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ABBREVIATIONS

ASPA	Albanian School of Public Administration
CAG	Community Action Group
CAHROM	Committee of Experts on Roma and Traveller Issues
CoE	Council of Europe
CSO	Civil Society Organisation
DG NEAR	Directorate-General for Neighbourhood and Enlargement Negotiations
ECRI	European Commission against Racism and Intolerance
EU	European Union
EUD	EU Delegation
FCNM	Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities
GLP	General Local Plan
HF	Horizontal Facility
HRA	Human Rights Approach
IWG	Institutional Working Group
JAP	Joint Action Plan
LAP	Local Action Plan
MoU	Memorandum of Understanding
MTG	Municipal Taskforce Group
NAPIRE	National Action Plan for Integration of Roma and Egyptians
NGO	Non-governmental organisation
OECD/DAC	Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development/Development Assistance Committee
OSCE	Organisation for Security and Co-operation in Europe
RCC	Regional Cooperation Council
RELOAD	Regional Programme on Local Democracy in the Western Balkans
ROMALB	National Electronic Data Collection System
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Background of the Evaluation

- I. The Joint Programme between the European Union (DG NEAR) and the Council of Europe – ROMACTED Phase I, “Promoting good governance and Roma empowerment at local level” covered seven Beneficiaries in the Western Balkans and Turkey from 1 May 2017 until 31 December 2020. The overall objective of the programme was “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 Roma¹ communities to contribute to the design, implementation and monitoring of plans and projects concerning them.” The target groups of the ROMACTED Phase I Programme have been local public administrations and the Roma communities from 61 selected municipalities in the seven Beneficiaries with an estimated number of 280,000 Roma living in these municipalities.²

Evaluation Purpose and Methodology

- II. The **objective of the evaluation** was
 - To assess the overall relevance, coherence and effectiveness of the ROMACTED Phase I Programme’s methodological approach and of its interventions in contributing to the promotion of good governance and Roma empowerment at the local level;
 - To identify lessons that the Council of Europe and the European Commission, as well as other stakeholders of the Programme should learn from its implementation, including sustainability of results achieved through ROMACTED Phase I implementation.
- III. The evaluation covered the overall ROMACTED Phase I programme with a focus on Albania, North Macedonia and Kosovo*. Case studies of six municipalities were included: Elbasan, Roskovec (Albania); Graçanica/Graçanicë; Ferizaj/Urosevac (Kosovo); Berovo, Strumica (North Macedonia). The evaluation team ensured triangulation by utilizing a variety of data collection methods including (a) a document review; (b) semi-structured interviews with key stakeholders; (c) focus groups in the six sample municipalities and (d) an online survey.

Lessons learned

- IV. On working with the Roma communities:
 - When responsibility is clearly assigned to CAGs, ownership is raised.
 - The inclusion of local facilitators and mediators raises the ownership of the programme in Roma communities.
 - The identification of allies can overcome a lack of interest in CAG participation.
 - An increased focus on establishing the CAGs outside political party lines proves to overcome political fragmentation.
 - Participation of women and youth contributes to a wider, and more diverse understanding of community needs.
 - A long-term perspective of engagement of the CoE with the municipalities strengthens the mid-term outcomes of the programme.

¹ In the evaluation report Roma is used as an umbrella term to include Roma, Ashkali and Egyptian communities. In the case studies the locally prevailing terminology is used, e.g., Roma/Egyptians in Albania; Roma, Ashkalia and Egyptians in Kosovo and Roma in North Macedonia.

² Albania: 7 municipalities; Bosnia-Herzegovina: 10; Montenegro: 8; North Macedonia: 12; Serbia: 11; Turkey: 5; Kosovo: 8.

* 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.

- V. On working with the municipalities:
- Pre-existing political will of stakeholders and good communication between the central and the local level are assets which contribute to successful programme implementation.
 - An explicit linkage to the national action plan, strategies for Roma, and systematic monitoring of implementation are essential for the effectiveness of programme.
 - When training for municipalities is designed as continuous processes, learning outcomes have a better chance to be absorbed on an institutional level.
 - Sensitive issues may at times be better addressed in informal settings.
 - Sharing of tested good practice and initiatives amongst municipalities encourage replication, and hence serve as a multiplier effect.
- VI. On supporting relationship-building between municipalities and Roma communities:
- Small-scale projects are important in demonstrating practical solution and served as a trigger for community engagement.
 - A high level of CoE project staff commitment, and representation of Roma within the CoE staffing contributes to the credibility of the programme.

Conclusions

- VII. **Relevance & Coherence:** The evaluation can establish that the ROMACTED Phase I programme is of high relevance to the needs of the Roma communities and local authorities in the Beneficiaries, as it addressed marginalisation, the lack of access to local services and of community participation and strengthened the target group capacities. The programme linked clearly into the new EU Roma strategic framework on equality, inclusion and participation for 2020-2030,³ and the CoE Strategic Action Plan for Roma and Travellers Inclusion (2020-2025)⁴ and the commitment of the Beneficiaries as part of the 2019 Poznan Declaration.⁵ The evaluation found that whilst the programme focused mainly on external synergies, interlinkages with other CoE and EU initiatives and programmes are also evident.
- VIII. **Effectiveness & Efficiency:** The evaluation concludes that the ROMACTED Phase I programme has been effective in producing concrete results and progressed towards trust-building between the Roma communities and the municipal institutions. The evaluation can also confirm the efficiency of the ROMACTED Phase I programme, as the value gained for each project beneficiary is appropriate to the amount spent per project beneficiary. The overall structure of the ROMACTED programme appears to be complex, with a high number of actors at different levels. Beneficiaries adapted the ROMACTED methodology to their country-specific contexts. In the sample Beneficiaries Albania and Kosovo, the ROMACTED programme provided a meaningful contribution to the translation of national Roma strategies into Local Action Plans. In some municipalities in North Macedonia, the formulation of one-year JAPs in addition to Local Action Plans resulted in a lack of clarity.
- IX. **Impact & Sustainability:** The evaluation concludes that Phase I produced some longer-term or systemic results, even if only to a limited extent, and to different degrees in the various Beneficiaries and municipalities. The formulated impact goals are long-term processes and require substantial changes in attitude and behaviour. The evaluators are confident about the sustainability prospects of ROMACTED processes and structures, in particular as the ongoing

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https://ec.europa.eu/info/sites/default/files/eu_roma_strategic_framework_for_equality_inclusion_and_participation_for_2020_-_2030_0.pdf

4

https://edoc.coe.int/en/module/ec_addformat/download?cle=3091d86c09a002e144f4ec506eada3d7&k=635e47e248fe90616d8d87e013fcd4b0

5 2019 Poznan Declaration of the Western Balkans Partners on Roma Integration within the EU Enlargement Process: <https://www.rcc.int/download/docs/2019-06-roma-deklaracija-b.pdf/6c1c88584b46c9f5f43c2a5f3937fb48.pdf>

Phase II further strengthens what has been put into place. Enabling factors such as coverage of a critical mass of municipalities with larger Roma populations, established trust between target groups and the credibility of the programme further point to sustainability. With regards to the small-scale grant scheme, there is evidence that in a number of municipalities, project activities are continuing.

- X. **Cross-cutting issues:** In terms of gender, the ROMACTED Phase I programme achieved a balanced participation only to a limited extent. Concerning the small-scale grant scheme, women from the Roma communities benefited as much as men. Projects that specifically address women's concerns were rare. Gender mainstreaming is also not consistently incorporated into the 4-step ROMACTED methodology. Concerning the application of the Human Rights Approach, the evaluation can confirm that the methodology and the tools of ROMACTED Phase I programme were appropriately designed to foster participation and inclusion, and produced the expected outcomes. However, certain challenges remain with regard to the lack of inclusiveness concerning specific groups within the Roma communities.

Key recommendations

- XI. To the CoE:
- Thematically, the ROMACTED programme should include in its work more activities on combatting antigypsism and strengthening Roma identity.⁶
 - The ROMACTED methodology should emphasise its flexible application and room for adaptation and further emphasise linkages to relevant national policy processes.
 - CoE should explore a leaner and/or more flexible programme structure.
 - Local facilitators and “key Roma contacts” should be sensitized to the possibly conflicting goals of effectively “getting things done” in a participatory process.
 - The ROMACTED methodology should put a stronger focus on the small-scale projects’ follow-up and stress the outcomes of learning processes.
 - There should be a balance between municipalities with an already existing basic political will and those where this needs to be formed more strongly.
 - The ROMACTED programme should be reviewed to strengthen gender mainstreaming.
 - Beneficiary-specific assessments on the extent to which the programme tools found broader acceptance and were applied would ensure a tailor-made approach.
 - As the role of local facilitators and mediators was crucial, the CoE should continue to leverage on this form of local ownership.
- XII. To the EU:
- IPA grant schemes for Roma should more explicitly target ROMACTED municipalities.
- XIII. To the CoE and the EU:
- The ROMACTED programme should explore how to create incentives for greater political will at the local level.
 - Participatory techniques introduced through ROMACTED can also be implemented in corresponding processes targeting the local population as a whole.

⁶ E.g., the “Evaluation of the EU Framework for National Roma Integration Strategies up to 2020”, concluded that tackling antigypsism was a key prerequisite to effective social inclusion initiatives.

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 Object of Evaluation

1. **OBJECT OF THE EVALUATION:** The Joint Programme between the European Union (DG NEAR) and the Council of Europe – ROMACTED Phase I, “Promoting good governance and Roma empowerment at local level” covered seven Beneficiaries in the Western Balkans and Turkey from 1 May 2017 until 31 December 2020. ROMACTED Phase I grew out of the experience of the preceding ROMED programmes.
2. The overall objective of the ROMACTED Phase I programme was “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 Roma⁷ communities to contribute to the design, implementation and monitoring of plans and projects concerning them.” To this end the programme envisioned two target-group specific outcomes: (1) Empowering the Roma community on the individual level as well as on the community level; and (2) Improving and expanding the institutions’ commitment, capacities, knowledge and skills in working for Roma inclusion, putting in practice the concepts of good governance. To achieve these outcomes a series of outputs were to be delivered along the four-step ROMACTED methodology: Improved local authorities’ understanding of the Roma communities’ needs as well as of the benefits of Roma inclusion; respective commitment of local authorities; mobilization, awareness-raising and capacity-building of the Roma communities for their engagement with local institutions; establishment of functioning Community Action Groups; needs assessments to establish needs, capacities and actions of Roma communities; establishment of effective mechanisms for consultation; development or revision of Joint Action Plans (JAPs); integration of JAPs into Local Development Plans; concrete actions based on the Joint Action Plans and Local Development Plans; funding opportunities assessed; funding applications prepared and submitted.
3. **CONTEXT OF THE PROGRAMME:** ROMACTED was designed to address the gap in capacities, political commitment and effective local level implementation of Roma Inclusion policies adopted at European and national level. The programme addressed the need for a more systematic approach to stimulating the processes of community change and engagement of local stakeholders in constructive dialogue by investing in a multi annual process with the involvement of different stakeholders at the local level.
4. **SCALE OF THE PROGRAMME:** The target groups of the ROMACTED Phase I Programme have been local public administrations and the Roma communities from 61 selected municipalities in the seven Beneficiaries with an estimated number of 280,000 Roma living in these municipalities.⁸
5. **KEY STAKEHOLDERS:** The programme was implemented by the Council of Europe’s Roma and Travellers Team and the Office of the Directorate General of Programmes. In the Beneficiaries,

⁷ In the evaluation report Roma is used as an umbrella term to include Roma, Ashkali and Egyptian communities. In the case studies the locally prevailing terminology is used, e.g., Roma/Egyptians in Albania; Roma, Ashkalia and Egyptians in Kosovo and Roma in North Macedonia.

⁸ Albania: 7 municipalities; Bosnia-Herzegovina: 10; Montenegro: 8; North Macedonia: 12; Serbia: 11; Turkey: 5; Kosovo: 8.

support organisations were providing support through monitoring and coordination of field activities including the small-scale grants.

6. Local Facilitators were responsible for fostering direct participation and cooperation of Roma communities with municipal structures. International and Beneficiary level stakeholders participated in Steering Committee meetings at regional level and in Advisory Group meetings at Beneficiary level which served as an entry point for the creation of synergies. Key stakeholders included the ministries in charge of the monitoring and implementation of the Roma Strategy. In 4 out of 7 cases, the ministries were among the signatory parties of MoUs with the municipalities and CoE.⁹
7. **IMPLEMENTATION STATUS:** Following the completion of Phase I in December 2020, ROMACTED Phase II was launched in January 2021 and will run until the end of 2024.

1.2 Evaluation Purpose and Objectives

8. **OBJECTIVES:** The evaluation's objectives are:
 - To assess the overall relevance, coherence and effectiveness of the ROMACTED Phase I Programme's methodological approach and interventions in contributing to the promotion of good governance and Roma empowerment at the local level in the targeted local communities;
 - To identify lessons that the Council of Europe and the European Commission as well as other stakeholders in the Programme should learn from its implementation, including sustainability of results achieved through ROMACTED Phase I.
9. **PURPOSE:** The evaluation has a three-fold purpose: (1) To review ROMACTED Phase I and its methodological approach; (2) to draw lessons on capacity-building measures and (3) to contribute to the orientation and development of the CoE and European Commission's activities in the field of Roma inclusion in general and of their Joint Programmes in particular.
10. **EVALUATION CRITERIA:** The evaluation assessed the ROMACTED Phase I programme against the six OECD/DAC evaluation criteria: relevance, coherence, effectiveness, efficiency, potential impact and sustainability. In addition, cross-cutting areas including gender, human rights and the inclusion of the most vulnerable target groups into the COVID-19 response of the Programme were assessed.
11. Evaluation questions were grouped around the OECD/DAC criteria. Questions on effectiveness and impact were based on the logical framework indicators of the programme. Questions also gave room for analysis of stakeholders and target groups themselves (see detailed evaluation matrix in annex 5).

1.3 Evaluation Methodology

12. **METHODOLOGY:** The evaluators developed an evaluation matrix which was structured around the evaluation questions specified in the ToR under selected OECD/DAC criteria. The matrix

⁹ Exceptions were Bosnia and Herzegovina, Kosovo* and Turkey.

identified the data sources and data collection methods for each evaluation question. This enabled the evaluators to gather, triangulate and analyze data in line with the evaluation questions. Relevant questions were also aligned with the logical framework of the ROMACTED Phase I programme so that the evaluators could identify progress and test the assumptions behind the logical framework of the programme.

13. **DATA COLLECTION** methods, rationale and limitations: The evaluation team ensured triangulation by utilizing a variety of data collection methods including (a) a document review; (b) semi-structured interviews with key stakeholders; (c) focus groups in the six sample municipalities and (d) an online survey. The rationale for the inclusion of focus groups was that they enabled broader participation, in particular of the Roma communities, in the evaluation process. The rationale for the inclusion of an online survey was its coverage of all Beneficiaries of the programme. The evaluators faced limitations in all three sample Beneficiaries as a number of interviews were cancelled due to interview partners and focus group participants testing positive for COVID-19. Therefore, the total number of stakeholders inputting into this evaluation is lower than originally planned during inception.
14. **DATA SOURCES** include CoE documentation on the ROMACTED Phase I programme as well as relevant deliverables, e.g. Joint Action Plans, Local Actions Plans or needs assessment documentation. Where relevant, external sources have been consulted to verify the programme context. Key informant interviews and focus groups were used to obtain a diversity of perspectives: (a) along the lines of the two target groups, the Roma communities and municipal institutions; (b) including both administrative levels, national and local and (c) including an internal (CoE, EU) and external (relevant stakeholders at Beneficiary/regional level) perspective.
15. **SAMPLING FRAME:** The evaluation covered the overall ROMACTED Phase I programme with a focus on Albania, North Macedonia and Kosovo. Case studies of six municipalities were included: Elbasan and Roskovec (Albania); Graçanica/Graçanicë and Ferizaj/Urosevac (Kosovo) and Berovo and Strumica (North Macedonia). Case study municipalities were selected based on the following criteria: Reasonable proportion of Roma/RAE in the overall population; mix of one larger and one smaller municipality; mix of one municipality using and one not using financial resources from its ordinary budget; and levels of openness displayed by the target groups towards the process. Three-day visits were carried out in each sample Beneficiary. A total of 72 interviews were conducted with key informants (on-site and online) or in the form of focus groups. A total of 146 stakeholders participated in the survey (see annexes 3 and 7).¹⁰
16. **STAKEHOLDER CONSULTATION PROCESS:** The evaluators carried out 11 focus groups in the six municipalities selected to serve as case studies, six with the Community Actions Groups (CAGs) and five with the Institutional Working Groups (IWGs). The rationale for this process was to capture a broader spectrum of voices from the two target groups on a set of particular questions. At the end of each focus group participants carried out a ranking exercise on the key deliverables of the ROMACTED Phase I programme (Action Plan; Small-grant project; Capacity Building; COVID-19 support).

¹⁰ 24% of respondents from Kosovo, 18% from Albania and Serbia, 12% from Bosnia-Herzegovina, 10% from North Macedonia, 9% from Montenegro and Turkey. A total of 35% of respondents were from local authorities, 25% other local actors (support organization, experts etc.), 18% from Roma communities, 13% CoE or EU staff and 8% other.

17. **GENDER AND HUMAN RIGHTS** were included in the evaluation as cross-cutting issues. The evaluators and CoE sought to find a gender balance with regard to stakeholder consultation. Around 42% of interviewees and focus group participants and around 40% of survey respondents were women. On the whole, engagement with stakeholders was guided by the principles of transparency, confidentiality, cultural sensitivity and collaboration.
18. **DATA QUALITY ASSURANCE:** Sample municipalities were chosen jointly with the CoE ROMACTED programme team and country offices, and selection criteria were documented in the inception report. Interviewees and survey participants were identified jointly with the CoE. Concerning the survey, the raw data sets are made available to the CoE. Finally, evaluators aimed to reflect transparently on controversial statements around any issue.

2. FINDINGS

2.1 Relevance

2.1.1 To what extent was ROMACTED Phase I relevant to the needs of the Roma communities and local authorities in the Beneficiaries?

19. **NEEDS:** The evaluation can establish that the ROMACTED Phase I programme is of high relevance to the needs of the Roma communities and local authorities in the Beneficiaries. The ROMACTED Phase I programme was based on a well-prepared stakeholder mapping in all seven Beneficiaries. The selection of municipalities was guided by a set of pre-defined criteria, a pre-assessment by external experts and a review of relevant stakeholders including EUDs and governmental representatives. Following the selection of municipalities, community needs assessments were carried out in all municipalities.
20. In the online survey carried out as part of this evaluation 80% of respondents of all seven Beneficiaries confirmed that the ROMACTED Phase I programme met the needs of Roma communities to “a considerable” or to a “great extent”. 74% of the respondents indicated that the programme met the needs of local authorities to a “considerable” or to a “great extent”.
21. **APPROACH AND METHODOLOGY:** In all three sample Beneficiaries interviewees highlighted that the ROMACTED methodology was highly relevant as it addressed marginalisation, the lack of access to local services and the lack of participation of Roma communities in municipal affairs and hence provided a contribution to tackling discrimination of Roma and to challenging antigypsyism sentiments. The ROMACTED participatory approach ensured that the Roma communities themselves identified and prioritised their needs. This in turn resulted in the development of Joint Action Plans (JAPs) or in the development or review of Local Action Plans with appropriate measures reflecting those needs.
22. Beyond generating a shared understanding of the needs of Roma communities, the relevance of the programme was that Roma communities themselves were often able to cooperate with municipal institutions for the first time and pro-actively collaborate in developing their priorities for action through the CAGs. Several interviewees emphasised that the programme’s approach enabled community members to adopt an attitude of acting as citizens with a responsibility for their community as a whole, beyond individual interests. For the CoE, ROMACTED constitutes a new programmatic approach. Whereas in the past the CoE tried to find entry points, e.g. through NGOs or mediators, the ROMACTED approach of community mobilisation (through the CAG and Facilitator) enables the community itself to be a driving force of their own change.
23. **CAPACITY-BUILDING:** The relevance of the ROMACTED Phase I programme’s objectives with regard to the needs of local authorities also reflects findings by CoE monitoring bodies, e.g. in its 2020 ECRI Report on Albania, ECRI recommended the provision of “adequate capacity-building to the local and regional authorities, corresponding to their increased responsibilities for implementing service-delivery measures under the National Action Plan (2016-2020) for the integration of Roma and Egyptians following their finding that several measures that were

to be implemented by local authorities have fallen short of the expected targets”.¹¹ In all three sample Beneficiaries, interviews indicate the importance of capacity-building measures for local authorities as an integral part of the programme methodology.

2.1.2 Was ROMACTED relevant to the EU integration / accession process?

24. **EU INTEGRATION AND ACCESSION:** The evaluation can establish that the ROMACTED Phase I programme was highly relevant as its methodology is designed to support European and national policy frameworks for the integration of Roma at local level as part of the EU accession process and the current EU Strategy for the Western Balkans.
25. Interviews confirm that the ROMACTED programme linked clearly into the new EU Roma strategic framework on equality, inclusion and participation for 2020-2030 which states that “the national strategic framework should also mainstream Roma equality and inclusion at regional and local levels”.¹² The programme also directly supported the implementation of the commitments outlined in the Poznan Declaration. The 2019 Poznan Declaration of the Western Balkans Partners on Roma Integration within the EU Enlargement Process constitutes a concrete political agenda. The Poznan Declaration’s commitments include, amongst others, the development of standards on public budgeting related to Roma integration for mainstream and targeted policies and the establishment of formal channels and mechanisms for joint involvement of the local governments and the Roma communities.¹³
26. Interviews, particularly in Kosovo and North Macedonia, indicate that municipal stakeholders gained an understanding of the context in which the ROMACTED programme is set and its contribution to achieving Roma inclusion as a benchmark for accession. In this respect, EU accession is also seen as an incentive or push factor for local problem solving.
27. Concerning Kosovo, the point was made that the ROMACTED programme contributes to bringing concerns of Roma communities into EU accession negotiations, which are focused on the larger political context based on relations between the Albanian majority and Serb minority and the related dialogue with Serbia.

¹¹ <https://rm.coe.int/report-on-albania-6th-monitoring-cycle-/16809e8241>

¹² https://ec.europa.eu/info/sites/default/files/eu_roma_strategic_framework_for_equality_inclusion_and_participation_for_2020_-_2030_0.pdf

¹³ In line with the Poznan Declaration and with the new EU Strategic Framework for Roma, the drafting and approval of a new series of national action plans is currently work in progress exceeding the originally envisioned September 2021 deadline. Only Montenegro adopted the new national action plan in April 2021 and Albania in November 2021. In North Macedonia and in Serbia a draft is available. In Bosnia and Herzegovina adoption is pending due to political fractions. In Kosovo the drafting is still work in progress. Following adoption of the new national action plans municipalities will develop their local action plan, a process that the ROMACTED programme will continue to support. Interviews indicate that the problem for municipalities remains that they might receive budgets based on preceding action plans. Moreover, it was pointed out that at times municipalities did not always have necessary central level documentation to develop their local action plans. <https://www.rcc.int/download/docs/2019-06-roma-deklaracijab.pdf/6c1c88584b46c9f5f43c2a5f3937fb48.pdf>

2.2 Coherence

2.2.1 External Coherence: To what extent did ROMACTED use synergies and interlinkages with other interventions carried out by Roma NGOs, relevant domestic authorities and international stakeholders?

28. **OVERALL APPRAISAL:** All in all, the ROMACTED Phase I programme demonstrated external coherence and built interlinkages with relevant international stakeholders and initiatives as well as with domestic authorities. Several interviewees pointed out that ROMACTED's collaboration with other initiatives reinforced the message and increased awareness of Roma as citizens. Moreover, the interviews suggest that ROMACTED, as a joint European Union and Council of Europe programme, proved to be a door opener for collaboration with relevant local and international stakeholders.
29. **EXTERNAL ACTORS:** Longer-term synergies have been created with a key set of stakeholder organizations, in particular with the Regional Cooperation Council (RCC) and its Roma Integration 2020 initiative on Roma Responsive Budgeting. Here, the RCC works complementarily with the Roma Contact Points at Beneficiary level. The ROMACTED Phase I programme in Albania was spearheading cooperation through its participation in the Intergovernmental Working Group for Roma Responsive Budgeting and adapted the RCC Guidelines¹⁴ on Roma Responsive Budgeting to the local context in cooperation with the Albanian School of Public Administration (ASPA).
30. Other relevant actors with whom the programme built synergies in various Beneficiaries include the Roma Education Fund through its project "EU Regional Action for Roma Education: Increased education opportunities for Roma students and Roma youth in Western Balkans and Turkey" and UNDPs Regional Programme on Local Democracy in the Western Balkans (RELOAD). Close collaboration with the OSI also took place in various municipalities, in particular in Albania and North Macedonia. At Beneficiary level, the programme collaborated closely with Roma-led organizations, such as e.g. in Albania with Roma Active Albania.
31. **GOVERNMENTAL STAKEHOLDERS:** Interviews in all three sample Beneficiaries indicated close cooperation with relevant governmental stakeholders, e.g. in North Macedonia with the Minister without Portfolio and the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs who strongly promoted the ROMACTED Phase I programme and the Ministry of Local Self-Government through its allocation of funds towards the implementation of the Local Action Plans. Here, the liaison with the National Roma Focal Points was key, although in the case of Kosovo, one interviewee indicated that follow-up on concrete actions proved to be difficult at times.
32. Coordination with stakeholders on Roma-related interventions took place from the early phase of the programme and the CoE's annual reports on the programme document a number of concrete cooperation at Beneficiary and municipal level. Interviews indicate that in particular the Focal Points sought to create synergies within the municipalities and to avoid any overlap.

¹⁴ Guidelines on Roma responsive budgeting:
<https://www.rcc.int/romaintegration2020/files/admin/docs/d0194eec72d289ae2f43543c8219d103.pdf>

33. **CHALLENGES:** A challenge faced by the programme was the at times emerging sentiments of competition among local actors, including in the Roma communities, whereby local leaders saw CAGs as a threat to their own position in the community.
34. Also flagged up in interviews was a certain level of reluctance by the municipalities to commit to the programme due to the existence of other Roma-specific initiatives or general local level actions. In particular in North Macedonia interviews pointed to a certain competition amongst donors for the same target municipalities. On the other hand, in municipalities which saw no other substantial initiatives, such as e.g. Strumica and Veles, the programme was perceived to have a better outreach.

2.2.2 Internal Coherence: to what extent did ROMACTED use synergies and interlinkages with other Programmes, projects and actions implemented by the Council of Europe and the EU?

35. **OVERALL APPRAISAL:** The evaluation found that whilst the programme focused mainly on external synergies, interlinkages with other CoE and EU initiatives and programmes are also evident. The ROMACTED methodology emerged through lessons learned from other joint EU-CoE programmes, including the ROMED and ROMACT programmes. Especially in North Macedonia interviews confirmed that the programme was able to build on the experience and established cooperation of the preceding ROMED I and ROMED II programmes in ten of the participating municipalities. This was particularly beneficial for the formation of the IWGs and the CAGs.
36. Monitoring reports of ECRI and the FCNM informed the design of the ROMACTED Phase I programme, and in turn the programme contributed to fact finding of ongoing monitoring cycles. A number of activities implemented under the ROMACTED Phase I programme included raised awareness on relevant CoE recommendations, such as e.g. on the inclusion of the history of Roma and/or Travellers in school curricula and teaching materials.¹⁵ Moreover, CAHRM/ ADI-ROM/ CDADI members were in many cases the National Focal Points or contact points from the relevant ministries (Albania, BiH, Montenegro, North Macedonia) and engaged in both, the Expert Committee and in the ROMACTED Phase I programme.
37. Mayors from participating municipalities took part in activities of the CoE Congress of Local and Regional Authorities and were included in the Congress delegations. Synergies and interlinkages with the Youth Department of the CoE are also evident, e.g. trainings under the ROMACTED programme adapted and utilized training material developed by the Youth Department. In addition, CAG members participated in Youth Department activities at European level. Other European level events in which ROMACTED stakeholders participated include the bi-annual CoE Dialogue with Roma and Traveller Civil Society meetings or the CoE international Roma women's conference.
38. A certain level of coordination with the CoE/EU Horizontal Facility (HF) programme was pursued at regional and at Beneficiary level, especially in the field of anti-discrimination in

¹⁵ Recommendation CM/Rec(2020)2 of the Committee of Ministers to member States on the inclusion of the history of Roma and/or Travellers in school curricula and teaching materials.

Albania. Interviews indicate that increased synergies with the HF are being pursued in the current phase of the ROMACTED programme.

39. **BENEFICIARY LEVEL:** Interviews confirm that at Beneficiary level the close liaison between the CoE and EUDs ensured the complementarity of the various actions. Although not having any formal responsibility in the oversight of ROMACTED as a regional programme, interviews suggest that through close communication with CoE, the EUDs gained an overview of the progress of the programme as well as important insights into the situation of Roma communities at the municipal level. EUDs were provided with regular reports on programme progress and were consulted on any major issues concerning the programme at Beneficiary level.
40. There is evidence that the programme also established synergies with other ongoing EU-funded interventions in the three sample Beneficiaries. In Albania close cooperation with the EU-funded project Economic and Social Empowerment for Roma and Egyptians (2015-2020) was confirmed to be crucial for the implementation of the ROMACTED Phase I programme, as both interventions aimed to support the development, implementation and monitoring of Local Action Plans. In North Macedonia, guidelines put forward in the IPA 2019 and 2020 grant schemes for Roma and people living in deep poverty, which provided financial envelopes of around 1 and 3.5 Million Euro respectively, stipulated interlinkages with the ROMACTED programme.¹⁶ The grant scheme funded six interventions in the field of infrastructure and housing in various ROMACTED municipalities, including Prilep, Kicevo, Vinica, Stip, Berovo, Bitola and Veles.

¹⁶ EU for Roma and people living in deep poverty (EuropeAid/168111/DD/ACT/MK) guidelines for applicants' state that "actions must take place in one or more of the administrative units (Municipalities) of the Republic of North Macedonia, where Roma poor and informal settlements are located, and preferably targeted with the ROMACTED project: Berovo, Bitola, Debar, Gostivar, Kicevo, Kocani, Prilep, Stip, Strumica, Tetovo.").

2.3 Effectiveness

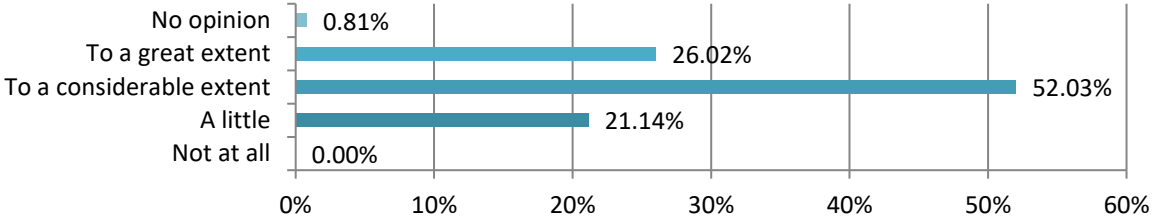
2.3.1 To what extent have expected outcomes been achieved for Roma communities?

41. The ROMACTED Phase I aimed to empower Roma communities at individual level to practice their basic rights and at community level to voice the interests of the community towards local authorities. To this end the intervention logic formulated a number of progress indicators along the ROMACTED four-step methodology, including the functioning of Community Action Groups and the development of Joint Action Plans on the basis of participatory needs assessments.
42. **COMMUNITY ACTION GROUPS (CAGs):** According to the ROMACTED Phase I final report, a total of 87 CAGs were set up in all seven Beneficiaries, (22 in Albania, 10 in Bosnia and Herzegovina, 9 in Kosovo, 8 in Montenegro, 12 in North Macedonia, 21 in Serbia, 5 in Turkey). In Albania, Serbia and Kosovo CAGs were established at municipal and community level due to the dispersed nature of the Roma settlements or the need for separate Roma youth and women CAGs.
43. Interviews and case studies confirm that the CAGs are recognized as valuable platforms to address issues and priorities of the Roma communities. Both target groups view CAGs as communication bridges between Roma communities and municipal institutions.
44. Case studies indicate that the role of the Facilitators and, where in place, of strong and committed Roma NGOs, was crucial. In some municipalities the initiation of CAGs proved to be more challenging and Facilitators worked with local NGOs and pro-active individuals to raise interest in participation.
45. Interviews suggest that the voluntary nature and open structure of the CAG constitute both a strength as well as a challenge. The CAG's strength is seen in its inclusive approach as an open entity without hierarchies. This in turn, at times, presented a challenge for regular participation and structured leadership. Accordingly, CAGs in all three sample Beneficiaries differed in their strength and in their levels of organisation. According to the ROMACTED Phase I final report, the estimated total number of members for all 87 CAGs in the seven Beneficiaries was 435, an average of five members per CAG.
46. In a number of municipalities the fragmentation of the Roma communities along political party lines constituted a key challenge for the functioning of the CAG. According to interviews, this had been the case in Gostivar and Kocani, North Macedonia. Here, communities did not cooperate despite mediation by the Facilitator. In Kosovo, there was an increased focus on establishing the CAGs outside political party lines.
47. CAG members benefitted from training, often jointly with the IWG, including e.g. on "Roma responsible budgeting", "participatory local planning and budgeting at local level" and "Project Cycle Management". In all three sample Beneficiaries, CAG interviewees highlighted that training and continuous coaching by the Facilitator led to a strengthening of their capacities and increase of confidence to collaborate with municipalities. Consequently, the need for continuous training was flagged up.
48. **JOINT ACTION PLANS (JAPs):** According to the ROMACTED Phase I final report, a total of 41 Joint Action Plans (JAPs) were developed in the municipalities based on preceding needs assessments. In Montenegro the programme supported either the development of new or guidance on the monitoring of already existing Local Action Plans for Roma Integration. In Kosovo the programme supported the implementation of Local Action Plans for the "Integration of the Roma, Ashkali, and Egyptian communities" which were already in place in

all eight municipalities. In Albania, the programme supported the development of seven four-year Local Actions Plans for Roma Integration.

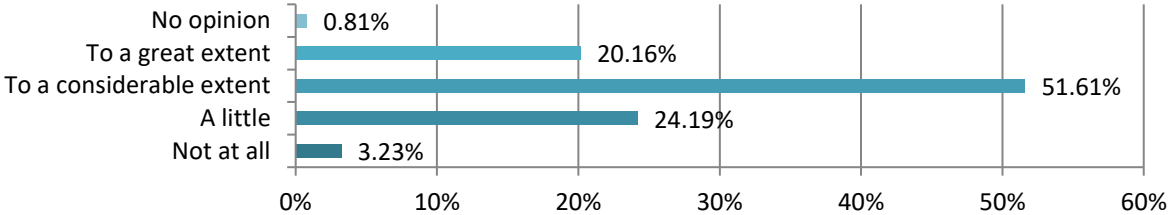
49. According to the ROMACTED Phase I final report, a total of 21 JAPs were submitted for integration into Local Development Plans. The example of North Macedonia demonstrates that municipalities followed different paths, e.g. the municipality of Gostivar aligned the JAP along the Local Development Plan's budget lines, indicating relevance to Roma communities rather than including separate budget lines to target Roma communities exclusively. In other municipalities such as Debar or Bitola, efforts were made to secure external resources.
50. **FURTHER OUTCOMES:** On the whole, the evaluation found a number of examples demonstrating that the ROMACTED Phase I programme enabled Roma at individual level. E.g. in Elbasan, Albania, a Roma community with strong elderly leaders, a young Roma active in the CAG was listed as a candidate for local council elections, and got elected as local councilor. In Strumica, North Macedonia, the CAG coordinator, a Roma activist, is now working as Facilitator for Phase II of the programme. Individual community members benefitted from CAG support to resolve concrete individual issues and problems with the municipality, e.g. access to social benefits, or to raise awareness of local communities on certain issues, which e.g. in the case of Albania resulted in increased birth registrations in a number of municipalities, as interviews confirmed.
51. Moreover, the evaluation was able to establish that the ROMACTED Phase I programme effectively enabled the Roma communities to voice their interests at municipal level. Interviewees in all three Beneficiaries highlighted that the programme countered the Roma community's longstanding mistrust of municipal institutions prevalent in most municipalities. In that sense, the programme opened the door for communities to the municipalities and established communication on Roma community's needs and priorities.
52. The ROMACTED Phase I programme also strengthened Roma identity, as highlighted by a number of interviewees in particular in North Macedonia. Acknowledging International Roma Day (8 April) and raising the Roma flag contributed positively to the communities' identity-building and pride. Especially in Strumica, North Macedonia, the intervention built confidence to affirm a collective identity vis-à-vis the Turkish communities.
53. Interviews suggest further that in Albania, ROMACTED activities especially supported the participation of youth in meetings as well as trainings, enabling them to participate in all stages of the process.
54. Finally, interviewees in all three sample Beneficiaries highlighted the responsibility given to Roma communities as a specific strength of the ROMACTED Phase I programme which positively distinguishes it from other interventions targeting Roma. In their view, this addresses a certain passive attitude in Roma communities, lack of solidarity, placing individual interests before communal problems and divisions within communities along political party lines which pose a threat to prioritization of communal issues and concerns.
55. **SURVEY DATA:** Evaluation survey data from all seven Beneficiaries confirm positive findings. The average percentage of respondents in all Beneficiaries perceiving an increase of the ability of ordinary Roma citizens to assess their needs "to a considerable extent" or "to a great extent" was at 78%. The average percentage in Serbia was highest with 100% and considerably lower in Turkey (60%) and in Montenegro (33%) (see chart 1 below).

Chart 1: *Did ROMACTED Phase 1 increase the ability of ordinary Roma citizens to assess their needs? (N = 123)*



56. Similarly, survey data suggest an increase in the ability of ordinary Roma citizens to contribute to the development of local public projects. A total of 72% of respondents from all seven Beneficiaries stated that the ability of Roma citizens to contribute to the development of local public projects has increased “to a considerable extent” or “to a great extent”. Here, the percentage of respondents from Kosovo was highest, with 86%, and considerably lower in Montenegro, with 25% (see chart 2 below).

Chart 2: *Did ROMACTED Phase 1 increase the ability of ordinary Roma citizens to contribute to the development of local public projects? (N = 124)*



CONFIRMED ROMACTED PHASE I OUTCOMES FOR ROMA COMMUNITIES

- A total of 87 Community Action Groups initiated
- 41 Joint Action Plans developed
- CAGs recognized as valuable platforms to address issues and priorities of Roma communities in the municipalities
- Decrease of mistrust towards municipal institutions
- Increased confidence of Roma communities in their ability to interact with local institutions
- Strengthening of Roma identity and pride

2.3.2 To what extent have expected outcomes been achieved for local authorities?

57. The programme also aimed to improve and expand the capacities and commitment of municipal institutions to Roma inclusion at local level. To this end indicators were formulated including: Municipal officials coached/trained and working on the measures developed to address the needs of the Roma; level of institutional knowledge and understanding concerning the Roma community and their inclusion; and projects identified and supported by small grants from the programme and co-financed by local authorities.

58. **INSTITUTIONAL WORKING GROUPS (IWGs) AND MUNICIPAL TASKFORCE GROUPS (MTGs):** According to the ROMACTED Phase I final report, IWG and MTG structures were initiated in all seven Beneficiaries including Albania (7 IWGs, 7 MTGs), Bosnia and Herzegovina (10 MTGs),

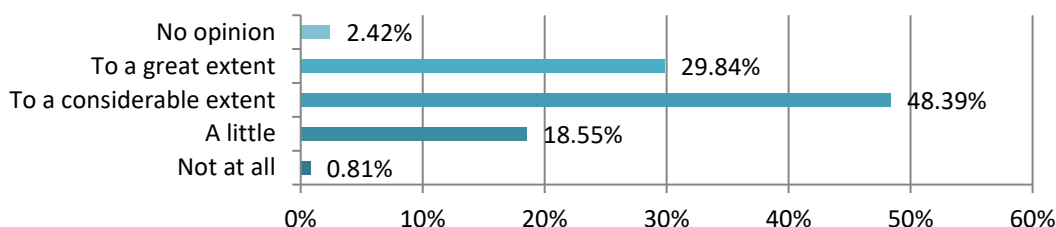
Kosovo (8 IWGs, 8 MTGs), Montenegro (4 IWGs, 4 MTGs), North Macedonia (12 IWGs, 12 MTGs), Serbia (11 IWGs, 11 MTGs), and Turkey (1 MTG).

59. In all three sample Beneficiaries, the composition of the IWGs was open in the sense that, depending on the topic and the items on the agenda, the relevant municipal representatives took part. At times municipal staff viewed their participation as an additional burden and not as an integral part of their work. Here, the role of the ROMACTED support staff, including Facilitators but also CoE project staff, was seen as essential to keep up the momentum.
60. MTGs had an equally open composition and in this sense MTG can be viewed as a label for joint meetings between the two target groups. According to interviews, Roma representation in the MTG or in meetings with IWGs was often limited, with the CAG coordinator at times being the sole representative. One interviewee highlighted the need for an increased number of Roma participants in MTG meetings.
61. **IWG CAPACITY BUILDING:** According to the final report, a total of 485 municipal staff in all Beneficiaries were trained to work on measures developed to address the needs of the Roma communities in the targeted municipalities.
62. Formal trainings were delivered in all three sample Beneficiaries. In Kosovo, a selection of IWG members were trained at national level, in Albania and North Macedonia, groups of IWG members from different municipalities were trained jointly. Training on RRB at the Local Level was carried out in North Macedonia and in Albania.¹⁷ In Albania, the RRB training built on initiatives from previous programmes, such as Gender Responsive Budgeting, and was seen as complementary to the Local Action Plans. Certification issued by the Albanian School of Public Administration (ASPA) and signed by the Ministry of Health and Social Protection increased the added value of the measure. In North Macedonia, interviewees stressed that while they saw the relevance of RRB training, there was no follow-up on the application of what had been learned and on the monitoring of budget allocations. This is currently work in progress.
63. Coaching of the IWGs was an integral part of the Facilitators' work, especially with regard to soft skills. Particularly interviews in Albania highlighted that building good communication practices benefitted the work of municipal administrators beyond their IWG engagement.
64. Interviewees in all three sample Beneficiaries stressed that capacity-building for municipal administration staff continues to be vital, in particular considering that participation in most training measures under ROMACTED Phase I was limited to two or three staff per municipality. Further training needs were identified particularly with regard to Project Cycle Management (PCM) to strengthen absorption capacities of larger EU funds.
65. **BUILDING OF KNOWLEDGE/UNDERSTANDING:** The evaluation can establish that in all three sample Beneficiaries municipalities increased their knowledge and understanding on Roma issues and priorities and recognized their specific needs, albeit to differing degrees.
66. Interviews also point towards municipalities demonstrating an increased ownership of the ROMACTED process. A number of municipalities have also adopted a more proactive approach and feel better positioned to fundraise for different projects. In Kosovo and North Macedonia municipalities started to understand the wider implications and contribution of local Roma integration to economic development and EU accession.
67. **SURVEY DATA:** At overall ROMACTED Phase I programme level, the survey carried out as part of this evaluation reveals that 78% of respondents across all Beneficiaries perceive that ROMACTED Phase I improved local authorities' capacities in working for Roma inclusion either

¹⁷ In Albania: Roma and Egyptian Responsive Budgeting.

“to a considerable extent” or “to a great extent”. Here, perception of respondents from North Macedonia was particularly high with 92% and considerably low with respondents from Montenegro with 58% (see chart 3 below).

Chart 3: *Did ROMACTED Phase 1 improve and expand local authorities’ capacities, knowledge and skills in working for Roma inclusion? (All Beneficiaries; N = 124)*



68. **SMALL GRANTS SCHEME:** The ROMACTED methodology sets out the implementation of a small grants scheme aimed to fund short and medium-term projects on the basis of Joint Action Plans or Local Action Plans. The grant scheme also aimed to provide the opportunity for cooperation between both target groups throughout project development and implementation.

69. According to CoE reporting, a total of 44 projects were implemented through the ROMACTED small-scale grant scheme in five of the seven Beneficiaries including Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, North Macedonia, Serbia and Kosovo. Five municipalities in North Macedonia were not able to implement the projects due to pandemic-related staff shortages and funds had to be returned. The CoE’s report documents that the overwhelming number of projects, a total of 29, consist of small-scale infrastructure measures, including street rehabilitation, electrical work, or the installation of sewage systems and water supply.¹⁸

70. All in all, interviews with both target groups and other stakeholders confirm that the small-grant scheme generated concrete changes and benefits for the daily life of the communities as documented in the CoE ROMACTED Phase I report. Small-scale projects were very important in demonstrating practical solutions, they served as practical examples for community engagement and enabled CAGs to demonstrate immediate, tangible results in line with the JAPs or the Local Action Plans. In this respect the small-grant scheme served its purpose as an important incentive to bring municipal administrations and Roma communities together.

71. There is evidence that in a number of municipalities, small-grant scheme projects initiated cooperation between the municipal administration and the Roma community, often for the first time, as was the case e.g. in the infrastructure intervention in the municipality of Gostivar, North Macedonia. This intervention included a number of different measures funded by the small-grants scheme, the municipal budget and other external sources. This led to continuous cooperation via the Task Force which met regularly during implementation, also on-site, in order to monitor progress, and which ensured transparency throughout all implementation steps.

¹⁸ According to CoE analysis, a number of projects covered multiple thematic areas. The distribution of thematic areas covered was as follows: 29 infrastructure; 15 environment and quality of life; 14 children; 11 health; 10 education; 6 capacity-building and training; 5 youth participation; 5 arts and culture; 3 employment; 3 sports; 2 housing and 2 mobility and communications.

72. A number of interviewees highlighted that joint implementation of small-scale projects helped the Roma communities to better understand municipal processes and decision-making and raised their awareness of respective limitations, e.g. with regard to central-level responsibilities (in particular in the area of urban planning).

73. Interviews also revealed that, in this context, the small projects raise the credibility of the programme. Budgets are much smaller than those of other donors, but the process determining how the funding is spent is credible. However, the different municipalities' management capacity varied which led national support organisations to closely guided municipal administrations in developing and implementing the small-scale projects.

CONFIRMED ROMACTED PHASE I PROGRAMME OUTCOMES FOR MUNICIPAL INSTITUTIONS

- A total of 485 municipal staff in all Beneficiaries were trained. However, further capacity building for municipal administration staff continues to be vital.
- In all three sample Beneficiaries municipalities increased their knowledge and understanding of Roma issues and priorities.
- Improved understanding of how local Roma integration contributes to economic development and EU accession.
- A total of 44 projects were implemented through the small-scale grant scheme.

2.3.3 To what extent did the COVID-19 response of the Programme provide a response to the needs of the Roma communities, contribute to the recovery measures in the Roma communities and ensure mitigation of negative effects of COVID-19?

74. The evaluation can establish that the COVID top-up grants provided an adequate response to the needs of the Roma communities, who experienced e.g. food shortages, inadequate home schooling and a lack of access to information or misinformation on the pandemic and were therefore disproportionately affected by COVID-19. Grants were awarded to 45 municipalities. Based on additional assessments carried out during the first wave of the pandemic, a number of different measures were funded, including the distribution of hygiene packages and food vouchers to vulnerable families and tablets for online schooling. According to the ROMACTED Phase I final report, over 2000 families in all seven Beneficiaries were reached.

75. Interviews highlighted that both the ROMACTED structures, especially the CAGs, as well as small-scale projects contributed to raising awareness and to providing accurate information on COVID-19 to Roma communities. The radio project implemented in the municipality of Gračanica/Gračanicë, Kosovo, is a good example of this.

CONFIRMED ROMACTED PHASE I COVID-19 MITIGATION OUTCOMES

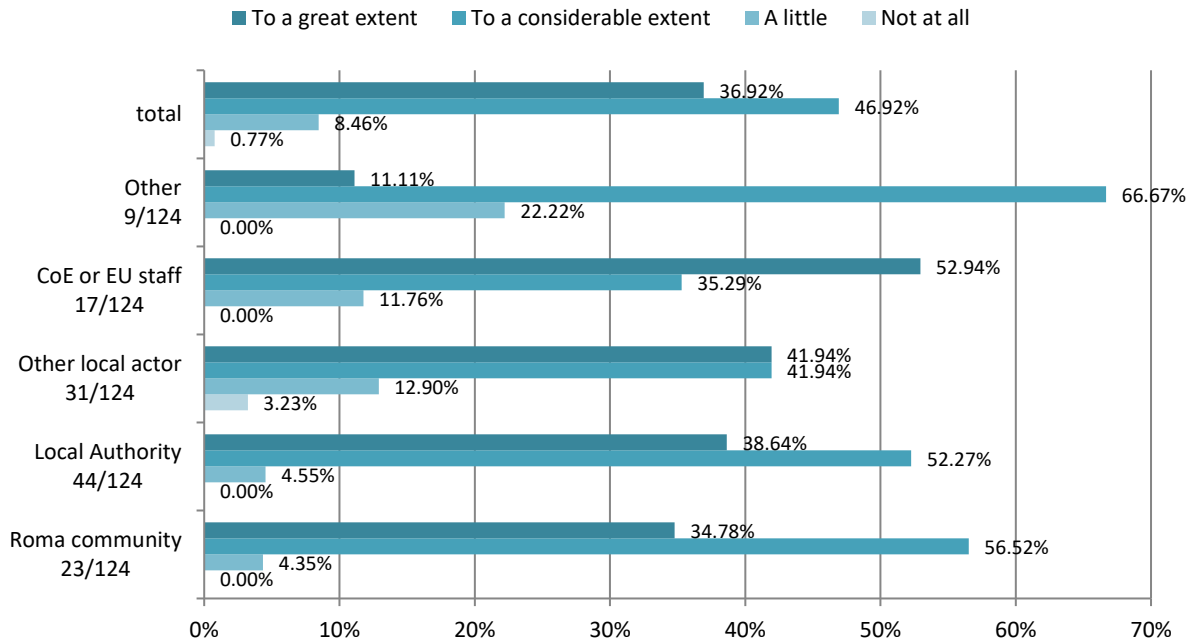
- A total of 45 municipalities benefitted from COVID-19 top-up grants.
- Over 2,000 families in all seven Beneficiaries reached.
- Contribution to raising awareness within Roma communities on COVID-19 and related mitigation measures.

2.3.4 To what extent are the target groups satisfied with the overall support provided by ROMACTED Phase I?

76. **SURVEY DATA:** Altogether, 84% of all target groups and other stakeholders in the seven Beneficiaries were satisfied "to a great" or "to a considerable extent" with the overall support provided by the ROMACTED Phase I programme. Within the target groups the number was

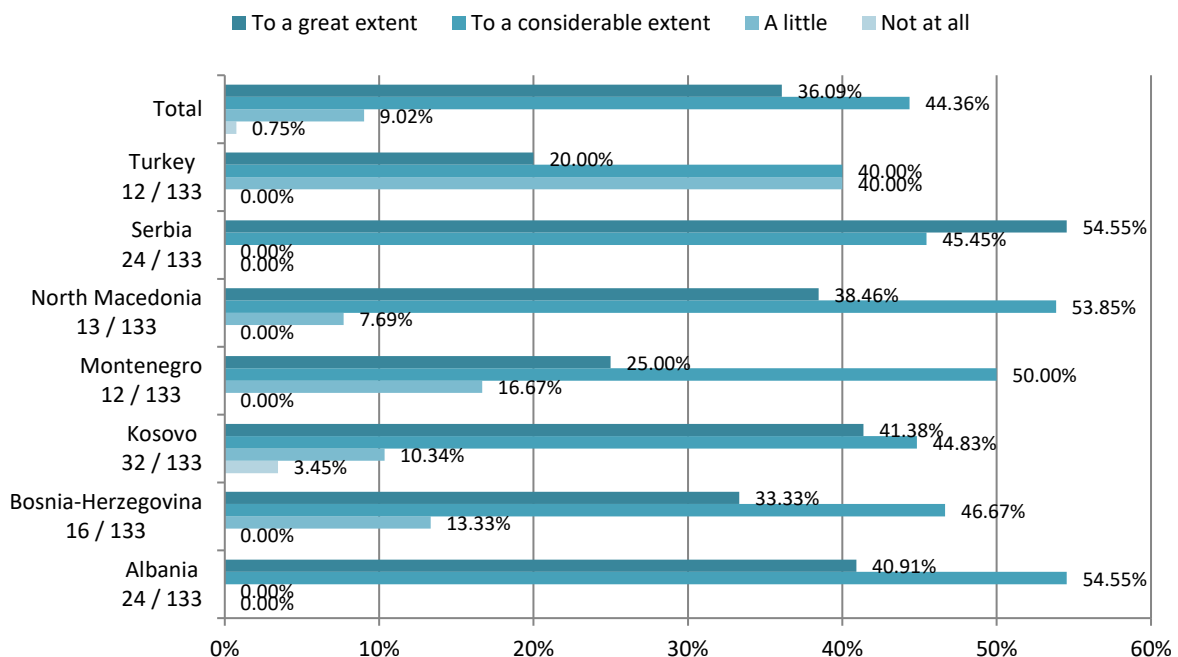
even higher with 91% of respondents from the Roma community and from the local authorities indicating that they were satisfied “to a great” or “to a considerable extent” (see chart 4).

Chart 4: Are you satisfied with the overall performance and results of ROMACTED Phase 1? All Beneficiaries by stakeholder groups (N = 124)



77. Broken up by country, the data show that all Serbian respondents (100%) indicated to be satisfied “to a great” or “to a considerable extent” with the ROMACTED Phase I programme support. In Albania this was indicated by 95% of respondents, in North Macedonia by 92%, in Kosovo by 86%; in Bosnia-Herzegovina by 80%; in Montenegro by 75%, and in Turkey by 60% (see chart 5 below).

Chart 5: Are you satisfied with the overall performance and results of ROMACTED Phase 1? All Beneficiaries by country (N=133)



2.4 Efficiency

2.4.1 What is the ratio between the total resources spent and the number of programme beneficiaries, i.e., is the value gained for each project beneficiary equivalent to the total amount spent per beneficiary?

78. **COST-BENEFICIARY-RATIO:** The evaluation can establish that the value gained for each project beneficiary is equivalent or appropriate to the amount spent per beneficiary.

79. The cost-beneficiary-ratios have been calculated below using two different approaches (see chart 6 for details). Approach 1 is based on the total estimated Roma population in the participating municipalities. Approach 2 is based on the estimated number of people directly reached through trainings, small-scale projects or COVID-19 mitigation measures, i.e. beneficiaries of direct services. The calculated cost per beneficiary is 12.63 EUR in approach 1 and 161.43 EUR in approach 2.

80. Approach 1 does better justice to the key idea of the project. This is because, potentially, Roma communities in the 61 participating municipalities benefit as a whole from an increase in political participation. Furthermore, other communities and individual citizens, regardless of their group affiliation, may benefit indirectly from improved communication and from their proximity to local authorities in political practice.

Chart 6: Cost-beneficiary-ratio (population-based/direct beneficiary-based)

Approach to beneficiary count		No. of beneficiaries		Total resources spent (EUR)	Ratio resources/beneficiaries (EUR)	Source of information for beneficiary count
1. Population based	No. of Roma population in 61 participating municipalities / potentially benefitting from policy changes	280,000	280,000	3,536,949	12.63	draft final narrative report Oct 2021 BH4578 JP 264 rapport financier final ROMACTED I
	Potential future beneficiaries of project proposals prepared for funding (total 77 proposals)	Unknown figure within the group above				logframe in draft final narrative report Oct 2021
2. Direct beneficiary based	No. of local authorities' staff and Roma directly benefitting from trainings and engagement in CAG and MTG Est. no. of active CAG members is 435, but assumed to overlap with trained CAG members	485 municipal staff 665 Roma citizens Total: 1,150 individuals	Estimated minimum: 21,910 individuals	3,536,949	161.43	draft final narrative report Oct 2021 own calculation ¹⁹
	Direct beneficiaries of COVID-19 mitigation action	2,000 families Estimated 8760 individuals				
	Direct beneficiaries of small-scale projects (overlaps with COVID-19 mitigation action possible)	Minimum estimated: 12,000 individuals				Annex 2 Small grants scheme projects & COVID-19 top-ups own calculation ²⁰

¹⁹ Estimated size of household is 4.38 based on UNDP/Worldbank/EC country factsheets, average of Roma household sizes Albania, Bosnia-Herzegovina, Kosovo, Montenegro, North-Macedonia and Serbia <https://www.eurasia.undp.org/content/rbec/en/home/library/roma/regional-roma-survey-2017-country-fact-sheets.html>, accessed 11.03.22

²⁰ Estimation based on data given for 20 small-scale projects. However, even for those 20 containing quantitative data, it is in some cases not complete. On the other hand, some double counting of beneficiaries of small-scale projects and COVID-19 mitigation is likely. For assumed household size see previous footnote.

2.4.2 Are there alternative approaches which are likely to be more efficient?

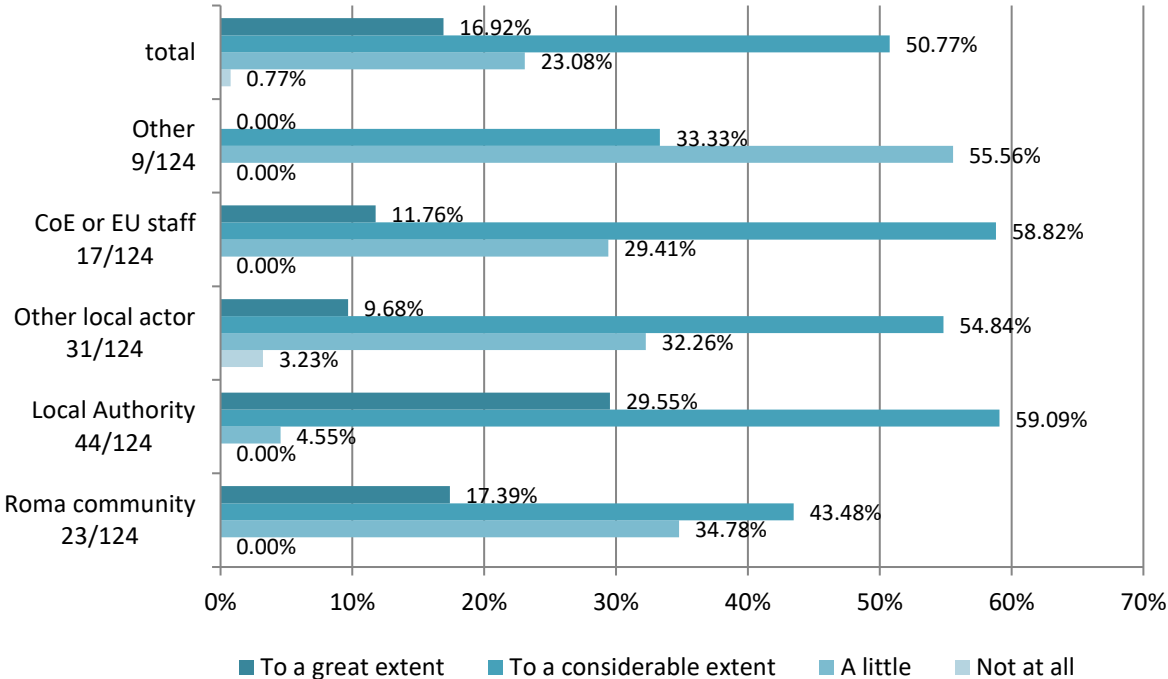
81. **STAKEHOLDERS' APPRAISAL:** Overall, interviews suggest that the ROMACTED methodology as such, and in particular its participatory approach, is viewed as appropriate and efficient. Interviewees did not indicate substantially differing, alternative approaches but rather only made suggestions for minor improvements.
82. **PROGRAMMING:** From a programmatic point of view, a stronger thematic focus on antigypsyism has been emphasised as being essential to achieve longer-term changes. One interviewee pointed out that without fostering an anti-racist attitude, the actions of local authorities will not change in the medium term.
83. **STRUCTURE:** The overall structure of the ROMACTED programme is very complex, including a high number of actors such as CAG, MTG, IWG, municipalities, support organisations, facilitators, focal points and CoE programme staff at different levels. Since the work is to be anchored in the municipalities in the long-term, one interviewee suggested simplifying this structure and directing resources to municipalities instead of engaging support organisations. The municipalities are overburdened with the diverse requirements of different donors and need financial support for their own structures in order to be able to work efficiently and coordinate internally.
84. **NATIONAL LEVEL SYNERGIES:** Synergies with the national level need to be strengthened as an integral part of the ROMACTED methodology. Solving small problems at the local level is inefficient if it is not meaningfully supported by national frameworks. For example, it is not sufficient for Roma in Gračanica/Gračanicë to have local access to education if degrees are not recognised at the central level.
85. **METHODOLOGY AND TOOLS:** Interviewees also called for capacity-building for local authorities prior to the initiation of the ROMACTED process. Local authorities should have a solid base, some pre-knowledge on the concepts of ROMACTED methodology, to ensure that the overall results are more efficient. Training should include a higher number of staff rather than only two or three representatives per municipality to efficiently facilitate mainstreaming.
86. The importance of informal contacts and communication with local authorities should be explicitly acknowledged as an integral part of the ROMACTED approach, e.g. sensitive issues such as racism and antigypsyism may not be addressed in formal settings, but can be discussed "over a coffee".
87. Further efforts should be invested in Roma empowerment, in particular through strengthening the capacities and expanding the utilization of local Roma facilitators, as the facilitator approach is viewed as most efficient in reaching Roma communities with comparatively few resources. (Interviewees mentioned the need for more working hours, longer-term assignments, more support through training and structured supervision in order to develop the facilitators' full potential).

2.5 Impact

2.5.1 To what extent has a political will for sustained policy engagement to advance Roma communities been established among local authorities?

88. **STAKEHOLDERS’ APPRAISAL:** Interviews convey a very heterogenous picture concerning progress on the establishment of a political will for sustained policy engagement on Roma. There are major differences both between the three sample Beneficiaries, and locally between the municipalities.
89. The ROMACTED Phase I programme encountered varying initial levels of political will in the different municipalities upon which it was able to build. In some municipalities, there was already a serious political will established, often represented by individual decision-makers (e.g. the Mayors) displaying commitment and openness.
90. A number of interviewees expressed that, in their point of view, improvements in political will and policy commitments are rather declarative or artificial; and in some cases are made only for the purpose of meeting EU requirements. There are differing views on how to define political will, e.g. does simply signing an MoU already constitute political will or can only a concrete commitment including financial allocation that enables changes on the ground, be considered enough to constitute political will?
91. Evaluation survey data show that roughly 60% of respondents from the Roma communities believe that the ROMACTED Phase I programme improved local authorities’ responsiveness and accountability “to a great” or “to a considerable extent”. Almost 90% of the local authorities’ respondents believe in the improvement of their own performance in this regard “to a considerable” or “to a great extent”. On average about 67% of respondents share this view. (See chart 7).

Chart 7: *Did ROMACTED Phase I improve local authorities’ responsiveness and accountability to citizens including Roma citizens (N=124)*



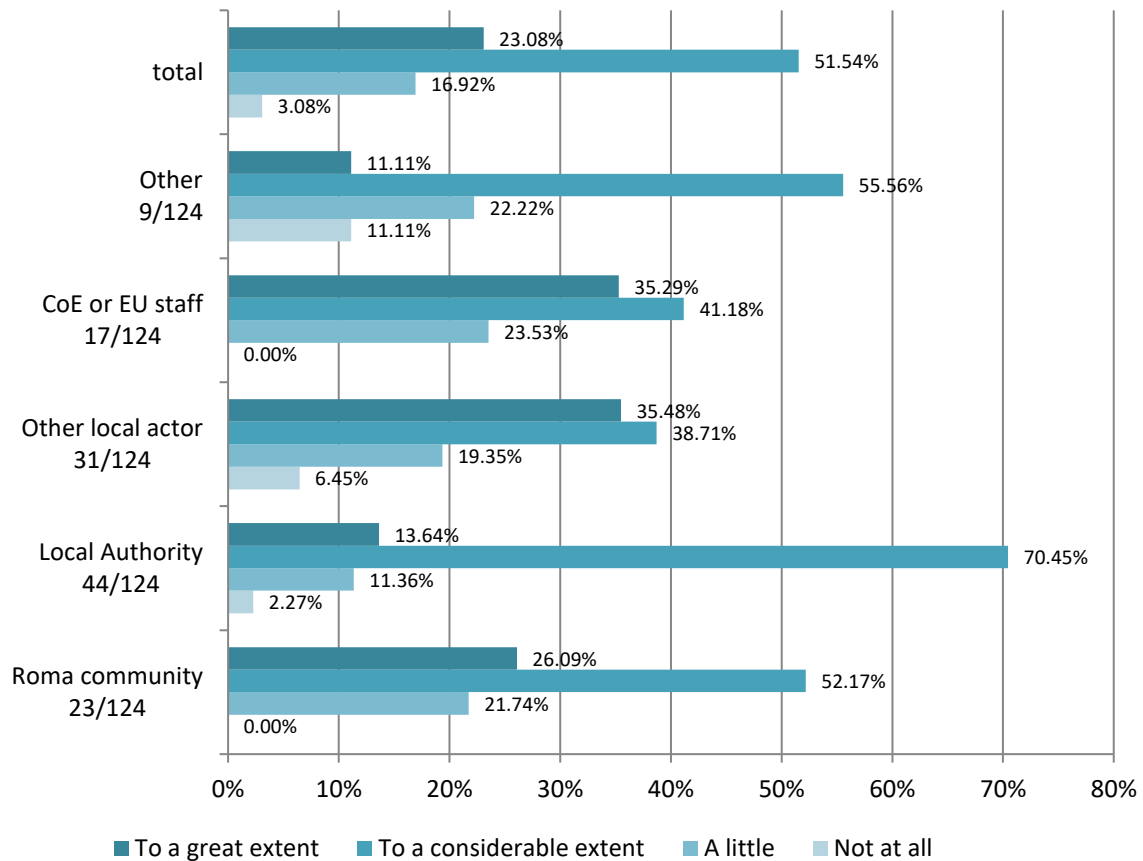
92. Interviews as part of the case studies in North-Macedonia and Kosovo confirm this trend of differing perceptions. Here, too, the local authorities were fairly convinced of their own political will. Roma representatives assessed the political will as improving, but less positively than the authorities themselves.
93. **POLICIES AND LEGISLATION:** Annex 2 summarizes the achieved changes to legislation or policies related to Roma inclusion, including the adoption of Local Action Plans, other policy documents on municipal level and policies on national level. The annex shows that at least 25 policy documents can be directly traced back to the activities of ROMACTED Phase I programme.
94. In Albania, both case studies as well as interviews highlight that the ROMACTED Phase I programme's support in developing Local Action Plans was crucial, as it enabled access to national budget programme funding. This was seen as the main achievement of the programme and LAPs are seen as important fundraising tools. Furthermore, a number of previously existing Local Action Plans were revised or revision is in process (BiH: Bjeljina, Prnjavor, Travnik). In Vukosavlje (BiH) and in Nis (Serbia) LAPs were initiated or developed, but adoption was postponed due to the COVID-19 pandemic. A number of municipalities struggled with a slow-down in policy processes due to the pandemic.
95. **FINANCIAL ALLOCATIONS:** For 32 out of 61 participating municipalities (about 52%), it is clearly documented that they have allocated funds to finance LAPs, priorities of JAPs or Roma inclusion measures. It is not always clear whether this is directly due to ROMACTED or whether the municipalities' commitments are based on framework strategies for Roma inclusion anyway. Furthermore, all municipalities implementing small-scale projects co-funded these projects. Additionally, municipalities submitted a total of 77 proposals for related activities to various donors. The ROMACTED Phase I programme supported the development of many of them. There is no systematic follow-up on the success rate of these proposals. However, they do constitute an indicator of political will.
96. **CHANGE OF PRACTICE:** In a number of municipalities (e.g., in Prnjavor and Tuzla, BiH; in Kostolac and Subotica, Serbia; in Elbasan, Albania) specific budget lines for Roma inclusion were introduced in the municipal budgets. These provide an improved basis for tracking and monitoring budgetary provisions to the benefit of Roma. In Kosovo one interviewee highlighted budget coding as an important tool for consistent monitoring and lobbying for Roma issues. Without it, effective budget control would not be possible.
97. Further changes of practice are documented in the CoE's report. In Montenegro the municipalities of Bar and Berane set up and funded offices for Roma mediators. In Kosovo, following the lead policy initiative by the Municipality of Obiliq/Obilic (affirmative action), three municipalities introduced university scholarships for Roma students and other municipalities were in the process of following this example. In Kosovo a number of municipalities started offering internships to Roma students. In Turkey the municipality of Edirne staffed the ROMACTED Centre for Children run by members of the CAG.

2.5.2 To what extent were Roma communities empowered to contribute to policies and practices concerning them?

98. **STAKEHOLDERS' APPRAISAL:** Survey participants display different perceptions with regard to the degree of empowerment of Roma communities. 78% of respondents from the Roma communities believe that overall, the programme did empower Roma communities "to a great" or "to a considerable extent" as compared to around 84% of respondents from local authorities. Across all survey participants about 74% of respondents share this view. (See chart

8). In qualitative interviews from case studies all CAGs expressed some degree of empowerment and named concrete examples.

Chart 8: Overall, did ROMACTED Phase I empower Roma communities (N=124)



99. **INSTITUTIONALIZED ROMA INCLUSION IN DECISION-MAKING PROCESSES:** There are few examples of Roma participation becoming formally established in decision-making processes. In Kosovo, according to one source, Roma were included in the local crisis management teams in all participating eight municipalities during the pandemic, which was a novelty. However, interview data from one of the case studies contradicts this, stating that Roma were not properly included in the local management of pandemic mitigation measures.

100. **EVIDENCE OF ROMA PARTICIPATION IN DECISION-MAKING:** There are a number of cases in which Roma participated in decision-making in varying functions within municipalities. These include Roma in a decision-making function (e.g. as deputy mayor), Roma employed in municipalities and Roma being elected members of local councils. However, in these cases it is not possible to determine the extent to which this can be attributed to the ROMACTED programme.

101. An understanding of local structures and decision-making is a key prerequisite for participation. The ROMACTED Phase I programme created a better understanding within Roma communities on municipal decision-making and budgetary processes, contributing to increased transparency. A number of interviews confirm that facilitators working with CAGs did transmit this kind of knowledge and led the group through municipal procedures and rationales for decision making, e.g., an urbanization plan needed prior to addressing lack of access to water. On this level the ROMACTED programme's contribution is evident.

102. Furthermore, in all three sample Beneficiaries the regular Roma presence in annual budget hearings has increased. Albania shows the strongest performance in terms of making use of this instrument. Here, guidance on Roma Responsive Budgeting directly fed into the local budgetary process for 2021 and the medium-term budgeting for 2021-2023. The Local Finance Directorate (Ministry of Finance and Economy) communicated Roma Responsive Budgeting as a priority and requirement during the Consultative Council meeting between the central and local government in autumn 2020.

2.5.3 Was there any other unintended positive or negative impact?

103. In Kosovo one of the support organisations reported that, as their main source of funding comes from various UN organisations, the CoE's support serves as match-funding for many of the mainly UN-financed programmes. In this way, the ROMACTED programme considerably supports their organizational stability and allows them to realize synergies to the benefit of minority communities in Kosovo.

104. According to interviews in Albania, the ROMACTED Phase I programme supported a process in which the CoE, the Ministry for Education, Sports and Youth and the Central Government cooperated to introduce Roma culture and history into the formal school curriculum.

2.6 Sustainability

2.6.1 To what extent did the process, structures and benefits of the programme continue at local level after the finalization of ROMACTED Phase I?

105. **STAKEHOLDERS' APPRAISAL:** Overall, 76% of survey respondents (N=124) say the results of the programme will be sustainable to a great or to a considerable extent. Only 58% of respondents from Montenegro share this view, while the figure for respondents from Albania is over 95%. (BiH 73%, Kosovo 79%, Turkey 80%, Serbia 82%). While 90% of respondents from local authorities of all countries also share this view, the rate is slightly lower for CoE/EU staff members and Roma communities with 82%.
106. A number of different interviewees (CoE staff, EU representatives, local authority representatives as well as members of CAGs) expressed that it was too early to expect sustainable change as envisioned attitude and behaviour change within the target groups require longer-term processes, possibly a third phase of the programme. Nevertheless, the programme is seen to be on the right track and has established a sound basis for further work.
107. **POLICIES AND LEGISLATION:** A number of interviewees expressed that the policies and legislation put into place are a sustainable contribution to lasting change. In particular MoUs and LAPs were mentioned as sustainable tools. The same applies to those municipalities which put specific budget lines into place for activities focused on Roma inclusion.
108. **CAPACITY-BUILDING OF LOCAL AUTHORITIES:** In the interviews, there were mixed voices on whether the capacity-building of local authorities is sustainable. On the one hand, especially in the case studies, many interviewees were able to give concrete examples of what they had learned or where they had developed new capacities. These included soft skills, such as increased empathy for Roma communities. On the other hand, it was also critically noted that the number of participants from local authorities was too small to really have a sustainable impact on the institutions. This is particularly the case where the composition of community councils and responsibilities have changed after elections.
109. In Albania, some interviewees perceive that the employment of Roma in municipalities promotes sustainability, especially if they are responsible for Roma issues.
110. **CAPACITY-BUILDING IN ROMA COMMUNITIES / EMPOWERMENT:** The stability of CAGs varies from municipality to municipality. As volunteer structures, CAGs depend on strong individuals holding the group together. Activity peaks have often occurred around the implementation of small-scale projects. Ongoing advocacy for Roma interests, on the other hand, tends to represent "the long straight" for volunteer groups, requiring persistency. Nevertheless, all case studies have shown that it is possible to mobilize some key group members, when necessary. Likewise, there are communities where CAGs have worked continuously.
111. **CAPACITY BUILT IN CoE:** Sustainable capacity has also been built within the CoE. What was learned and practiced in Phase I is now being transferred to new municipalities much more quickly in Phase II of the programme.
112. **TRUST, COMMUNICATION and CREDIBILITY:** A number of interviewees mentioned that the trust created between local authorities, Roma communities and the CoE is there to stay and that the high level of credibility of the overall programme constitutes a value as such, which is an asset for implementation of Phase II.
113. **OUTCOMES OF SMALL-SCALE-PROJECTS AND OTHER GRANTS:** Many outcomes and benefits of the small-scale projects are sustainable. A number of projects are ongoing, such as

e.g. the radio programme in Gračanica/Gračanicë, Kosovo. For other projects, e.g. in education or infrastructure, many interviewees point out long-lasting benefits. However, there are also critical voices stating that these projects “are a drop in the ocean, given the small scale”. Conceptually these projects were meant as exemplary learning grounds to understand the process of accessing funds and implementing projects. This understanding has been created to a certain extent. However, the desire of many interview partners for higher budgets (in Phase II) indicates that this learning process has not yet been processed sustainably and in the intended sense.

2.6.2 What were the major factors which influenced the achievement or non-achievement of sustainability of the ROMACTED actions / process?

Enablers:

114. **PROGRAMME DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY:** A number of interviewees cited the ROMACTED programme design and methodology as its key strength. The methodology of focusing on empowerment and accountability of the different actors is valued as unique and as sustainable. It sets the programme apart from the classic "aid approach", which ultimately turns project beneficiaries into objects of the aid process. Some voices support the methodology, but believe it should be even more assertive and promote even more lobbying and advocacy elements.
115. **SCOPE OF THE PROGRAMME:** The programme's scope and regional approach are also appreciated. According to interviewees, the ROMACTED programme has the potential to make a difference, especially in smaller Beneficiaries where the coverage can reach a critical mass, such as in Kosovo, Montenegro and North Macedonia.
116. **LONG TERM WORK AND PERSISTENCY:** In North Macedonia it was particularly underlined that prior work, done within the framework of ROMED I and II, had a positive effect on the ROMACTED programme. As an example, an interviewee mentioned that out of 100 mediators trained in ROMED, around 80 were employed by the Ministry of Education and Science and the Ministry of Health. CAG membership draws from this trained group and hence, ROMED outcomes contribute to CAG sustainability in ROMACTED.
117. In the practical work, persistency (especially of the CoE employees) was emphasised. Continuous monitoring of whether policies and promises are actually implemented and monetized led to good results. The same applies to the capacity-building of local authorities. They, too, must be able to rely on an ongoing process of capacity-building so that changes become sustainable.
118. **CoE CREDIBILITY AND PERFORMANCE:** The CoE is seen as a credible actor with a positive image. This lends credibility to the programme. Various interviewees also emphasised the special role of the CoE project staff, who support the programme with a high level of identification and commitment, while at the same time showing respect for the individual situation of each municipality and each Roma neighbourhood. Representation of Roma within the CoE staffing (diversity) also contributes to the credibility of the ROMACTED programme to a great extent.
119. **POLITICAL WILL:** Pre-existing political will of local authorities, national authorities and Ministries as well as good communication between the central and the local level authorities are external assets, which determined a different starting point for each Beneficiary and each Municipality and which have a significant impact on sustainability.

120. **ROMA OWNERSHIP:** Many interviewees emphasised the special role of local facilitators and mediators. This form of local ownership should be used more intensively. This commitment becomes particularly productive when the key persons in the CAGs and the facilitators systematically transfer their skills to the groups involved. Furthermore, it is worthwhile to improve not only the communication between local authorities and Roma, but also between different Roma groups and NGOs, and thus to increase the coherence of ownership.

Challenges:

121. **FRAMEWORK CONDITIONS:** Some municipalities are affected by particular external challenges. In Kosovo and North-Macedonia, new elections of local authorities which led to processes being interrupted or slowed down, were mentioned in particular. In Kosovo, the special situation of the Roma in Graçanica/Graçanicë as a minority within a minority municipality, which implements Serbian policies in parts, should also be mentioned. In the education sector, for example, these policies set extremely unfavourable external conditions (such as the non-recognition of educational qualifications).

122. **INSUFFICIENT OWNERSHIP OF MUNICIPALITIES OF SPECIFIC INSTRUMENTS:** Municipalities do not demonstrate sufficient ownership for all instruments, according to interviewees. In Kosovo, for example, it was emphasised that Roma-sensitive budgeting or community budgeting with the corresponding hearings is only formally implemented. However, this form of democratization from below lacked real ownership. The understanding is technical and the tool is not home-grown. Likewise, the instrument of affirmative action lacks real support in the authorities. If such instruments are pushed too strongly from outside, there is a risk that they will undermine the sustainability of the processes rather than contribute to it.

123. **STRUCTURAL OWNERSHIP:** Similarly, some interviewees find the anchoring of the programme's structures in the municipalities too weak to be sustainable. At the operational level, this implies that the focal points must be located in the municipalities in order to realize a real transfer of responsibilities in a sustainable way. Likewise, interviewees mentioned that the programme responsibility and its methodology should be placed on the national level within the respective Ministry steering the National Strategy for Roma inclusion.

124. **INSUFFICIENT INCLUSION OF ELECTED BODIES:** Interviewees in North Macedonia pointed out that, in their point of view, insufficient cooperation with municipal councils jeopardizes the approach's sustainability. As it is the councils, not the municipalities, who are the elected bodies representing the citizens, they need to be key partners.

125. **IMPLEMENTATION GAP BETWEEN PHASES I AND II:** The implementation gap between the different phases of the programme negatively affected in particular the stability and activities of the CAGs. While communication between Roma and local authorities continues on an improved level, it is a process which still requires continuous facilitation and therefore continuous programme implementation.

2.7 Cross-cutting issues

2.7.1 How is the principle of gender equality and participation of women reflected in the implementation of ROMACTED?

126. **STAKEHOLDERS' APPRAISAL:** According to the evaluation survey, a total of 76% of respondents state that the ROMACTED Phase I programme reflected the principle of gender equality and participation of women to "a considerable" or to "a great extent". Interviews indicate that participation of women in the ROMACTED cycle was seen as important. The observation was made that their contributions relate more to what benefits the community as a whole, in particular with regard to education and health. There were differing perceptions of interviewees with regard to the degree of involvement in ROMACTED events such as training events or meetings at Beneficiary level. One interviewee noted that here women were very visible and active. Another interviewee perceived men to be taking leadership roles.
127. Interviews confirm that the CoE has sought to increase women's involvement in implementation at both local and programme levels, e.g. in Kosovo meetings with women were held in settings accommodating their daily routines to assess their specific needs. The CoE funded, through the ordinary budget, a training event on the subject of women's participation and citizenship attended by 25 Roma women and girls.
128. **GENDER MAINSTREAMING:** However, gender mainstreaming in the implementation cycle of the ROMACTED programme proved to be challenging. Concerning gender distribution within the CAGs, the CoE's reports note differences between the Beneficiaries which can be confirmed by this evaluation. In Albania, CAGs saw on average a balanced representation with around of 50% women and girls, according to interviews. Roma women were perceived to fully participate in the CAGs and gender balance was viewed as important for the overall work of the groups. In North Macedonia and in Kosovo, CAGs were mostly male-dominated during Phase I. Interviews pointed to regional differences within North Macedonia by which, in the western part of the country, male domination of CAGs was due to the more traditional make up of Roma communities. In turn, gender representation within CAGs in the eastern part of the country, which is seen as less traditional, was more balanced. Interviews also indicate that, in the current Phase II of the programme in North Macedonia, women's participation in CAGs has substantially increased to around 50%, possibly as the result of the minimum percentage participation rate set for CAG membership.
129. Equally, the programme saw an unbalanced representation of female facilitators, especially in North Macedonia, where the ROMACTED Phase I was considered to be almost entirely male-led. Only one out of 15 facilitators was female and she was not of Roma origin. In Kosovo, the increased number of young women becoming involved as local facilitators in Phase II of the programme is seen as beneficial and was noted positively.
130. In Albania, one of the criteria for the selection of municipalities was a balanced gender ratio among mayors, an indicator not initially included in the methodology but later added to ensure female mayors were represented in balanced manner.
131. Concerning the small-grant scheme, the CoE's reports note that "all 44 implemented projects equally targeted both Roma women and men." According to CoE reports, in particular

projects in Serbia, which aimed for social inclusion of Roma communities, integrated activities which specifically targeted or benefitted women.²¹

132. **GENDER ANALYSIS:** Evidence of the inclusion of gender analyses into the ROMACTED programme cycle is very limited. The 4-step methodology of the ROMACTED programme as outlined in the Handbook does not systematically address gender in each of the four steps of the programme cycle. Reference is made only to the composition of the CAGs for which diversity and gender sensitivity are listed as two of the eleven characteristics. The needs assessment tool was designed to capture gender-disaggregated data. However, respective disaggregated data was not always available in all municipalities. In addition, the tool had included one question assessing specifically the situation and needs of women with regard to employment. Overall, ROMACTED reports make reference to “men and women” of their target group but do not provide a more in-depth analysis.
133. **GENDER-DISAGGREGATED OUTCOMES:** There is evidence, albeit limited, of gender-disaggregated outcomes in ROMACTED reports. The ROMACTED logical framework includes one indicator to track progress on gender, namely the “Number of projects addressing the priorities of Roma women and awareness concerning gender issues.” Annex 2 of the final report on the small-grants scheme projects and COVID-19 top-ups to small grants includes an analysis of the grant outcomes. It makes reference to, and at times includes concrete figures on, any activities specifically targeting or benefitting women. However, it misses a more in-depth assessment of the extent to which the grant-scheme as a whole has aimed to mainstream gender and consider issues and concerns relevant to women. Data on the composition of the CAGs is available, approximate figures can be due to the fact that CAG composition and size fluctuate as a result of their open and voluntary character. Nevertheless, external interviewees highlighted the limited information on gender and respective data gaps.

2.7.2 How is the principle of the Human Rights Approach, particularly the participation of vulnerable groups within the Roma communities, applied in the implementation of ROMACTED?

134. On the whole, the evaluation can establish that the methodology and the tools of the ROMACTED Phase I programme were designed to foster participation and inclusion of the Roma communities at local level. The previous chapters confirm the outcomes of the ROMACTED approach. In general, the human rights approach is viewed to be an added value of CoE projects, including the ROMACTED programme.
135. Interviews indicate that certain challenges have remained with regard to increasing inclusiveness of specific groups within the Roma communities, e.g. inclusion of returnees. According to interviews, the inclusion of educated youth in North Macedonia poses a challenge because the programme covers rural or more remote municipalities whereas educated Roma youth are mainly in the capital cities in order to enter into government or corporate employment.

²¹ E.g. in Kragujevac, as part of the project workshops were held for Roma youth on topics of violence prevention in the family and reproductive health of young Roma women; the project in Subotica included five workshops specifically for Roma women on the issue of health; in Zajecar a cooperative was established which comprised seven Roma women and one Roma man.

2.7.3 How did the COVID-19 response reach the most vulnerable individuals and groups within the Roma communities?

136. In a number of municipalities, the ROMACTED structure provided an entry point for other organisations' relief measures in the Beneficiaries. CAG representatives identified the most vulnerable within the Roma communities and/or contributed to the implementation of relief measures and liaised with the crisis management groups set up by the municipalities. In particular in North Macedonia and in Bosnia Herzegovina this was seen as important as municipalities lost a number of focal points due to the pandemic. In Kosovo, one interviewee indicated that whilst CAGs identified the most vulnerable, its members at times put their own families first. However, this has led to fruitful discussions between the CoE and Roma on the criteria to be used in setting up and implementing aid measures. Awareness has been raised on the importance of seeing the whole community and not only one's own family. Furthermore, in Kosovo, women were specifically targeted by female CAG members going door to door to establish the needs of women in light of the pandemic.

3. CONCLUSIONS and RECOMMENDATIONS

3.1 Lessons learned

Working with Roma communities

137. When responsibility is clearly assigned to CAGs, ownership is raised.

Interviewees highlighted the responsibility given to Roma communities as a specific strength of the ROMACTED Phase I programme which positively distinguishes it from other interventions targeting Roma.

138. The inclusion of local facilitators and mediators raises the ownership of the programme in Roma communities.

This became particularly apparent when facilitators systematically transferred their skills and knowledge to the CAGs, for example leading the CAG through municipal procedures and rationales for decision making. For example, an urbanization plan needed prior to addressing lack of access to water.

139. The identification of allies in the communities can overcome a lack of interest in CAG participation.

When working in municipalities where the setting up of CAGs faced challenges, the involvement of local NGOs and pro-active individuals clearly raised interest in participation.

140. In municipalities where Roma communities are divided along political party lines, an increased focus on establishing the CAGs outside political party lines proves to overcome fragmentation.

141. Special attention given to the participation of women and youth contributes to a wider, and more diverse understanding of community needs.

Separate assessments (e.g. in the form of focus groups) with women and youth, facilitates this process. Furthermore, the continuous involvement of women and youth benefits from targeted invitations to training and further activities. It supports the participation of women and youth in all stages of the implementation process. When women and youth are visible as active participants of CAGs, it raises the attractiveness of the CAG for other women and youth to join.

142. A long-term perspective of engagement of the CoE with the municipalities strengthens the mid-term outcomes of the programme.

Municipalities which were able to build on outputs of ROMED I and II benefitted from already trained mediators. CAGs are more effective when they can draw their membership from previous interventions and training programmes.

Working with municipalities

- 143. Pre-existing political will of local authorities, national authorities, and Ministries along with good communication between the central and the local level authorities, are external assets which contribute to successful programme implementation.**
- 144. An explicit linkage of local action plans with the national action plan, strategies for Roma, and systematic monitoring of implementation as part of the Programme, are essential for the effectiveness of ROMACTED tools.**
- 145. When training programmes for municipalities are not designed as one-off activities, but rather as continuous processes, the learning outcomes have a better chance to be absorbed at an institutional level.**
In municipalities, the number of staff trained, needs to reach a critical mass of individuals in order to influence the organisational practice and culture and facilitate mainstreaming.
- 146. Sensitive issues such as racism and antigypsyism may at times not be addressed in formal settings.**
When these issues were addressed informally "over a coffee" changes of attitude could be initiated.
- 147. Sharing of tested good practice and initiatives amongst municipalities encourage replication, and hence serve as a multiplier effect.**

Supporting trust and relationship-building between municipalities and Roma communities

- 148. Small-scale projects were important in demonstrating practical solutions, they served as a trigger for community engagement and enabled CAGs to demonstrate immediate, tangible results.**
In this respect the small-grant scheme served its purpose as an incentive to bring municipal administrations and Roma communities together.
- 149. A high level of identification and commitment of CoE project staff, as well as representation of Roma within the CoE staffing, contributed to the credibility of the programme and raising of trust of project stakeholders.**
This supports a positive dynamic in the communication between municipalities and Roma communities.

3.1 Conclusions and recommendations

On Relevance & Coherence

Conclusions:

150. The evaluation can establish that the ROMACTED Phase I programme is of high relevance to the needs of the Roma communities and local authorities in the Beneficiaries, as it addressed marginalisation, the lack of access to local services and the lack of participation of Roma communities and strengthened the capacities of both target groups.
151. The programme linked clearly into the new EU Roma strategic framework on equality, inclusion and participation for 2020-2030 and the commitment of the Beneficiaries as part of the 2019 Poznan Declaration of the Western Balkans Partners on Roma Integration within the EU Enlargement Process.
152. The evaluation concludes further that the ROMACTED Phase I programme demonstrated external as well as internal coherence and built interlinkages with relevant international stakeholders and initiatives as well as with domestic authorities.

Recommendations:

153. (a) TO THE CoE: Thematically, the ROMACTED programme should include in its work more activities to combat antigypsyism and strengthen Roma identity in order to support inclusion of Roma communities at the local level.²² In this regard the programme is able to further build on its linkages with the European Roma Institute for Arts and Culture (ERIAN) by utilizing their thematic expertise and regional outreach (Belgrade office).
154. (c) TO THE EU: IPA grant schemes for Roma should more explicitly target ROMACTED municipalities to allow follow-up on small-scale projects in order to scale them up and increase their outreach. This would enable target groups to further strengthen cooperation and put the programme into a broader development context.

On Effectiveness & Efficiency

Conclusions:

155. The evaluation concludes that the ROMACTED Phase I programme has been effective in producing concrete results as described in the findings above (LAPs, CAGs, small-scale projects, etc.). The programme also progressed towards trust-building between the Roma communities and the municipal institutions and towards increased confidence of Roma communities in their ability to interact with local institutions. The evaluation can also confirm the efficiency of the ROMACTED Phase I programme, as the value gained for each project beneficiary is appropriate to the amount spent per beneficiary.
156. The overall structure of the ROMACTED programme appears to be complex, with a high number of actors such as CAGs, MTGs, IWGs, municipal administrations, support organisations, facilitators, focal points, advisory groups and CoE programme staff at different

²² E.g., the "Evaluation of the EU Framework for National Roma Integration Strategies up to 2020", concluded that tackling antigypsyism was a key prerequisite to effective social inclusion initiatives.

levels. The Municipal Taskforce Group comes together on an occasional basis, rather than on an institutionally agreed upon fixed schedule. Therefore, cooperation between IWGs and CAGs is a permeable process whereby different members of groups participate to differing levels depending on the issue under discussion.

157. Beneficiaries adapted the ROMACTED methodology to their country-specific contexts. In Albania the ROMACTED programme provided a meaningful contribution to the translation of national Roma strategies into Local Action Plans. In some municipalities in North Macedonia, the formulation of one-year JAPs in addition to Local Action Plans resulted in a lack of clarity. As one-year plans, JAPs map out the work of CAGs and IWGs under the ROMACTED programme.
158. Although the mainstreaming of Roma-sensitive policies into municipal development plans differed in its effectiveness between the municipalities, it presented an equal challenge to municipal stakeholders in all sample Beneficiaries alike.
159. A key assumption of the ROMACTED programme is that greater empowerment can be achieved when targeting Roma communities directly rather than through intermediaries, e.g. NGOs. In practice this has played out only to a limited extent. As the case studies demonstrate, CAGs are led by a few strong and well-educated Roma. They may be assets of the CAGs or they may function as gate-keepers dominating the group. The voluntary nature and openness of the CAG structure constitute both a strength but also a challenge, as their (informal) leaders or spokespersons do not necessarily represent the larger community of a municipality. This reveals the complex interplay of the ROMACTED programme between aiming for effective implementation of the various programme activities and ensuring wider impact on the target groups with regard to participation and empowerment.
160. According to the ROMACTED methodology, small-grants projects serve primarily as a “tool” to initiate community involvement and cooperation between Roma communities and municipal institutions through joint action which generates a benefit to the communities. During Phase I, the small-scale grant scheme directed the target group’s attention towards project outputs and thereby contributed to a misunderstanding about its core purpose. This has led to the CoE having to manage expectations of their target groups, in particular with regard to the scope of project funding. This mixed message regarding the purpose of the grant scheme is also reiterated by CoE reporting, which emphasises project outputs.

Recommendations:

161. (d) TO THE CoE: In order to avoid “tick-the-box” effects, the ROMACTED methodology should emphasise its flexible application and room for adaptation, e.g. with regards to the development of Action Plans. The ROMACTED methodology should further emphasise its linkages to relevant national policy processes affecting the local level.
162. (e) TO THE CoE: The CoE programme staff should explore options for a leaner and/or more flexible programme structure. In order to improve the ROMACTED programme’s prospects of sustainability, staff should examine whether resources could be directed to the municipalities to a larger extent
163. (f) TO THE CoE and ROMACTED municipalities: Mainstreaming should be emphasised and strengthened where possible. This includes small technical measures such as the translation of the ROMACTED programme MoU into local languages and broader dissemination of the document to municipal staff; greater coverage of municipal staff through training measures; support to the IWG to carry out assessments on how to promote and strengthen intersectoral cooperation between different departments.

164. (g) TO THE CoE: Local facilitators and “key Roma contacts” should be sensitized to the possibly conflicting goals of effectively “getting things done” and involving the entire group in a genuine participatory process (which is usually slower and to some degree repetitive, as new group members get involved at different times). These issues have been picked up to some extent in the ROMED2 guidelines and resources for National and Local Facilitators²³ and would benefit from thorough follow-up through training, supervision and peer-learning measures.
165. (h) TO THE CoE: The ROMACTED methodology should put a stronger focus on the small-scale projects’ follow-up and stress the outcomes of learning processes in addition to concrete benefits for the Roma communities. Systematic follow-up should be pursued, e.g. by providing support to the upscaling of successful projects (as pilots), concrete support to follow-up proposal writing and donor identification, etc.

On Impact & Sustainability

Conclusions:

166. Concerning the wider impact of ROMACTED programme, the evaluation was able to establish that Phase I produced some longer-term or systemic results, even if only to a limited extent, and to different degrees in the various Beneficiaries and municipalities. Considering the timeframe of Phase I including its inception phase, the collection of baseline data, the initial set-up of the required structures in the municipalities as well as some understandable slow-downs due to the COVID-19 pandemic, progress made can be seen as reasonable.
167. The formulated impact goals, the establishment of a political will for sustained policy engagement to advance Roma communities and the empowerment of Roma communities to contribute to policies and practice, are long-term processes and require substantial changes in attitude and behaviour that go beyond a three-year project cycle. Moreover, the ROMACTED programme introduces specific participatory approaches that are not, or only in a limited way, available to the majority population. However, municipalities have little or no respective experience, such as on participatory budgeting targeting all citizens.
168. The evaluators are confident about the sustainability prospects of processes and structures produced by the ROMACTED Phase I programme, in particular as the ongoing Phase II further strengthens what has been put into place during the preceding programme cycle. Enabling factors such as coverage of a critical mass of municipalities with larger Roma populations particularly in smaller Beneficiaries, the trust established between the two target groups and the credibility of the ROMACTED programme and its methodology further point to potentially sustainable processes. With regards to the benefits generated through the small-scale grant scheme, there is evidence that in a number of municipalities, project activities are continuing, or benefits (especially in terms of infrastructure measures) are outlasting the Phase I programme cycle.
169. Nevertheless, it must be noted that this encouraging outlook on the sustainability of the programme cannot be established for all municipalities alike. In a number of them, external challenges such as local elections or continued lack of ownership, also with regard to the ROMACTED processes, hamper the sustainability of Phase I achievements.

²³ <https://bit.ly/2i5RXjG>

Recommendations:

170. (i) TO THE CoE AND THE EU: The ROMACTED programme should explore how to create incentives for greater political will at the local level, such as participation in the ROMACTED programme as an added value in relevant EU tenders or increased communication regarding the role of local levels in the Beneficiaries meeting the EU accession criteria.
171. (j) TO THE CoE: With regard to a possible future expansion of the ROMACTED programme, there should be a balance between municipalities with an already existing basic political will (potential for sustainability orientation) and municipalities where this needs to be formed more strongly (needs orientation).
172. (k) TO THE CoE: To prepare for future measures, the ROMACTED programme should carry out Beneficiary-specific assessments on the extent to which the various programme tools found broader acceptance and were applied in the Beneficiaries, e.g. while in Albania Roma Sensitive Budgeting was implemented effectively as a specific component of Phase I, this proved to be more difficult in Kosovo.
173. (l) TO THE CoE AND THE EU: An assessment should be made of the extent to which the participatory techniques introduced through ROMACTED can also be implemented in corresponding processes for involving the population as a whole, possibly as a specific component in other regional CoE/EU programmes.
174. (m) TO THE CoE: As the role of local facilitators and mediators was crucial for the achievement of the first phase of the programme, the CoE should continue to leverage on this form of local ownership.

On cross-cutting issues

Conclusions:

175. In terms of gender balance, the ROMACTED Phase I programme achieved only limited participation, both in terms of representation in the CAGs and in the appointment of facilitators. In terms of the small-scale grant scheme, women from the Roma communities benefited as much as men from a large number of the projects. However, projects that specifically address women's concerns were rare. Gender mainstreaming is also not consistently incorporated into the 4-step ROMACTED methodology.
176. Concerning the application of the Human Rights Approach, the evaluation can confirm that the methodology and the tools of ROMACTED Phase I programme were appropriately designed to foster participation and inclusion, and produced the expected outcomes. However, certain challenges remain with regard to the lack of inclusiveness concerning specific groups within the Roma communities

Recommendation:

177. (n) TO THE CoE: The ROMACTED methodology and tools should be reviewed to strengthen systematic integration of gender mainstreaming into all four steps of the ROMACTED implementation cycle. Facilitators and target groups should receive the necessary and appropriate training on the revised methodology.

ANNEXES

Annex 1 - Case Studies

Albania

CASE STUDY Elbasan

1) Background information on the municipality

The municipality of Elbasan in Albania has a population of 141,714 inhabitants. As a result of the decentralisation process and territorial/administrative reform, the new municipality consists of 12 administrative units. Elbasan municipality has a high concentration of Roma and Egyptian communities compared to other cities. Around 8,460 Roma and Egyptians live there, of which 2,800 are Roma and 5,660 are Egyptians (or about 1,846 families). The average age of the Roma/Egyptian community in Elbasan is 5 years younger than the average age of the total population, as data from the 2011 census shows. According to the ROMACTED baseline survey, only 15% of primary school aged Roma/Egyptian children attend school regularly. Amongst girls the rate is even lower at only nearly 6%. There is no segregation in schools. Only 13% of the Roma/Egyptian population are registered as employed, their employment being mainly in the recycling business or municipality supported services and handicrafts. In Elbasan, discrimination is not identified as a factor limiting the Roma/Egyptian population's chance of employment. According to the ROMACTED baseline survey, 90% of Roma/Egyptian households in Elbasan aren't connected to public infrastructure. Legalising properties and obtaining property ownership certificates pose a significant problem.²⁴ Moreover, 25% of the Roma/Egyptian community in the city of Elbasan do not have identification documents. Birth registration and the collection of related data remains problematic.

Albania did not participate in the preceding ROMED programmes.

2) The ROMACTED methodology

Step 1: Preparing the process

In February 2018, the **Memorandum of Understanding** was signed as a tripartite agreement between the Council of Europe, Ministry of Health and Social Protection, and the municipality of Elbasan. The Mayor appointed the Director of Social and Community Care as ROMACTED **municipal coordinator** to provide support and facilitate the process of implementation at municipal level. Interviews suggest that, from the very beginning, the municipal coordinator had a good understanding of the Elbasan Roma/Egyptian community's situation and took on the coordination of various steps of ROMACTED, including the needs assessments and the development of the Joint Action Plan. Interviews furthermore suggest that in the case of Elbasan the ROMACTED methodology of installing a municipal coordinator

²⁴ For example, Rapishte neighbourhood, in which 400 Roma/Egyptian families are located, displays severe issues with quality in building structure, water supply, sewage infrastructure and road infrastructure. Furthermore, street lighting remains an issue there. Nearly 289 Roma/Egyptian families have applied to legalise their properties (the process is on-going) and 23 Roma/Egyptian families live in buildings which are not yet legalised.

worked well as a result of two factors: the coordinator's administrative position and expertise could be used and through his position as a salaried municipal official, sustainability could be ensured.

The **facilitator** for Elbasan, a Roma/Egyptian from the city of Elbasan, was contracted in 2018. He had been identified by the former facilitator as one of the most active CAG members, who had also benefitted from peer-to-peer capacity building. In 2019 he was elected a member of the Municipal Council, making him the only Roma/Egyptian representative in the municipal structure. The role of the facilitator has been frequently described by interviewees as including, among many things, being a "role-model" for the local community, especially youth. Interviewees pointed out the exemplary nature of this case, in which an individual was gradually empowered from being a member of the CAG to becoming a facilitator to becoming a candidate for local elections. It is an encouraging example of a citizen's engagement transforming into institutional representation. Interviewees underlined that the example in Elbasan demonstrates how the opportunity for individual empowerment, as made possible through the ROMACTED methodology, is an important prerequisite for the advancement of the community.

Interviews confirm that the municipal coordinator and the facilitator worked well together, displaying good teamwork in their interactions with the CAG and the IWG.

The Community Action Group (CAG), the Institutional Working Group (IWG) and Municipal Taskforce Group (MTG) were officially established in Elbasan in the first six months of 2018. The **IWG** comprises five representatives (three women) of different municipal directorates including social services, infrastructure, water provision and sewage, employment, and health and education and is led by the municipal coordinator. In total, seven IWG meetings were organised by the local authorities up until January 2020. Interviews confirm that the IWG had established a good working relationship with the facilitator.

The **CAG** was composed of eight to ten Roma and Egyptian members, out of which five were women. The CAG met once per month totalling 19 CAG meetings up until March 2020. Roma and Egyptian women proactively voiced their needs by submitting specific requests and meeting with public administration institutions. Although there is a Roma/Egyptian Community Centre in Elbasan, funded by the municipality, in which community members gather, the **specific format of the CAG** (and its main parameters e.g. inclusion of women, discussion among equals, etc) gave community participation a more formal and structured framework, which facilitated process implementation overall. According to interviews, some of the CAG members are experienced community mediators (trained/engaged in other projects) who feel that the CAG's structure and methodology are more effective for interacting with public institutions than what they experienced in previous projects.

Interviews also confirm that **the triangle comprising the IWG, the facilitator and the CAG** was very productive. IWG members had the opportunity to have first-hand discussions with Roma/Egyptian community representatives about the community's actual needs and problems. These first-hand discussions allowed the IWG to engage actively and to provide a participatory approach in finding solutions. The **MTG** is composed of two to three participants from local institutions and five to seven CAG participants. Meetings were organised every four months totalling 11 between April 2018 and March 2020. Interviewees indicated that most of the CAG's requests have been considered and solutions discussed during MTG meetings.

Concerning **capacity building** of the CAG, each meeting was seen as an opportunity to discuss not only specific problems or solutions, but also to gain new knowledge and skills on various topics that concern the community. Each meeting was in fact a training for the CAG members. The CAG members confirmed that not only did they gain new skills and knowledge, but that they are now also able to transfer these to other members of the community (coaching/advising); they are able to mentor youth

on issues around empowerment and to support the community with specific problems such as helping young mothers register births. Due to their new capacity, the CAG explained that they have become an informal focal point to which the entire community turns to seek advice. The CAG members were very proud that young people, women and girls took an active role in supporting their community. The fact that they could now advocate their solutions, discuss their problems and present them to the municipal representatives in a meaningful way, together with the fact that this was recognised by the wider community, makes Elbasan a good example to demonstrate how community empowerment might look in practice.

In 2018, five MTG members were trained on “Participatory Local Strategic Planning” and in 2019 on “Developing Joint Action Plans for Roma Integration at Local Level”. In 2020, ten MTG members were trained on “Roma and Egyptian Responsive Budgeting at Local Level”. Municipal staff already trained through previous CSO initiatives supported the introduction of Roma/Egyptian Responsive Budgeting. IWG interviewees emphasized both the knowledge gained through the trainings and the importance of exchanging information on good practice with other municipalities.

Step 2: Assessing needs and prioritizing

Several activities were carried out in order to understand and identify the most critical issues that Roma and Egyptian communities face and to prioritise measures accordingly. In February 2019 several events were organised to this end, including a workshop with IWG members and local institutions in Tirana, followed by a meeting of the IWG and the public officers of the municipality of Elbasan as well as a CAG meeting. Data collection and situation analysis was based on information provided by focus groups, interviews with social services and budget planning specialists as well as on a review of all strategic documents approved by the municipality, such as development plans, General Local Plan (GLP), 2019 budget, and medium-term budget programme (MTBP). Primary data was mainly provided by the IWG as interviewees confirmed their active engagement in the process. Each priority area, including education, employment, health and housing was assessed separately. Following discussions of the findings, the CAG agreed on a priority list.

The community expressed their needs mainly in the area of housing while also noting problems with low school enrolment and employment. CAG interviewees confirmed that the community struggles with illiteracy and school dropout, all linked to the difficulties in finding employment. The IWG representatives as well as in-depth municipal assessments confirmed the main problems of the local Roma/Egyptian communities as being the low levels of education, illiteracy, high poverty related to unemployment, problems with ID documents and housing issues related to both construction standards and legal/property claims.

Step 3: Adopting a Joint Action Plan

On 30 April 2020 the Local Council of the municipality of Elbasan approved the **Local Action Plan for the Integration of Roma and Egyptian Minorities 2019-2022 (LAP)**. The total cost for implementing the Plan’s measures, to be derived from all resources of funding, is estimated to be about 456.6 million ALL or approximately 3.65 million EURO. Financial resources from the state budget cover about 13.9%, while resources of funding committed by the municipality cover 41.8 % of the Local Plan’s total cost. All interviewees confirmed that adopting the LAP was the most important achievement of the ROMACTED Phase I programme, its good results being attributed to the joint effort made by all parties involved in the process. This was also confirmed through the scoring exercise performed as part of this evaluation in which both CAG and IWG members scored the LAP as the most important component of

the ROMACTED Phase I programme. Interviewees further emphasised the importance of a continuous LAP implementation process to enable both the community and the municipality to take up their respective roles in that process.

The LAP laid out over 70 specific measures which cover all sectors identified as part of the needs assessment and which also fall under the structure of the National Action Plan for the Integration of Roma and Egyptians to allow for monitoring at national level. Five local-level policy documents have been approved in Elbasan Municipality which are complementary to the LAP: The General Local Plan (GLP); the Development Strategy; the Social Protection Plan 2017-2022; the Gender Equality Action Plan 2018-2020; and the Strategic Anti-Corruption Plan. The municipality plans to mainstream the LAP into the next Social Protection Plan which is currently being developed and should cover the period 2023-2026.

Step 4: Funding and project implementation

According to the interviewees, the LAP has not been fully integrated under the municipal budget although the “Roma and Egyptian Responsive Budgeting” trainings were completed. This is expected to happen in the next budget cycle. However, there were a number of **financial allocations made by the municipality** to the Roma and Egyptian communities, including 200.000 EURO for housing, to be given out mainly as rental bonuses but also for renovations. This is also linked to new amendments to the Law on Social Housing.²⁵ For example, in 2021, the municipality invested in the reconstruction of 20 Roma/Egyptian houses.

As part of the ROMACTED Phase I **small grants scheme projects**, the municipality implemented the project to “Improve and expand the commitment, capacities, skills and knowledge of community centre staff to provide quality and effective teaching to Roma/Egyptian children, rehabilitation of the bridge leading to the community centre”. The CAG expects this investment to increase the number of Roma/Egyptian children attending kindergarten and school-mentoring activities at the community centre. Further, there were some COVID-19 top ups such as rubbish bins distribution in the community to improve garbage disposal.

A number of **LAP actions did not require direct funding** and could be implemented via the **triangle CAG – Facilitator – IWG**. For example, in the area of **employment** 37 Roma/Egyptian youngsters were provided with information about public employment programmes run by the Elbasan Labour Office. Information meetings organised by CAG helped 25 Roma/Egyptian youth to enrol in vocational courses offered by the Elbasan Vocational Training Directorate. In the **education** sector, 25 children were assisted in registering for the kindergarten, 16 students in high schools; and 5 students were enrolled in the university in Elbasan. Finally, five Roma/Egyptian children were registered with the **civil registration** office through completion of the necessary documentation (birth certificate, parents’ documents and ID).

Monitoring the LAP is an institutional responsibility of the municipality. The LAP assigns clear responsibilities to municipal departments (education, housing, social protection, etc). The CAG has assumed its responsibility for monitoring as demonstrated by the fact that it is preparing both its first school visits to work on issues regarding school dropout, as well as community meetings to assess infrastructure problems. Specific **Municipal Decisions issued by the Council** provide the basis for

²⁵ The ROMACTED Programme provided international expertise in the design of bylaws of Law No. 22/2018 on Social Housing within the Ministry of Finance and Economy. Consultations were held on secondary legislation on preventing forced eviction of vulnerable groups and introducing a 5% quota for Roma/Egyptian beneficiaries per all of the six housing programmes prescribed.

monitoring progress on the investments made for all actions and projects. On the other hand, the current budget is not specifically coded to track funding benefitting the Roma/Egyptian community. The preparation of the first monitoring reports is underway and data collection is planned for February 2022. The process will be assisted by external experts. The local monitoring system also feeds into the national monitoring system (ROMALB), which monitors indicators across the sectors defined by the National Action Plan for Integration of Roma and Egyptians (NAPIRE).²⁶ The ROMALB evaluation report is prepared twice a year by the Ministry of Health and Social Protection and the municipality regularly updates this online electronic system.

Finally, the ROMACTED Phase I COVID-19 response was important in the wake of economic hardship experienced by Roma/Egyptian families during the restrictions. The CAG members and the facilitator, in coordination with the municipality, organised the provision of 120 emergency aid packages. The distribution of additional items was organised with other donors, such as the hygiene packages distributed together with UNICEF.

3) Concluding remarks

Elbasan Municipality seems well equipped with the basic preconditions needed for any reform, including political will, professional staff and individuals committed to Roma/Egyptian inclusion. The LAP is the main product of the joint participation of all stakeholders. One of ROMACTED Phase I programme's objectives is to improve communication and participatory planning at municipal level. In this regard Elbasan is a success case, in which the local community and the municipality, via the CAG and the IWG, both fully participated in the entire process and came to a joint agreement concerning priorities and measures to be budgeted for the formal adoption of the LAP as municipal strategic document. The Roma/Egyptian Community Centre remains a central resource for activities and the CAG. All stakeholders agree that, although more time is needed for all components to come together and additional trainings are required, the ROMACTED Phase I programme has nonetheless provided a solid platform for a way forward.

Both the CAG members and the municipal representatives pointed to the central role played by the facilitator. The evaluators conclude that in Elbasan there was a productive balance between the effectiveness of a committed and resourceful individual ("getting things done") and a slower, participatory path accompanied by capacity-building, awareness-raising and investments into creating behavioural changes in a larger group to support Roma/Egyptian inclusion.

²⁶ The ROMACTED Phase I programme supported the preparation of the National Action Plan for the Integration of Roma and Egyptians 2021-2025 for Albania to ensure alignment with the new EU Roma Strategic Framework for Equality, Inclusion and Participation by providing specific expertise on Roma and Egyptian responsive budgeting and on the topic of antigypsyism.

CASE STUDY Roskovec

1. Background information on the municipality

The municipality of Roskovec was newly formed following the 2015 territorial reform of the Republic of Albania. It is a part of the region of Fier and covers 4 administrative units. Currently, Roskovec municipality manages one town (Roskovec) and 14 villages. Roskovec has a population of 32.276 inhabitants with a total Roma/Egyptian population of 344, or 1% of the total population.

17% of the total population of Roskovec are estimated to be at risk of poverty. 23% of Roma/Egyptian reported having a job-related income while the ROMACTED Baseline Survey confirms that discrimination is not a major cause for Roma/Egyptian unemployment. School attendance is low within the Roma/Egyptian community in the municipality of Roskovec. Only 50% of primary school aged children attend school regularly and only 10% of children under 5 years of age attend kindergarten. The ROMACTED Baseline Survey reported on problematic levels of school dropout amongst girls, the reasons cited for this being migration, the early preparation of young girls for the future family, early marriage, and the low educational level of parents. Roskovec municipality has only two general high schools. Access is difficult for children in rural areas, and the level of attendance of Roma/Egyptian children is negligible. According to the ROMACTED Baseline Survey, the fact that 12% of Roma/Egyptian citizens lack identity documents must indicate problems within the birth registration system and/or other administrative problems with the issuance of personal documents in Roskovec municipality.

The 2020 report on Local Governance Mapping in Albania²⁷, (assessment based on the following 4 criteria: effectiveness and efficiency; accountability; transparency & rule of law; participation and citizen engagement) reported that Roskovec came 4th out of 61 municipalities for its overall local governance performance. The same study named Roskovec as one of only three municipalities rated as “very good” in terms of citizen participation in municipal meetings.

Albania did not participate in the preceding ROMED programmes.

2. The ROMACTED methodology

Step 1: Preparing the process

In February 2018, the Memorandum of Understanding was signed as a tripartite agreement between the Council of Europe, the Ministry of Health and Social Protection and the municipality of Roskovec. The Mayor appointed the municipal contact point to provide support and facilitate the process of implementation at municipal level.

In 2018 The **Community Action Group (CAG)** was set up with 13 CAG meetings taking place until March 2020. The average number of CAG members is 17 - 18 Roma/Egyptian (8 -9 of them women). According to interviews some form of community group existed prior to the start of ROMACTED and was active in communicating with the mayor's office for the past 6 years. However, interviewees stressed that the ROMACTED methodology and capacity building support provided a more structured approach that was widely accepted by the community.

²⁷ Governance Perception in a Reforming Albania, Nationwide Local Governance Mapping in Albania 2020, IDRA Research & Consulting and Human Development Promotion Center (HDPC).

The facilitator brought up the issue of **financial compensation for CAG members** for meeting or training days. The issue will need to be taken up in further capacity building efforts for CAG members, as such payments would possibly contradict ideas on promotion of active citizenship frequently linked to volunteerism. However, the coverage of certain expenses such as transport costs could be considered.

The **Institutional Working Group (IWG) and Municipal Taskforce Group (MTG)** were established in the first six months of 2018. Five IWG meetings were held with 51 participants from local municipal directories and decentralised bodies. Eight MTG meetings were organised during the period April 2018 to March 2020. IWG interviewees indicated that initial challenges were experienced before the different departments gradually learned to complement each other in addressing issues raised by the CAG.

A key outcome of the ROMACTED Phase I programme, as confirmed by interviews, has been closing the trust gap between the Roma/Egyptian community and the municipality. The municipality achieved this by organising outreach activities in the community such as e.g., information sessions on employment options. Moreover, the evaluator observed that Roma/Egyptian citizens approach the Mayor directly to discuss any particular issues they have. This observation confirms interview statements with regards to the openness and commitment of the Mayor (including the Mayor's office).

Concerning **capacity building**, three MTG members were trained on "Participatory Local Strategic Planning" in 2018, on "Developing Joint Action Plans for Roma and Egyptian Integration at Local Level" in 2019 and seven MTG members were trained on "Roma and Egyptian Responsive Budgeting at Local Level" in 2020. Interviewees highlighted that they gained knowledge on new concepts and methodologies, including the application of the participatory approach to identify issues relevant for Roma/Egyptian. CAG meetings were used to build its members' skills and expand their knowledge base. Skills developed included those needed to access rights and services, such as how to write applications, letters and requests in a way appropriate for official communication with the municipality. Meetings held between CAG and IWG members were also an important vehicle for skill-building in the areas of communication capacity, understanding the concept of advocacy and mastering the mechanisms for accessing information and basic services. While interviewees confirmed that they had developed new skills, especially in advocacy, the CAG also indicated that skill-building in the area of mediation would benefit the community participation processes.

Practice of communication between the CAG, the IWG and other municipal bodies was singled out as a most important capacity building achievement. Good habits were established and can be applied to any issues arising in the future. Interviewees discussed how they can now apply their new skills to other sectors and problems, relying on lessons learned and best practices established.

Step 2: Assessing needs and prioritizing

Roskovec was the **only municipality which developed an Action Plan on Social Inclusion (Social Plan)** in lieu of a Roma and Egyptian Integration Plan like the other six municipalities participating in the ROMACTED Phase I programme. As a consequence, needs were assessed along the wider social themes relevant to the inclusion of all communities in Roskovec municipality.

The municipality had already established a database and continuously collects data (place of residence, profession, education, employment, etc.) on Roma and Egyptian citizens which provided a sound basis for the ROMACTED assessment. In addition, meetings were held at community level and also between the CAG and the IWG. All in all, interviewees acknowledged the usefulness of these meetings.

Needs were identified across a number of sectors including housing, education, employment and infrastructure. In particular, a shortage of available social housing was emphasized. Poor infrastructure, including a lack of public transport and poor roads represent an obstacle to pre-school and school attendance for Roma/Egyptian children. Finally, limited access to employment services was also identified as a key area of concern.

Step 3: Adopting a Joint Action Plan

The Local Council in Roskovec under the Decision No. 47, dated 17 May 2019 approved the Action Plan on Social Inclusion 2019-2022 of the Municipality of Roskovec. Interviewees underlined that Roskovec municipality has a small and well-integrated Roma/Egyptian population that does not require community-specific Action Plans. Instead, the municipality insisted on mainstreaming Roma/Egyptian into the Social Plan that benefits all communities. This was also seen as beneficial for fundraising purposes. Interviews suggest that Roma/Egyptian issues were well integrated and given appropriate weight in the Social Plan. There are some issues that specifically pertain to Roma/Egyptian citizens, such as social housing constructions, kindergarten quotas, business incentives and others. On the other hand, in information also shared with the CAG members, the Mayor explained that due to budget limitations not all measures could be adopted. However, all needs were noted and will be considered as financial allocations will allow.

Interviewees confirmed that, via the CAG, the Roma/Egyptian community actively participated throughout the entire process of developing the Social Plan, voicing their needs, reviewing the draft document and monitoring its implementation. The municipality also aimed for transparency as demonstrated by the Mayor and municipal representatives hosting a public hearing with the Roma/Egyptian community to allow for an open discussion on the Social Plan and to explain budgetary limitations.

Overall, although the decentralisation process in Albania is ongoing and the transferral of a number of services to the local level is still pending, one can observe that Roskovec municipality implements the concept of good governance to the fullest, especially considering the limited financial resources available to this small and newly formed self-governing unit.

Step 4: Funding and project implementation

Based on the needs identified by the CAG, the municipality applied the Roma and Egyptian Responsive Budgeting approach and **invested over 5 million ALL (over 43.000 EURO)** of its budget in various Roma/Egyptian-specific projects which include the rehabilitation of the water supply, rehabilitation of roads, installation of a transformer for electricity supply, reconstruction of apartments and transport for school children. In addition, seven Roma/Egyptian were employed by the municipality, including four as community mediators in the Social and Youth Centre, one as a teacher in the public school, one as an advisor in the Municipal Council and one in the local water sewage system company.

Social Plan priorities were also funded externally. The project "At grandpa's coffee place" was funded by the Ministry of Health and Social Protection. The project "Daily Care Centre for Disabled People" was funded by UN Albania, with a total budget of around 8 million ALL (67.000 EURO).

Finally, the **ROMACTED Phase I small grants scheme** supported the project "Reconstruction of Kurjan lake road" to improve accessibility of Roma/Egyptian community residents to the centre of Roskovec. This was followed by works to improve of Roskovec kindergarten's facade, and by the provision of

working equipment to three young Roma/Egyptian professionals (one barber, one painter and one construction worker).

A number of **cost-free initiatives** were implemented via community-municipality cooperation. One such initiative was the facilitation of access to employment in the private sector, which resulted in a total of 11 Roma/Egyptian finding employment. Another initiative ensured that a total of 65 Roma/Egyptian children attended kindergarten or school regularly. Further initiatives included activities promoting intercultural dialog and civil registration. The CAG also initiated adult literacy classes and English classes for students, offered for free in the community centre. A number of actions specifically targeted women, such as the formation of a Women's Network. In the network, Roma/Egyptian and non-Roma/Egyptian women can share their experiences, exchange information on job and vocational training opportunities and engage in women's topics, such as the breast cancer campaign "Pink October" in October 2019.

The CAG estimates that roughly 70% of their requests of medium-term nature have already been implemented. The CAG interviewees also expect a follow up and monitoring of the implementation of other actions specified in the Social Plan. In the IWG's view, monitoring the implementation of projects and various community activities realized under the Social Plan is part of the regular work of the municipality, which can be seen as an additional indicator for mainstreaming Roma/Egyptian issues into local development.

Finally, by means of the COVID-19 assistance, 30 emergency aid packages were provided to Roma/Egyptian community members in need. However, interviewees did not view this as a very significant contribution to the overall implementation of the ROMACTED Phase I programme. Since the restrictions had negative effects on Roma/Egyptian communities economically, the ROMACTED small grant scheme provided some additional top-up assistance in the form of distributing essential materials and items of clothing to 35 children in kindergarten and school. Compared to the JAP, capacity building activities and the small-scale projects both the CAG and the IWG gave lower scores to the COVID-19 response and its impact on the community. Nevertheless, interviewees appreciated the COVID-19 response taking place.

3. Concluding Remarks

Roskovec municipality demonstrated Roma and Egyptian Responsive Budgeting in practice with over 43,000 EUR invested and requests financed and implemented over the period of the ROMACTED Phase I programme. The ROMACTED methodology, the trust and communication bridges built over time, enabled the Roma/Egyptian community to directly participate in policy-making as well as in the monitoring of relevant projects (as was the case, e.g., with the 43,000 EURO direct municipal investment on infrastructure).

According to the ROMACTED at a Glance report, the municipality of Roskovec has been sensitive to the needs of local Roma and Egyptians, being one of the most Roma/Egyptian-friendly local self-government units in Albania. In 2019, the Mayor was awarded the prize of "Most Roma-Friendly Mayor" by the European Commission's Directorate-General for Neighbourhood and Enlargement Negotiations within the 2019 EU Award for Roma Integration. The evaluators can confirm that the political will and commitment of the Mayor played a significant role in the promotion and application of the inclusion process. The Mayor's approach aims to avoid "positive discrimination" or the creation of a parallel "Roma/Egyptian" system. At the same time, it promotes equality and demands that citizens change their behaviour and mentality for the benefit of the entire community.

CASE STUDY Ferizaj/Uroševac

1. Background information on the municipality

Ferizaj/Uroševac municipality is located in the south-eastern part of Kosovo. Ferizaj/Uroševac is the third largest city in Kosovo and also the administrative centre of Ferizaj/Uroševac district.

According to the ROMACTED baseline survey (2017) the total population is 108,610, of which 3857 are Roma, Ashkali or Egyptian residents. OSCE details that there are 3,629 Ashkali, 204 Roma and 24 Egyptian residents in the municipality (2011 census).²⁸ Thus, Ashkali, Roma and Egyptian residents are estimated to make up roughly 3.5 percent of the municipality's population. Communities are scattered throughout the municipality with some concentration at Sallahane, Dubrava village and Gjilan road. The baseline survey noted that school attendance among Ashkali, Roma and Egyptian children is considered low with the priority in education usually given to boys. School infrastructure is inadequate lacking e.g., decent bathrooms, wheelchair access and, in some cases, running water. According to ROMACTED baseline survey, circa 201 Ashkali, Roma and Egyptian residents have an income from work. OSCE reports that 38 Roma, 610 Ashkali and two Kosovo Egyptians are registered as active job seekers with the municipal employment office (data as of 2018). None of the communities are well-represented in the municipal civil service, as Ferizaj/Uroševac did not meet the minimum threshold for each community to be represented in the civil service.²⁹ There is a health centre financed by the municipal budget. Healthcare professionals are accessible to Ashkali, Roma and Egyptian residents within 5 km of the communities, however there are no outreach health services. The health centre lacks some essential equipment. There is no data on Ashkali, Roma or Egyptian residents lacking identity documents.

Kosovo did not participate in the preceding ROMED programmes.

2. The ROMACTED methodology

Step 1: Preparing the process

In May 2018, the Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) was signed between the Council of Europe and the Mayor of Ferizaj/Uroševac municipality and the Mayor appointed a ROMACTED municipal contact person. In Ferizaj/Uroševac, setting up the **Community Action Group** faced some challenges, as all interviewees reported. The Roma communities in this municipality are spatially separated in different communities. However, it is the political dividing lines, rather than the spatial separation, that seem to have more effect. There is latent competition between the various politically engaged Roma stakeholders. The acquisition of project funds is seen as an expression of political strength. Municipal representatives stressed that they would like to see more political unity among the Roma and try to promote this. Roma leaders, they say, should do a better job of looking after the interests of their communities instead of just promising to do so during election campaigns. Against this backdrop the CoE and the supporting organisation Advancing Together attributed high importance to identifying Roma who do not hold political functions and ensuring that all different Roma communities are represented. Moreover, at the beginning of the programme, trust in the municipality and in

²⁸ OSCE: Overview of Roma, Ashkali and Egyptian communities in Kosovo, 2020, page 12.

²⁹ OSCE: Overview of Roma, Ashkali and Egyptian communities in Kosovo, 2020, page 13.

national and international organisations was very limited. Over time, the CAG has come together, at times numbering up to ten members and covering the various localities well. Balanced representation of women continues to be a challenge (see below).

For the CoE, the initiation of the programme, including the establishment of the **Institutional Working Group (IWG) and the Municipal Taskforce Group (MTG)**, got off to a slow start. However, this too seemed to have settled over time and a constructive attitude now prevails in the municipality. Reflecting critically, one interviewee emphasised that signing the MoU with the Mayor does not automatically ensure a presentation of the programme to all relevant departments. There are information gaps that hinder the further flow of work. Having a municipal contact point in place is crucial for the dissemination of information throughout the different departments of the municipality. While there is a high degree of openness for new ideas or approaches on the part of the municipality, it is not always easy to ensure a concrete follow-up.

According to CoE reports, representatives of the CAG and the municipality participated in a total of six workshops, e.g. in the preparatory phase one on “Participatory Local Strategic Planning”.³⁰ None of the interview partners in Ferizaj/Uroševac mentioned these workshops unprompted. Nevertheless, both the municipality representatives and the CAG representatives rate the area of “**capacity building**” in the scoring exercise as the most beneficial for the community.

The CAG focus group particularly highlighted the training received by the educational mediators, which achieved a clear improvement in the mediator’s soft skills. The CAG focus group had a broader understanding of what capacity building meant to them: of particular importance to them was learning from their participation and involvement in all programme processes. The exchange and opinion-forming processes in the group were emphasised as being productive. Municipality representatives mentioned a higher emotional closeness to the Roma community as a personal, and somewhat surprising, learning effect. This was also an effect that did not result from formalised training, but from the practice of working together.

Step 2: Assessing needs and prioritizing

With regard to **needs assessment and priority setting**, all interviewees pointed out that the ROMACTED methodology emphasises Roma ownership, which sets it apart in a positive way from other programmes. The municipality acknowledged the lead of the CAG in identifying needs and subsequently setting priorities which the CAG focus group noted positively. In addition, **the focus group** emphasised that the community took on full responsibility for prioritizing their needs. Initially the CAG identified infrastructure as a priority for the Roma community. Later on, it was concluded that potentially larger infrastructure projects could better be covered by other funding sources. The focus was then placed on educational measures addressing school drop-out of Roma children. Needs were further identified in discussions with parents, and included a lack of school equipment as well as a lack of parental awareness regarding the importance of education. During the pandemic, home schooling due to COVID-19 related restrictions proved to be an additional factor for potential exclusion.

The **municipality** stressed that, in their view, there was no discrimination against Roma in Ferizaj/Uroševac, that the disadvantages experienced by Roma do not result from discrimination practised by majority groups, but rather stem from the Roma way of living. In their point of view local organisations sometimes tend to exaggerate the extent of discrimination as well as the needs of Roma for fundraising reasons. In contrast, based on the 2011 and 2017 Regional Roma Surveys UNDP, the

³⁰ CoE: ROMACTED Kosovo. Baseline overview on the capacities and needs of the Roma communities and the beneficiary municipalities of ROMACTED Programme in Kosovo*. Assessment Report, page 49.

World Bank and the EC conclude that “Roma face limited access to opportunities in virtually every aspect of human development, such as basic rights, health, education, housing, employment and standard of living.”³¹ Against this backdrop the municipality’s analysis that simply “there is no discrimination” seems to be somewhat oversimplified. A deeper analysis and awareness of the multi-faceted reasons limiting access to opportunities for specific groups of the population may be lacking. Discrimination is a complex process and there is hardly any society without discrimination.

The CAG and IWG therefore entered the discussion on identified and prioritized needs from very different starting points. The CAG’s long list of priorities was partly met with scepticism in the municipality. In this regard, one of the interviewees stressed that the facilitator was very helpful in the joint discussions, promoting neutral communication between the CAG and the administration. Here, too, a component of the ROMACTED methodology was explicitly flagged up and noted positively.

With regard to **gender-specific needs**, one interviewee stated that it was important to address women specifically and separately. In some cases, individual discussions were sought by going from door to door resulting in a broader list of needs. This direct approach increased the participation of women within the CAG. The topic of gender equality was also taken up in one of the workshops (for all participating municipalities in Kosovo).

Step 3: Adopting a Joint Action Plan

Local Action Plans for the “Integration of the Roma, Ashkali, and Egyptian communities” have been in place in all participating municipalities in Kosovo. They are in line with the Strategy for Inclusion of Roma and Ashkali Communities in the Kosovo Society 2017 – 2021, the national policy for the inclusion of Roma communities. ROMACTED utilised the existing 2017-2021 Local Action Plan for Ferizaj/Uroševac, which corresponds with the community’s needs as identified or validated in the ROMACTED needs assessment and which was approved by the local assembly.

When asked about the most important components of the ROMACTED Phase I programme, none of the interview partners addressed the Local Action Plan on their own initiative or highlighted it in any way. When asked specifically about the Local Action Plan, the municipality made it clear that it considers it important as a sort of umbrella policy stating that “everything is within the action plan”. The CAG representative pointed out that, “of course the action plan is important, but even more important is the budget”.

According to the municipality, the **integration or mainstreaming of Roma issues** at municipal level is working well. Reference was made to the community office within the municipality which works towards similar goals as ROMACTED, the Ashkali deputy Mayor and equal investment into all communities.

Furthermore, the CAG confirmed that, in their point of view, mainstreaming is working and is actively pursued by the Mayor. However, the CAG believes that the lack of funding is an issue. One interviewee pointed out that effective mainstreaming is difficult as the municipality is missing a specific budget code tracking activities which benefit minority communities. This results in a situation in which there is the political will, but the municipality is nonetheless technically not able to allocate and track a budgetary provision due to budget codes being issued from the central level in Pristina.

Another interviewee stated that there is political will for mainstreaming, working top-down, but at the same time there are officials within the administration displaying prejudices against Roma. In this

³¹ UNDP, The World Bank, EC: Roma at a glance. Kosovo*, April 2018.

interviewee's point of view some initial work has been done in influencing this mindset, but it continues to be a work in progress and difficulties with officials remain.

Step 4: Funding and project implementation

All interview partners agreed that the **small-scale project “Mediation and prevention of school drop-out of children from the Roma community”** delivered concrete results. 60% of the costs were covered by the municipality and 40% by ROMACTED. The most important aspects of the project, carried out by the educational mediators, were deemed to be counselling the parents and motivating school drop-outs. According to the CAG, only 3-4 pupils, all of whom have not attended school for a longer period of time, had not returned to class. For all those who dropped out in the last 6-24 months, the project was successful.

All interview partners emphasised that **educational mediators were crucial in achieving the envisioned results**. In this context, a balanced selection of the mediators was important. Selection criteria included the coverage of three Roma settlements (1 mediator each), having a certain standing in the communities (as a person of integrity) and the absence of party-political ties.

Mediators played a variety of roles: they were present in all households, recorded their needs and when necessary accompanied families, e.g., during the registration process for school enrolment (school testing after pre-school). During COVID-19 related lockdown, they continued to monitor the availability of technical prerequisites and online participation of pupils. In individual cases, mediators intervened if the technical requirements were not in place. During the distribution of school equipment, additional volunteers helped out. This voluntary commitment to the school project was valued as personally enriching.

Concerning the mediators, an **institutional aspect** should also be emphasised. Mediators are often contracted by an NGO. In Ferizaj/Uroševac, for the first time in ROMACTED Kosovo, mediators were contracted by the municipality funded by the ROMACTED Phase I programme. This introduces an institutional design which underlines the municipality's responsibility in enabling the attendance of all school-aged children. This is not, as is often the case in project contexts, the task of civil society. CoE uses this example to demonstrate this option to other municipalities in Kosovo.

Interviewees highlighted two aspects which do not relate directly to the small-scale project but which were identified as being important within **the educational sector**. The CAG emphasised the establishment of mixed classes from minority and majority populations as a success. According to their assessment, it looked for a while as if there would be segregated school classes. Moreover, all interviewees highlighted the fact that the admission criteria for scholarships to secondary school have been removed. This has facilitated Roma access to secondary education. However, the CAG pointed out that the measure was limited to one year and that in the long run they need a quota solution to ensure access.

Concerning the technical implementation, interviewees pointed out several administrative difficulties. Procurement procedures proved to be complicated. The CAG also emphasised that educational mediators experienced delays in their payments. Furthermore, unclarity about related responsibilities and budgetary stipulations led the CAG to intervene several times with the municipal administration.

Both the CAG and the municipality **monitored project results**, by means of recording quantitative data on pupils who returned to class. The CAG also reports that, to some degree, it monitors whether pupils actually participate in home schooling.

With regard to the **COVID-19 related measures as part of the ROMACTED Phase I programme**, the perceptions of the interviewees differ. The municipality describes its support to all groups in the population as equal. Representatives stated that they were not sure whether measures on COVID-19 mitigation were also covered by ROMACTED. In the scoring exercise, they omitted COVID-19 from the score because they did not consider it an integral part. Other interviewees indicated that Roma were not sufficiently/equally supported by the municipality, e.g., there was no community presence in the municipality's COVID-19 emergency group. According to information from the CoE and the support organisation, the ROMACTED Phase I programme supported 61 of the most vulnerable households with food and non-food items, incl. hygiene products. The CAG actively took part in the selection and distribution process. One of the educational mediators, a trained nurse, helped to disseminate COVID-19 related information and to raise awareness of the pandemic amongst Roma communities.

Finally, CoE reports summarize some **further short and medium-term activities**, e.g., engagement of students in an internship programme, identification of Roma houses in need of formal registration, a meeting with Roma community on property rights, infrastructure measurements, extension of the MuralFest to a Roma neighbourhood and some environmental initiatives. These were not explicitly referred to by any of the interviewees.

3. Concluding Remarks

All in all, interviewees emphasized their satisfaction with the ROMACTED methodology, as it stands out positively from other approaches. Nevertheless, everyone also says openly that they hope for more financial resources. The CoE was clearly able to build trust in the ROMACTED Phase I programme and in its CoE representative, both in the municipality and in the Roma community. All interviewees were able to identify concrete results of the ROMACTED Phase I programme and analyse the programme's strengths and weaknesses. These analyses were not always unanimous, but reflect a constructive debate. A broader joint analysis of factors related to discrimination of Roma communities is likely to be useful to the overall process in the medium term. Local mediators are consistently welcomed by all as a clear expression of local commitment and local competence. Stakeholders see the ROMACTED Phase I programme as successful, but not yet as sustainable. Some actors explicitly see an institutionalization of project successes as a goal for the second phase of the ROMACTED programme. In particular, the voluntary structure of the CAG is fragile and commitment has to be re-established over and over again. Interviews also suggest that a longer-term timeframe is a decisive factor in achieving the aims of the ROMACTED programme. Nonetheless, on the whole, stakeholders reflected positively on Phase I and are motivated to participate in Phase II.

CASE STUDY Gračanica/Graçanicë

1. Background information on the municipality

Gračanica/Graçanicë is a municipality located in central Kosovo near Pristina. According to the ROMACTED baseline survey, the total population is 10,675, of which 852 are Roma, Ashkali or Egyptian residents. The OSCE details that there are 745 Roma, 104 Ashkali and three Egyptians (2011 census). As of 2018, the OSCE quotes somewhat different numbers, saying that according to community representatives there are 1271 Roma, 100 Ashkali and three Egyptian residents in the municipality.³² Thus, Roma, Ashkali and Egyptian residents are estimated to make up 8 to roughly 13 percent of the total population. Communities are scattered throughout the municipality with Preoce village having the highest number of Roma, Ashkali and Egyptian households. The municipality provides education following the Serbian curriculum. School attendance among Roma, Ashkali and Egyptian children is considered low with the priority in education usually given to boys. According to the ROMACTED baseline survey, circa 335 Roma, Ashkali and Egyptian residents have an income from work. The OSCE reports that 223 Roma and ten Ashkali are registered as active job seekers with the municipal employment office (data as of 2019).³³ There is a health centre financed by the Serbian government. Healthcare professionals are accessible to Roma, Ashkali and Egyptian residents and the communities do receive some outreach health services. Approx. ten Roma, Ashkali or Egyptian residents lack identity documents.

Kosovo did not participate in the preceding ROMED programmes. In May 2018, the Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) was signed between the Council of Europe and the Mayor of Graçanicë/Gračanica municipality and the Mayor appointed a ROMACTED municipal contact person.

2. The ROMACTED methodology

Step 1: Preparing the process

The initial formation of the **Community Action Group (CAG)** in Gračanica/Graçanicë was challenging due to different political currents within the Roma community and their affiliation to different political parties, as a number of interviewees pointed out. In addition, the CAG had to face the attempts of a single member to impose his particular interests in social housing according to the "all or nothing" principle. Within the CAG, however, it was understood that the housing sector must be financed by larger donor grants and that the CAG was ready to work on different thematic fields. The conflict was resolved when the member concerned left the CAG.

According to the interviewees, the CAG started out with a total of ten active members, but attendance and participation levels were subject to strong fluctuations over the course of Phase I. Interviewees further pointed out that while following up on concrete activities ensured the stability of the group, it was more difficult to keep CAG members engaged during the transition from ROMACTED Phase I to Phase 2.

Setting up the **Institutional Working Group (IWG) and the Municipal Taskforce Group (MTG)**, on the other hand, was perceived as relatively straightforward. Interviewees stated that the Mayor was supportive of the programme. They also emphasised the role of the then Deputy Mayor, who was

³² OSCE: Overview of Roma, Ashkali and Egyptian communities in Kosovo, 2020, page 28.

³³ OSCE: Overview of Roma, Ashkali and Egyptian communities in Kosovo, 2020, page 29.

prepared to take responsibility for the concerns of the Roma community. His position within the municipality gave weight to these concerns, thus having a positive effect on the establishment of the IWG.

With regard to **capacity building** the CoE documents that in Gračanica/Gračanicë CAG and IWG members participated in a total of six workshops, including one on “Participatory Local Strategic Planning”.³⁴ However, during the interviews, CAG members primarily pointed to new skills and knowledge gained through the implementation of the micro project rather than through the formal workshops offered by ROMACTED. In the scoring exercise carried out as part of this evaluation, the CAG scored **capacity building** as the second most beneficial component for the community (following the action plan).

The CoE encourages the principle of gender equality, especially balanced gender ratios in the working groups, and raised the issue with the CAG in particular. However, all key structures such as the CAG and MTG remain male dominated to date. The topic of gender equality was also taken up in one of the workshops (for all participating municipalities in Kosovo).

Step 2: Assessing needs and prioritizing

Interview partners assessed the **capacities of the municipality** of Gračanica/Gračanicë as above average. The municipality understood the specific ROMACTED approach quickly and well. Furthermore, process flows and hierarchies within the municipality were largely functional. One interviewee stated that, due to its majority Serbian population, Gračanica/Gračanicë has more experience with international donors and partners working on minority issues than other municipalities in Kosovo. This previous experience might have contributed to a comparatively smooth start in the cooperation with the ROMACTED Phase I programme. On the other hand, another interviewee emphasised that the municipality is also very strongly oriented towards the Serbian population. This is understandable in terms of numbers, as the Serbian population makes up 94% of the municipality's population. Other interview partners described the Mayor in particular as cooperative. He not only wanted to distribute food or other humanitarian goods, but to "highlight Roma culture as a value in itself".

Concerning the **assessment and prioritizing of the Roma communities' needs**, the CAG reflected self-critically on the priority setting process. In their opinion, it was a mistake to approach the municipality with a list of needs and priorities. This gave the municipality the opportunity to pick an easy (or the easiest) activity. Instead, Roma communities would have been better off clearly defining their own priorities and approaching the municipality speaking with one voice and one clear top demand. In contrast, other stakeholders preferred starting with less complex projects in order to generate a sense of achievement, especially in the initial phase of the project, and to try out and establish routines of cooperation between the municipality and the Roma citizens.

The CAG pointed out that there are key problems lying beyond the municipality's realm of responsibility, requiring actions and/or decisions at central level. It can limit the usefulness of the entire process if the CAG is allowed to set priorities participatively at local level, but these can only be decided/resolved at central level. (See mainstreaming below for more details).

The CAG highlighted that ROMACTED does not focus on specific groups (e.g. women, children) within the Roma community, but aims to achieve something for all Roma. This is seen as positive and

³⁴ CoE: ROMACTED Kosovo. Baseline overview on the capacities and needs of the Roma communities and the beneficiary municipalities of ROMACTED Programme in Kosovo*. Assessment Report, page 57.

increases the relevance of the project. The CAG is perceived as an opportunity to meet contacts in the municipality as an organised group. Furthermore, the group structure offers different and spatially separated Roma communities the opportunity to exchange information about their respective needs. The appointment of a contact point in the municipality is also seen as positive. Overall, the programme meets the needs of the Roma by supporting these structures.

Step 3: Adopting a Joint Action Plan

Local Action Plans (LAP) for the “Integration of the Roma, Ashkali, and Egyptian communities” have been in place in all eight municipalities in Kosovo participating in the ROMACTED Phase I programme. They are in line with the 2017-2021 Strategy for Inclusion of Roma and Ashkali Communities in the Kosovo Society. ROMACTED utilised the already existing 2018-2022 Local Action Plan for Graçanica/Graçanicë, which has been approved by the Local Assembly and corresponds with the communities’ needs as identified or validated in the ROMACTED needs assessment.

When asked about the most important components of the ROMACTED Phase I programme, none of the interview partners addressed the Local Action Plan on their own initiative or highlighted it in any way. However, when asked specifically about the Local Action Plan, the CAG and the municipality gave their assessments, which differed considerably. The municipality deems the LAP, in their own words, to be “sufficient”. The CAG pointed out that the LAP as such may be good, but that its usefulness really depends on whether it is respected and practically implemented in the municipality. The CAG considers the LAP to be too weak since, unlike e.g., an MoU, it does not stipulate co-operation directly between the municipality and the Roma community. In their point of view, the Action Plan can therefore only be realized if somebody takes on the role of persistently pushing to advance it. At the same time in the scoring exercise the LAP scored highest as “most beneficial to the community”.

With regard to the integration or **mainstreaming of Roma issues** at municipal level, the CAG indicated that one of the key issues of concern cannot be solved at local level. The municipality of Graçanica/Graçanicë recognizes Romani as a language in official use in the municipality, while the central level in Pristina, according to the CAG, does not. As a result, no interpreter for Romani can be employed in the municipality, as Pristina does not allocate a budget for this purpose. According to the interviewees, however, such a position in the municipality is one of the key demands that the CAG hopes will lead to more consistent mainstreaming and institutionalised access to municipal processes. The OSCE also underlines that the discontinuation of “translation into Romani due to lack of funds (...) impedes the implementation of the municipal decision on recognition of Romani as a language in official use in the municipality ...”³⁵

While the municipality highlighted the fact that one Roma was employed in the “office for communities”, the CAG pointed out that the number of Roma employees needed to be higher to do justice to mainstreaming. Budgetary limitations leading to a lack of Roma representation in the municipality, e.g. in the area of education or health, are the core problem to be tackled. Another interviewee pointed out that the municipality should be more astute in integrating fundraising for Roma issues when seeking funding for Serb communities. In the interviewee’s opinion the municipality “has not yet integrated this idea.”

The CAG highlighted a number of key factors which they believe pose a challenge to mainstreaming and long-term progress:

³⁵ OSCE: Overview of Roma, Ashkali and Egyptian communities in Kosovo, 2020, page 29.

- Insufficient genuine interest on the part of the municipality leads to continued reliance on the CoE's commitment to maintain cooperation between the municipality and the Roma community.
- A lack of cooperation at national level to secure budgetary allocations for higher Roma representation in the municipality.
- The need to re-establish communication and cooperation with the municipality after each election. The CAG feels that now, with a new Mayor elected, they have to start over again. During the last local legislative period, they had “their phone number” in the municipality, a contact person open to Roma issues. The CAG indicated that after each election it can take 12 to 18 months before the new municipal administration is ready to work and cooperation is re-established.
- The lack of a coordinated strategy within the Roma community: some Roma believe it is enough to secure "one friend, one phone number" in the municipality. Others want a contact person who is responsible by function and independent of election cycles.
- The many self-interests displayed within the CAG are viewed as an internal problem. Furthermore, the CAG does not represent all positions, needs or priorities of the different Roma communities. Therefore, an informal group is not suitable for pursuing the implementation of the LAP as an overarching instrument. This would rather be possible with the support of CoE at the central level in Pristina.

Step 4: Funding and project implementation

As part of the ROMACTED Phase I **small grants** scheme, Gračanica/Graçanicë municipality implemented the project “Extension of the information space for the media programme in Romani language”. All interview partners highlighted the radio programme in Romani language as a very successful project and instrument. It was an initiative by the CAG and the municipality accepted it straight away. Topics typically covered by the programme included health, education and news from Pristina. The radio programme also proved to be an important channel for disseminating information on COVID-19 related measures and hygiene. According to the CAG, at the beginning of the pandemic there was either no information at all or only misinformation circulating. The project therefore served the interests of both the municipality and the Roma community. Initially the project employed four Roma and the municipality provided 60% of the total project budget in addition to the CoE small grants scheme contribution. Two Roma currently still work for the radio programme. The aim of the CAG is the long-term continuation of the programme and its financing by the municipality. One interviewee pointed out that salaries in the radio programme are rather symbolic, but that the capacity building effects are actually of greater value than the income as such.

Land allocation for cemeteries in Preoce, Livadje villages and Gračanica/Graçanicë municipality constituted another issue which the CAG – IWG cooperation successfully solved. A number of interviewees recognized this allocation in the cadastre as a sign of the municipality's commitment.

The CAG also flagged education, namely the introduction of Roma mediators in schools, as an important field of activity. According to interviewees the measure of introducing mediators was underway, but then stopped due to the pandemic. CoE reporting summarizes some further short and medium-term activities, e.g. students placed in municipal departments as interns, information meetings on property, agricultural subsidies for two farmers. These were not mentioned by any of the interviewees.

The project's Covid-response in the municipalities: In Graçanica/Graçanicë food and non-food packages were provided for Roma and non-Roma communities. All interviewees appreciated this and highlighted it as a welcome joint intervention.

Looking beyond this practical activity, both the municipality and the CAG emphasised that the pandemic posed a major challenge for the course of the project. Activities, while not halted, slowed noticeably. In particular, the CAG underlined the difficulty of maintaining a civic voluntary initiative under pandemic conditions such as contact restrictions and other socio-economic effects. The functionality of Community Action Groups as a voluntary and rather loose structure is particularly unstable under these circumstances.

3. Concluding remarks

The CAG in particular expressed their endorsement of the ROMACTED methodology and considers the formation of the CAG a “great opportunity to meet local authorities”. The CoE was clearly able to build both the municipality's and the Roma community's trust in the programme and in its CoE representative. All interviewees identified concrete results of the ROMACTED programme and reflected constructively on its strengths and weaknesses. This analysis was much more elaborate on the part of the CAG. However, due to some COVID-19 related interview cancellations, the evaluator could only meet with one representative of the municipality.

The CAG brought up the fact that there are key problems that cannot be solved at local level but require national level interventions. Here, a further joint analysis would be helpful as to how the ROMACTED programme can provide the support needed, and which interventions can interlock at local and central level. Overall, the project stakeholders see the realization of the radio programme as a key achievement of the ROMACTED programme. It is seen as successful, but only partially as sustainable. In particular, the fact that the radio programme is still being aired a year after completion of ROMACTED Phase I, is seen as an indication of some degree of sustainability. At the same time, members of the CAG are well aware that Roma communities need broad institutional and political recognition. This concerns, e.g., recognition of the Romani language, but goes much deeper to include issues such as the recognition of school certificates obtained under the Serbian system applied in Graçanica/Graçanicë. Stakeholders in Graçanica/Graçanicë are aware that they have a long way to go and that conditions posed by the political framework are not favourable. However, ROMACTED Phase I programme intervention at local level in Graçanica/Graçanicë municipality is valued and stakeholders are looking forward to Phase 2. With a new, recently elected Mayor in place, stakeholders are not yet sure what to expect and believe that trust between the municipality and the Roma community will have to be rebuilt.

CASE STUDY Berovo

1. Background information on the municipality

The municipality of Berovo is located in the eastern region of North Macedonia bordering with Bulgaria. The 2002 national census established that the municipality has around 14,000 inhabitants, of which 3.3% (around 500 inhabitants) are Roma. With over 30%, the municipality has a high percentage of population at risk of poverty. Most of the Roma community live in two settlements, 23 August and Prohor Pcinski. The employment rate of the Roma community is very low, at around 44%. Common jobs are craft workers, cleaners and agriculture workers. According to the ROMACTED Phase I survey, the school dropout rate is at 4%. The school infrastructure is adequate, but the 2km distance from the Roma settlements constitutes a major challenge as there is no public or organized transport available. Ambulances do not respond to calls from the Roma settlement.

Berovo participated in the ROMED 2 programme starting in 2013 and had already developed a Local Action Plan for 2017-2020 when the municipality joined the ROMACTED Phase I programme. The municipality also had one Roma Councillor at the time of joining.

2. The ROMACTED methodology

Step 1: Preparing the process

The formation of the **Institutional Working Group (IWG)** began in April 2018 with first meetings between the ROMACTED national support team, the municipality and Roma representatives. The Municipal Council assigned members to the IWG which included municipal representatives in decision-making positions and other relevant local institutions including the Department of Local Economic Development, the Centre for Employment and the Centre for Social Work. The composition of the **Community Action Group (CAG)**, which was already set up as part of the preceding ROMED programme, remained largely unchanged which enabled an easy start, according to one interviewee. Out of a total of ten members half were women. The coordinator organized monthly meetings.

Concerning **capacity building**, two CAG members were trained on “Roma responsive budgeting” (organized in cooperation with the Roma Integration 2020/Regional Cooperation Council) and “participatory local strategic planning and budgeting at local level” as part of a training organised with two other ROMACTED municipalities. The CAG focus group emphasized that training and continuous coaching by the facilitator provided members with a good understanding of communication, priority setting and teamwork. Equally, as part of the scoring exercise for this evaluation, CAG focus group members scored capacity building as most important for them individually and most beneficial for their community. The need for further CAG training was also stressed.

Members of the IWG focus group who attended the Tetovo workshop organised as part of the ROMACTED Phase I programme highlighted the benefit of exchange with other municipalities. Hence, the IWG underlined the importance of opportunities for municipalities to engage in exchange regarding best practices. In particular, the IWG stressed the need for building more thematic expertise and knowledge on new approaches e.g., with regard to child protection and education, also but not exclusively in relation to Roma. Interviews also suggested that the municipality still lacks sufficient

expertise in terms of implementing IPA and other institutional donor projects and that the administration needs more training, particularly in the area of project cycle management.

The **Municipal Taskforce Group (MTG)** comprised all IWG and two CAG members. Meetings were conducted every three to six months. On the whole, both IWG and CAG members stressed that cooperation was good. Both focus groups emphasized the formation of the IWG and the CAG as an appropriate approach, as it formalized communication between the Roma community and the municipal institutions. However, MTG meetings were not attended by all CAG members but usually by the CAG coordinator. IWG members underlined the good cooperation with the CAG coordinator and her profound expertise.

Interviews with stakeholders at Beneficiary level suggest that Berovo was viewed as one of the more successful participating municipalities in the ROMACTED Phase I programme. In their view, this is due to a number of factors including a strong and committed CAG coordinator and a Mayor who has been very actively involved at operational level including actively participating in IWG meetings. The fact that the Mayor stayed in office following local elections is seen as a further favourable contributing factor. According to one interviewee, this sustained political commitment has in turn generated broader mobilization of the administration, also beyond the IWG.

According to municipal representatives, IWG and CAG cooperation is based on pre-existing, well-established relationships between the majority and Roma communities in Berovo. Interviewees also pointed out that the level of education of the Roma community in Berovo lies above the average of Roma communities in North Macedonia; e.g. there are a considerable number of Roma in Berovo holding university degrees.³⁶ The IWG focus group and interviews with municipal representatives emphasized that cooperation both within the MTG setting and beyond it facilitated the municipality's understanding of the needs of the community, while simultaneously improving the community's understanding of municipal processes and rationales for budgetary decisions. The latter was viewed by the IWG as essential in addressing the community's problems and concerns arising from misinformation of municipal competences and decision-making structures. This is the case in particular with regard to requests on infrastructure upgrading for which a formal urban planning permission is required and which has been a source of unclarity in the past.

CAG members reflected more critically on their relations with the municipality. CAG members highlighted their ability to communicate with the municipality in a structured way as a key achievement leading to better transparency. One interviewee indicated that the ROMACTED Phase I programme increased municipal institutions' interest in Roma issues. However, CAG members also pointed out that the more formalized communication through the MTG/IWG/CAG setting alone was not sufficient. Roma should also be represented in the Municipal Council (not currently the case) in order to ensure transparency in the implementation of external funds from the EU, for example. To a certain extent, as was emphasized in the focus group, scepticism remains in the Roma community as to the degree in which programmes intended for Roma (especially larger infrastructure measures) actually benefit the Roma community.

Step 2: Assessing needs and prioritizing

The **assessment of relevant needs** for the Roma community was carried out through the CAG. However, according to interviews, prioritisation was primarily done by the IWG with the participation of the CAG coordinator and the representative of a Roma NGO but not by the entire CAG structure.

³⁶ A perception-based statement. No corresponding figures were provided.

Nevertheless, IWG and the CAG focus groups confirmed that there was agreement on infrastructure and employment as the top priorities for the Roma community. With regard to employment, CAG members stressed that the inclusion of Roma in short-term measures is not seen as a sustainable approach. As one interviewee pointed out, “Despite the fact that so much money is spent on Roma, we are still stuck”. CAG members also highlighted that the persistence of stereotyping Roma is a key impediment for the advancement of Roma communities. CAG members believe that in the future the CAG could play a role in bringing Roma culture closer to the municipality in order to overcome these prejudices.

Step 3: Adopting a Joint Action Plan

The Municipal Council adopted a three-year 2017-2020 Local Action Plan for Roma as part of the Roma Integration 2020. This covered four sectors: education, housing, health and women. Following this, the Municipal Council decided against formal adoption of the **2019-2020 Joint Action Plan (JAP)**, as it felt that activities outlined in the one-year JAP were an integral part of the Local Action Plan.

Interviews with representatives from both the municipality and the Roma community confirm that initiatives included in the JAP address areas identified as relevant for the Roma community. The IWG stated that because of the CAG’s input, they view the JAP as being more needs-based and more specific. According to the CAG focus group, certain issues raised were not included, such as e.g. the request for an ambulance or sports initiatives.

The CAG’s input in the drafting process was rather limited. It was the IWG, in conjunction with the CAG coordinator and a Roma NGO representative, who is also member of the CAG, who drafted the JAP. Subsequently the draft was not presented to other members of the CAG for a chance to comment and provide feedback.

Step 4: Funding and project implementation

The Joint Action Plan outlined six concrete measures for the Roma community in the areas of employment, housing, access to water, infrastructure, and access to pre-school education. With regard to **employment**, there are two Roma employed by the municipality including a Roma pre-school teacher and a Roma caretaker in a home for the elderly. Other outcomes were mostly of short-term nature including the placement of seven Roma mediator interns in municipal institutions. Only two were retained in health and education services with temporary contracts by the Ministry of Health and the Ministry of Education and Science. Members of the Roma community also temporarily benefitted from a public work programme implemented by UNDP Skopje and financially supported by the Swiss Embassy, as part of the operational plan for active measures under the Employment Agency and Ministry of Labour and Social Policy. These temporary and project-based job-creating measures are viewed very critically by the CAG. One member highlighted that, for the most part, VET training initiatives or temporary placements are not working and do not lead to permanent employment. As he put it, “Roma cannot live on a project basis”.

Concerning **housing**, the municipality met JAP targets by providing housing for three Roma families in addition to 18 families benefitting from a social housing scheme. The Local Council exempted vulnerable families from paying for water consumption of up to 10m³. Regarding **pre-school education**, the municipality fully subsidized pre-schooling for a total of 23 Roma children who lacked access for financial reasons. As an accompanying measure the ROMACTED facilitator provided “parenting skills” training to Roma parents.

Infrastructure measures were implemented **as part of the ROMACTED small-scale grant** of 10,000 EURO which financed the project “Community for citizens -the construction of a water supply system” in the Roma neighbourhood in the Prohor Pcinski street. As a complementary measure, the municipality financed the reconstruction of Prohor Pcinski street in the Roma community with a total of 243,000 MKD (around 4,000 EURO) out of its municipal budget. There are some mixed messages regarding the CAG’s participation in implementing and monitoring this small-scale project. Municipal representatives stated that the CAG was involved in the monitoring of the project. Interviews with CAG and focus group members, however, suggest that the implementation of this small-scale project did not present them with an opportunity for a learning experience. According to interviews, CAG members were not fully involved in the decision on how the small-scale project fund should be spent. The suggestion of which particular infrastructure project should be funded was put forward by the municipality and approved by the ROMACTED support organization SONCE. The CAG did not really follow the implementation of the project but did select the street that was to be rehabilitated. The CAG nevertheless emphasized that this measure solved a long-standing problem and provided a concrete benefit to the community in terms of improved access to clean water and improved hygiene and living conditions. Finally, the CAG focus group pointed out that, on the whole, there was a certain frustration amongst its members concerning concrete benefits to the community beyond the small-scale grant measure.

The municipality **secured additional funding for Roma** initiatives from institutional donor agencies. Interviews confirm that the ROMACTED structure provided a basis for municipalities to apply jointly for EU funds for Roma. In 2021 Berovo municipality started implementing the three-year EU IPA project “Shtip and Berovo - Together for the improvement of living conditions of Roma communities” with a total project value of around 800,000 EURO, of which 200,000 EURO have been allocated towards measures in Berovo. Infrastructure measures include the reconstruction of 15 houses as well as accompanying measures such as legalization and urban planning. However, the CAG of Berovo municipality is not involved in the implementation of this project.

Berovo benefitted from the ROMACTED **COVID-19 response** and received a 4,000 EURO COVID-top-up grant. With it, tablets were distributed to 30 Roma children following a request made by the municipality. The municipality stressed that they were under time pressure to utilize the grant. In addition, the municipality provided pre-paid cards for families without internet access. However, both the IWG and the CAG acknowledge that the children at times had problems using the devices correctly.

4) Concluding remarks

The ROMACTED approach was seen as appropriate by both the municipality and the community. Both target groups confirmed that the ROMACTED approach contributed to a better mutual understanding of the Roma community’s needs as well as of the municipality’s decision-making and budgetary processes. The small-scale project component of the ROMACTED Phase I programme was viewed by both target groups as a concrete outcome benefitting the Roma community. The CAG coordinator played an important role and has a good standing in both the municipality and in the Roma community. This was crucial for the effective implementation of the ROMACTED Phase I programme. On the other hand, it can be concluded that this was at the expense of the involvement and participation of the CAG. This is evident, for example, in the fact that the CAG did not review or comment on the JAP draft document. This suggests that regular joint stocktaking and communication of progress on JAP priorities was insufficient. The case of Berovo illustrates the importance of achieving the right balance between effectiveness and participation/learning.

CASE STUDY Strumica

1) Background information on the municipality

Strumica is the largest town in the southeast of North Macedonia, close to the border with Bulgaria, with a total population of around 55,000 inhabitants. Non-governmental organizations estimate that with 2-3% (around 500 to 1,500 households) the percentage of Roma is higher than indicated in the 2002 national census, which cites only 0.27%, due to the fact that many Roma in Strumica do not declare themselves as Roma, but as Turkish. Most of the Roma community live in a settlement around Kliment Ohridski street, some also in a second settlement called St. Petnaeset. Around 75% of Roma children in Strumica attend schools. The dominant industries in Strumica are agriculture, food, textile and wood processing. Only around 12% of Roma have formal work. The majority has informal work, mainly in the agricultural sector or as waste collectors. The dependence on social welfare assistance is also relatively high; it lies at 75% and 50% in the settlements of Kliment Ohridski and St. Petnaeset respectively.

Unlike Berovo, the Municipality of Strumica did not participate in the preceding ROMED programmes. However, a training of mediators was provided and financed through CoE budget for Strumica and Veles as newly joining municipalities in ROMACTED Programme. One educational mediator was hence employed from that pool in Strumica.

2) The ROMACTED methodology

Step 1: Preparing the process

The CoE signed an MoU as a tripartite agreement with the Mayor of Strumica and the Ministry of Labour and Social Policy in March 2018. Following local elections in 2021, a new Mayor and a 23-member municipal Council came into office. In order to form the **Institutional Working Group (IWG)**, the Mayor was asked to select representatives to participate from those sectors relevant to Roma issues, including local economic development, urban planning, education, social welfare and health. Also included into the IWG were representatives from the Macedonian Red Cross and law enforcement (police and prosecutors office). The IWG met around five times per year. According to one interviewee, bringing additional institutions on board proved to be challenging initially due to a lack of interest and knowledge. The composition of the IWG has been described as relatively stable by interviewees; its members remained the same under the current second phase of the ROMACTED programme. Interviews suggest good cooperation between the facilitator and the IWG. A number of interviewees also highlighted the competences and commitment of the contact point appointed by the Mayor, who was seen as the “door opener” for Roma communities to the municipality. All in all, interviews confirm that the IWG constituted a novum in the sense that for the first time, inter-sectoral municipal meetings had a sole focus on Roma communities.

The **Community Action Group (CAG)** was set up with around six members including two women, traditional leaders and members of a local Roma NGO “Hayat”. According to an external stakeholder, one of the stronger and more committed CAGs has emerged in Strumica, also in comparison to other municipalities involved in the ROMACTED Phase I programme. Municipal interviewees furthermore stressed the high motivation of the CAG. One of the main reasons cited for this is that the CAG is staffed by members of a strong NGO. The CAG itself pointed out that, although at times community members would engage with the CAG for a limited period of time to pursue a single issue, a core group of three

to five active members ensured continuity, also into Phase II of the ROMACTED programme. According to the CAG coordinator, women's participation was and continues to be a challenge as communities in Strumica are comparatively conservative.

Interviews with both IWG and CAG members confirmed good and constructive cooperation within the **Municipal Taskforce Group (MTG)**. According to IWG interviews, collaboration between the IWG and the CAG via the MTG led to a better understanding on both sides. One IWG interviewee felt that, through MTG engagement, the Roma community seemed to have increased their trust in the municipal institutions. Also, the IWG interviewees stressed that as a key outcome of the MTG cooperation, the IWG members obtained a better understanding of the problems and issues concerning Roma communities, especially in the area of housing. According to the IWG, this mutual understanding and increased trust provides a basis to address bigger issues in the future. The CAG particularly highlighted that the ROMACTED structure introduced the mechanism to address the community's problems in a more structured and transparent way. ROMACTED in this sense filled a gap, according to CAG, as there was no similar engagement at municipal level beforehand.

The IWG stressed that with regard to **capacity building** the facilitator played a crucial role. Firstly, through coaching during his monthly visits. Secondly through formal two-day training workshops on "Roma responsive budgeting" (organized in cooperation with the Roma Integration 2020/Regional Cooperation Council) and "participatory local strategic planning and budgeting at local level". Interviewees indicated that they were able to apply the knowledge they gained in their day-to-day work. One interviewee pointed out that training should have been provided to the whole IWG group instead of only to two members.

With regard to building capacities of the Roma community, training was provided on "project cycle management", "negotiation techniques", "communication and presentation skills", "local democracy and local participation" and "monitoring and evaluation". Interviewees confirm that ROMACTED training of CAG members, as well as the opportunity for them to apply the newly acquired skills while implementing ROMACTED activities, strengthened not only the CAG but also the NGO Hayat.

Reportedly, Hayat's engagement with the ROMACTED programme has increased its visibility within the municipality and beyond. The CAG coordinator, a young Hayat activist now acts as the facilitator for Phase II of the ROMACTED programme in Strumica. CAG members indicated that further training is needed on the issue of self-identification and identity, antigypsyism and mediation in order to combat discrimination. Finally, two CAG members also participated in the trainings on Roma responsive budgeting and participatory budgeting. According to CAG interviews, trained members were not able to fully apply their newly gained knowledge.

Step 2: Assessing needs and prioritizing

Data for the **assessment of relevant needs** of the Roma community in Strumica was collected by means of a questionnaire directed at the CAG and Roma activists. The process also included a meeting of around 20-30 community members, which for many of them, according to CAG interviews, was their first contact with the local institutions. Interviews indicate that the data provided by the municipality had been quite scarce but that the community assessment provided a sound mapping of current needs. According to one interviewee, the assessment of institutional capacities and the collection of relevant data proved to be more challenging. As a key outcome, the needs assessment led to a social

mapping of the Ministry of Labour and Social Policy, including a household survey on housing, education and health.³⁷

With regard to **prioritization** there was a critical reflection on the CAG: one interviewee pointed to the challenge of guiding CAG members towards a balanced negotiation of common interests that goes beyond individual interests or the interests of a particular group. According to him, the CAG's representation of community interests was therefore somewhat limited.

Linked to this, the issue of identity and self-identification was flagged up as a key impediment, particularly for the municipality of Strumica, as Roma often self-identify as Turks. In turn, Turks view Roma as part of their community and do not acknowledge the Roma community. These sentiments, as highlighted in a number of interviews, are played out for political purposes, especially in the lead up to elections. This has led to manipulation, e.g. during elections, when political interests prevail. According to interviews, the ROMACTED programme has started to touch upon this issue by providing the Roma community an opportunity for self-awareness through reflection on their needs and by building their confidence to bring these needs to the attention of the municipality.

Step 3: Adopting a Joint Action Plan

As part of the 2020 Roma Integration a three-year 2019-2021 Local Action Plan for Roma was developed. Following the needs assessment and prioritisation of the CAG, the **2019-2020 Joint Action Plan (JAP)** was drafted by the facilitator as an operational plan of the Local Action Plan for the year ahead. Neither the Local Action Plan nor the JAP were officially adopted by the Municipal Council.

According to interviews, the development of both documents proved to be a difficult process. There was certain scepticism by the Mayor as well as resistance by the Turkish Council members towards the Local Action Plan as part of the national strategy for Roma under the Roma Decade. Moreover, the approval of the JAP by the Municipal Council failed twice. According to interviewees, the reasoning of the Municipal Council member who withheld his consent was that a larger Turkish community should equally benefit from international projects. Interviewees stressed that, despite the fact that ROMACTED benefits both the Roma and the Turkish communities, the lack of approval of both documents illustrates that the relationships between the two communities is a key challenge for the municipality. According to one interview, considering the JAP as an operational plan was a good compromise. According to him, the JAP did not necessarily have to be adopted; adoption would have been more crucial for the Local Action Plan as an overarching policy document.

Interviews indicate that the Local Action Plan had been utilized as a basis for all cooperation between the municipality and the various Ministries concerning the Roma communities and national funds channelled to the municipality for Roma. However, it was also pointed out that the extent to which the Local Action Plan has been systematically used by the different sectoral departments of the municipality for their planning purposes is unknown. Concerning the JAP, one interviewee stressed that on the whole it had not been followed-up upon, in his view because of the lack of approval by the Municipal Council. The municipal focal point hopes that with the newly elected Council conditions will become more favourable for the new JAP to be developed under the ROMACTED Phase II programme.

³⁷ AECOM International Development Europe SL. Thematic evaluation of EU support for Roma communities and Roma social mapping. Social mapping report. Final draft. July 2019.

Step 4: Funding and project implementation

The JAP outlined eight priority measures for implementation in the areas of infrastructure, education, health and community participation. The municipality allocated its own funds for **infrastructure** projects for Roma. The small-scale grant, “Municipality of Strumica, a community with equal opportunities for all - We Roma also exist – upgrading the infrastructure in the Roma settlement in Strumica” of 8,300 EURO was matched with a total of 5,000 EURO from the municipal budget for the installation of street lights. Moreover, the municipality issued a water bill exemption for most vulnerable Roma families. Under the Urban Planning Department, the issue of illegal construction was further addressed. According to an interview, the Department consulted the CAG and additional Roma community members on the development of a project financed by the World Bank to relocate Roma residents from St. Clement Street to newly built residential areas.

In the field of **education**, the CoE financed from its ordinary budget a mediator training following a recommendation by the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs. In Strumica, a total of 12 Roma mediators were trained. However, according to interviews, only two of the mediators found subsequent employment, including one educational mediator who was employed within the framework of the Ministry of Education and Science. Reflecting critically, one interviewee pointed out that including individuals who had no education beyond primary school level into the mediator training proved to be an obstacle to employability and should be avoided in future.

With regard to **community participation and inclusion**, in 2018 the municipality introduced an annual Budget Forum to determine the municipal budget, in which both the CAG and the NGO Hayat actively participated. The CAG viewed this as an important step for community participation, which led to the budgeting of infrastructure measures for the community. Moreover, according to interviews, for the first time, one Roma was employed in the municipal administration. This is seen as a significant contributor to the sustainability of ROMACTED measures, although, as one interviewee stressed, Roma representation should also be ensured in the Municipal Council (which is currently not the case). Finally, both IWG and CAG interviewees stressed that the official celebration of International Roma Day (8 April) and Roma Language Day (5 November), the latter of which was organized jointly by the public library and Hayat, were important symbolic steps towards the inclusion of the Roma community.

Strumica benefitted from the ROMACTED **COVID 19-response** with a total of 2,700 EURO for the distribution of personal protective equipment (PPE) such as facemasks and hygiene products as well as for awareness-raising measures. The municipality engaged a total of seven field workers for a duration of one month, and the NGO Hayat functioned as a partner in coordinating the various activities. Hayat was also able to secure an additional 4,500 EURO for PPE-distribution and awareness-raising. Interviews confirm that these measures were seen as highly beneficial for the Roma community in the light of the pandemic.

Interviews indicate that on the whole the ROMACTED Phase I programme increased the relevance of municipal interventions for the Roma community. One interviewee noted that Strumica had a better outreach than other municipalities, despite the fact that it did not participate in the preceding ROMED programme. A suggestion was made to address inter-ethnic relations more prominently in the activities of the second phase of the programme, in particular with regard to Turkish-Roma relations.

3) Concluding remarks

Stakeholders were able to identify a number of outcomes of the ROMACTED Phase I programme: Roma gained the pride and self-confidence to approach the municipality; the municipal administration has a much better understanding of Roma needs and issues; and cooperation between the community and

the municipality improved. The commitment of the municipality towards the Roma community evidently increased.

The Roma NGO Hayat's involvement in the ROMACTED Phase I programme contributed not only to the strengthening of the NGO and its capacities but to an effective implementation of programme activities in the municipality. The evaluator was not able to assess the extent to which the NGO functioned as an enabler for community participation rather than a gatekeeper.

The ROMACTED Phase I programme has been able to address challenges, in particular with regard to the strengthening of self-awareness and identity of the Roma community. However, other obstacles remain which might only be successfully tackled over a longer period of time, in particular the relationship between the Turkish and Roma communities, the influence of political factions and the fragmentation of the Roma community into separate interest groups.

Data collection for this particular case study was hampered as a number of interviews or participation in focus groups were cancelled due to Covid-19.

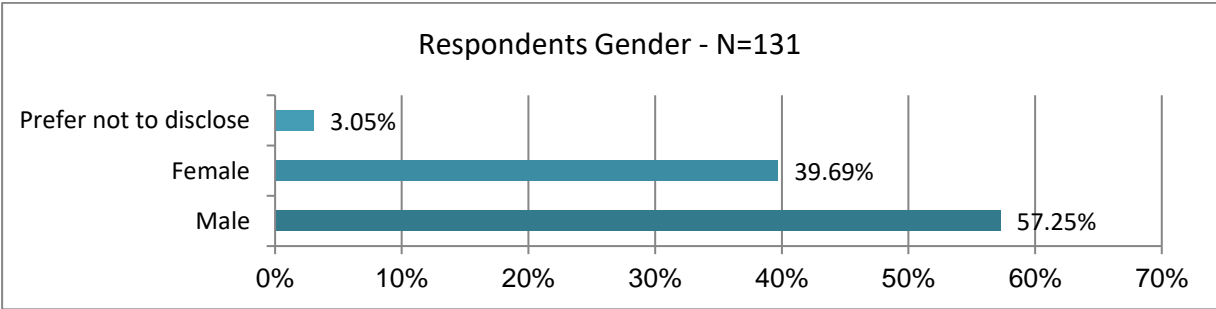
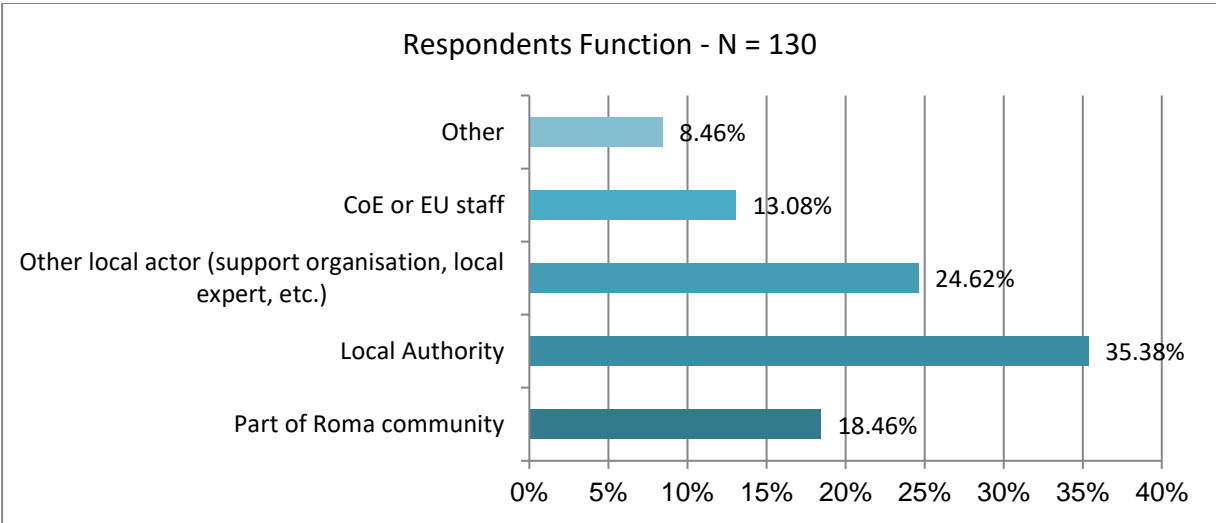
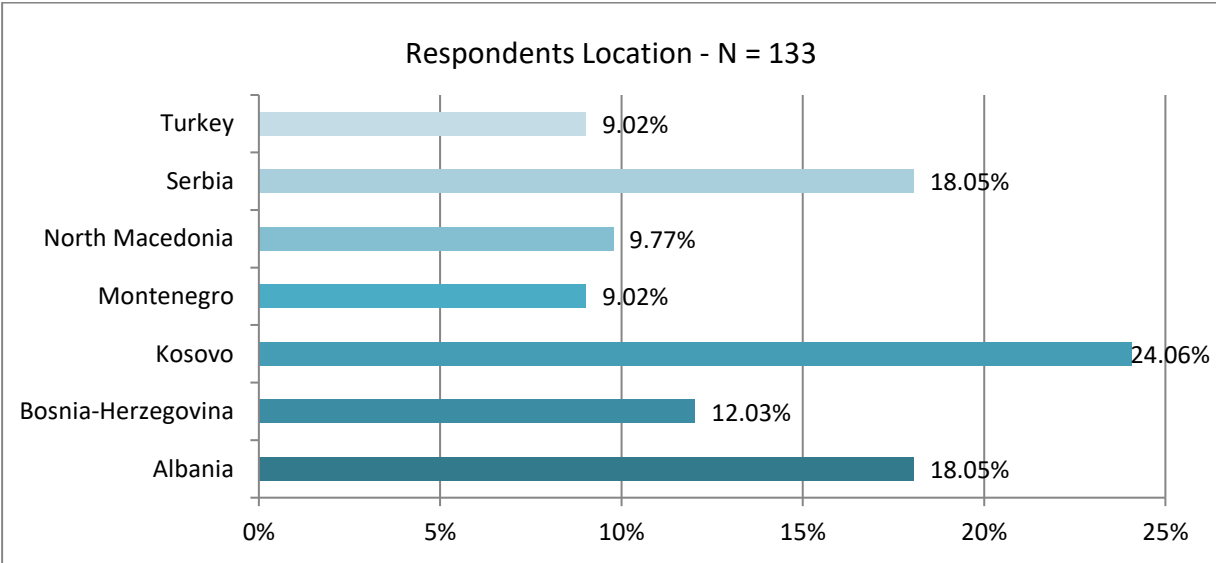
Annex 2 Legislation or policies related to Roma inclusion

	Local Action Plans	Other policies on municipality level	Sectoral or National Level Policies
Albania	6 Local Action Plans for the Inclusion of Roma and Egyptian minorities (all municipalities except Roskovec)	Social Plan 2019 - 2022 for Roma Inclusion in Municipality Roskovec, Decision NO. 47, 17.05.19	ROMACTED recommendations were endorsed under the official Guideline No.10 on the "Preparation of the Medium-Term Budgeting 2021-2023" for local self-government units of the Ministry of Finance and Economy in Albania.
		Operational Plan developed for the Korca Community Centre upon the request of the municipality.	The ROMACTED Programme provided international expertise in the design of bylaws of <u>Law No. 22/2018 on Social Housing</u> within the Ministry of Finance and Economy. Consultations were held on secondary legislation for social housing in Albania on preventing forced eviction of vulnerable groups and introducing a 5% quota for Roma beneficiaries per all of the six housing programmes prescribed.
		Guidelines on Roma and Egyptian Responsive Budgeting prepared and published after the participatory consultations with relevant stakeholders and partner municipalities	
		According to interviews in Elbasan there was a local level decision to waive kindergarten fees for Roma.	
BiH			Bottom-up approach was ensured in the final version of the National Action Plan for Roma Integration, which was a direct input as a result of work done through ROMACTED Programme. The Ministry of Human Rights and Refugees (MHRR) recognized ROMACTED as one of the main contributors to the implementation of the National Roma Strategy.
Montenegro	LAPs for Roma and Egyptian Inclusion adopted in Bar, Berane and Ulcinj.		
North-Macedonia	LAP was adopted in Veles (first time), in Kicevo and Debar (for employment,	Municipal Council in Berovo adopted a decision to exempt vulnerable groups for paying the water consumption (up to 10 m3).	

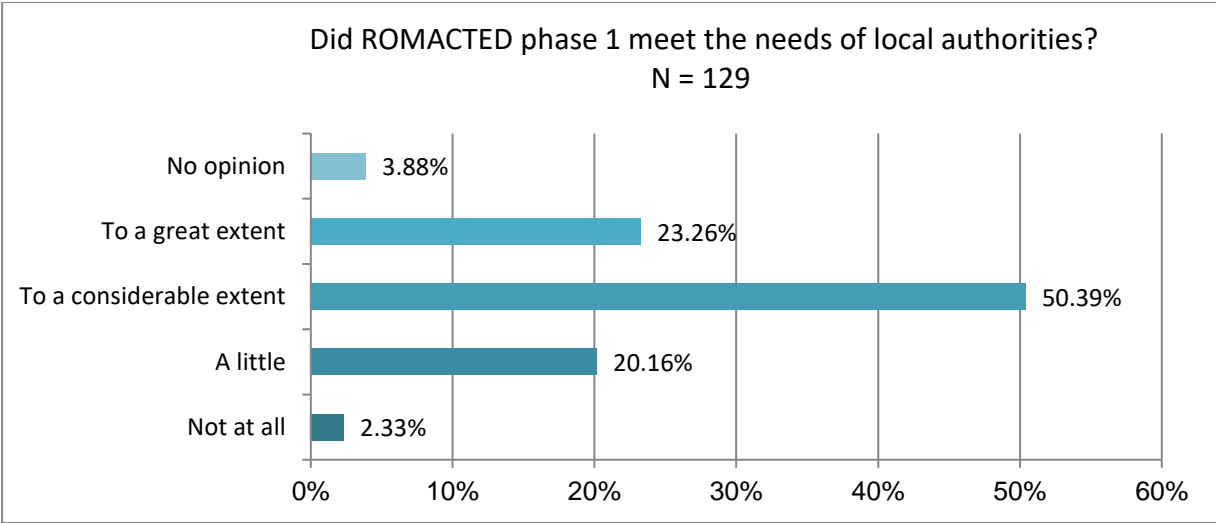
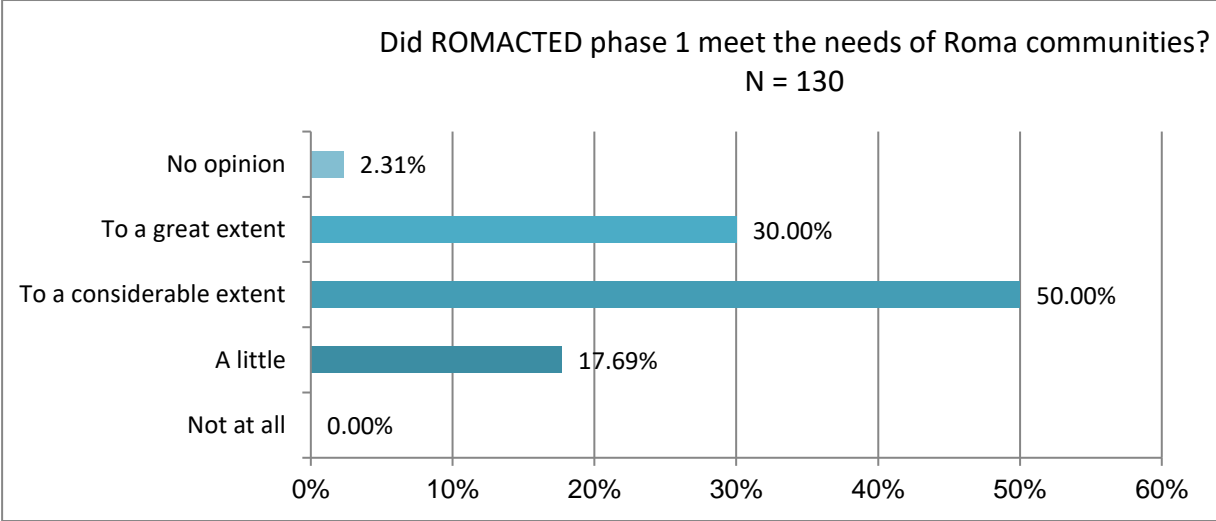
	housing, education and health) and in Kocani (for education only).		
Serbia	LAP prepared and adopted in Zajecar and Vrnjacka Banja.		
Turkey		In Edirne municipality, a draft Joint Action Plan was prepared. As a result, the municipality included the topic of Roma inclusion in its mainstream five-year Strategic Plan and officially allocated a budget for the activities. This was the first time that Roma inclusion was expressly mentioned in a local strategic plan in Turkey.	
		From the Joint Action Plan prepared within the ROMACTED process in Karadeniz Ereğli municipality, the municipal authorities included several articles on Roma inclusion in their five-year Strategic Plan.	
Kosovo		Scholarships: Municipality of Obilic the Municipal Regulation on Scholarships and introduced a clause on affirmative action. This was picked up by a number of other municipalities, though there are differences in the strengths of the respective policies (for some there is no specification whether the measure is temporary or long-term).	

Annex 3 Survey Data

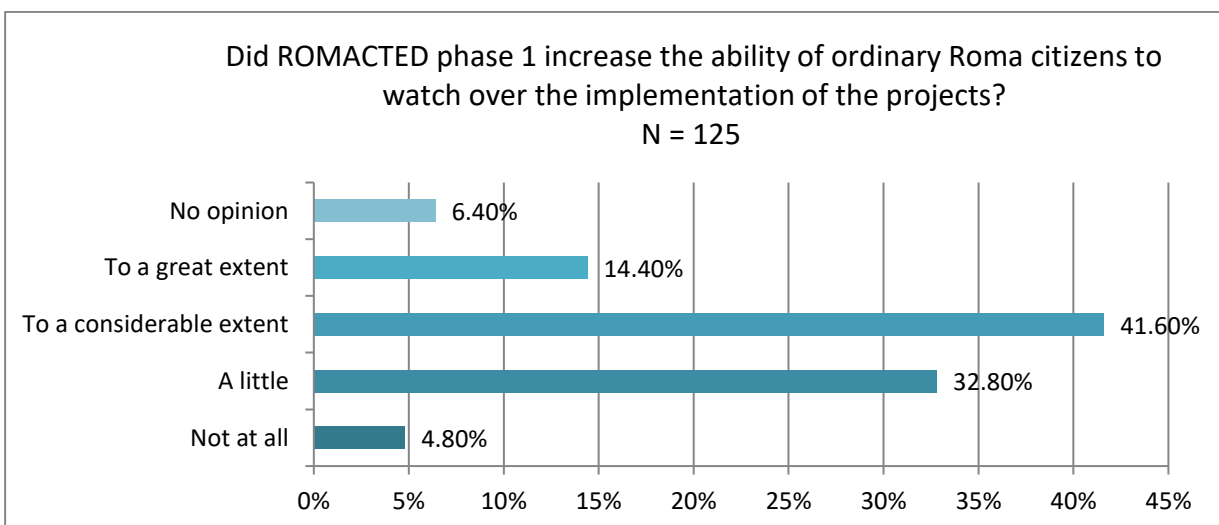
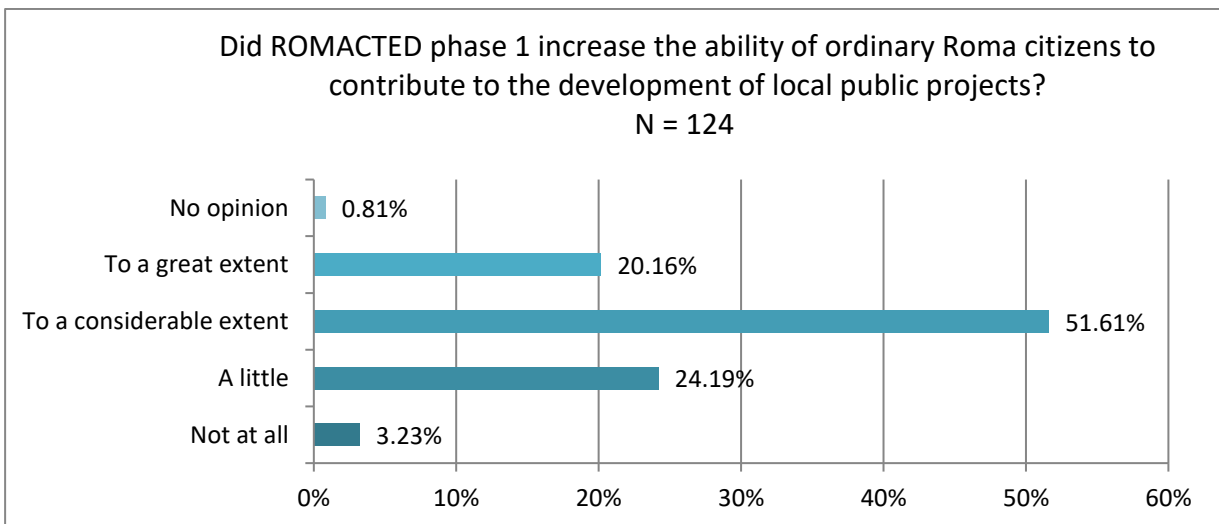
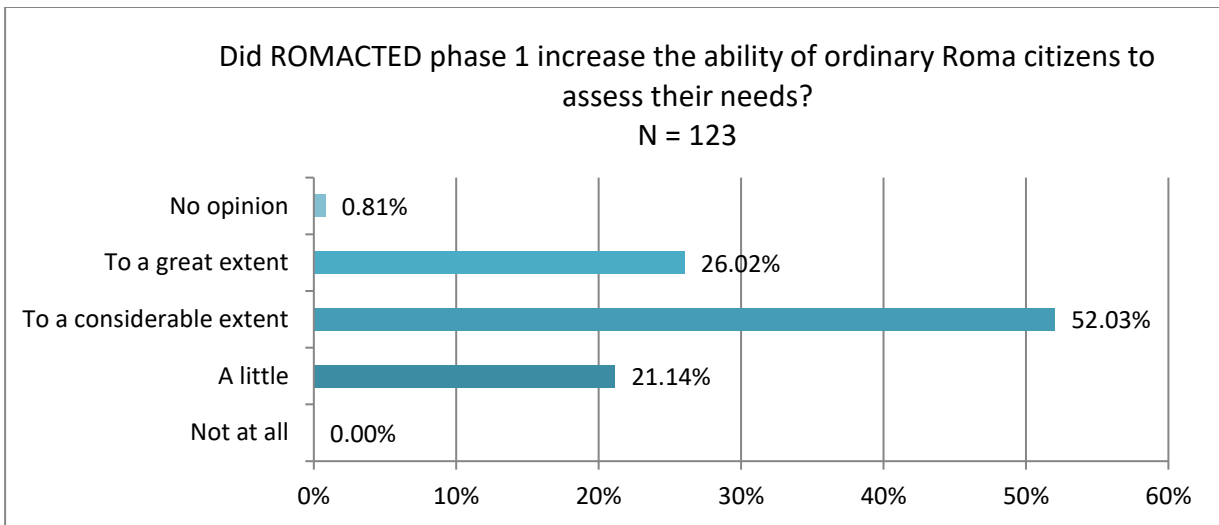
Statistics Respondents

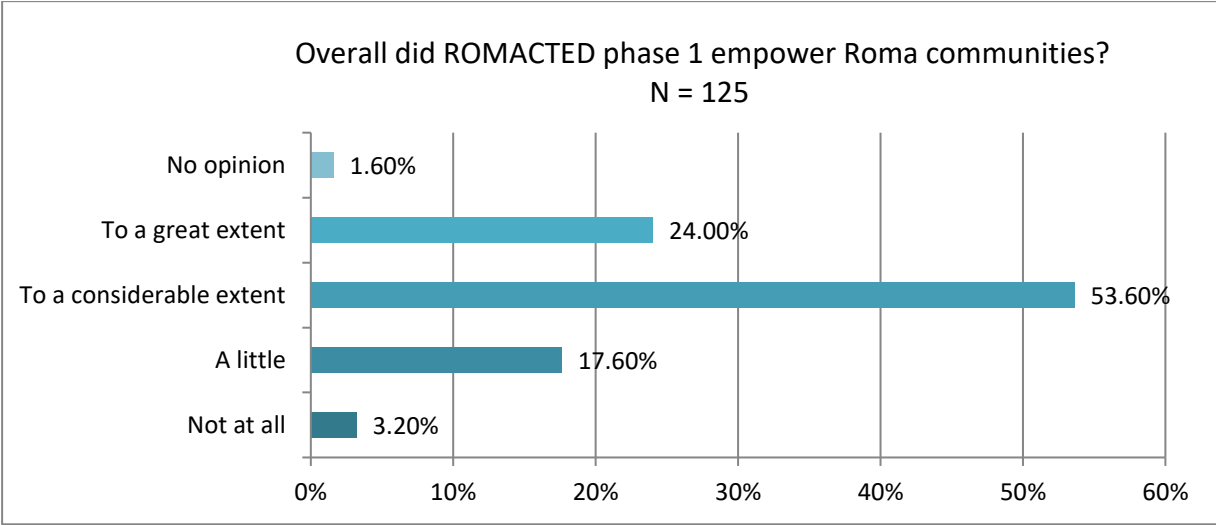


Needs

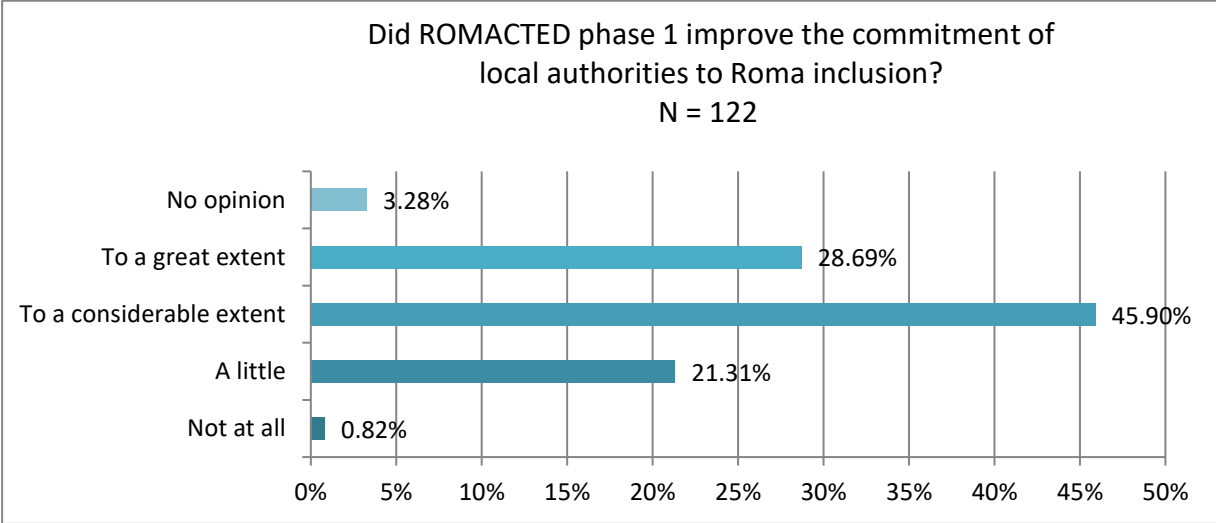
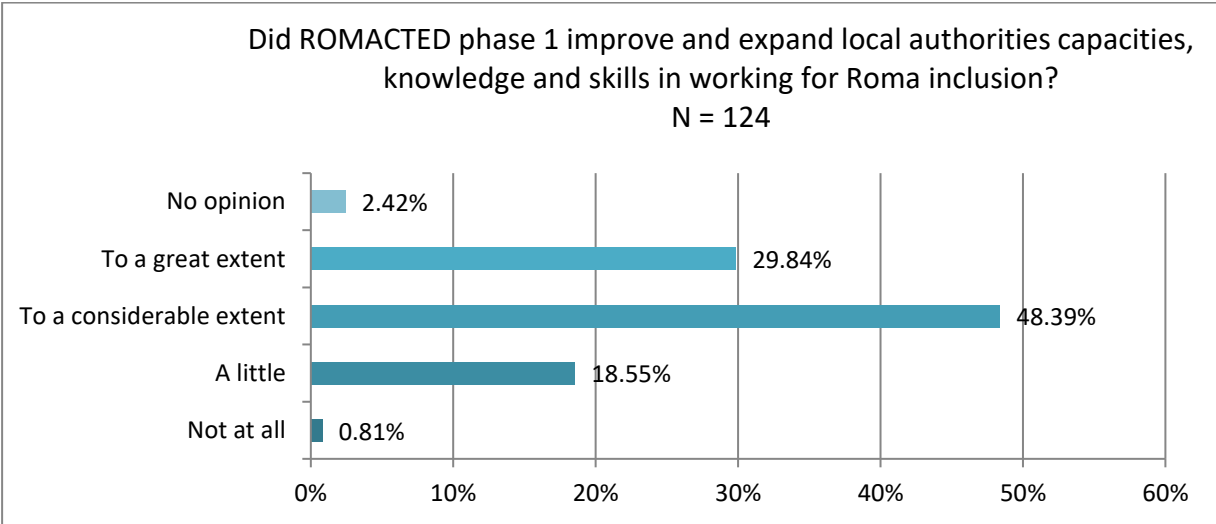


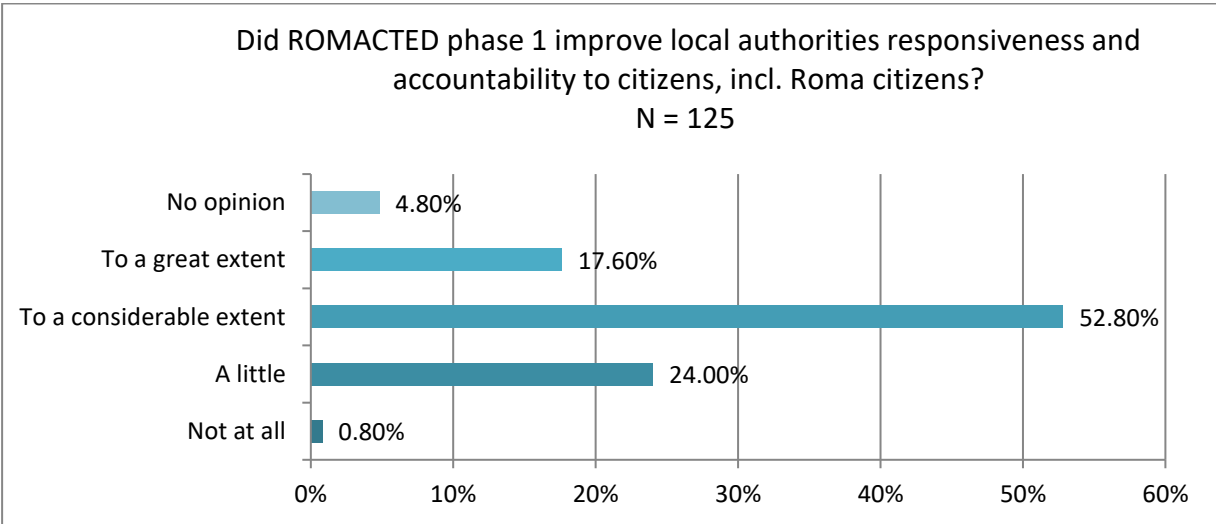
Roma communities



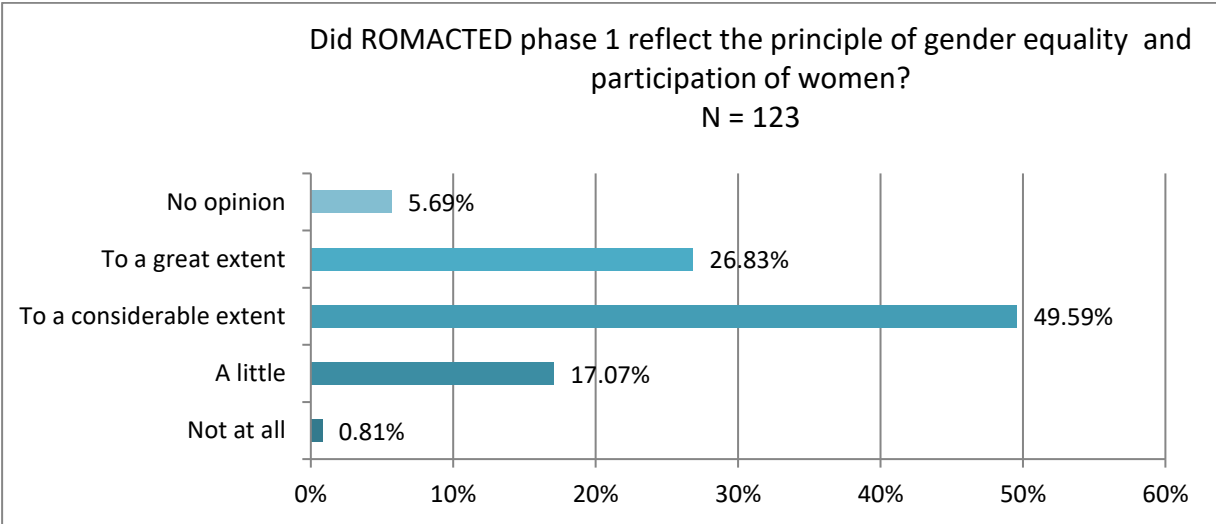


Local authorities

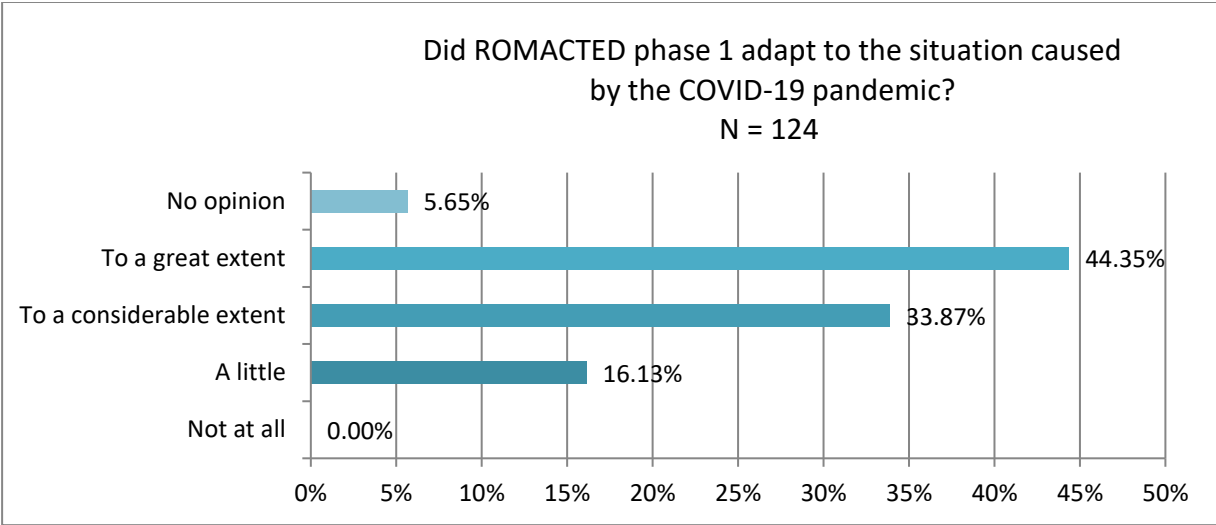




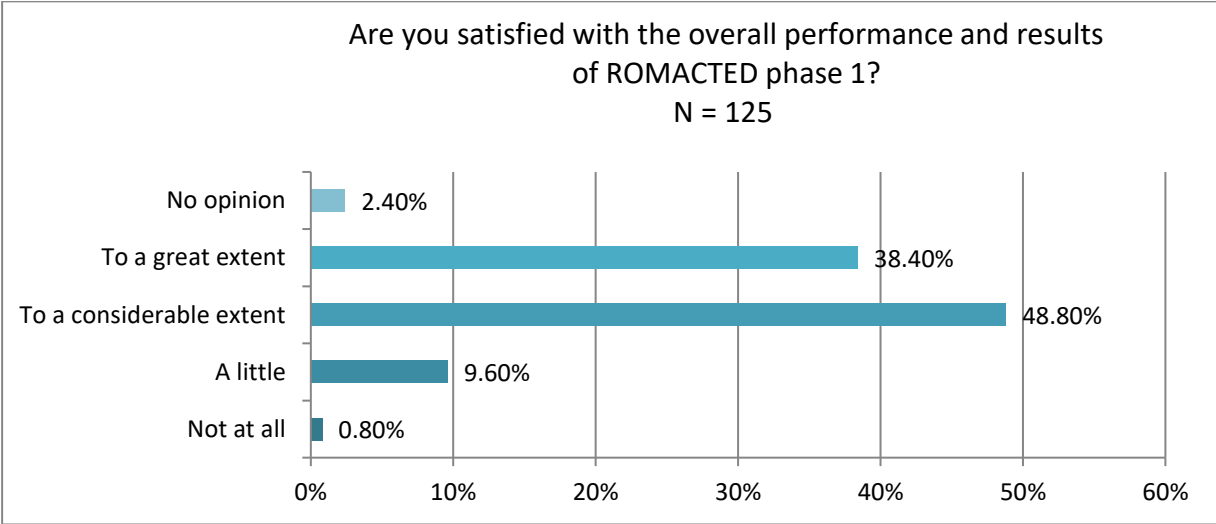
Gender



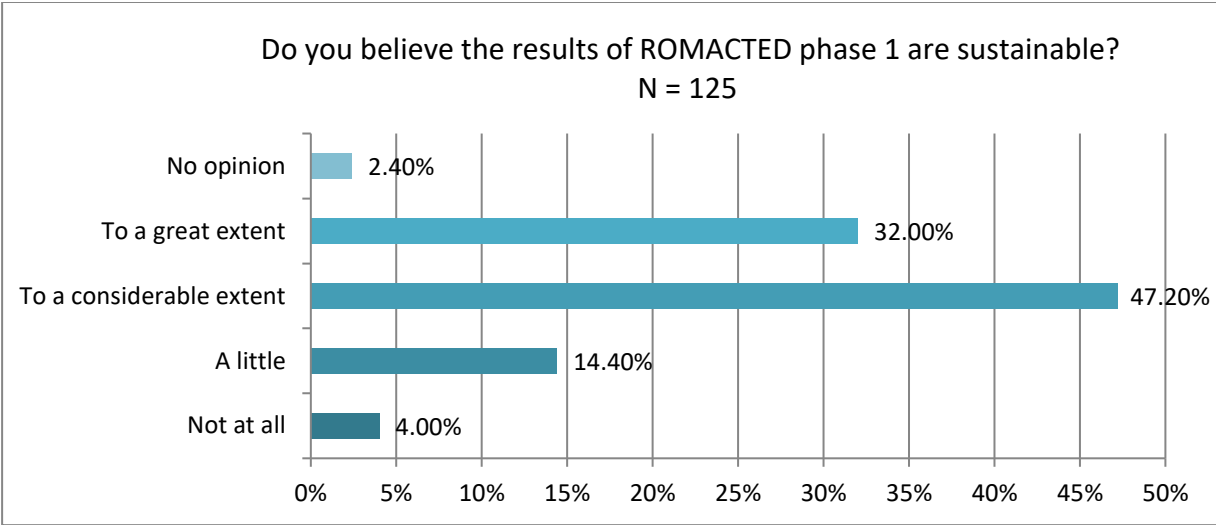
COVID-19 mitigation



Overall performance



Sustainability



Annex 4 Recommendations by interview partners

The recommendations collected below were expressed by interview partners. They reflect the opinions of the interview partners and do not claim to be factually correct.

Albania

- The ROMACTED programme needs to factor in longer timeframes, specifically with regards to the development of Local Action Plans.
- The ROMACTED programme in Albania should focus more on local community and less on national policy level.
- Meetings with local administration should be attended by more CAG members. Per diems for activities should be considered to cover transportation and other ancillary costs related to the attendance of meetings.
- Further capacity building should be conducted in the field of data collection and analyses in order to track all the effects of Roma inclusion and municipal level implementation of activities.
- ROMACTED should aim to build knowledge of municipal staff on relevant policy processes, legislative changes at national level, and their respective effects and obligations at municipal level.
- Continued capacity building on Roma inclusion necessary for all levels of government, similar to gender mainstreaming approaches.
- Municipal administrators continue to be in need of training in project cycle management, especially monitoring of projects.
- ROMACTED should include measures to open access for employment of Roma in municipal institutions (training etc).

Kosovo

- The MoU on the ROMACTED programme between CoE, the lead ministry and the municipality is available in English language only. To increase transparency and to reduce the information gap within the municipal administration the MoU should also be made available in local languages.
- Support organisations need more guidance on their reporting obligations, in particular with regard to financial reporting, including related VAT exemption issues. Increased exchange of experiences at regional level would be beneficial for the support organisations.
- To achieve impact of the ROMACTED programme the time horizon must be set including a potential Phase III and possibly aim for other donors to join in on the ROMACTED methodology.
- Based on Phase I CoE should identify municipalities that can serve as examples of good practice for others to learn from.
- Facilitators need longer-term engagement to allow for the monitoring of long-term results, e.g., school attendance rates. The work of the facilitators also needs to be accompanied by closer coordination around the exchange on ideas, requests, needs etc.

North Macedonia

- There is a need to factor in more time and flexibility to implement interventions; as the CAG and municipality are responding to ad hoc needs and issues that need to be resolved, which might affect existing plans and timelines. Also, responding to unforeseen funding opportunities consumes additional time.
- In future the programme should consider not to allocate small scale grants directly to municipalities as their absorption capacities are very low, but to allocate funds to local NGOs in partnership with the municipalities, e.g., a number of NGOs have substantial IPA experience.
- The ROMACTED programme should systematically cooperate with *all* NGOs in the municipalities.
- There is a need to find the right approach to diversify CAG representation, in particular engaging more with Roma youth rather than focusing on older leaders.
- Additional measures accompanying training and coaching would be beneficial, e.g. study visits to other (European) municipalities to show-case what works well, or closer collaboration with organizations who have specific expertise.
- There is a need for ROMACTED to include a continuous training component on Roma inclusion, in particular with regard to anti-discrimination and antigypsism.

Annex 5 Evaluation Matrix

Evaluation question	Measure(s) / Indicator(s)	Data Collection Instrument(s)	Data Source(s)
OECD/DAC criteria – RELEVANCE			
1) To what extent was ROMACTED Phase I relevant to the needs of the Roma communities and local authorities in the Beneficiaries?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Appraisal of local authorities and Roma stakeholders of the relevance of the ROMACTED Phase I to their needs. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Document review Interviews (case studies) Survey 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Description of the Action (DoA); annual and final reports, any other project documentation. Supporting organizations, municipal focal points; mayor, CAG representative.
2) Was ROMACTED relevant to the EU integration / accession process?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Extent to which ROMACTED is relevant to the EU integration / accession process. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Document review Interviews 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Relevant EU strategies, progress reports DG NEAR; EUDs
OECD/DAC criteria – COHERENCE			
3) External Coherence: To what extent did ROMACTED use synergies and interlinkages with other interventions carried out by Roma NGOs, relevant domestic authorities and international stakeholders?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Evidence of utilization of synergies and linkages with other relevant interventions by external stakeholders. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Interviews Document review 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> CoE Project Officers Annual ROMACTED I reports, final ROMACTED report.

Evaluation question	Measure(s) / Indicator(s)	Data Collection Instrument(s)	Data Source(s)
<p>4) Internal Coherence: to what extent did ROMACTED use synergies and interlinkages with other Programmes, projects and actions implemented by the Council of Europe and the EU.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Evidence of utilization of synergies and linkages with actions and programmes implemented by the Council of Europe and the EU. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Interviews Document review 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> CoE Project Officers; EU Delegations Annual ROMACTED I reports, final ROMACTED report.
OECD/DAC criteria – EFFECTIVENESS			
<p>5) To what extent have expected outcomes been achieved:</p> <p>- 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);</p> <p>- improving and expanding the institutions' commitment, capacities, knowledge and skills in working for Roma inclusion, putting in practice the concepts of good governance.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Community Action Groups are created and functioning Joint action plans developed and agreed with LA in the framework of the project Municipal officials coached/trained and working on the measures developed to address the needs of the Roma. Projects identified and supported by small grants from the project and co-financed by local authorities. Level of institutional knowledge and understanding concerning the Roma community and their inclusion. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Document review Interviews (case studies) Focus groups (case studies) Survey 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ROMACTED Handbook; Description of the Action; At a Glance; inception, annual and final reports, grant scheme reports. CoE project officer (field office), supporting organizations, municipal focal points; mayor; CAG representative. Target groups: IWG, CAG.

Evaluation question	Measure(s) / Indicator(s)	Data Collection Instrument(s)	Data Source(s)
<p>6) To what extent did the COVID-19 response of the Programme</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - provide a response to the needs of the Roma communities? - contribute to the recovery measures in the Roma communities? - ensure mitigation of negative effects of COVID-19 to the project beneficiaries? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Stakeholder appraisal on the provision of a COVID-19 response of the ROMACTED I Programme in view of the needs of and recovery measures for Roma communities, and mitigation of negative effects. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Document review • Interviews (case studies) • Focus groups (case studies) • Survey 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Final ROMACTED report; any grant scheme reports and specific reports on the COVID-19 response. • CoE project officer (field office), supporting organizations, municipal focal points; mayor, CAG representative. • Target groups: IWG, CAG.
<p>7) To what extent are the target groups satisfied with the overall support provided by ROMACTED Phase I?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Appraisal of ROMACTED Phase I support by target groups 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Survey 	
OECD/DAC criteria – EFFICIENCY			
<p>8) What is the ratio between the total resources spent and the number of project beneficiaries, i.e. is the value gained for each project beneficiary equivalent to the total amount spent per beneficiary?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Appraisal of the value gained for each project beneficiary equivalent to the total amount spent per beneficiary. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Document review 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Final report including financial report, budget and statistical data on beneficiaries
<p>9) Are there alternative approaches likely to be more efficient?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Stakeholder appraisal on efficiency of alternative approaches. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Interviews (case studies) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • CoE project officers (field offices); support organizations, possibly CoE experts

Evaluation question	Measure(s) / Indicator(s)	Data Collection Instrument(s)	Data Source(s)
OECD/DAC criteria – IMPACT			
10) To what extent has a political will for sustained policy engagement to advance Roma communities been established among local authorities?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Changes to legislation or policies related to Roma inclusion • Evidence of any other short term and long-term systemic solutions benefitting Roma communities (including financial allocations, change of practices). 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Document review • Interviews (case studies) • Focus Groups (case studies) • Survey 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Final ROMACTED report; any other project documentation. • CoE Strasbourg and field office teams; DG NEAR and EUDs; supporting organizations; mayor, municipal focal points, CAG representative. • Institutional Working Group; Community Action Group.
11) To what extent were Roma communities empowered to contribute to policies and practice concerning them?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Evidence of institutionalized Roma inclusion in decision making processes (through municipal decisions, by-laws) • Evidence of Roma participation in decision-making processes 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Document review • Interviews (case studies) • Focus Groups (case studies) • Survey 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Final ROMACTED report; any other project documentation. • CoE Strasbourg and field office teams; DG NEAR and EUDs; supporting organizations; mayor, municipal focal points, CAG representative. • Institutional Working Group; Community Action Group.
12) Was there any other unintended positive or negative impact?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Evidence of any other unintended positive or negative impact 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Document review • Interviews (case studies) • Focus Groups (case studies) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Final ROMACTED report; any other project documentation. • CoE Strasbourg and field office teams; DG NEAR and EUDs; supporting organizations; mayor, municipal focal points, CAG representative. • Institutional Working Group; Community Action Group.

Evaluation question	Measure(s) / Indicator(s)	Data Collection Instrument(s)	Data Source(s)
OECD/DAC criteria – SUSTAINABILITY			
13) To what extent did the process, structures and benefits of the Programme continue at local level after the finalization of ROMACTED Phase I?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Stakeholders' appraisal on the extent to which the benefits of the Programme continue at local level after completion of the first phase. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Interviews (case studies) Survey 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> CoE field office teams; supporting organizations; mayor, municipal focal points, CAG representative.
14) What were the major factors which influenced the achievement or non-achievement of sustainability of the ROMACTED actions / process?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Stakeholder appraisal of major factors. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Interviews (case studies) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> CoE field office teams; supporting organizations; mayor, municipal focal points, CAG representative.
CROSS-CUTTING ISSUES			
15) How is the principle of gender equality and participation of women reflected in the implementation of ROMACTED?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Evidence of gender mainstreaming in implementation of ROMACTED; Evidence of gender analyses incorporated; Evidence of gender disaggregated outcomes in ROMACTED reports. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Document review Interviews Survey 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Handbook, Description of the Action; Baseline studies; annual and final reports. CoE Strasbourg and field office teams; supporting organizations; CAG representatives.
16) How is the principle of the Human Rights Approach, particularly the participation of vulnerable groups within the Roma communities applied in the implementation of ROMACTED?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Evidence of HRA into design and implementation of ROMACTED with regard to participation and inclusion. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Document review Interviews 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Handbook, Description of the Action; Baseline studies; annual and final reports. CoE Strasbourg and field office teams; supporting organizations; CAG representatives.

Evaluation question	Measure(s) / Indicator(s)	Data Collection Instrument(s)	Data Source(s)
17) How did the COVID-19 response reach the most vulnerable individuals and groups within the Roma communities?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Appraisal of the COVID-19 response in view of reaching the most vulnerable individual and groups within the Roma communities. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Document review Interviews 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Final ROMACTED report; any grant scheme reports and specific reports on the COVID-19 response. Supporting organizations, municipal focal points; CAG representatives.

Annex 6 Focus Groups / Scoring

Procedure: The participants in the focus groups were asked to freely distribute a total of ten points per question among the four categories and then explain their weighting.

Note on methodology: This form of scoring is a qualitative tool. Its purpose is to generate new aspects in the discussion and enrich the exchange between the participants. It is not a robust quantitative tool. Numerical values can only be compared within the scoring of one focus group, not between the scorings of different focus groups.

		NORTH MACEDONIA		KOSOVO		ALBANIA	
		Berovo	Strumica	Ferizaj / Uroševac	Graçanica/ Graçanicë	Elbasan	Roskovec
CAG 1	# of participants	7	2	3	2	4	3
	Question: What was most important for you?						
AVERAGE	Action Plan	1,3	1	3,3	4	3,5	3,3
SCORE	Small Projects	1,7	0	1,7	1,5	1,5	2,3
	Capacity Building	2,6	2,5	2,7	2,5	3	4
	Covid-19 relief	1,9	0,5	3,3	2	2	0,3
	Question: What had the biggest gain or benefit in your view for your community/administration?						
AVERAGE	Action Plan	1,9	0,5	2,7	3,5	2,3	2,3
SCORE	Small Projects	2,1	2	1,7	2,5	3	3,7
	Capacity Building	2,4	2,5	3	3	2	0,3
	Covid-19 relief	1,9	2	2	1	1,8	3,7
MUNICIPALITY	# of participants	4	2	2	1	5	
	Question: What was most important for you?						
AVERAGE	Action Plan	3	1,5	3	2	4	3,3
SCORE	Small Projects	1,3	1	3	0	1,6	2,7
	Capacity Building	1,8	1,5	4	6	2,6	2,7
	Covid-19 relief	3,5	0,5	N/A	2	1,8	1,3
	Question: What had the biggest gain or benefit in your view for your community/administration?						
AVERAGE	Action Plan	1	1	3		3,2	3
SCORE	Small Projects	4	2	3		2,6	3,7
	Capacity Building	0,8	1,5	4		2,4	1,3
	Covid-19 relief	0,8	2	N/A		1,8	2

Annex 7: List of Interviewees and Focus Group Participants

Programme level

1. Marcos Andrade, Deputy Head of Division for the Roma and Travellers Team, Council of Europe
2. Marina Vasic, ROMACTED Programme Manager, Council of Europe
3. Lejla Hadzimesic, Senior Project Officer, Council of Europe
4. Victoria Hopson, Senior Administrative Officer, Council of Europe
5. Liselotte Issakson, Civil Society and Social Inclusion Head of Sector, DG NEAR, European Commission
6. Kristina Vujic, Project Manager, DG NEAR, European Commission

Albania

7. Orsiola Kurti, ROMACTED Senior Project Officer, Council of Europe
8. Alessandro Angius, European Union Delegation to Albania, Contact Person during ROMACTED Phase I
9. Fran Brahimi, Director of Local Finance, Ministry of Finance and Economy
10. Saimir Plaku, Executive Director Agency for the Support of Local Self-Governments, Ministry of Interior
11. Merita Xhafaj, Ministry of Health and Social Protection, National Roma Contact Person/ ADI-ROM member
12. Elona Dhembo, ROMACTED Expert
13. Raimonda Duka, ROMACTED Expert
14. Adriatik Hasantari, Roma Active Albania, NGO resource person
15. Bledar Taho, Institute of Romani Culture in Albania, ROMACTED Programme Focal Point
16. Xhesika Korra, Institute of Romani Culture in Albania, Assistant to the Focal Point

Municipality of Elbasan

17. Mexhidije Ademi, CAG member
18. Nikolino Ademi, CAG member
19. Vasil Raifi, CAG member
20. Shefki Lika, Municipality of Elbasan, Director of Social Services
21. Eltiona Kolla, IWG member
22. Ervin Muco, IWG member
23. Lindita Senia, IWG member
24. Raxhi Rakipi, ROMACTED Facilitator

Municipality of Roskovec

25. Miranda Kasemaj, CAG member
26. Kristina Karafili, CAG member
27. Daniel Kasemaj, CAG member
28. Majlinda Bufi, Mayor, Municipality of Roskovec
29. Asim Hyska, IWG member
30. Elis Apostoli, IWG member

31. Selman Cepele, IWG member
32. Ermelind Malko, ROMACTED Facilitator

Kosovo

33. Sakibe Jashari, CoE ROMACTED Project Officer
34. Stefano Gnocchi, EEAS Pristina
35. Dejan Radivojevic, ROMACTED I Facilitator
36. Jehona Shala, ROMACTED Facilitator / Thematic consultant
37. Besim Shkololli, Focal Point

Municipality of Gračanica/Graçanicë

38. Demir Osmani, CAG member
39. Saip Ramic, CAG member
40. Leutrim Ajeti, Municipal contact point

Municipality of Ferizaj/Uroševac

41. Osman Emini, CAG member
42. Mohammed, volunteer, CAG member
43. Alina Jashari, CAG member and educational mediator
44. Agim Aliu, former and current municipal Mayor
45. Selim Marevci, Municipal contact point
46. Elbasan Osmani, Municipal contact point

North Macedonia

47. Gjulten Mustafafova, ROMACTED II Project Officer, Council of Europe (with Marina Vasic as back-up as ROMACTED Phase I Project Officer did not respond to the invitation for an interview).
48. Nafi Saracini, EU Delegation to North Macedonia
49. Mabera Kamberi, Head of Department, Ministry of Labor and Social Policy/ ADI-ROM member
50. Aleksandra Bojadjieva, Regional Cooperation Council
51. Elvis Memeti, ROMACTED I Facilitator/National Roma Contact Point
52. Ferdi Ismaili, ROMACTED I Focal Point, Roma Democratic Development Association – SONCE
53. Redjepali Cupi, ROMACTED I Facilitator, Roma Education Fund
54. Ismail Kamberi, ROMACTED Facilitator
55. Srdzan Amet, Young Roma Lawyers
56. Sebihan Demirovski, NGO Roma Resource Centre

Municipality of Berovo

57. Tatjana Dimitrovska, Secondary School teacher
58. Firdeska Zekirova, CAG co-ordinator
59. Mevlida Dzemail, CAG member
60. Emrah Kanturovski, CAG member

61. Ajse Kanturovska, CAG member
62. Fatime Kanturovska, CAG member
63. Halime Kanturovska, CAG member
64. Ferisan Zekirov, CAG member
65. Zvonko Pekevski, Mayor of Berovo
66. Gjorgji Peovski, Municipal Contact Point in first and second phase
67. Biljana Markovska, Municipality of Berovo
68. Dimitar Krakutovski, Center for Social Work

Municipality of Strumica

69. Kemal Sulejmanov, CAG co-ordinator
70. Guner Ibov, CAG member
71. Murat Juseinov, CAG member
72. Teodora Gjeorgieva, Municipal Contact Point in first and second phase
73. Tatjana Miceva, Urban Planning Department, Municipality of Strumica

Annex 8: Statistics Interviewees and Focus Group Participants

Stakeholder group	number of stakeholders consulted			
	Kosovo	North Macedonia	Albania	Brussels/ Strasbourg
Council of Europe				4
DG NEAR Brussels				2
Delegations	1	1	1	
Sample Beneficiary level				
CoE field office teams/project officers (AL; KOS; NM)	1	1	1	
ROMACTED Facilitators/Focal Points Phase I	3	4	3	
Any relevant Ministries		1	2	
Any other resource person/experts, incl. National Roma Contact Point		5	5	
Municipal level				
Mayor	1	1	1	
Municipal contact point	1	2	1	
Focus group - Community Action Group	5	10	6	
Focus group – Institutional Working Group	2	4	6	
Total	14	27	26	6

Annex 9: Key documents

Project documentation by CoE

- ROMACTED IPA Description of the Action, 2017
- ROMACTED Budget & Revised Budget, 2017
- ROMACTED Inception Report, 2017
- ROMACTED Baseline Surveys Albania, Kosovo, North Macedonia
- ROMACTED Baseline Overview Albania, Kosovo, North Macedonia
- ROMACTED Narrative and financial report, 2017
- ROMACTED Narrative and financial report, 2018
- ROMACTED Narrative and financial report, 2019
- ROMACTED Final Narrative and financial report, 2021
- ROMACTED Handbook
- ROMACTED at a Glance - Beneficiaries and Municipalities
- ROMACTED Small grants scheme projects and COVID-19 top ups
- ROMACTED ROM Report, 2019

Albania

- ROMACTED: Roma and Egyptian Responsive Budgeting: Guidelines for Municipalities, Albania 2020
- Government of Albania: Report on the implementation of Roma integration public policy in Albania for 2019, 2020
- CoE, ECRI Report on Albania, 2020
- IDRA Research & Consulting and Human Development Promotion Center (HDPC), Local Governance Mapping in Albania 2020, 2020
- National Action Plan for Integration of Roma and Egyptians in the Republic of Albania 2016-2020
- RCC: Roma Integration Public Policy in Albania – Background Paper, 2020

Kosovo

- OSCE: Overview of Roma, Ashkali and Egyptian communities in Kosovo, 2020
- UNDP, The World Bank, EU: Roma at a glance Kosovo*, 2018
- Government of the Republic of Kosovo: Strategy for inclusion of Roma and Ashkali communities in the Kosovo Society 2017 - 2021
- Republic of Kosovo: Midterm Evaluation of the Strategy for Inclusion of Roma and Ashkali Community into the Kosovar Society 2017 - 2021, 2020
- Regional Cooperation Council Roma Integration Action team: Analysis of mainstream policies targeting Roma and Ashkali integration in Kosovo, 2020

North Macedonia

- ROMED evaluation report, country findings Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, 2016
- UNDP, The World Bank, EU: Roma at a glance The Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, 2018
- AECOM International Development Europe SL, Thematic Evaluation of EU support to Roma communities and Roma social mapping, 2019

Appendix I

TERMS of REFERENCE EVALUATION of ROMACTED Phase I PROGRAMME

OCTOBER 2021

A. INTRODUCTION

This evaluation concerns the joint EU-CoE ROMACTED Phase I Programme, with focus on the implementation aspects of its methodological process and interventions for capacity building at local level. ROMACTED Phase I was a joint initiative of the Council of Europe and the European Commission with the main aim to promote good governance and Roma empowerment at local level.

The purpose of this evaluation process is to assess the relevance, coherence, effectiveness, efficiency, impact and sustainability of ROMACTED Phase I and its methodological approach, in order to support the reviewing and improvement of relevant lines of intervention under the Programme, for an optimal impact on the target groups during the ROMACTED Phase II implementation period.

Therefore, the evaluation's outcomes are aimed at taking stock of the impact of ROMACTED Phase I interventions in the field³⁸ and at further supporting the possible adjustments of its methodology, after being implemented in various municipalities in the seven Beneficiaries (Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Kosovo*, Montenegro, North Macedonia, Serbia and Turkey) in the period 1 May 2017 – 31 December 2020. Phase II of ROMACTED should benefit from the lessons learnt drawn from this evaluation in this context.

The present ToR outlines the parameters of the evaluation exercise to be conducted in selected locations.

B. EVALUATION BACKGROUND AND CONTEXT

The Joint EU-CoE ROMACTED Phase I Programme was designed to build up political will and sustained policy engagement of local authorities, enhance democratic local governance and to build up capacity and stimulate the empowerment of Roma communities to contribute to the design, implementation and monitoring of plans and projects concerning them. ROMACTED Programme results from the experience of the ROMED and ROMACT programmes and reflected upon the adaptation of these methodologies and activities to each Beneficiary and selected location, to fit into the policy cycle and the dynamics and reality of each municipality, and thus bringing an additional input to existing policies and practices for an effective and more inclusive functioning.

³⁸ Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Kosovo, North Macedonia, Montenegro, Serbia and Turkey

* 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.

In recent years, there has been a strong development of European and domestic policy frameworks for the integration of Roma. This reality has been fully integrated in the pre-accession policies. At the same time, awareness has grown that policy measures at local level are decisive for bringing about real improvement in the social inclusion of Roma, across the key areas of education, housing, employment, health and civil documentation. This has been recognised by the European Commission, the Council of Europe and other stakeholders, including by local and regional authorities themselves.

The local level is of critical importance for the effective implementation of policies and programmes for Roma inclusion. This is the level where exclusion is most visible, and where practical steps for inclusion are needed. A major challenge for effective implementation of Roma Inclusion policies adopted at European and domestic level is the considerable gap of understanding, capacities and political commitment at municipal level. Growing the engagement, commitment and capacities of local administration and institutions to consistently work for Roma inclusion and including it in the local agenda and budgets for development is an important priority. However, practicing good governance and local democracy will also depend on the investment in the capacity of Roma communities to be active participants and equal partners in the process, rather than passive recipients and targets of paternalistic interventions which may reconfirm dependency and exclusion.

Joint EU-CoE ROMACTED Phase I Programme builds on previous programmes tackling Roma empowerment in the field.

The ROMACTED Phase I Programme - *Promoting good governance and Roma empowerment at local level* was launched in May 2017 and its main objectives were 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 through the following outcomes:

(1) to empower 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);

(2) to improve and expand the institutions' commitment, capacities, knowledge and skills in working for Roma inclusion, putting in practice the concepts of good governance;

The specificity of the actions would be to assist the local authorities to integrate Roma specific dimension/measures into the mainstream local policies, budgets and public service delivery in their agenda, while enhancing the participation of the Roma citizens in the design, implementation and monitoring of those policies and projects.

ROMACTED Phase I was implemented in line with the [Handbook](#), and its estimated results were as follows:

- Support to local authorities for ensuring openness, transparency and equity in dealing with local plans and budgets will lead to **inclusive local plans and resource allocation** (including Roma needs);
- Enhanced capacity-building through training and coaching has a positive impact on public administration for delivering **quality services to all citizens** (including Roma citizens);
- Municipality regulations and practices have an impact on the participation and empowerment of Roma: **information is available, there is a recognition of the Community Action Group, participation is effective.**
- Community Action Group interventions will have a positive impact on presenting choices to be transformed into actions that will result in **increased ability of ordinary Roma citizens to assess their needs, contribute to the development of local public projects, watch-over their implementation, and monitor the local public budget.**
- The result can be summarised as such: **Increased responsiveness and accountability of local government/administration through a strengthened participation and representations of the Roma community.**

Main activities of ROMACTED Phase I were envisaged as follows:

- All Programme activities and incentives are meant to support strategic interventions (training, coaching, the implementation of participatory working cycles, advocacy actions, etc. during key moments of the municipal cycles: planning, budgeting, local decisions, projects etc.) which influence the attitudes, behaviour and actions of the local actors, mainly local administration and targeted Roma communities.
- The Programme will adapt its actions and activities to each beneficiary including each selected location, in order to fit in the policy cycle and to the dynamics and reality of each municipality, thus bringing an additional input to existing policies and practices for an effective and more inclusive functioning.
- One of the leading guidelines in the methodology of the Programme is that participation in local governance can only be effective if it is context-appropriate. Thus, preliminary mapping, assessment, baseline survey and research are done in each selected municipality so as to facilitate the adaptation of the Programme and its support and monitoring of the process.
- ROMACTED and Covid-19 Response:

Through concrete operational work with the support of the EU, in 2020, ROMACTED intervened with rapid response in all the 61 municipalities covered in all the seven Beneficiaries. Some of the examples of the interventions include:

- the programme has mobilised significant financial and human resources in the participating municipalities to adequately respond to the Covid-19 crisis and to help those most in need in the Roma communities.
- In total it is estimated that €250 000 to €300 000 from ROMACTED Phase I was devoted to direct actions supporting the impact of the COVID19 pandemic in the Roma communities.

Other type of actions carried out at the local level in order to respond to the crisis include:

- Maintaining contact with the local and central authorities to remind them of the precarious situation that their fellow Roma citizens find themselves in has therefore been our central approach to this pandemic;
- Distribution of information on preventive measures;
- Participation in crisis management teams and other similar actions at local level and coordination of actions at Beneficiary level;
- Initiation and implementation of actions by the respective support organisations jointly with other relevant stakeholders and actors.

Finally, target group of ROMACTED Phase I were local public administrations (the elected representatives and relevant officials) and the Roma communities from the selected municipalities. They are also the first short-term beneficiary group of the project. Overall the project was envisaged to target 50 Municipalities, and by the end of the project implementation the total number of municipalities was 61.

C. EVALUATION PURPOSE

The purpose of this final evaluation process is to support the review and improvement of relevant lines of ROMACTED Phase I and its methodological approach, in order to support the reviewing and improvement of relevant lines of intervention under the Programme, for an optimal and sustainable impact on the target groups during Phase II of the Programme.

The evaluation will help draw lessons on capacity building measures that would enable local authorities in given municipalities in the seven Beneficiaries to develop better strategies, plans and projects for the promotion of good governance and Roma empowerment at local level.

The conclusions and recommendations of the evaluation will provide substantive elements for the adaptation of the ROMACTED Phase II methodology and will be integrated in the ongoing implementation of the Programme. The evaluation results will be debriefed with the various actors and structures of the programme in order to be applied in the future action.

Furthermore, the evaluation report will contribute to the orientation and development of Council of Europe and European Commission's activities in the field of Roma inclusion in general and of its Joint Programmes in particular.

D. EVALUATION OBJECTIVES

The evaluation's objectives are :

- To assess the overall relevance, coherence and effectiveness of the ROMACTED Phase I Programme's methodological approach and of its interventions in contributing to the promotion of good governance and Roma empowerment at the local level in the targeted local communities;

- To identify lessons that the Council of Europe and the European Commission, as well as other stakeholders of the Programme should learn from its implementation, including sustainability of results achieved through ROMACTED Phase I implementation.

E. EVALUATION SCOPE

The evaluation will cover the period of the ROMACTED Phase I implementation between 1 May 2017 and 31 December 2020 and it is envisaged to cover the processes in 61 municipalities in the seven Beneficiaries, with a particular focus on the case studies to be developed in six municipalities from three Beneficiaries (Albania, Kosovo and North Macedonia). The effectiveness of ROMACTED methodological process and of its interventions will be assessed in the selected municipalities where the full ROMACTED Phase I cycle was implemented.

F. EVALUATION CRITERIA

The ROMACTED Phase I Programme with its methodological approach and interventions at local level will be evaluated against criteria of relevance, coherence, effectiveness, efficiency and sustainability, reflected in the guiding evaluation questions listed below, while applying the OECD DAC criteria.

G. EVALUATION QUESTIONS

The following evaluation questions have the aim to guide the evaluation process, while the full list of questions is to be developed by the evaluator as a result of the Inception Phase.

Relevance

- to what extent did ROMACTED Phase I respond to the needs of the Roma communities and local authorities in the Beneficiaries?
- to what extent did ROMACTED Phase I contribute to the development and planning of the relevant authorities with regards to their overall work on Roma communities?
- Was ROMACTED relevant to the EU integration process?
- To what extent did ROMACTED Phase I provide response to immediate, mid-term and long-term needs of the communities in the context of COVID-19 pandemic?

Coherence

- External Coherence: To what extent did ROMACTED use synergies and interlinkages with other interventions carried out by Roma NGOs, relevant domestic authorities and international stakeholders?
- Internal Coherence: to what extent did ROMACTED use synergies and interlinkages with other Programmes, projects and actions implemented by the Council of Europe and the EU, and other donors.

Effectiveness

- 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: preparing the process, assessing needs and prioritizing, adopting a joint action plan and funding and project implementation?
- To what extent is the target group satisfied with the overall support provided by ROMACTED Phase I?

- To what extent did the COVID-19 response provided by the Programme contribute to the recovery measures in the Roma communities?

Efficiency (cost effectiveness)

- What is the ratio between the total resources spent and the number of project beneficiaries, i.e. is the value gained for each project beneficiary equivalent to the total amount spent per beneficiary?
- How did the project beneficiaries benefit from the implementation of ROMACTED Phase I, both in terms of short-term benefits and in the long term (possible systemic solutions) sense?
- To what extent have the local authorities committed to continuing to provide similar support to the project beneficiaries and in general to the Roma population?
- Could the same results have been achieved with less resources? Could more results have been achieved with the same resources?
- To what extent did the COVID-19 related support provided through ROMACTED ensure mitigation of negative effects of COVID-19 to the project beneficiaries?

Impact

- What is the number and type of short term and long-term systemic solutions created as a result of ROMACTED Phase I, i.e. 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)?
- Assess the level of involvement of the Roma population in policymaking at the local level. For example, of all the initiatives and policies developed by local authorities during the ROMACTED implementation period, what is the percentage where the Roma population was involved (directly or indirectly linked with Community Action Groups, Local Action Plans and other relevant policies)
- To what extent have the project interventions related to COVID-19 had an impact on decreasing vulnerability of Roma in relation to the overall population?

Sustainability

- To what extent did the process, structures and benefits of the Programme continue at local level after the finalization of ROMACTED Phase I?
- What are the prospects of sustainability after ROMACTED II, and what measures could be implemented now to enhance the prospects for sustainability?
- Do the structures (Community Action Groups, Local Action Plans and other relevant policies, etc) established during the implementation of ROMACTED Phase I remain in place today?
- What were the major factors which influenced the achievement or non-achievement of sustainability of the ROMACTED actions / process? (If yes, draw a list of best practices, if no, draw a list of lessons learnt and recommendations for Phase II.

Cross-cutting Areas

- How is the principle of gender equality and participation of women reflected in the implementation of ROMACTED?

- How is the principle of Human Rights Approach, particularly the participation of vulnerable groups within the Roma communities applied in the implementation of ROMACTED?
- How did the Covid-19 response reach the most vulnerable individuals and groups within the Roma communities?
- What overall lessons can the management team of the Programme, the Council of Europe and European Commission learn from the implementation of ROMACTED? (e.g. normative and causal lessons learned from the experience of the Programme, recommendations for sustaining and valorising results achieved, improving its methodological handbook and the effectiveness of the Programme etc.)

H. Evaluation methodology

The evaluation will follow Council of Europe ethical and other guidelines, by respecting its evaluation approach and data collection and analysis methods that are human rights based and gender sensitive.

The data collection and analysis methods used by the evaluator should be sufficiently rigorous to assess the subject of the evaluation and ensure a complete, fair and unbiased assessment. There should be sufficient data to address all evaluation questions; there should be logical and explicit linkages between data sources, data collection methods and analysis methods.

1. Proposed Evaluation process stakeholders

For the purpose of this Contract, the Council of Europe will establish an Evaluation Reference Group, which will be composed of members of Roma and Travellers Team at the Council of Europe, the ROMACTED Team, the Council of Europe's Directorate of Internal Oversight, the ROMACTED counterpart at the European Commission and the contracted Evaluator.

To facilitate the work of the Evaluator, an indicative minimum list of relevant stakeholders for the evaluation process will be provided (ROMACTED management team; ROMACTED Support Team members in the Beneficiaries, including relevant experts / trainers; representatives of targeted municipalities – public servants, elected officials and experts; representatives of the CAGs; other local (mediators, schools and other services' representatives relevant for the ROMACTED process) and relevant Management Authority, ministries' representatives, EU Delegation and other stakeholders present in the Beneficiary.

2. Evaluation phases

- a. Inception Phase*** – 31 October to 30 November 2021. This phase refers to a period of desk study implying the *review of relevant documents and sources of information* provided and to be further identified on the topic of the Evaluation Contract. During this period the *content of the field interviews* and surveys will be elaborated and the necessary *arrangements (logistics and appointments)* for the planned field research will be made.
- b. Data Collection Phase*** – 30 November 2021 – 15 March 2022. This is a phase involving activities carried in the targeted locations: *field visits in project locations, collecting relevant data and documents, conducting interviews, surveys, meetings with relevant*

stakeholders etc. This field phase will serve to complete the data collection in the areas in which information gaps have been identified in the Inception Phase and for checking the viability of the available information for better triangulation of previous findings. Moreover, less visible aspects related to context and political and institutional processes relevant to the Programme will be identified.

- c. Reporting Phase – 16 March – 30 April 2022. After the evaluation team will analyse the collected data, a *draft outline report* will be prepared and discussed with the Contracting party from the side of the Council of Europe. A *meeting* with the Evaluation Reference Group should be organized to discuss the findings of the report and relevant inputs could be incorporated in the *Final Evaluation Report* as differing views.

3. **Methodological tools** (*to be revised according to the final list of evaluation questions*)

The evaluation will use the methods listed below which should answer the proposed evaluation questions. Any revision to the methodological tools proposed by the Terms of Reference should be discussed with the Contracting party and the Evaluation Reference Group.

a. Document Review:

The Evaluator will carry out a document review at the beginning of the Contract, both from the package provided by the Council of Europe as well as further identified as relevant for the subject. The following documents will be particularly assessed:

- i. *ROMACTED Phase I Programme documentation*
- ROMACTED DoA related to the period to be evaluated;
 - ROMACTED methodological Handbook;
 - ROMACTED database with local baseline surveys;
 - ROMACTED Reports, statistics and communication tools outputs
- ii. *Municipal documentation related to the implementation of ROMACTED Phase I process:*
- Signed Memoranda of Understanding (MoUs);
 - Action Plans and Strategies adopted at local level;
 - Projects submitted for funding in relation to the implementation of Action Plans / Strategies;
 - Small grants scheme projects,
 - Covid-19 response-related documents
- iii. Relevant documentation of the Council of Europe and European Commission (e.g.: Council of Europe's Roma and Travellers Action Plans relevant for the period of evaluation, EU policy documentation, etc.), including the evaluation reports of previous relevant Programmes;
- iv. Visibility and media records on the Programme.

b. Semi-Structured Interviews and surveys:

Semi-structured interviews and surveys will be carried out with different relevant stakeholders (indicative names and contacts to be provided):

- The ROMACTED Programme Phase I management team members;
- The Council of Europe experts who have been working in the Programme (trainers, expert consultants etc.) supporting the process of developing and implementing the Programme approach;
- Field staff of the Programme (Project Officers);
- Support Roma organisations (including Focal Points and assistants where relevant)
- Representatives of the CAGs in the targeted local communities;
- Official representatives of the City Halls (municipal contact points for the Programme);
- Representatives of other local Roma NGOs in the targeted municipalities;
- Other relevant local actors (mediators, representatives of schools, police etc. – non-members of the Task Force) and (Roma and non-Roma) citizens who can provide accounts on the ROMACTED Phase I implementation.
- EUDs

c. Case Studies

- Samples from six selected municipalities in Albania, Kosovo, and North Macedonia³⁹(two municipalities per Beneficiary) are to be analysed in depth, in the form of case studies, with the purpose of collecting evidence for further revision and development of the Programme's methodology. These should not be, however, the only basis for evaluation. The sample of case studies will be selected during the inception phase of the evaluation. The Evaluator will carry out field missions to the targeted locations in order to conduct semi-structured interviews, surveys (and potentially focus group discussions) with key individuals / stakeholders.
- The case studies will be of exploratory nature, describing contexts and implementation mechanisms and assessing the changes and impact that occurred, further detailing what may be important to be explored in similar situations. The case studies will look into the different phases of the Programme and its relationship with the context and provide information about reasons for success, challenges and drawbacks. The case studies should be representative and include both more and less successful cases, with their respective contexts and conditionalities, in order to provide a comprehensive picture, particularly why and upon what conditions results have been (or have not been) achieved.
- Particular attention will be paid at the ROMACTED Phase I response to the pandemic in the case study selected locations
- The sample case locations will be decided in cooperation with the Evaluation Reference Group based on the likelihood of the case to provide valuable insights and offer an opportunity for learning about the approach employed and its comparative advantages.

³⁹ In 2018, a ROM mission was carried out in the 3 other Programme Beneficiaries: BiH, Montenegro and Serbia.

The *lessons learned* from the case studies will feed into the process of formulating the recommendations of the Evaluation report.

The evaluation report should include a list of *recommendations* regarding the orientation and further development of the Programme's methodology, based on findings and lessons learned. The recommendations should also include, where appropriate, indications on additional tools to be used for more effective / meaningful Programme impact. The Evaluator will design a list of recommendations in close consultation with the ROMACTED Team, for the recommendations to serve as a tool for the improvement of implementation of the ROMACTED Phase II.

I. Evaluation Work Plan

1. The deliverables that the Evaluator will be accountable for producing in English language are:

- a. *Inception Report* - An Inception Report should be prepared by the Evaluator before going into the full-fledged data collection exercise; this should detail the Evaluator's understanding of what is being evaluated and why, showing how each evaluation question will be answered by way of: proposed methods, proposed sources of data and data collection procedures. The inception report should include a proposed schedule of tasks, activities and deliverables. The inception report has the aim to set the clear parameters over the understanding about the evaluation and to clarify any misunderstanding at the outset. The Inception Report shall be submitted to the Evaluation Reference Group and discussed in a joint meeting to be decided upon. Inception report will also contain a description of the role of the stakeholders in order to ensure participatory process throughout the evaluation.
- b. *Draft Evaluation Report* – The Draft Evaluation Report should contain horizontal findings, a short ROMACTED Phase I methodology implementation assessment for each of the targeted municipalities in the beneficiaries covered and the final case studies. The Evaluation Reference Group will review the Draft Evaluation Report to ensure that the evaluation meets the required quality criteria.
- c. *Final Evaluation Report* – The Final Evaluation Report shall respect the Quality Assurance Checklist attached to the Technical Specifications. The Final Evaluation Report shall be discussed in a joint meeting with the Evaluation Reference Group and should include the following elements:
 - Executive Summary
 - Introduction
 - Description of the object of evaluation
 - Purpose of the evaluation
 - Evaluation methodology
 - Challenges encountered during the evaluation
 - Findings
 - Horizontal findings related to evaluation questions

Beneficiary level and municipal level assessments for the targeted municipalities of the two beneficiaries covered, including overall conclusions and recommendations for each beneficiary

Conclusions and lessons learned

Recommendations

Appendixes (including the case studies, the lists of people interviewed and of relevant documents reviewed, formats and content of semi-structured interviews etc.)

- d. *Final Synthesis Evaluation Report* – A Final Synthesis Evaluation Report should be prepared based on the Final Evaluation Report and by taking into account the inputs received during the joint meetings with the Evaluation Reference Group.

2. Locations and logistical arrangements

The targeted locations for the evaluation are selected on the basis of ensuring relevant coverage for the quality of implementation of ROMACTED methodological process, for balanced geographical and demographical considerations and institutional commitment for the Programme. Therefore, the evaluation is to be undertaken in three Programme Beneficiaries (Albania, Kosovo and North Macedonia), in two municipalities each. An indicative list of targeted locations / focus areas at the beneficiary level will be provided to the Evaluator, subject to the approval of the Evaluation Reference Group in the inception phase of the evaluation process.

The evaluation team will be responsible for the necessary logistics of performing the evaluation: office space, administrative and secretarial support, telecommunications, printing of documentation, translation and interpretation etc. The evaluator will also be responsible for the dissemination of all methodological tools such as questionnaires and surveys, but the relevant Council of Europe / ROMACTED field staff should facilitate this process to the extent possible.

The Evaluator will be responsible to make their own arrangements for the field visits and appointments with relevant stakeholders. The Support Teams of the Programme could be asked to facilitate the organisation of field visits and appointments, if deemed necessary by the Evaluator.

3. Timeframe for the evaluation process

The indicative timeframe for the evaluation process is set to start at the beginning of November 2021:

Deliverables and other key-steps	Deadline
Desk study – documentation review, finalizing methodologies	Oct 2021
Submitting the Inception report	Oct/Nov 2021
1 st Joint meeting with the Evaluation Reference Group	Nov 2021

Field work – Evaluation missions	Nov 21 – Feb 22
Draft Case Studies	
Draft Evaluation report	Feb/March 2022
2 nd Joint meeting with the Evaluation Reference Group	March 2022
Final Evaluation Report	March-April 2022

4. Budget and payments

The budget of the Evaluation is **set at maximum 38000 €**, with a minimum of 40 days, incidental expenditures included. A Financial Proposal should be submitted together with the Evaluation Proposal (See PART V, Appendix to the Act of Engagement).

Monitoring and Evaluation

The selected evaluator will be monitored by the CoE team taking into consideration the possible comments/ requests of the Evaluation Reference Group, in accordance with the CoE evaluation guidelines checklist to ensure quality control.

5. Qualifications of the evaluator(s)

The criteria for selecting the evaluator are:

- Strong record in designing, managing and leading evaluations in the context of international cooperation;
- Extensive knowledge of, and experience in applying standard evaluation principles, qualitative and quantitative evaluation methods;
- Technical competence in the field of social inclusion of disadvantaged groups, including the Roma in Europe;
- Experience with similar contracts in the seven Beneficiaries of ROMACTED Programme;
- Language proficiency relevant for the countries targeted by evaluation;
- Knowledge of the role of the Council of Europe and of the European Commission and their programming tools, particularly on Roma Inclusion policies and on the EU Integration context;
- Independence and absence of conflicts of interests;

The evaluator(s) are asked, if possible, to submit two or three examples of evaluation reports recently completed when submitting their proposal. If possible, one or more of the reports should be relevant, or similar to, the subject of evaluation.

No sub-contracting is planned for this evaluation.

The application file should include References of previous employers.

Annexes to ToR include:

- Evaluation Matrix Template;

- Council of Europe Code of Conduct for Evaluators;
- Quality assurance Checklist for Inception Report;
- Quality Assurance Checklist for Final Report;
- Informational Resources
 - a. The following documents are available on the website of the ROMACTED Programme
 - i. ROMACTED Joint Programme website: www.coe-romacted.org
 - ii. [ROMACTED Handbook, A Manual for Development of local resources, joint action and empowerment of Roma Communities](#)

Annex: Quality Assurance Checklist for Final Evaluation Report

1. Report Structure

- a. The report is well structured, logical, clear, concise and complete.
- b. The report is logically structured with clarity and coherence, based on the guidelines provided and according to the proposed structure.
- c. The title page and opening pages provide key basic information:
 - Name of the evaluation object;
 - Timeframe of the evaluation and date of the report;
 - Locations (country, region, etc.) of the evaluation object;
 - Names and/or organizations of evaluators;
 - Name of the organization commissioning the evaluation;
 - Table of contents which also lists Tables, Graphs, Figures and Appendixes;
 - List of acronyms.
- d. The Executive Summary is a stand-alone section that includes:
 - Overview of the evaluation;
 - Evaluation objectives and purpose of use;
 - Evaluation methodology;
 - Most important findings and conclusions;
 - Main recommendations.
- e. Appendixes may include, inter alia:
 - The agreed proposal of evaluation implementation;
 - List of stakeholders / persons interviewed and sites visited;
 - List of documents consulted;
 - More details on the methodology, such as data collection instruments, including details of their reliability and validity;
 - Evaluator's related information and justification of team composition;
 - Evaluation matrix;
 - Results framework.

2. Object of Evaluation

- The report presents a clear and full description of the 'object' of the evaluation.
- The expected results chain (inputs, outputs and outcomes) of the evaluation are clearly described.
- The context of key social, political, economic, demographic, and institutional factors that have a direct bearing on the object of the evaluation is properly described.
- The scale and complexity of the object of the evaluation are clearly described.
- Key stakeholders involved in the Programme implementation and their roles.
- Implementation status of the Programme and implications for the evaluation.

3. Evaluation Purpose and Objectives

- Evaluation purpose and objectives are fully explained.
- The purpose of the evaluation is clearly defined, including why the evaluation was needed at that point in time, who and why needs the information and how the information will be used.
- Evaluation questions are described and justify what the evaluation did and did not cover.
- The report describes and provides an explanation of the chosen evaluation criteria, performance standards, or other criteria used by the Evaluator.

4. Evaluation Methodology

- The report presents transparent description of the methodology applied to the evaluation that clearly explains how the evaluation was specifically designed to address the evaluation criteria, to obtain answers to the evaluation questions and achieve evaluation purposes.
- The report describes the data collection methods and analysis, the rationale for selecting them, and their limitations. Reference indicators and benchmarks are included where relevant.
- The report describes the data sources, the rationale for their selection, and their limitations. Moreover, the report should include information on how the mix of data sources was used to obtain a diversity of perspectives, ensure data accuracy (triangulation) and overcome data limits.
- The report describes the sampling frame – area and population / stakeholders to be represented, rationale for selection, numbers selected out of potential subjects, and limitations of the sample.
- The evaluation report gives a complete description of stakeholder’s consultation process in the evaluation, including the rationale for selecting the particular level and activities for consultation.
- The methods employed are appropriate for the evaluation and to answer its questions.
- The evaluation approach and data collection and analysis methods are gender equality and human rights responsive and appropriate.
- The report presents evidence that adequate measures were taken to ensure data quality, including evidence supporting the reliability and validity of data collection tools (e.g. interview protocols, observation tools, etc.)

5. Findings

- The findings respond directly to the evaluation criteria and questions detailed in the purpose and objectives section of the report and are based on evidence derived from data collection and analysis methods described in the methodology section of the report.
- Reported findings reflect systematic and appropriate analysis and interpretation of the data.
- Reported findings address the evaluation criteria and questions defined in the Terms of Reference.
- Findings are objectively reported based on the evidence.
- Gaps and limitations in the data and/or unanticipated findings are reported and discussed.
- Reasons for accomplishments and failures, especially continuing constraints, were identified as much as possible.
- Overall findings are presented with clarity, logic, and coherence.

6. Conclusions

- Conclusions present reasonable judgments based on findings and substantiated by evidence, and provide insights pertinent to the object and purpose of the evaluation.
- The conclusions reflect reasonable evaluative judgments relating to key evaluation questions.
- Conclusions are well substantiated by the evidence presented and are logically connected to evaluation findings.
- Stated conclusions provide insights into the identification and/or solutions of important problems or issues pertinent to the prospective decisions and actions of evaluation users.
- Conclusions present strengths and weaknesses of the Programme evaluated, based on the evidence presented and taking due account of the views of a diverse cross-section of stakeholders.

7. Lessons learnt

The Lessons learned are to be informed by the general findings of the evaluation and from the Case Study samples analyzed. The Case Studies should be included as Appendix to the section. The Lessons learned described by the report should be:

- Specific and relevant to the topic of the evaluation.
- Clearly linked to specific findings.
- Tied to clearly identified external factors.
- Replicable in the organizational context.

8. Recommendations

- Recommendations are relevant to the object and purposes of the evaluation, are supported by evidence and conclusions, and were developed with the involvement of relevant stakeholders.
- The report describes the process followed in developing the recommendations including consultation with stakeholders.
- Recommendations are firmly based on evidence and conclusions.
- Recommendations are relevant to the object and purposes of the evaluation.
- Recommendations clearly identify the target group for each recommendation.
- Recommendations are clearly stated with priorities for action made clear.
- Recommendations are actionable and reflect an understanding of the commissioning organization and potential constraints to follow-up.
- Recommendations are supplemented with suggested modalities of implementation and opportunities for improvement.

Annex 11: Short biographies of the evaluation team

Heidrun Ferrari (team lead) has over 20 years of experience, both in programme management and as a consultant. Prior to the consultancy career, Heidrun worked in management positions for a number of NGOs and international organisations, including Minority Rights Group International and the UNHCR. Her thematic focus is on civil society strengthening, human rights, especially minority and women rights, and social inclusion. Her regional focus is on countries of Southeast Europe, Eastern Europe and the Caucasus. As consultant she also has worked on Roma issues, e.g., for the Roma Education Fund. Heidrun has over 12 years of evaluation experience and carried out numerous evaluations for international organisations and donor agencies applying participatory and qualitative M&E techniques. Recent evaluation work has focused on reviewing programmes on anti-discrimination and human rights; democratization; independent judiciary; and freedom of expression and media; including evaluations for the Council of Europe, e.g. last evaluation of the European Roma Institute for Arts and Culture (ERIAC) in October 2021.

Britta Schweighöfer has over 20 years of experience, both in programme management and as a consultant. Prior to the consultancy career she lived and worked for six years in countries of the former Yugoslavia with a focus on the right to return and women's empowerment. Furthermore, Britta worked in management positions for a number of NGOs, including the Human Rights Organisation FIAN. Her thematic focus is on economic, social and cultural rights, civil society strengthening and citizens political education. Her regional focus is on countries of Southeast Europe, Eastern Europe, the Caucasus and Central Asia. Britta has over 10 years of evaluation experience and carried out numerous evaluations for international organisations and donor agencies applying participatory and qualitative M&E techniques. Recent evaluation work has focused on reviewing programmes on anti-discrimination and human rights; democratization and electoral practice; including evaluations for the Council of Europe (Action Plans for Georgia and the Republic of Moldova and the Horizontal Facility II).

Anja Simic has 22 years of professional experience gained in non-profit sector through her work with Malteser International, UNHCR and Migration, Asylum, Refugees Regional Initiative (MARRI). In addition to the Western Balkans regional experience, Anja also worked in Turkey, Syria and South Sudan. In parallel to her on-going UNHCR consultancy, Anja also registered own consultancy firm and started individual private consultancy work in 2018. Over the period of 22 years Anja covered a range of issues from emergency up to development settings including implementation of a various programmes requiring management and analytical skills. Working for the UN, NGO and governmental organisations Anja built expertise in the fields of migration, education, employment, health, social protection, housing and general community development issues. On the other hand, in her current capacity as UNHCR – Government expert consultant on refugee/asylum/migration issues Anja regularly assists the implementation of national policies, strategies, laws or specific development measures to support the Agenda 2030.