the short-term benefits of the Programme for the Beneficiaries and target groups?	The extent to which the Programme Beneficiaries and target groups have benefitted from the Programme activities	Desk research Interviews/focus group discussions Online questionnaire <i>Qualitative data analysis – narrative analysis, intervention logic, case study approach</i> <i>Quantitative data analysis</i>	Programme documentation CoE Programme Management Team CoE Programme Field Staff Representatives of all municipalities involved Representatives of CAGs Representatives of Support Organisations Representatives of other local actors as relevant
	6.2 What were the long-term benefits of the Programme for the Beneficiaries and target groups? Have any systemic solutions been identified?	The extent to which the Programme Beneficiaries and target groups have benefitted from the Programme activities		
7. To what extent has the Programme implementation reflected the horizontal principles of equality and non-discrimination?	7.1 How is the principle of gender equality and participation of women reflected in the implementation of ROMACTED?	Evidence of application of the horizontal principles of equality and non-discrimination	Desk research Interviews/focus group discussions Online questionnaire <i>Qualitative data analysis – narrative analysis, intervention logic, case study approach</i> <i>Quantitative data analysis</i>	Programme documentation CoE Programme Management Team CoE Programme Field Staff Representatives of all municipalities involved Representatives of CAGs Representatives of Support Organisations Representatives of other local actors as relevant
	7.2 How is the principle of Human Rights Approach, particularly the participation of vulnerable groups within the Roma communities applied in the implementation of ROMACTED?	Evidence of application of the horizontal principles of equality and non-discrimination		

EFFICIENCY				
8. To what extent has the implementation of the Programme been efficient?	8.1 How effective was the ROMACTED set-up of the field process and of the implementation team, including all the phases in accordance with the ROMACTED methodology?	Effectiveness and efficiency of individual phases of the ROMACTED process: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ preparing the process ○ assessing needs and prioritising ○ adopting a joint action plan ○ funding and project implementation 	Desk research Interviews/focus group discussions Online questionnaire <i>Qualitative data analysis – narrative analysis, intervention logic, case study approach</i> Quantitative data analysis	Programme documentation CoE Programme Management Team CoE Programme Field Staff Representatives of all municipalities involved Representatives of Support Organisations
	8.2 To what extent have the local authorities committed to continuing to provide similar support to the Programme beneficiaries and in general to the Roma population?	Level of commitment and ownership of local authorities Strength and diversity of partnerships		
	8.3 Could the same results have been achieved with less resources? Could more results have been achieved with the same resources?	Efficiency of Programme resources Identification of value-added solutions and approaches Application of the value for money principle		
IMPACT				
9. To what extent has the Programme been effective in building up capacity and stimulating the empowerment of Roma communities in the Beneficiaries?	9.1 What impact of Programme activities on individual target groups has been identified?	The extent to which target groups have benefitted from the Programme activities: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ launching events, workshops ○ mapping stakeholders ○ setting up relevant local structures ○ training of the Roma community members ○ local communities' assessment including their capacities, needs and priorities ○ baseline surveys ○ developing and adopting joint actions plans ○ implementing short and medium-term actions ○ assessment of funding opportunities ○ preparation and submission of relevant projects and their implementation ○ monitoring and evaluation of the implementation of actions ○ regional thematic workshops, visits, high level events ○ raising awareness of the Programme 	Desk research Interviews/focus group discussions Online questionnaire <i>Qualitative data analysis – narrative analysis, intervention logic, case study approach</i> Quantitative data analysis	Programme documentation CoE Programme Management Team CoE Programme Field Staff Representatives of all municipalities involved Representatives of CAGs Representatives of Support Organisations Representatives of other local actors as relevant Representatives of EU Delegations Representatives of NRCPs

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> o establishment of the Programme Regional Steering Committee 		
	9.2 Are the Programme activities conducive to combating antigypsyism and discrimination at the local level?	Assessment of potential of the Programme activities to contribute to reduced antigypsyism and discrimination in the selected municipalities		
	9.3 What unexpected positive/negative effects of the Programme implementation have been identified?	Identification and assessment of unexpected effects		
10. What is the number and type of short-term and long-term systemic solutions created as a result of ROMACTED Phase II?	10.1 To what extent is the inclusion of Roma in decision-making processes ensured at the institutional level (through municipal decisions, by-laws and other relevant documents)?	Evidence of processes and structures created to ensure the inclusion of Roma in decision making	Desk research Interviews/focus group discussions Online questionnaire	Programme documentation CoE Programme Management Team CoE Programme Field Staff Representatives of all municipalities involved
	10.2 To what extent did the ROMACTED intervention contribute to better allocation of local funds, in line with the principles of Roma Responsive Budgeting?	Evidence of application of the Roma Responsive Budgeting and evidence of its benefits	<i>Qualitative data analysis – narrative analysis, intervention logic, case study approach</i>	Representatives of CAGs Representatives of Support Organisations Representatives of other local actors as relevant
	10.3 To what extent have the Programme interventions related to COVID-19 and disaster-risk management had an impact on decreasing vulnerability of Roma in relation to the overall population?	Benefits of the support provided in relation to COVID-19 Impact of the support provided on target groups	<i>Quantitative data analysis</i>	
SUSTAINABILITY				
11. To what extent are the Programme outcomes and positive impact sustainable?	11.1 To what extent did the process, structures (Community Action Groups, Local Action Plans and other relevant policies) and benefits of the Programme continue at local level after the finalisation of ROMACTED Phase II?	Evidence of commitment and ownership of the local actors Strength and diversity of partnerships Evidence of sustainability measures applied	Desk research Interviews/focus group discussions Online questionnaire	Programme documentation CoE Programme Management Team CoE Programme Field Staff Representatives of all municipalities involved
	11.2 What are the prospects of sustainability after ROMACTED II, and what measures could be implemented now to enhance the prospects for sustainability?	Evidence of commitment and ownership of the local actors Strength and diversity of partnerships Evidence of sustainability measures applied	<i>Qualitative data analysis – narrative analysis, intervention logic, case study approach</i>	Representatives of CAGs Representatives of Support Organisations Representatives of other local actors as relevant
	11.3 What were the major factors which influenced the achievement or non-achievement of sustainability of the ROMACTED actions/process?	Identification of factors affecting the Programme sustainability Identification and assessment of unexpected effects	<i>Quantitative data analysis</i>	Representatives of EU Delegations Representatives of NRCPs