



Médiation
pour les Roms

Mediation
for Roma



EXPERIENCING ROMED

A legacy for improved participation
of Roma communities

**Democratic Governance and
Community Participation through Mediation**

Funded
by the European Union
and the Council of Europe



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by the Council of Europe

EXPERIENCING ROMED

A LEGACY FOR IMPROVED PARTICIPATION OF ROMA COMMUNITIES

ROMED1 Programme

European training programme on
intercultural mediation for Roma
communities

ROMED2 Programme

Democratic Governance and Community
Participation through Mediation

**A European Union
and Council of Europe Joint Programme**

Author :

The Intercultural Institute of Timisoara

Evaluation by :

Blomeyer & Sanz s.l.
Creda Consulting

Editor :

Oana Gaillard



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the ROMED Programme

ROMED Programme,
F-67075 Strasbourg Cedex
<http://coe-romed.org>

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Contents

EXPERIENCING ROMED – EXPERIENCING EMPOWERMENT

PART I A COMPLEMENT TO THE ROMED2 GUIDELINES AND RESOURCES FOR NATIONAL AND LOCAL FACILITATORS	9
THE ROMED2 EXPERIENCE – A PILOT AND A LEGACY	10
THE ROMED2 PROCESS	11
Chapter 1. BECOMING A ROMED FACILITATOR	12
Chapter 2. THE LOCAL ADMINISTRATION INITIATING PARTICIPATION IN THE ROMA COMMUNITY	35
PART II EVALUATION OF THE COUNCIL OF EUROPE AND EUROPEAN UNION JOINT PROGRAMME 'ROMED' FULL REPORT	41
Chapter 1. Introduction	43
Chapter 2. ROMED1 horizontal findings: Empowering mediators	57
Chapter 3. ROMED2 horizontal findings: Empowering Roma communities	77
Chapter 4. Conclusions and lessons	105
Chapter 5. Recommendations	113
PART III COUNTRY INFOGRAPHICS	119
PART IV ASSESSMENT OF THE ROMED PROGRAMMES FOR COUNTRIES NOT COVERED BY THE EXTERNAL EVALUATION	135
4.1. ROMED in Bosnia and Herzegovina	136
4.2. ROMED in Germany	142
4.3. ROMED in Greece	148
PART V THE LEGACY OF THE ROMED PROGRAMMES - RESOURCES AND INSPIRATION	157
ROMED2 - EXAMPLE OF COMMITMENT LETTER	158
ROMED2 - CHARACTERISTICS OF THE COMMUNITY ACTION GROUP	159
ROMED2 - ACTIVITY ON GROUP BELONGING	161
RESOURCES AND CONTACTS FOR SUPPORT	162
RELEVANT PUBLICATIONS AND MEDIA RESOURCES	163

EXPERIENCING ROMED – EXPERIENCING EMPOWERMENT



Aurora Ailincăi
Head of the Strategic Partnerships Unit, Support Team to the SRSF for Roma issues

When we designed the ROMED Programme five years ago, many doubts accompanied our plans. We received criticism and many found our goals to be too ambitious and unrealistic. Today, we can say that how one interprets challenges, setbacks, and criticism is one's own choice. Indeed, we interpreted them in a growth mindset as signs that we needed to ramp up our strategies and effort, stretch ourselves, and expand our abilities.

We hoped for changes in the minds of people, in the organisational culture of the local administrations, in the perception of people about what participation means in contexts of poverty and discrimination. And the more we advanced with the implementation of the Programme, the more we were surprised by the determination and the abilities of the hundreds of people involved in its implementation at local level.

Neither ROMED1, focusing on the mediators, nor ROMED2, which took that further towards community organising, were easy to implement. ROMED represents an exceptional case of joint efforts at European level, where the European Commission and the Council of Europe have supported a process from backstage; the ownership then moved to the Roma organisations and associations, local authorities, as well as activists, mediators, experts and, more importantly, to the Roma citizens themselves.

We witnessed those transformation effects of ROMED that are well-described in this publication. We hope that the seeds planted through ROMED will grow into a generation of independent leaders within Roma communities and look at the Roma as citizens who need to accumulate power to keep governments accountable and to speed the pace of change. We hope that ROMED encouraged Roma to develop critical voices, nurturing leaders whose potential is not based on ethnic origin, but rather on their capacity to contribute to the development of policies for all citizens.



Marcos Andrade
ROMED Programme Manager

The knowledge, skills and values required to live in a democracy, and the ability to live together in an inclusive community, do not come naturally. And if you are Roma, acquiring that ability also represents engaging in a courageous struggle against discrimination and fighting to access spaces of political participation and decision-making where so often Roma have been rejected. It requires education for change and it obliges all involved to experience and practice ways that are able to convey change. That change has to have the capacity to respond to the collective aspirations of the community.

Over the last five years serving the ROMED Programme, what has inspired me the most has been the amazing power of change and positive transformation of a group of very committed people with shared values and a shared vision, and how this group embraced a process of learning together for the change. Change with and for the Roma. The community of practice gathered by ROMED2, composed of the people in the local community action groups, by the national and pedagogical teams but also by the people in the local administrations and national administrations, is a very impressive legacy of this programme. Individually and as a group, they are a very important resource for local, national and also European institutions, such as the Council of Europe and the European Union. They are both an opportunity for institutional learning and strategic agents to continue sustaining and conveying the needed change for Roma inclusion.

Godspeed to all of those that “Experiencing ROMED” can seduce to join in a journey of participation and community empowerment.

Godspeed for all of those that having experienced ROMED will continue walking and inspiring this journey. Most grateful to all of you.



Marina Vasic
ROMED Project Officer

ROMED went beyond being a simple project that you implement throughout several years. It became a philosophy that empowers people in a number of ways, teaching them about the tools of active citizenship and thus building stronger commitment to the cause. It tackles upon an every-day struggle of Roma community members that are often invisible to us, highlighting the core values of community organizing.

During the years, I have experienced high admiration and respect for ROMED process, expressed by the Programme's direct beneficiaries and partners who have been involved in the implementation from the very beginning. Numerous countries and their municipalities have experienced real advancements on the ground, building towards inclusive society and diversity. It is amazing to witness these "small victories" that develop further on into something so meaningful for the community's well-being. The sustainability of change is possible if you manage to convince people that commitment to participation is crucial for any type of growth and advancement. And this is what we have been trying to do all along.



Victoria Hopson
ROMED Senior
Administrative Assistant

My personal ROMED experience started back in 2011 when the first seeds were sown. Little did we know how quickly our ROMED "baby" would grow and the impact on lives arising from it some six years later.

For me, the ROMED experience represents a huge amount of work, effort, commitment of all of the remarkable people involved who somehow were perceptive enough, and willing enough, to devote so much of their time and energy to working towards the bigger picture, to talk to each other, put faith and trust in both themselves and others, believing in the value and strength of togetherness being greater than the sum of the parts, irrespective of name, nationality, role, institution, religion and so on.

We have grown together and shown empathy, understanding, respect and solidarity. By empowering others, we have also empowered ourselves.

We have all experienced ROMED together and accompanied each other on this journey and I thank everyone whose path has crossed with mine over these past years. Of course, the journey doesn't stop here. In fact, one might just say that this is merely the end of the beginning, the challenge now is maintaining the legacy for the sustainable benefit of all.



Oana Gaillard
ROMED Communication
Officer

I have had the privilege of witnessing the conception of ROMED2 in 2013, based on the ROMED1 experience and the creation of a wonderful pool of committed, passionate people. They were perhaps doubting whether achieving community organising and Roma participation was possible at such a large scale. The human side of us all came to surprise them in the most beautiful way: with very few exceptions the communities were not only following, but very soon became eager to lead.

There are so many stories of personal inner force in ROMED, which have always been the fuel that kept us all going in the most adverse of times. Indeed, in the ROMED2 experience it is the communities and each individual person bringing their capacity within a common space that enabled them to achieve not only concrete results but a deep, meaningful process of empowerment.

List of abbreviations

ACIDI	High Commissioner for Immigration and Intercultural Dialogue (Portugal) which has since become the High Commission for Migration (ACM, I.P.)
CAG	Community Action Group
CAHROM	Council of Europe Ad hoc Committee of Experts on ROMA and Traveller Issues
CoE	Council of Europe
DG EMPL	European Commission Directorate General for Employment, Social Affairs & Inclusion
DGEAC	European Commission Directorate General for Education and Culture
EC	European Commission
EU	European Union
LA	Local Authorities
MtM	OSF programme "Making the Most of the European Funds"
NFP	National Focal Point
NGO	Non-Governmental Organisation
NPO	National Project Officer
NRIS	National Roma Integration Strategies
NST	National Support Team
OSF	Open Society Foundations
PAGODA	Pillar Assessed Grant or Delegation Agreement
PHARE	A pre-accession instrument of the European Union
ROMACT	Building capacity at local level for the integration of Roma
ROMACT T.C.C.	Transnational Cooperation Component of the ROMACT Programme
ROMED1	European Training Programme on Intercultural Mediation for Roma Communities
ROMED2	Democratic Governance and Community Participation through Mediation
ROMED2 Guidelines	ROMED2 Guidelines and Resources for National and Local Facilitators
ToT	Training of Trainers
UNPD	United Nations Development Programme

Part I

OVERCOMING BARRIERS TO ROMA PARTICIPATION AT LOCAL LEVEL

A complement to the ROMED2 Guidelines and
Resources for National and Local Facilitators

THE ROMED2 EXPERIENCE A PILOT AND A LEGACY

If you are reading these lines, we assume that you are interested in learning about how to mobilise the Roma community, build trust and ensure the best conditions for the population in your city, village or any other form of local administration. You are either a civil servant working in a department of the municipality that is in touch with a Roma community; or an employee of a local institution, an activist, a representative of a Roma NGO; or simply a citizen that is looking for solutions for her/his community.

Whoever you may be, we hope that the next chapters will help you to find answers and inspiration in initiating a participatory process with the Roma community where you live. We have included multiple examples from the implementation of ROMED2, feedback from the facilitators who have been leading these processes for three years and valuable advice on how best to go about it.

The ROMED2 Experience is not just “an experiment”. It has become a proven methodology¹ - a pilot if you like - in sparking not only the involvement of Roma persons directly in the decision-making processes in their cities or villages but also a new path to personal growth – with many examples of Roma persons involved in the **Community Action Group (CAG²)** stating that they feel today more confident and more committed as citizens and individuals. It is also a methodology that grew out of the ROMED1 Training of Mediators and bloomed through the implementation of ROMED2.

Participation and empowerment are words used so often, they tend to become void of meaning. What ROMED2 tested and offers is the way to make these words actually fulfil their meaning.

If you think that the ROMED2 methodology is something that could be of interest to stakeholders in your city, village, commune, inter alia, please do talk to them about it. You can also get in touch with us at romed@coe.int and we will try to guide you as much as possible towards the relevant persons and organisations in your country who can support you in this endeavour (see also Resources & Contacts for Support at the end of this publication, as well as the Resources section available on the ROMED website at www.coe-romed.org).

Before you continue reading this first part, you should print out or open in your browser the ROMED2 Guidelines and Resources for National and Local Facilitators (free and available to download from the ROMED website). We will often make reference to modules of these ROMED2 Guidelines, so if you have them close at hand, the points we try to get across will make much more sense. The ROMED2 Guidelines themselves contain plenty of information on all the points we are about to discuss below, but our main aim here is to provide you with **hints and examples on how people react to the methodology, what you can expect and how you can best prepare for a meaningful process for Roma participation in decision-making at local level.**

The first half is dedicated to the facilitators and the CAG, covering most of the sensitive points in the formation of such a group, difficulties that can be encountered along the way and examples of how facilitators in the ROMED2 experience dealt with them. **The second part is dedicated to local authorities** and covers crucial issues such as why the mobilisation of the Roma community will make your job easier, how to find the human resources that can do it, indications of the costs involved, etc.

Within the relationship between Roma and local institutions, ROMED2 has always focused more on the Roma

1. See the Full Evaluation Report – PART II of this publication (p.42)

2. See Annex ROMED2 – Characteristics of the Community Action Group (p.159)

3. As of 30 April 2017, the ROMED Programme reaches the end of its status of Joint Programme of the Council of Europe and European Union

4. The ROMED2 Guidelines can be downloaded in full here: <http://bit.ly/2j5RXjG>

5. More on the ROMACT Programme here: <http://coe-romact.org/>

community, on the dynamics of the CAG, on building competence with the group and on preparing not only the CAG, but also the entire community for the participatory process. The programme thus cumulated much more knowledge and know-how on community empowerment than on capacitating the local authorities – which was the mission of the ROMACT programme launched at the same time as ROMED. This explains the unbalanced quantity of information summarised in the two sections of this publication. We also encourage local authorities to read the ROMACT Handbook, available for download from the ROMACT website in several languages⁶.

THE ROMED2 PROCESS

	Community action group	Facilitator and local facilitator	Institutional working group
1	The local facilitator identifies a core group of community members interested in becoming involved in the CAG		
2	Setting up of the CAG		
3	Training of the CAG (continues in parallel with the following steps)		
4	Collecting data, analysing the situation, prioritising		Municipality contact point provides information and support
5	Defining the community proposals for action and preparing for the joint planning meeting		
6		Identification of the relevant institutional counterparts and setting up the IWG	
7		Training on inclusive good governance and related topics	
8		Analysis of the situation from the institutional perspective	
9		Development of proposals from the institutional perspective	
10	Joint planning meeting moderated by the local facilitator and the municipality contact point, in the presence of the national facilitator, bringing together the IWG and the CAG		
11	Implementation	Implementation	Implementation
12	Monitoring meetings		
13	Community evaluation		
14		Institutional evaluation	
15	Joint evaluation		
16		Follow-up at institution level	
17	Follow-up of the CAG		

6. The ROMACT Handbook can be downloaded here: <http://coe-romact.org/resources>

Chapter 1

BECOMING A ROMED FACILITATOR

Why would an activist / sociologist / anthropologist / mediator / committed citizen aiming for the role of facilitator (national or local) need the ROMED2 methodology? Surely any person of Roma origin, or having worked with Roma communities, should be able to initiate a participatory process in the community, correct?

This is partly true.

Certainly, knowledge of the specificities of Roma issues in urban or rural settlements, culture codes, and, for *local facilitators*, understanding of the local contexts, are indeed a prerequisite. However, without a methodology such as the one developed and tested by ROMED2, the process is bound to hit many barriers, up to the point of coming to a halt. Worse, the experience may create high expectations that would never be met and thus create a dangerous precedent in the municipality, blocking any such future initiative based on more solid methodological ground.⁷

During ROMED2, facilitators were trained together through Training of Trainers (ToT) sessions, coached by an international pedagogical team, continuously backed by the National Support Teams (NSTs), provided with a set of tools they were free to test and give feedback on.

A facilitator that had not been trained under ROMED2 found it difficult to work with the newly-formed CAG. The discussions were constantly interrupted by members of the CAG bringing up personal issues and thus making it hard to reach a more constructive level. The facilitator missed the opportunity to understand and expect this as part of the “Storming” phase in group development (explained in CAG13 **Stages of Group Development**) of the ROMED2 Guidelines.

Within the chapters below, as well as within the other ROMED publications⁸, we aimed to compensate for the lack of ToTs, international meetings, and networks supported by the EC and CoE. We want to provide you - or those who are interested in initiating Roma participation processes - with those examples and explanations on sensitive transition points that would avoid costly mistakes.

1.1. Starting off as a ROMED Facilitator

Since we are addressing you, a facilitator-to-be, it is important that we make here the distinction between the two types of facilitators involved in the ROMED2 process. Think of your position towards the Roma community and have a look at the description of the roles of the National Facilitator and of the Local Facilitator⁹ as described in the ROMED2 Guidelines.

For which role do you qualify more? This is a crucial question, as it affects both the way you will interact with the Community Action Group (CAG) and with the Local Authorities (LA), as well as the tasks that are assigned to your role.

If you qualify more for the position of “local facilitator” (meaning someone who knows the community, and who will be able to follow the group on a more regular basis, from within the municipality), your role will be to start off the CAG and accompany it towards sustainability.

7. See “What if similar initiatives failed before in the municipality?” below (p.20)

8. See Part V - The legacy of the ROMED Programmes - Resources and inspiration below (p.158)

9. The ROMED2 Guidelines can be downloaded in full here: <http://bit.ly/2j5RXjG>

You must accept from the start the idea that, in the long run, your role will gradually fade out until it remains a figure that “leads from behind”¹⁰.

In this case, you would need to:

- ▶ discuss with local authorities the possibility to hire an expert - outsider to the municipality - to ensure the facilitation process (ref. role of the national facilitator in the ROMED2 Guidelines);
- ▶ address NGOs or governmental structures which would have the possibility and the interest to work on such issues, present the ROMED process to them and discuss the needs (cost-wise, etc.)¹¹
- ▶ get in touch with the ROMED team at romed@coe.int. Even though the programme is not actively working anymore, you will always receive feedback, support and guidance on possible contacts and help.

If you are a “national facilitator” – an independent expert, or an NGO-based activist for instance – your work in the cities you aim for will have to be supported by a “local facilitator”. You can start by contacting the Roma mediator in the city or by identifying the person acting closest to the role of mediator in the community.

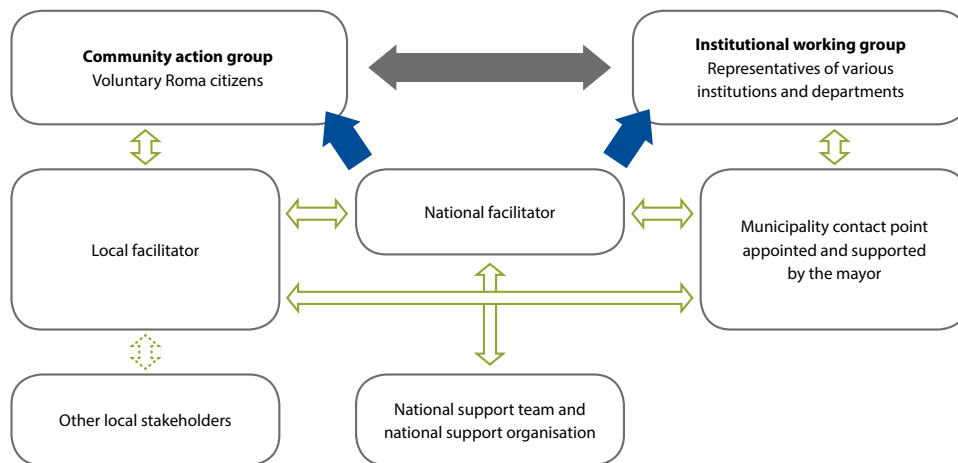
We also recommend that you make the necessary efforts so that the mediator – who will become a local facilitator – attends a ROMED1 or ROMACT T.C.C.¹² training for mediators.

Why is this important? Have a look at the ROMED1 Trainer’s handbook¹³ and at the Mediators’ Code of Ethics¹⁴ to understand why it is crucial in the long run that intercultural mediation is done in an effective manner.

Can I do it alone? On whom can I rely?

Considering what we have just established in the previous chapter, the answer is: **no, the ROMED process cannot be achieved alone**. If you qualify more for the position of “local facilitator”, you will need the intervention of a “national facilitator” and *vice-versa*. Moreover, you will need, if not a strong ally in the administration, at least a contact person with whom you feel you can build the process¹⁵. Last but not least, you will need guidance from national level – ideally the teams that were previously involved in ROMED2¹⁶.

The relationships between the key stakeholders are illustrated in the diagram below



10. Recommended TED Talks - Itay Talgam: Lead like the great conductors: <http://bit.ly/2hTv7NQ> and Simon Sinek: Why great leaders make you feel safe: <http://bit.ly/2cH6Hrc>

11. In the report of the external evaluation in PART II of this publication, you will find the costs of implementation per country for both ROMED1 (chapter 2.2.5. Cost efficiency) and ROMED2 (chapter 3.3.2 Level and type of resource allocation in ROMED2 municipalities) – these can provide you with the necessary guidance on what kind of sums would need to be earmarked to put in place such initiatives.

12. ROMACT Transnational Cooperation Component, Module B – Training of Mediators: organising trainings under ROMACT T.C.C. is restricted to countries of destination of non-national Roma. For conditions of organisation of trainings, please see: <http://bit.ly/2hM13oc>

13. ROMED1 Trainer’s Handbook available at: <http://bit.ly/220scS3>

14. The Mediators’ Code of Ethics is available for download at: <http://bit.ly/2jtjnDw>

15. See ROMED2 Guidelines – The role of the Municipality Contact Point, p.21: <http://bit.ly/2j5RXjG>

16. If a ROMED2 National Support Team (or co-ordination team) was never active in your country, you can get in touch with the Council of Europe for guidance at romed@coe.int

One important pre-requisite, however, without which little can be achieved, is the political will of local administrations¹⁷. If the mayor or persons working in the administration have a negative attitude towards Roma, it might be a good idea to start off with a different approach (for instance, ROMACT T.C.C. provides intercultural trainings – encourage the administration to respond to the calls for applications¹⁸). ROMED2 can be attempted once the ground is prepared, involving all of these actors.

“Considering that any mediation process cannot be imposed on the parties involved, the ROMED2 process requires an explicit willingness and commitment of the municipality to take action for improving the situation of the Roma community.”
(ROMED2 Guidelines)

After the three years of the ROMED2 experience, the external evaluators identified the commitment of local authorities, the presence of key persons within the municipality administration, and the positive attitude towards the CAG as some of the most important factors that lead to good results.



This was, for instance, very noticeable when the contact person within the administration of the **6th sector in Bucharest (Romania)** resigned and the CAG was left without support from the City Hall. Communication between the CAG and the City Hall, as assessed by CAG members, was good during implementation due to the openness of the Deputy Mayor and the Directorate of Social Assistance. After the resignation of the Deputy Mayor however, CAG requests began to be ignored, the local action plan was not approved and the group was not officially recognised by the municipality.¹⁹

In **“the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia”**, political commitment appears to be at its best. In **Tetovo** for instance, the local administration is very open to working with Roma NGOs and active citizens in the community. The Mayor himself has worked as part of the NGO community in the past. There are consistent efforts to develop strategic interventions in the area of Roma inclusion based on a consultative process with Roma. In addition, the national policy also supports, and allocates significant funding, to Roma inclusion priorities.

The good co-operation between the representatives of the Roma community and representatives of local authorities has resulted in visible achievements in the process of inclusion of Roma. One of the main results is the long-term education strategy developed in consultation with the CAG and the support organisation (Sonce), with a special focus on secondary and vocational education supported by concrete allocations provided from the local budget and projects for the implementation of the envisaged measures. The local administration, CAG and Sonce consider together the improvement of education as an important investment in the sustainability of the Roma inclusion process in the municipality.²⁰

In **Prilep**, the political representation of Roma is the next level to which the process can aim for ensuring long-term political commitment to Roma inclusion: *“Good representation of Roma in the local councils and the structure of local administration is a key factor for ensuring the long-term commitment and political will of the local administration.”* (Evaluation Case Study – Prilep, “the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia”)

17. This can be expressed through an official letter signed by the mayor of the municipality. A proposed template (to translate) is attached in ROMED2 – Example of Commitment Letter (p.158).
 18. ROMACT Transnational Cooperation Component, Module A – Intercultural Training: organising trainings under ROMACT T.C.C. is restricted to countries of destination of non-national Roma. For conditions of organisation of trainings, please see: <http://bit.ly/2hM13oc>
 19. Evaluation case study – Bucharest 6th sector: <http://bit.ly/2lnE1Gn>
 20. Evaluation case study – Tetovo: <http://bit.ly/2jUmcep>

Can it be done? Will the community follow?

Looking at the ROMED2 experience (from 2013 to 2016) in more than 50 municipalities, it was very rare that the Roma community did not respond. In such cases, when the community could not be mobilised, the reasons given included earlier failed experiences that left the community sceptical or a wrong choice in the human resources leading the process at local level.

You might be interested to know that the facilitators recruited by ROMED had the same doubts at the beginning of the programme, which were expressed during the First Training of Trainers session in 2013. **It is legitimate to question whether people, and more particularly persons in a vulnerable situation as Roma often are, will want to commit time and resources to a process that doesn't bring immediate personal gain.**

It turns out that they do, provided that they are prepared to understand the longer-term, more important gain as a community (and this is where you come in, as a facilitator). Mostly, if the ROMED process²¹ is respected and applied as explained in the ROMED2 Guidelines, the CAG will start off as a rather big group and then gradually stabilise to 6-7 persons as a "core" group.²²

What can go wrong?

First, it may be that you do not manage to attract enough people to the first meetings. This is an indication (for you as national facilitator) that **you have not accessed the right channels to reach the community** or that the community you are trying to access is in an unstable situation. In this case, it might be good to review the ROMED2 Guidelines – Chapter 2.1 – Setting up the CAG. There are different strategies that can be applied in this case, to be chosen according to your understanding of the background of the community: you can either address Roma leaders²³ explaining clearly – and without promising anything - what you want to initiate, the benefits of the process but also the rules that will make it possible and with which they will also have to comply; or you can look for a physical "entry point" which can be a central place in the community, a coffee shop, a kiosk, or any other location where you are sure to find people at a given time. Spend time with the people in the community, make sure you introduce the Characteristics of the CAG²⁴ from the beginning, and ask them to spread the news in the community.

If you are still worried about your contact with the community and/or not being able to attract enough people to the meetings, the case study in **Prilep ("the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia")** offers an interesting observation: *it is important to identify the right "entry point" of issues of real interest of the community in order to further activate its involvement in a broader process of Roma inclusion. The main initial driver in Prilep was the interest of the older informal leaders in building a mosque in the Roma neighbourhood. This was the initial cause that "sparked" the processes of activation of the Roma community which later on expanded to other important issues and led to very good results in education, infrastructure and political representation of the Roma community (one of the members of the CAG was elected to the local council of the municipality, his credibility in the community has increased due to his participation in the CAG).*²⁵

In **Torres Vedras, Portugal** for instance, the Community Action Group took a long time to form despite the very positive attitude of the administration. Initially people in the community did not want to attend the meetings – they had misunderstood the objectives, and there were rumours that the programme was giving out money that never reached them. This, combined with the novelty of the process, as well as the use of too formal communication (administrative jargon) made it hard for the facilitator to reason with the CAG. However, with the support of the National Support Team and of the municipality, the community was persuaded to enter the process which led to real changes.

If you could go back in time and give yourself a piece of advice before starting as a ROMED facilitator, what would that be?

"I would read less books about Roma and spend more time drinking coffee with them."

(National Facilitator, Greece)

21. See PART II - The ROMED2 Process of the ROMED2 Guidelines, p.19: <http://bit.ly/2j5RXjG>

22. More on this in the ROMED2 Guidelines – Chapter 2.1 Setting up the CAG, as well as in the evaluation findings.

23. More on how to communicate with informal leaders in "How do I manage internal conflicts" (p.28)

24. See Annex ROMED2 – Characteristics of the Community Action Group (p.159), or ROMED2 Guidelines p. 50.

25. Evaluation Case study – Prilep: <http://bit.ly/2jVBkHP>

Second, it could be that you attract a crowd that is too large to work with. Realistically speaking, you will not be able to facilitate sessions with a CAG that is larger than 20 people. The following solution found for the CAG in Bucharest could help you out in this case:

The CAG of **Giulești Sârbi (Bucharest)** was among the first CAGs formed through the ROMED2 process, in November 2013. During the first meeting, around 400 Roma citizens showed up – which posed obvious logistical and facilitation issues. After discussions, the participants in the meeting elected 27 community representatives as members of the CAG. Out of the 27 elected members, 7-8 persons attended meetings regularly. Interesting to note here is that the group was mixed, with at least one non-Roma member regularly attending the meetings. *“The membership of the group has been fluctuating and gradually reducing. A number of members dropped out due to their responsibilities in needing to make a living. The constant number of members that stayed in the group over time was about ten members which had stabilised to five members by the end of the ROMED2 Programme.”*²⁶

All in all, looking at the ROMED2 experience in over 50 cities, there is a much higher likelihood that the Roma community will not only follow, but will end up taking the lead.

The ROMED2 Guidelines draw attention to a risk in this kind of dynamic, particularly at the start of the process. The reason is that it can limit the involvement of people without previous experience of this kind, which can lead to political manipulation or raise unrealistic expectations. Take this into account and use another strategy if the risk becomes reality.

Although organising several meetings with more than 20 participants will prove to be tiresome and probably not very effective, you could count on the group gradually shrinking down to a more manageable number. Most importantly, you should give the necessary time for the group to form on a solid basis.

There are several Roma communities in the city – how do I work with the CAG?

The type of CAG and the profile of the Roma citizens participating in it will surely have an impact on the way you will organise the trainings and coaching sessions in the community. Start off by asking yourself the following questions:

Is the community urban or rural? Is it composed of two or more distinct groups? Are there socio-economic differences between these groups? Are there power relations between the groups? What is the overall educational level of the community? Is migration (to or from the municipality) a growing trend among Roma? How are women and youth perceived in the community (is it a traditional community)?

One of the big questions in the ROMED2 process has been **whether splitting the community into separate CAGs to accommodate the different needs is a viable solution in the long term**. The answer is that, while in the short term, splitting the groups can be more productive (as it eases the communication between the facilitator and the groups), in the long term the two groups should not only be brought together but also mainstreamed in the broader local democratic instances.

Furthermore, by starting off with two groups, you have a better chance of reaching more people in each community which grants a better basis of citizens who get to know the CAG and become candidates for more permanent membership. Make sure, however, that you introduce as often as possible the message that ultimately the two groups will have to converge. **Most importantly, the whole process should be done in such a way that competition between the communities is avoided.**

The diverse representation of Roma community members in the CAG ensures that the process is kept open to broader community issues and is not limited to specific interest groups. This can help consolidate the community around a longer-term vision for the empowerment and inclusion of Roma. This in turn is the force that drives work on specific causes and issues (recommendation of the External Evaluation of the ROMED Programme).

National or non-national Roma residents

In **Germany**, the difference in status and in needs is very noticeable among Roma and Sinti of German nationality and non-national Roma. Even among non-national Roma, those coming from ex-Yugoslav countries have different priorities (most often related to the “tolerated status” and imminence of deportations) than those coming from Romania and

26. Evaluation case study – Bucharest 6th sector: <http://bit.ly/2lnE1Gn>

Bulgaria (housing issues, less opportunities to follow language courses). In **Bremerhaven**, an attempt at bringing national and non-national Roma and Sinti together had started in 2016, for which no conclusive results were available at the time of the publication.

The Roma community of **Darnytsia district in Kiev, Ukraine** is very diverse. It consists of a settlement and Roma families who live permanently in their apartments. This creates two target groups with different sets of problems. While in the settlement there is a lack of basic living conditions and problems with documentation, the permanently-based Roma are struggling more with poor housing conditions, lack of employment and weak integration into the community. There is also a certain tension between the two groups, with some mutual accusations and stereotypes. The National Project Officer and local mediator are aware of these issues and are trying to address them by building links between the two groups. One member of the new CAG is accompanying the National Project Officer and the mediator to the settlement to help arrange waste collection there. This interaction could help facilitate better understanding between Roma living in the settlement and Roma with permanent housing in Darnytsia. The scale of Darnytsia region and the fact that it is located in the capital city of Kyiv create additional challenges for community mobilisation. Large cities tend to be magnets for domestic migration for people in search of jobs and the local Roma community is also very mobile. The diversity of the Roma community (settlement and permanent residents) creates a diversity of needs, which are often hard to combine in one CAG. Therefore, it is important to find the right composition of the group that represents the different interests and needs of the community, whilst being effective and interested in civic activism at the same time.²⁷

Different socio-economic status

In **Nagyecsed (Hungary)**, there are two Roma segregated settlements on the two edges of the town. The bigger one with approximately 300-400 inhabitants is populated by Romungro, the smaller one by Olah Roma. The CAG became operational in February 2014 in the Olah Roma settlement. It included members from both Roma communities and both genders. During its implementation, the project shifted its focus to the bigger and more disadvantaged Romungro settlement and the CAG meetings started to take place there in 2015. At that time, the CAG was over-represented by Romungro members. According to the external evaluation of the programme, putting the focus on the Romungro settlement is one of the main achievements of the programme. Before ROMED, the municipality and other civil programmes were mostly targeting the smaller Olah Roma community, which has a better economic situation due to their business activities. The Romungro community is much more marginalised with a poor housing situation and economic status. However, this community has experienced many changes since 2011 from identifying good role models to getting self-organised and registering a civil organisation. The process of community empowerment of the Romungro community was supported by the National Support Team of the ROMED2 Programme which also attracted the support of other programmes as well.²⁸

In **Mesolongi**²⁹, even though there are significant socio-economic differences between the communities, the team tried to conduct joint meetings for as long as possible. The CAG including the two communities reached the conclusion that a strong, unified Community Action Group that can mediate and negotiate is the pre-condition for resolving the problems that the communities face. The main challenge for the unified CAG is however to understand the internal power-plays – among the two groups, as well as within each group. While in Eniades there is a consensus among the wider circle of residents and participants in the formed CAG, in Tabakaria interferences from Roma informal leaders made the process difficult. Furthermore, the support of the municipality for these informal leaders triggered an alarm for the facilitators and the National Support Team. To overcome this apparent dead-end, the local and national team adopted a strategy based on mediation principles, aiming for the inclusion of the informal leaders under the same terms and on an equal footing with the other members of the CAG. At the same time, the ROMED team acted towards the municipality by doubling their efforts in making them understand the benefits of not playing on power relations within the community but investing in the building of trust instead.

One facilitator in Greece used the comparison to “A Tale of Two Cities” by Charles Dickens to describe the situation of the two adjacent Roma communities in Mesolongi, the Tabakaria area and the Eniades.

27. Evaluation case study – Darnytsia: <http://bit.ly/2jhCspr>

28. Evaluation case study – Nagyecsed: <http://bit.ly/2jb6Fd1>

29. A similar situation also occurred in Ilida, Halandri and Ampelokipi-Menemeni in Greece as well. For instance, more on the story of Ilida here: <http://bit.ly/2ljn0ND>.

Diversity in rallying to political movements or of approach to Roma inclusion

In **Targu Jiu, Romania**, the Head of Strategies and Community Policy Office explained in the interview that “*we (local administration) have more than 15 years of good collaboration with Roma communities from Targu Jiu, but the ROMED2 Programme made it possible for us to see for the first time the leaders and representatives from all Roma communities sitting together at the same table and discussing the community issues.*” Two out of the three communities are highly organised with strong leaders, but with differences in their approach. These differences led them in time to build separate communication channels with the local administration. The ROMED2 Programme created the opportunity for those three communities to share a common ground and work together.³⁰

In **Gostivar, “the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia”**, facilitators noticed in the midst of the process that, at a certain level, there was a division of interests, influenced by different political affiliations which had an impact on the desire for greater internal co-operation in the interest of the community. More specifically, within the CAGs, people were particularly interested in creating a structure which, in turn, would be responsible for organising and conducting joint meetings. Here you can notice a greater awareness of the political interests that are directly reflected in the work of the CAGs.

How do I mobilise women and young Roma in the community?

We have just seen that the CAG can and should be as diverse as possible. In the absence of direct representatives for whatever reason, the facilitator – you – should always remind CAG members of the need to consider other unexpressed needs, particularly those specific to women and youth.

Although it might seem difficult in certain traditional contexts, investing in the participation of women and youth not only ensures that their voices are heard. They can also become the determinant factor in the sustainability of the CAG, picking up the process when the motivation of other members might falter.

*The CAG is diverse: the group includes people previously involved in similar activities and new people, **men and women, of all ages and members of various subgroups.***

2ND CHARACTERISTIC OF THE CAG

Why is there lower participation for women and youth?

“Promoting the participation of women is not just about counting the number of women involved in activities. It is a process of overcoming cultural specificities which were stronger in some communities and/or countries.”

External Evaluation of the ROMED Programme

Looking at some of the examples we mentioned above, in **Giulesti Sarbi (Bucharest, Romania)**, initially women from the community were also part of the CAG, but they gradually dropped out from the group due to their household and childcare obligations.³¹ In **Prilep, “the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia”**, the participation of women in the CAG has been minimal throughout the ROMED2 Programme, due to the cultural and religious specificities of the Roma community.³² In **Karditsa, Greece**, some of the members of the Roma community faced prejudice towards their opening up to the wider society. An example is the issue of schooling: a few of the participants talked to the facilitators about their decision to attend second chance schooling and the fact that the rest of

the community did not encourage them to go down that road. The problem was more obvious when it came to women. Their attempt to free themselves and avoid paternalistic attitudes provoked strong symbolic reactions. The peer support inside the CAG – particularly among young persons and/or women – played an important role in Karditsa in addressing this issue: one of the mediators acted as a mentor for two younger CAG members in practice.

In other municipalities, women are the leading force within the CAG. In **Byala Slatina, Bulgaria**, at the beginning of the programme, the group consisted of more than 15 people but, after several changes of facilitators and interruptions of the programme, at the time of the evaluation it had only seven members, the majority of whom were women (five).

30. Evaluation case study – Targu Jiu: <http://bit.ly/2kkvtLK>

31. Evaluation case study – Bucharest, 6th sector: <http://bit.ly/2lnE1Gn>

32. Evaluation case study – Prilep: <http://bit.ly/2kSfZ5T>

The CAG is organised around the health and labour mediators working in the municipality. Its meetings are sometimes attended by the newly-elected Deputy Mayor of Roma origin. In the framework of another programme, women who are the core active part of the CAG were supported in starting a project to create a community centre providing services for Roma mothers.³³ The CAG in **Figueira da Foz, Portugal** has ten to twelve members, with more women than men, with a proportion of 60% - 40% present in the meetings. The age of the members of the group varies from 17 to 58 years old and most of them have finished primary school. Currently, there are four members of the CAG at university studying different subjects, an achievement resulting in part from their commitment in ROMED.³⁴

The CAG in **Nyirbator, Hungary**, is a group of motivated and reliable women who truly want to support their community. They are considering formally registering as a civil organisation in order to access financial resources for their activities. The CAG is able to represent adequately the general problems of the Roma community, but not the specific interests of all of its segments since the CAG is quite homogeneous, consisting of women of the same age. The need for a more diverse group and inclusion of more community representatives was formulated by both the mediator and the municipality.³⁵



According to one national facilitator from the Greek team, the fact that the group in **Ampelokipi-Menemeni** is mobilised by young women gives a specific dynamic which could become inspirational to other women in the community. Moreover, the presence of the local Roma Women Association allowed the NST in Greece to raise their expectations as to the capacities of the CAG to induce changes in the community. In fact, most CAG members have been active board members within the Roma Women's Association «ΣΥΛΛΟΓΟΣ ΓΥΝΑΙΚΩΝ ROMA ΔΕΝΔΡΟΠΟΤΑΜΟΥ ΘΕΣΣΑΛΟΝΙΚΗΣ», the intervention of ROMED only coming about to enhance the dynamic, the skills and knowledge of this already active group within the Dendropotamos municipality.

The CAG in **Ampelokipi-Menemeni, Greece** is made up mostly of women (11 out of a total of 14 CAG members), with ages between 19 and 48. Two members are mediators trained under the ROMED1 Programme, one of whom holds the Chair of the "Association of Roma Women of Dendropotamos" while the second holds the position of Secretary, with experience particularly in educational programmes. Some of the CAG members attend second chance high school and two members graduated from university: one with a degree in infant care and another who works as a teacher and is involved in the above-mentioned programme. All members hold occasional jobs at the same time to ensure their family income. The male CAG members are license holders at local open markets, engaged in the commerce of textile and other products and one of them is a musician. One of the CAG members was elected as Community Councillor in Dendropotamos. By the end of 2015, the CAG managed to attract the membership of **young Roma high-school students** who had been showing an interest to participate in the local processes and contribute to developments regarding the whole neighbourhood of Dendropotamos. These three young students not only submitted concrete proposals regarding several issues

for the improvement of their school building, but also significantly contributed to the shaping of proposals for the redevelopment of the central road of Dendropotamos and for the «centre» of the neighbourhood, the place most frequented by youth and children (Roma and non-Roma). Moreover, one of the CAG members was the only woman to be invited, together with other Greek Roma leaders, to meet with the committee specialising on Roma issues in the Greek Parliament to express her views on the current situation of Roma in Greece and the National Roma Integration Strategy.

Which "tips and tricks" can be used to mobilise women and young people?

The facilitators in **Halandri, Greece**, organised a series of training sessions targeting Roma women from the Nomismatokopio community. Firstly, they went to the settlement to introduce themselves and then invited them to CAG meetings. Next, they organised separate open meetings for women – discussions organised within the settlement to make it easier for them to participate either as observers or as active members. They started by attracting the relatives of the men involved (mothers, wives, sisters, etc.) to the CAG and then spread the word to the rest of the women in

33. Evaluation case study – Byala Slatina: <http://bit.ly/2kkvtLK>

34. Evaluation case study – Figueira da Foz: <http://bit.ly/2litTha>

35. Evaluation case study – Nyirbator: <http://bit.ly/2jlxHts>

the community. **Overall, they found that it was easier for women to initially express their opinions and problems without the presence of men.** The women also thought that they could be empowered to participate in the CAG after these personalised training sessions. When three new, very young, members of the Roma community joined the CAG in Ampelokipi-Menemeni, facilitators used the **Reflection on power** (CAG 10) module to encourage them to speak up. The module was *«linked very well with the fact that if students take initiative and present a coherent and organised plan, they can also acquire power through their knowledge and their initiative. The success of the activity was reflected in the fact that the rest of the participants were really engaged in the discussion that followed and they had to learn a lot from the students.»*

In **Berlin, Germany**, facilitators noticed that in the first two groups formed in **Berlin-Mitte** and in **Berlin-Lichtenberg**, women did not participate. In the district of Lichtenberg, trainings and meetings started to be organised in the buildings or homes where most members of the CAG lived – and, sure enough, women started to get in touch with the process. Various explanations were given for this gap in participation: in a large city like Berlin, women did not dare to take part, did not have the means to pay for transport tickets, and did not know how to get to the meeting venues; although women wanted to participate or express their opinion, some were intimidated by the presence of men; the lack of facilities or relatives to take care of children during the meetings. In winter 2016, when the second CAG failed to form, facilitators started to mobilise Roma women for a new CAG that would focus on women’s and children’s issues.

A national facilitator from Bosnia and Herzegovina highlights the importance of mediators/local facilitators in mobilising women and youth: *“mobilisers were Roma mediators in the community, who on every day basis encouraged community members, in particular women to participate and have their voices heard”.*

In **Tundzha, Bulgaria**, the main drive for participation in the CAG was the personal motivation of its members to create better conditions for their children and to increase the educational level of the Roma community. As shared by three of the women who joined the CAG, *“we are mothers and we want our children to have an education and better chances than us, instead of repeating what we did not have”*.³⁶ Identifying what drives women in the community, and what entry point could stir up ideas and encourage them to become more vocal, could be a strategy to take into account for attracting more women to the CAG.

Very efficient mobilisers of women and youth have been facilitators (national or local) who were themselves young Roma women. In some of the implementation countries, **the inclusion in the National Support Teams of facilitators with this profile had a positive impact on the way women and young persons perceived their role in the CAG.** In certain cases this has been a challenge, in particular for local facilitators, since it required making use of mediation – keeping a balanced position between their belonging to the group and the role of the facilitator. This also justifies the need for local facilitators to be trained in intercultural mediation prior to their involvement in a community-organising dynamic. Indeed, this has been precisely the logic of the ROMED1 and ROMED2 steps.

If Roma women’s organisations exist in the places where you intend to initiate a participatory process, ROMED facilitators found it important to establish co-operation with such available partners.

Finally, as the entry point for attracting women to meetings, in particular when the aim from the beginning was a women-only CAG, facilitators found it useful to identify an activity or a theme in which most women would be interested (for example, in certain places it was knitting; in others, concern for their children’s education). **Finding that common point of interest is part of the background research on the community in the initial phase of the process.**

What if similar initiatives failed before in the municipality?

It is very likely that, in the municipality where you are about to start to work as a facilitator, there were previous attempts to include Roma, with various degrees of success in doing so. In those places where previous projects clearly failed, the experience results generally in a feeling of powerlessness, a blockage in motivation and a reluctance to engage again with people or institutions outside of the community.

Indeed, having looked at 15 different municipalities among the 54 experiences within ROMED2, the external evaluators noticed that there was a *“social inclusion fatigue”* translating into a low level of trust inside communities. Roma citizens had witnessed various programmes and projects promising inclusion and raising expectations for improvement,

36. Evaluation case study – Tundzha: <http://bit.ly/2kkvtLK>

but with limited tangible effects. Establishing trust in the genuine intentions of the programme also takes time and consistency of effort.

It is thus important that you familiarise yourself with previous Roma-related projects conducted in the municipality and prepare your answers when faced with natural questions such as:

The module **Reflection on previous experiences** (CAG 3) of the ROMED2 Guidelines provide the methodology on how to address this sensitive topic once you attract people to a first meeting of the CAG.

“Why will this be any different? Why should we do anything for you? How can you guarantee that we will achieve something?”

The challenge is to make people see that power is gained through the smallest and seemingly “meaningless” things, and above all that it is gained in time. Most often however, you will be able to provide the CAG with **the opportunity to enhance previous experiences and making them more impactful**

and more sustainable. This “enhancement” effect was noticeable in some of the case studies of the external evaluation.

In **Targu Jiu (Romania)**, the Roma community had a history of good self-organisation with the purpose of improving their living situation. This collaboration started in the mid-nineties with the establishment of the Del Youth Foundation gathering together people dedicated to Roma inclusion and with a very clear long-term vision. When Targu Jiu municipality joined the ROMED2 Programme, there was already a history of more than 15 years of collaboration and the infrastructure issues in the community were resolved. An important role in this process of change was played by the Del Youth Foundation, headed by a leader with the vision and ability to mobilise community members. Organised for a common purpose, the community members initiated, developed and maintained a collaborative relationship with the local authorities. This relationship was described by the Head of Strategies and Community Policy Office of the City Hall of Targu Jiu as a «win-win» strategy for both the community and the local administration.³⁷ **Torres Vedras (Portugal)**, also had a strong practice of participative planning. The municipality developed the Local Agenda 21 based on a wide process of social engagement, with public meetings in all the parishes and with many stakeholders, leading to a municipal action plan focused on sustainability. The culture of participation was therefore present and the political executive saw ROMED2 as an opportunity to promote the social inclusion of Roma communities, using innovative participative tools.³⁸

1.2. Building competence with your group

Building competence with the CAG implies building competence with each individual member. Since the CAG is an open structure and that anyone can join or leave at any moment, **you can expect that the building of your CAG's competences will go constantly back and forth.** While some of the CAG members who attended meetings since the beginning will have integrated the characteristics of the CAG, making decisions in a democratic way, with horizontal leadership notions, etc., newcomers will have to be treated each time as equally important and filled in on all the developments of the CAG so far. **Involving other CAG members in training newcomers can be an interesting practice if you feel that your group is already open to learning from one another.**

Part II – The ROMED2 Process of the ROMED2 Guidelines offers an overview not only of the first sessions to be organised with the CAG, but also on what kind of skills and competences members will develop through these modules. Below you can find a summary of the main skills targeted and the modules that provide the methodology on how to work on them with the CAG:

37. Evaluation case study – Targu Jiu: <http://bit.ly/2kkvtLK>

38. Evaluation case study – Torres Vedras: <http://bit.ly/2lO5rp4>

Skill	Module	Number of reported uses Jan 2015 – Oct 2016
Democratic decision-making skills	CAG1 – Characteristics of the CAG	95
	CAG9 – Making decisions in a democratic way	44
Negotiations & consensus building	CAG6 – Making links	N/A
Leadership awareness	CAG14 – Tackle problems – find solutions as a team	70
Conflict management skills & mediation	CAG15 – Conflict management	42
Planning & advocacy	CAG16 – Mapping key stakeholders	N/A
Communication skills	CAG18 – Challenges of communication	84
Public speaking skills	CAG19 – Public speaking skills	25

In **Nyirbator, Hungary**, members of the CAG pointed out that the programme developed greatly their **communication skills** and provided them with practical information about the local public administration system. Another important impact was the **new self-confidence** they gained in presenting their opinions to the institutions. In addition, CAG members were included in further training sessions in civic education, communication and activism provided by other programmes attracted by the ROMED2 National Support Team and the local facilitator. The CAG is a group of motivated and reliable women who truly want to support their community. They are considering formally registering as a civil organisation in order to access financial resources for their activities.³⁹

One critical point in the development of the skills of the CAG members is the preparation of the first Joint Meeting with the local authorities⁴⁰. This is usually the moment when the skills built since the beginning of the CAG are put to the test. Most often, facilitators in ROMED2 dedicated an entire session or even several sessions to preparing this meeting, structuring together with the CAG the presentation of ideas so as to make them as clear as possible.

“Evidence from the 15 case studies in ROMED2 municipalities indicates that the programme is considered very relevant, as it revolves around Roma community empowerment. The CAGs are viewed as **practical schools for active citizenship that have increased the participatory skills and the self-esteem of their members** so that that they are now able to influence local policies.”

External Evaluation

During one such preparation meeting in **Halandri, Greece**, the CAG was worried that the priorities would get dispersed if everyone talked, so they decided that two or three persons maximum would present them during the joint meeting. The facilitators organised “Joint Meeting simulations”, where CAG members would rehearse their position in the meeting and the message they would try to get across, but also play the role of mayor or staff of the local administration (to understand how to prepare this, see CAG8 **A day as a Mayor**). The same group later showed a trend in delegating leadership to a few CAG members – returning into a comfort zone of “*participating as observers*” and not as active members. The facilitator went several times over the Module on **Making Decisions in a Democratic Way** (CAG 9) in separate sessions, returning to it and to the **Characteristics of the CAG** (CAG1) every time newcomers joined the group. Later, the Module on **Citizens’**

rights and responsibilities in participatory democracy (CAG5) was used by the facilitator to tackle the notions of rights and duties/responsibilities with a rather low response in the beginning. Indeed, the group in this example reacted with highs and lows upon gaining awareness of the rules of democratic citizenship. However, in time the notions were

39. Evaluation case study – Nyirbator: <http://bit.ly/2jVEdrT>

40. In the ROMED2 Guidelines, section 2.2.4 Session 3 with the CAG (p.40) gives recommendations on what techniques and modules to use prior to the first Joint Meeting between the CAG and Local Authorities.

not only integrated but also put in practice more and more naturally. Sometimes modules that were designed for use with the local authorities were also applied to the CAG, as was often the case for **The Situation of Roma communities** (IWG3) through which CAG members in Halandri realised, on the one hand, that the situation and the problems of the local community were perceived in a subjective manner, noticing that each CAG member had a different perception of the same problematic. On the other hand, they realised that it is the community itself, those who live with the problems, who is best placed to talk about the issues at hand. Therefore CAG members are the ones who need to explain these problems to the authorities and to convince them of the necessity to prioritise them over the many other problems that citizens face.

Sometimes, certain modules sparked different reactions with different communities, as was reported on **Two truths and a lie** (CAG 2) in Greece and in “the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia”. Whilst CAG members in **Berovo, “the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia”** appreciated the activity, the reaction in Halandri, Greece, was very different. On the one hand, participants found it childish “*to play this game*” and, on the other hand, they did not feel comfortable exposing themselves in front of other members of the community, even if they had quite close (family) relationships with them; nor were they comfortable in revealing facts about themselves in the presence of the ROMED team. This difference in reaction can perhaps be explained by the profile of the CAG members, the average age in Berovo being much younger than in Halandri, as well as by cultural specificities or the local contexts and citizens’ previous experiences with disclosure of rather personal information.

In order to build motivation within the group as well as notions on **leadership**, the team of facilitators in “**the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia**” prepared a slide show with pictures of leader figures in history, such as Martin Luther King, Mother Teresa, Napoleon, Mahatma Gandhi and Abraham Lincoln, asking participants if they knew who they were and what made them leaders. They also referred to relevant TED talks or other useful media resources, some of which are included in **the Resources section of this publication**.

In **Germany**, the intervention of the leader of a Roma and Sinti organisation in the meetings of some of the CAGs helped members understand the history of Roma civil rights movements and the need for time and resilience for progress to be achieved. Last but not least, the projection of the **Parovel Documentary**⁴¹ also proved helpful in inspiring CAGs and in absorbing the notion and feel of horizontal leadership. It is, however, up to you as a facilitator to decide if this type of alternative activity fits the profile of the CAG members.

In **Greece**, facilitators used the power of storytelling as an induction towards **public speaking** – often a skill that is hard to acquire when there is an acute lack of self-esteem. The technique helped encourage public speaking in a progressive manner and was well-received and appreciated by CAG members. In some cases, facilitators reported that the fact that everyone in the training knew each other well did not help, since the link between speaking among neighbours and “speaking in public” was not always easy to make. Furthermore, also in Greece⁴², upon going several times over the modules on **communication skills**, CAG members became aware not only of the incapacity of local authorities to communicate with Roma communities but also realised that the way in which they had tried to communicate their problems and priorities to institutions was faulty. When this awareness was achieved, it became easier for facilitators to introduce different communication techniques.



1.3. Building a healthy group dynamic

In the previous chapters, we have looked at the ways that CAGs were formed in the ROMED2 experience. We have seen that, in the beginning, you may attract either too few persons or too many persons or you might get the Goldilocks zone of CAGs - just the right number to start the group. You also became aware that the overall tendency of the CAGs is to shrink down to a core of 6-7 people - this is also to be expected in the group you are about to start. We have also looked at how to handle a group made up of several communities with different contexts and backgrounds. Finally, we have discussed strategies on how to initiate a healthy group, a lot of it based on the ROMED2 Guidelines.

41. Available in full, online at: <http://bit.ly/2jAW9lr>

42. This happened prior to the local elections in May 2014 that brought about changes in the local administrations and a better co-operation environment

What happens next is going to be unique to the municipality you are working in, since it will be a CAG made up of individuals with their own stories, with influences from the history of the community, of the city or village or from the culture of the majority population. However, looking at the 54 municipalities where the ROMED2 experience was led, there are a few common lines that can be drawn, and this is what this chapter will try to cover.

Within the ROMED2 Guidelines, section **2.2 Meetings with the CAG** gives a rather clear overview of the objectives of the first meetings with the CAG in terms of group development, advancement in the process for addressing concrete issues and the knowledge, skills and attitudes needed for addressing the chosen issues. The ROMED2 Guidelines also anticipate some group dynamics as a result of the proposed activities. **For instance**, it is very likely that upon listing for the first time the short-term and long-term priorities, disagreements will appear among participants for various reasons. Also, those persons who are more at ease with public speaking (informal leaders, mediators, etc.) might tend to occupy the debate and impose their view, which might not be what other participants think. **In the ROMED2 experience, CAG members were encouraged to talk about and debate the issues at stake with persons outside the CAG as well.** This ensured that the overall opinion of the community was taken into account and, at the same time, the activities of the CAG were made known to those persons who had never been involved in it, thus raising the chances that one day they might get involved.

The dynamic of the group also implies **how often the group will meet**. In the ROMED2 experience, this differed from one group to another. In **Bosnia and Herzegovina**, CAGs met more rarely than in other locations since the CAG is also involved in the LAG (a Local Action Group including representatives of local institutions). The meetings of the CAGs are organised to address specific topics, upon convocation by its members. In most locations within ROMED2 however, CAGs decided to meet on a very regular basis – once a week or once a fortnight up to once per month.

The **infographic on page 26** displays the example of **Ampelokipi-Menemeni in Greece**. This graph shows:

- ▶ the frequency at which CAG meetings and trainings were organised between March 2014 and July 2016;
- ▶ the Modules from the ROMED2 Guidelines that were used with each session;
- ▶ the timeline of competences and skills developed with the group.

To understand the dynamics in this particular case, it is worth noting that Ampelokipi-Menemeni is a municipality within the Thessaloniki Urban Area, some 500km away from Athens, where the National Support Team was based. As you will notice, trainings and CAG meetings tended to be organised at regular intervals, over several consecutive days. This was in response to the obvious logistical question imposed by having to travel a significant distance every time the national facilitator organised a CAG meeting or training. Another remark worth noticing is that the facilitators working in Ampelokipi-Menemeni used quite often modules which were initially designed as tools to use with the Institutional Working Group (indicated by IWG) or Local Stakeholders (indicated by LS). You should also give yourself the freedom to use any module you deem important for your group – so **pay attention to hints on what your group would like to know or understand better.**

Also in Greece, the National Support Team insisted on the development of the sense of **group belonging** within their CAGs and even developed a specific activity for this. **Appendix 3 – Activity on group belonging** at the end of this publication gives full details on how this was developed and put into practice. An additional way in which the Greek NST tried to spark more cohesion in the group was by linking the history of the community to personal stories and the history of the wider society. CAG members were asked to share a story from their past or their ancestors' past, in this manner underlining that such stories matter and play a vital role in the historical consciousness of all humans. This activity – led by a national facilitator passionate about history – was also designed to help overcome the perception that recorded history is the mark of the privileged, and to make CAG members understand that the history of their community is just as legitimate.

One delicate and important aspect of the group dynamic, however, **is the way you handle your own role within the group**. If you play the role of **national facilitator** and have frequent interventions with the CAG, you might notice that the group starts to perceive you as a leader or mentor. Be aware of the way people perceive you, make it clear that your role is temporary and empower the local facilitator as well as the core group in taking over gradually things like: induction of newcomers in the CAG, taking over the relationship with the Municipal Contact Point, facilitating the meetings with the local authorities, etc. **Your presence and intervention in the group should be long enough for the CAG to be sustainable (around two years), but be aware that staying too long can be counterproductive for the sustainability and legitimacy of the group.**

If you are a **local facilitator**, you should take over gradually some of the tasks of the national facilitator. However, your role should never become that of a leader – at least not in the “pyramidal”/classical meaning of the term. The aim of the

CAG is for all members to feel equally important and relevant, and while guidance might always be needed, you should only attempt to “lead from behind” – by learning to observe the dynamics of the group, by being ready to intervene when conflicts emerge or when the group loses speed and becomes scattered, for instance.

How do I manage membership turnover in the CAG?

As mentioned in the above chapter “**Can it be done? Will the community follow?**”, upon creation of the CAG in the ROMED2 experience, the tendency has been for the group to shrink down to a membership of 8-10 persons. Out of these, 6-7 persons generally acted as a “core group” – meaning those persons that were most committed to the process and who attended CAG meetings and trainings on a very regular basis.

In the same chapter, we have looked at strategies used for initiating CAGs in two scenarios: when you do not manage to attract enough people in the beginning, or when you attract too many. Once the group was more or less stabilised, the ROMED2 facilitators noticed often a turnover – particularly concerning CAG members that were not part of the core group. Sometimes even the core group was at risk of demotivation in direct relation to the outcomes of their meetings, negotiations with the local authorities and whether their priorities were addressed or not. As a national or local facilitator, you should not get discouraged by this kind of fluctuation in the motivation of the group and consequently on its membership. Regardless of if you are a national or local facilitator, **one of your primordial roles is to build the group’s resilience**: meaning to expose the CAG to the difficulties of advocacy, to coach them on the methods for influencing the decision-making process and to encourage them to acknowledge the smallest victories and persist in front of failure.

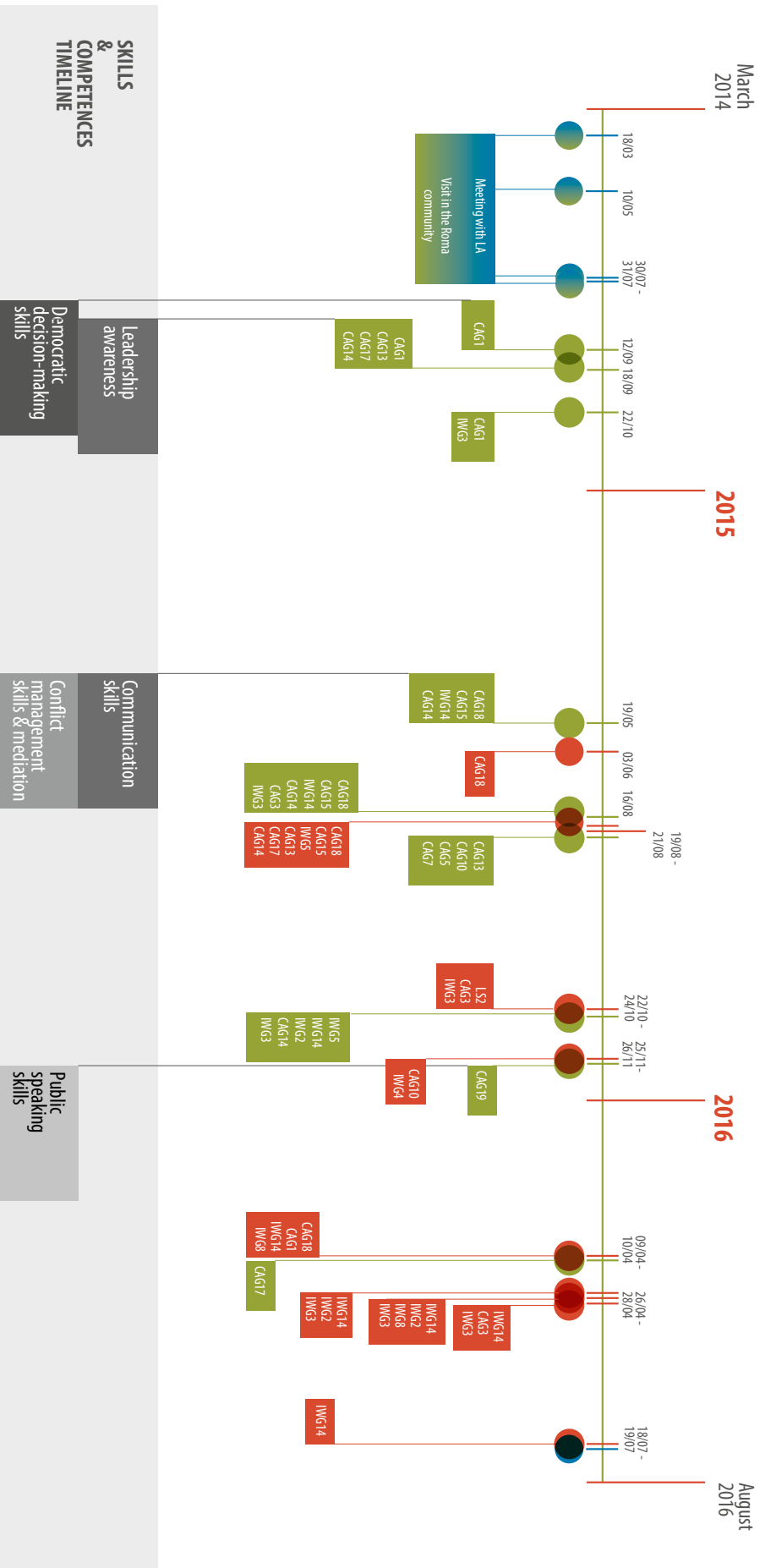
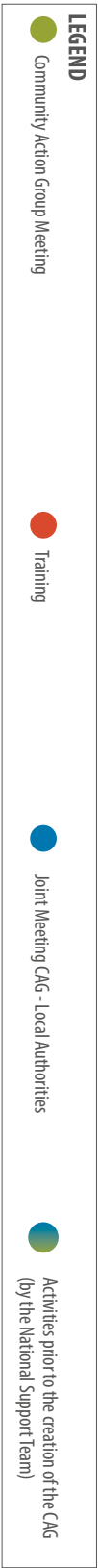
As an example of commitment and resilience, the attitude of CAG members in **Tundzha, Bulgaria**, is worth noting. *“The group is very stable and committed to continuing. No member of the group has dropped out, even though some of them need to travel more than 30 km from their village to Yambol in order to attend CAG meetings. Due to lack of travel resources, some members cannot attend all meetings. According to the CAG members, the ROMED2 process gave them the confidence to formulate issues and the opportunity to put the collective demands of the community to the authorities which in turn can lead to solving concrete problems.”*⁴³

*“If somebody from another community asks how we succeeded in achieving all of what we have achieved, our answer will be: a well-organised community knowing very well what we want, dedicated and committed people involved and constant dialogue with local authorities. **There are ups and downs in the communication with the local institutions, but we have to show that we are strong and reliable long-term partners**” (CAG member Targu Jiu, Romania).*⁴⁴

In most countries, another tendency might occur that is bound to affect the group drastically: **migration to or from the municipality**. Whether in the place of origin or in the city of destination of Roma citizens, this has always represented an important challenge for the ROMED experience to the extent of making the process impossible. Indeed, without minimal stability and visibility in time, Roma citizens cannot be engaged into such a long-term process.

43. Evaluation case study – Tundzha: <http://bit.ly/2kkvtLK>

44. Evaluation case study – Targu Jiu: <http://bit.ly/2kkvtLK>



The ROMED process* in
Ampelakipi – Menemeni, Greece
 *as reported by the National Support Team in Greece

In **Valea Seacă, Romania**, the CAG was established at the end of February 2014. Initially it consisted of 12 people including representatives of the villages of Valea Seaca, the school mediator, the health mediator and the school principal. Five of the members were Roma women but in time they have gradually dropped out of the group. The group is affected by migration and its structure has been changing over time. The core part of the group that participates in its meetings on a permanent basis consists of five people – the school mediator, the health mediator, the school principal and two community members. The CAG has tried to engage different segments of the local community in various activities in support of the Roma. According to the Mayor of Valea Seaca, there is a close and good working relationship between the local administration and the Roma community: «We have many Roma who currently respond to every request for assisting our difficult work» The main issue is migration and the change of people involved in the CAG.⁴⁵

In **Berlin, Germany**, the living situation of the CAG has been crucial for its sustainability. The initially-formed CAG of Berlin-Mitte consisted of a group of 30 Roma from Romania, which quickly dissipated (three months after its creation) due to its members' full-time work in other cities.

How do I keep expectations within realistic boundaries?

Expectations are closely linked to the previous experiences in the municipality and with the projects targeting the Roma community. Have a look at the chapter "What if similar initiatives failed before?" above, as well as "Can I do it alone? Will the community follow?" for extensive details on what to expect and how to tackle various kinds of situations.

In **Halandri, Greece**, facilitators reported a high level of enthusiasm among participants from the first meeting with the community. This can be a rejoicing dynamic for both facilitators and the community, **however it is very important to keep expectations within reasonable limits from the beginning and never promise anything that cannot be achieved by the CAG themselves.** Later on, in Halandri for instance, the hype turned into a roller coaster of emotions when the process hit a rough patch: the municipality published an action plan that, although in line with their priorities, did not meet their expectations in terms of how they would be applied in practice. The mismatch between expectation and reality brought about a series of misunderstandings and a tense situation between the CAG, the local authorities and the

"In most cases CAG members did not have any expectation. They were just curious. The problem was their high expectations that they may have developed through the process. There, the basic argument was that the lowest expectations they have, the most successful they would be. Also, I was trying to make them realize that many times their expectations were not related to the true circumstances." National Facilitator, Greece

ROMED2 National Support Team. Addressing the matter, going again through modules LS2 **Managing challenges in the dialogue process** and CAG18 **Challenges of communication** and, in particular, making CAG members understand that this was not the end of the process, but merely a bump in the road, made participants turn from anger and frustration to a more calm and strategic attitude. This crisis period that had shaken the CAG helped it become more open and transparent in the long-term. In the end, it was a learning process of taking decisions in a democratic way. **This is all part of the process, but you have to be prepared to recognise the type of situation you are confronted with and use the appropriate tools and attitudes to ensure the continuation of the process.**

In **Byala Slatina, Bulgaria**, the CAG members explained that, in the beginning of the ROMED2 process, their involvement in the group gave them the confidence to actively participate in the formulation and implementation of local policies. "The ambitious start of the CAG also created high expectations within the Roma community. The group developed a Community Action Plan and presented it at the round table on improving the situation of Roma in the municipality. Together with the local administration, the CAG developed a Joint Action Plan adopted by the local council on 10 December 2014 and included in the Municipal Plan for Roma Integration. An important lesson for the CAG and the local government is not to create expectations within the Roma community that cannot be met. All discussions and planning must comply with the opportunities provided by either the Operational Programmes or other feasible sources of funding. Otherwise, with no possibility of support, suggested measures from the local budget will remain just an empty promise that will reduce the trust of the community in both the local authorities and the CAG itself."⁴⁶

Among the issues underlined by the **external evaluation** of the programme were "the high local expectations from the programme, including expectations of financial support. It was reported in most countries that the initial expectations,

45. Evaluation case study – Valea Seaca: <http://bit.ly/2k6LNEs>

especially among local authorities, was that ROMED2, as a European programme, would provide not only advice and facilitation, but also funding to resolve local issues." **This underlines that what you say or what you do not say is bound to create expectations**, in this case, addressing the perception of CAG members that the Council of Europe and European Commission are donors and financial aid is bound to arrive directly through the programme). Based on your cultural awareness and understanding of the community, you should address at some point in the beginning of the process all those aspects which, if left undiscussed, can endanger the process in the mid-term.

"Most of them expected that all problems could be solved immediately. After some time, they realised it was a process and it was necessary to solve problems step by step." National Facilitator, Bosnia and Herzegovina

However, keeping expectations within realistic boundaries is not only linked to paying attention to the initial hype, but also to working on the disappointment and the disheartening of citizens who had been promised things before without any results. **Keeping a balance between the two is achievable by coming back to the aims of the programme each time you detect a tendency towards hype or towards demotivation.** Going over the Module CAG14 **Tackle problems – find solutions as a team** can be a useful tool in helping CAG members identify the different attitudes taken within a team and the effect they have on the whole group.

Another example in this sense, reported by facilitators in the ROMED2 experience, was what CAG members perceived as the "cost of inclusion". Indeed, the initial reaction in certain cases has been to fear a heavier financial burden for services to which they would start to have access by forwarding the priorities they had defined in the previous phases of the process.

How do I manage internal conflicts?

Conflicts within the community and, by extension, within the CAG, can appear for various reasons, being of a very different nature and of various degrees of seriousness. The matter of addressing internal conflicts is linked at the same time to other aspects of your intervention as facilitator: the way you will establish your relationship with informal leaders of the community, how you will address the diversity of communities in your group, and finally how experienced you are in conflict mediation and how you can transfer that knowledge to the CAG.

One of the first internal conflicts that can appear is the opposition of informal leaders to your intervention in the community. Depending on the community, this is almost guaranteed to happen if you do not act one step ahead and meet leaders before initiating the process, explaining your aim and inviting them to participate in the CAG – albeit under the same status as any CAG member (see "**Can it be done? Will the community follow?**" above). Rely on **CAG1 Characteristics of the Community Action Group** but also give the leaders examples of what has been achieved through such initiatives (like in ROMED) in other similar municipalities. It may be the case, of course, that such informal leaders are very supportive and become local facilitators on the longer term. In fact, **giving informal leaders a specific task**, as was practiced by some of the facilitators (like collecting data on a specific matter) **can be a smart way to simultaneously ensure their position and role in the CAG in a functional manner and avoid that they are ignored** which can easily become an inconvenient situation.

Dealing with informal leaders is one of the reasons why the role of the national facilitator is indispensable in the first few years of the ROMED2 process. The fact that the national facilitator is an "outsider" and thus has a more objective perception of internal issues in the community is a position that is necessary when trying to help the CAG see those blind spots in their perceptions so far. Another strategy in addressing this matter – depending on the context of the community - is to bring the CAG outside the usual "territory" of influence of informal leaders. Changes in the setting of the meetings helps bring the discussions into neutral areas, where horizontal leadership is more easily attained.

In a municipality in **Greece**, the facilitator described the following situation: "*there was lately one case where a «leader» was somehow insulted for not being informed about the programme and he wanted one way or another to be a part of it, and not only that but to exert influence on its process. I tried as a person and as group (ROMED) to include him in the CAG without permitting him to have power and influence on the whole group. I tried to do that by telling him how important it would be to leave the CAG uninfluenced by his «authority». The CAG was mature enough though to differentiate itself from the «leader»*"

46. Evaluation case study – Byala Slatina: <http://bit.ly/2kkvtLK>

because they could see that by the processes of our trainings they had the power to depend on themselves and not on some other «saviour».

This example shows the importance of maturing the CAG into democratic decision-making and horizontal leadership, and making sure that each member truly integrates those concepts. A good way of assessing how the community perceives leadership and/or how well the CAG has understood the idea of shared leadership is highlighted in module CAG 14 **Tackle problems** – find solutions as a team and might help you put your finger on those points that still need to be tackled.

In “**the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia**”, facilitators faced a similar situation: “*In one of the CAGs, a Roma adviser from the municipality council wanted to prioritise the priorities on the mayor’s agenda, giving the group direction on what priority should be chosen by the CAG members. I used the method from the training curriculum of the session on «Making decisions in a democratic way» with voting by all CAG members and this helped the CAG members to choose the priority for the Action Plan. At the end of the process, all the people responded satisfactorily because they were deciding on the priorities and I was facilitating the process giving opportunities to everyone in the group to speak and decide with their vote and I stayed very neutral!*”

We have already looked at the representation of the diversity of communities in the CAG in the section “**There are several Roma communities in the city – how do I work with the CAG?**”, concluding that, **while in the short-term splitting the CAG into two or several groups can be more productive (as it eases the communication between the facilitator and the groups), in the long term the groups should not only be brought together but also mainstreamed in the broader local democratic instances.** Splitting the CAG is even more recommended when there are longer-term conflicts between communities. In any case, the facilitator should always be careful not to foster involuntarily competition between communities and thus contribute to feeding the conflict any further.

In **Komotini, Greece**, for instance, there was a strong rivalry between different (ethnic and religious) Roma groups. Each group suspected the ROMED National Support Team of being on the side of the other group and were convinced they were trying to convey the secret agenda of their rivals. In this context, after a few months of failed attempts to initiate a CAG, the National Support Team decided to withdraw from the community and focus on other municipalities in Greece.

At times, more or less serious conflicts can occur in the community which can temporarily affect the group. This can be an important learning opportunity for the CAG, which can become the space where such conflicts can be addressed in a constructive way. CAG15 **Conflict management** is a good tool to start with, but elements from the ROMED1 curriculum⁴⁷ might also prove useful in addressing conflicts within the community, as well as between the community and outside factors. This is also one example in which the “outsider” role of the national facilitator will be crucial, underlining thus that without an external intervention the process in the community will be much more difficult.

One method used by some facilitators in ROMED in addressing conflicts among CAG members, or within the extended community, was to make participants reminisce about moments when they worked together for a common cause. In **Halandri, Greece**, for instance the facilitator used the memory of the resistance of the community against eviction attempts during the 1980s. Of course, **only a thorough background research of the history of the community can provide you with this type of argument in such situations.**

1.4. Getting to concrete results

Obtaining concrete results is one of the first expectations of the persons involved in the Community Action Group. Defining what “concrete results” are, and learning to acknowledge and recognise the smallest of “victories” and advancements, is an essential part of your role as facilitator, since sometimes such achievements are not necessarily visible or are downplayed by CAG members as “not what they had in mind when they signed up for this”. This is, of course, linked to how you manage expectations within the CAG - have a look at “**How do I keep expectations within realistic boundaries?**” above for plenty of examples on this aspect.

The first step in moving towards concrete results is the definition of priorities. Crucial in this respect is the way the CAG will define them: learning to make the distinction between personal interest and community priorities, defining short-term and long-term priorities, understanding by which institution each set of priorities can be addressed and which local stakeholder can also be involved in the process. **The ROMED2 Guidelines provide an excellent step-by-step description of how to achieve this and the modules to use in each context**⁴⁸.

47. Available for download at <http://bit.ly/220scS3>

In the ROMED municipalities, such concrete results varied from infrastructural projects (“the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia”, Romania, Bulgaria) to impacts on the education of children and adults (“the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia”, Greece, Germany), the hiring of persons from the Roma community on various municipal positions (Bosnia and Herzegovina, Portugal), down to organising festivals or small cultural events in the community (Portugal, Ukraine, Germany). Although an important part of the process, **changes in the attitude of counterparts in local institutions can go unnoticed or be downplayed by the CAG members.** Make sure, when necessary, that you draw attention to such subtleties and that you valorise them in the collective memory of the achievements of the CAG.

Although a shrinking down of the CAG is a natural tendency in this type of mobilisation, failing to achieve even the smallest results can lead to a demotivation of the group which will be quickly noticed through the falling number of CAG members. This is why in many ROMED municipalities, small grants from the municipalities for organising small events, the presence of the mayor during such events, and the provision of a meeting space for the CAG, etc. have been effective ways of highlighting that mobilisation leads to results sooner or later, that the institutional counterparts are paying attention and that dialogue is possible.

In **Torres Vedras, Portugal**, the CAG became a platform for communication and collaboration with the local government. The main priority identified by the group was job creation for the members of the Roma community. The facilitator worked as a pivot player on that relationship and, over time, gained trust from both sides. Interaction really started with the presentation of a first proposal to the executive board, consisting in the resolution of a problem affecting the local evangelical church (accumulated debt in the payment of rent and electricity). The CAG asked for economic support and requested 2,500 EUR to help the evangelical church. The second proposal from the CAG focused on employment, considering all the problems related to the high levels of unemployment affecting the Roma community and the low levels of formal education. The group proposed the hiring of five Roma people - three men and two women - by the municipality or other local institutions. The third line of proposals were more focused on the cultural dimension, including the organisation of a photographic exhibition associated to the initiative «Experiencing ROMED» in November 2015.⁴⁹

The strategy used by the facilitator and the CAG in Torres Vedras is thus worth noting: besides the important priorities which would be more difficult to deal with by the municipality (finding solutions for the employment of five persons), the CAG also introduced very simple priorities which required both their involvement and a small contribution on the side of the local administration (organising a photo exhibition, sorting out the debt issue of the evangelical church).



In **Tundzha, Bulgaria**, the main visible results are in the area of education, identified as a leading priority for the municipality. As shared in the focus group with the CAG, “investing in all our children, including Roma, is investing in our future as a municipality”. As shared in all interviews with the Mayor and Deputy Mayor and their team, this is a human mission, not just a paper plan. The local administration works based on a long-term vision in the area of education. It has already been very successful in ensuring full coverage and the enrolment of children in preschool and school education. Whilst with the optimisation of the school system other rural municipalities are closing schools, Tundzha has invested in a new general school in the village of Skalica which is more accessible for the children from the surrounding villages.⁵⁰

In **Nyirbator, Hungary**, as a result of the advocacy of the CAG, the municipality has already resolved a number of ad hoc infrastructural problems in different villages with a higher concentration of Roma. The problem with the lack of drinking water in the village of Boyadzhik has been resolved. Electric meters in villages have been installed. Five completely destroyed streets in different villages that flood with mud and water when it rains have already been asphalted thanks to funds from the local budget. In other places, the problem with street lights has been resolved. A children’s playground was built in one of the villages. In addition to providing children with a place to play, it will help improve communication between the majority population and Roma, as it is built in the very centre of the village.⁵¹

48. In chapter 2.2. Meetings with the CAG (p.22) of the ROMED2 Guidelines.

49. Evaluation case study – Torres Vedras: <http://bit.ly/2lO5rp4>

50. Evaluation case study – Tundzha: <http://bit.ly/2kkvtLK>

How do I manage political change and elections periods with the CAG?

Elections within the municipality have always been treated in ROMED as a very sensitive moment for the work of facilitators and for the mobilisation of the CAG. Depending on your background, you are probably fully aware of the implications of public activities during such a time and the risks involved, in particular the risk of the CAG being taken over by a political party. Generally, all ROMED teams suspend interventions in the CAG prior to local elections for a period of up to two months, in order to guarantee the message that the CAG is a non-affiliated, non-political structure and that it must remain so for the sake of its sustainability.

In **Tundzha, Bulgaria**, evaluators feared that, in spite of an exemplary attitude and action so far on the side of the local authorities, things could quickly turn around after the local elections: *“while the Tundzha local administration is a model of work for Roma inclusion, it is questionable as to what extent this model will stay in place after electoral changes. Some signs in this direction came as a result of the last elections in 2014. The new local parliament does not always share the same commitment and vision for Roma inclusion. Evidence in this direction is that it has not voted through parts of the local budget suggested by the local administration. A major deficiency in the ROMED2 process is that it works mostly with the mayor and the administration and not with the local parliaments where political decisions are taken.”*⁵²

In some cases, the changes that came as a result of local elections did not affect the ability of the municipality to continue what had been started. In **Nyirbator, Hungary**, the co-operation between the local authority and the CAG is good and stable and was not affected by the change of mayor after the elections. The current mayor was the supporter of the previous one and both of them belong to the same left-wing party. The municipality considers the programme to be valuable because it is politically neutral and “shows the problem of Roma from a different point of view due to community involvement”.⁵³

After local elections in Greece, facilitators reported that “the first move was to meet with the newly-elected officials, together with the municipality staff that had attended the trainings. The aim was of course to make acquaintance and to present the progress that had been made already given the fact that there are municipality employees that had been trained and already participated in the ROMED process. We then asked them to commit to continue their support to this process, pointing out the benefits that it had to offer for them and their citizens” (National Facilitator, Greece).

Besides political will and support from local elected officials, some ROMED facilitators found it just as important to have a strong ally as a Municipal Contact Point, and/or a civil servant with decision-making power. This ensures the stability of the relationship with the local administration to a certain point beyond local elections and political changes.

How do I ensure the sustainability of the CAG in the long run?

The question of the sustainability of the CAG has been the subject of several meetings among the National Support Teams in ROMED. It was also tackled in the evaluation report found in PART II of this publication and is something that has yet to be achieved. Why? Because, by definition, sustainability implies the test of time to determine whether what was done was right or not.

The external evaluation of the programme concluded that **a participatory process, such as the one initiated through ROMED, cannot become sustainable in less than 18 months (roughly one year and a half)**. Furthermore, a process that is led in “waves” is not going to perform as well as a process that is regular and without interruptions (other than those motivated by elections or exceptional events). It is also more likely that a CAG in a small city or village performs better and advances faster than a CAG in a large city, in particular in cases when the municipality has many other emergencies and has a limited attention span towards Roma issues.

Probably the most efficient way in which a CAG can ensure at least a sustained status is **a local council decision recognising it as the official dialogue partner on Roma issues, with the prospect that, in the long term, the group and the issues are brought within similar mainstream groups**. This solution is not always applicable for various reasons, which is why in the ROMED experience a few CAGs decided to protect their achievements and prevent their dismantling by setting up an NGO. Registering as an NGO provided the CAGs with more legitimacy with the local administration, as well as a more solid basis for their recognition as partners. Finally, being a non-profit organisation also brought about the benefit of being able to receive subventions or small grants for “short-term” priorities, as was the case in some of the examples presented above.

51. Evaluation case study – Nyirbator: <http://bit.ly/2jlxHts>

52. Evaluation case study – Tundzha: <http://bit.ly/2kkvtLK>

53. Evaluation case study – Nyirbator: <http://bit.ly/2jlxHts>

In **Figueira da Foz, Portugal**, the CAG created an NGO (Ribaltambição - Association for Gender Equality in Roma Communities) in 2015. This was a way to enable access to new possibilities, for example, applications for small grants in order to implement activities proposed by the group. This transition to a formally-registered civic association is a sign of the maturity of the group and the determination to continue, despite the future of ROMED.⁵⁴

"We were asking the group to complete small tasks in the period between the training sessions. If tasks were not completed, we postponed the joint meeting with the authorities. It is true that in most cases a CAG needs quite some time to become stable, maybe from 2-3 to 6 months." (National Facilitator, Greece)

In **Nagyecsed, Hungary**, CAG members saw the issue of organising as an NGO as a means to find alternative funding opportunities: *"The Community Action Group is one of our achievements, but we see our future as a NGO, where we can keep our independence from the municipality and apply for funding"* (CAG members).⁵⁵

There is however, a rather high risk that, by resorting to the solution of an NGO, the CAG crystallises and becomes the purpose of the CAG (rather than empowerment of the community). Of course, within an NGO, electoral procedures are supposed to be carried out in a democratic manner and, depending on the culture of participation and the NGO structures allowed in a given country, an NGO can more or less respond to the needs of formalisation of the CAG (for example, broad-based community organisations in the United Kingdom). However, more often than not, the internal structure of an NGO is typically pyramidal with a chairman, a vice-chairman, a secretary, a treasurer, active members and donors. Because ROMED is an empowerment process for the entire community, the facilitators and members of the CAG and the association/NGO should be aware of the risks involved, namely that the structure of the organisation should avoid overriding the horizontal leadership aimed at by the CAG.

Another solution attempted in ROMED was **the creation of official municipal platforms of co-operation**, which implied the involvement of local stakeholders such as local Roma NGOs and locally-elected Roma persons (or simply local councillors supportive of the cause of the Roma). Their involvement has had, in any case, a real impact on the ROMED experience regarding how quickly the priorities of the CAG were addressed and play an important role in the sustainability of the CAG.

The situation in **Jarovnice, Slovak Republic**, is unique to a large extent – the mayor, the municipal councillors and local administration are one team. They work together with the local Roma pastoral centre, the NGOs, the community centre and the educational institutions, involving the active citizens in the Roma community to solve everyday problems of the village and the Roma neighbourhood. Some of the CAG members are already members of the Local Council, which makes the group sustainable and able to solve problems. The majority of local councillors (seven out of 13) are Roma, participating in CAG meetings. All the projects carried out by the municipality are the result of active communication and co-operation between the representatives of the municipality and the members of the CAG. The role of the CAG is not limited to determining priorities. Members also participate in committees selecting the people involved in the completion of different projects addressing the outlined priorities, for example, deciding upon whom from the community will be most appropriate and need to be involved. Another important factor in the success of the local co-operative process is the direct involvement of Roma in the decision-making process – they are directly represented in the local council (the majority of councillors are Roma). This involvement is also a major sustainability factor that is particularly important given the demographic trends in Jarovnice.⁵⁶

In **Bosnia and Herzegovina**, as explained in PART IV of this publication, the CAGs took the form of such co-operation platforms bringing together mediators, Roma community leaders/members and Roma NGO representatives. Unlike in other ROMED2 countries, meetings were often attended by representatives of the Ministry of Human Rights and Refugees (MHRR). In fact, the CAG were formed around the mediators who played a pivotal role in identifying members. They suggested potential members to the National Programme Officer (NPO) who then became proactively involved in the mobilisation process.

"Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful, committed citizens can change the world; indeed, it's the only thing that ever has."
Margaret Mead

54. Evaluation case study – Figueira da Foz: <http://bit.ly/2litTha>

55. Evaluation case study – Nagyecsed: <http://bit.ly/2jb6Fd1>

56. Evaluation case study – Jarovnice: <http://bit.ly/2kkvtLK>

One of the key factors to achieving the sustainability of the CAG is you – the facilitator. As a national facilitator, you have to accept the fact that, in time, your role in the CAG will fade out and that the CAG, along with the local facilitator, will then be empowered to lead the process by themselves. **Be honest with yourself before initiating such processes and question whether in two years' time you will be able to take a distance from the group and let it continue on its own.** If the answer is no, the outlook is that you will lead the CAG, but you will not let the CAG lead itself and therefore its performance will depend on your initiative and reaction. **Remember that the final aim is not only the empowerment of a limited number of individuals, but rather the empowerment of the entire community of which the CAG is only a “snapshot” at a given moment.**



In **Nyirbator, Hungary**, for instance, at the start of the programme, the motivation of the CAG members was higher and the interaction with the local institutions more dynamic. After a while, development stagnated and the CAG did not manage to move forward in its work. According to the Mayor, *“the CAG narrowed down its operation and was not able to become an independent actor”*. The CAG was unable to include more people from the community and be active without the support of the ROMED2 National Support Team. Although interaction was facilitated and initiated by the ROMED2 facilitator from Budapest, it could not make the step to regular and direct professional collaboration between the CAG and the municipality.⁵⁷

In **Targu Jiu, Romania**, the Community Action Group is thinking forward of how to ensure the future sustainability of empowerment of the community. The main need expressed is to increase the capacity of young Roma to carry on their work.⁵⁸

1.5. Knowing when to give up (or not)

Talking about failures is as healthy as talking about success. In certain contexts the process can simply not be started (yet), and it's important to recognise those contexts so that you do not end up harming even more the relationship between Roma and local authorities, and by extension with the majority population. For instance:

Is there a deep problem of internal conflict in the community? Did the local authority become reticent to working with Roma? Are Roma in a situation of emergency that cannot allow for regular meetings (for example, migrant Roma in big cities)?

In **Romania**, the National Support Team decided in 2014 to withdraw from **Budesti**, where there was both a lack of political commitment on the side of the local authorities and the discovery of false reporting from the facilitator recruited to mobilise the community. The capacity of the community to organise was never questioned however, without the appropriate human resource and without political will, little could have been achieved.

In **Greece**, the National Support Team decided to withdraw from several locations albeit for different reasons: in **Komotini** – as explained above – the conflict between the two communities left the facilitators without any possibility to come out of a loophole of mistrust. In **Iraklion** and **Illion**, the reasons for withdrawal were linked, on the one hand, to the lack of political will of the municipality and, on the other hand, and particularly for Iraklion, to the difficult and expensive logistics required to reach the community.

Thus, for the ROMED2 experience, giving up meant withdrawing from those cities where it became clear that nothing could have been achieved within the timeframe of implementation. This was first and foremost in order to preserve available resources for the municipalities where changes were possible. However, outside the institutional framework given by the Council of Europe and European Commission, **we cannot talk about “giving up”, but rather about “putting on hold” until the right context comes around.**

57. Evaluation case study – Nyirbator: <http://bit.ly/2jlxHts>

58. Evaluation case study – Targu Jiu: <http://bit.ly/2kkvtLK>

In **Timisoara**, despite the fact that the municipality signed the letter of commitment twice, their involvement was more formal rather than a real engagement in the process. According to the interview with the national facilitator, the attitude of the municipality staff has been reserved and cautious. Almost all the CAG requests and proposals made during the ROMED2 Programme, although initially accepted, were put on hold or delayed by the municipality. No Joint Action Plan has been approved by the Local Council.⁵⁹ In spite of these difficulties, it is planned for the process in Timisoara to be picked up again as soon as the overall context becomes more favourable to Roma participation.

In **Germany**, the National Support Team chose not to withdraw from the municipalities where the initially created CAGs failed to stabilise (see Germany Country findings in Part IV of this publication). Instead, they initiated new CAGs in the same municipality but in different districts or with different Roma communities, or with different categories of persons (usually CAGs composed of women). Of course, the migration element has been a very strong determinant of how stable CAGs have been in Germany, a factor which has little to do with the quality of the process or even with the political will of the administrations.

59. Country Findings – Romania: <http://bit.ly/2luyIBQ>

Chapter 2

THE LOCAL ADMINISTRATION INITIATING PARTICIPATION IN THE ROMA COMMUNITY

If you are reading this part, we assume you are either a person working in a local administration, a mandated NGO, or perhaps even an elected official. It is also very likely that you work in a municipality with at least one Roma community in need of better inclusion measures. You are aware of the National Strategy for Roma Inclusion applying to your country, or of any other framework referring to the inclusion of vulnerable persons or of Roma as a national minority. All of them include the obligation for a more **participatory** inclusion of Roma.

But what does this really mean?

It means that the community *becomes your compass in identifying the areas where you should intervene first* – these might be very different to what you expect. It means that the Roma community is accompanied and prepared by a local facilitator (person from the community) and a national facilitator (an expert from outside the municipality) to understand the limits of the competence of the local level and their own position as citizens – involving rights and duties, the difference between short-term and long-term priorities and how to address them to your team, having the building of trust as a background motive.

2.1. No pain, a lot of gain

Participation of Roma communities in decision-making at local level does not have to be a painful process. The way ROMED2 sees it, it is a long process, but if both parties have a positive attitude and work to understand one another, it will ultimately be an enriching one for the entire municipality.

From the ROMED2 experience, staff of local administrations – your peers in ROMED2 municipalities – had a multitude of worries at first. **They worried that the programme and the Roma community would expect problems to be dealt with immediately, that the administrative capacity would not match the priorities of the community, and also that they would be judged and placed in a position of “bad guys” in the story of Roma inclusion.**

FACILITATORS' ADVICE

“Successful Roma community means successful entire community”
(Facilitator, Bosnia and Herzegovina)

“Try it. It may not work, but it is in your hands to make it work.”
(National Facilitator, Greece)

“My advice [to the staff of municipalities with Roma communities] would be to initiate ROMED 2 because this program will help them enter in dialogue and cooperation with effective mechanisms and procedures ensuring consultations of Roma on local policies. Proposals resulting from consultations with members of the Roma community will be very important for the municipality taken into consideration in policy-making and resulting in formal decisions, budgeting implications and projects (including projects to be submitted for EU funding). ROMED 2 will be a positive model for future actions and decisions made at local level for any other minorities or smaller ethnic groups.” (National Facilitator, “the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia”)

“Roma problems can be solved only through mutual efforts and communication between local administration and Roma. Nothing can be done and solved without listening to Roma.” (Facilitator, Bosnia and Herzegovina)

“You will be enriched by the whole process because the Roma members of the municipality will be valuable and cooperative citizens in your area.” (National Facilitator, Greece)

The involvement of the local administrations in the process, the humane attitude or, on the contrary, the reluctance to deal with the CAG is indeed a **crucial** factor in the outcome of Roma participation. The political commitment of elected officials is the beginning of the process, **but everyday progress is achieved through the alliance between the CAG and the contact person(s) in the municipality.**

There are numerous stories from the ROMED2 experience that could convince you of the importance of the way **you** will see the process. We encourage you to watch this short documentary⁶⁰ created by the ROMED team in Portugal, where both staff of municipalities and CAG members talk about their apprehensions, surprises and feelings after two years of implementation.

Other such examples of the added value of the co-operation with the CAG came through the **external evaluation**⁶¹ led in seven countries where ROMED2 was implemented, the full report of which you can find in **PART II of this publication.** For authorities in **Byala Slatina, Bulgaria**, for instance, the CAG was very helpful in solving the specific problems of the Roma community there. The active role of the CAG was appreciated as a basic prerequisite for overcoming the accumulated stress and tension between the Roma community and the local electrical company in developing a project for a new power supply in the Roma neighbourhood.⁶² In **Nyirbator, Hungary**, the contact person for ROMED2 in the municipality commented that *“sharing information as part of the institutional meetings with the CAG helped the municipality to better understand the situation of the local Roma and they have been learning a lot from this process”*.⁶³ In **Prilep, “the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia”**, the local government views the ROMED2 process as a *valuable tool that contributes to the clear formulation of local issues with the participation of people from the Roma community, putting them on the policy agenda of the municipality.*⁶⁴ This relationship between the CAG and the local authorities was

IMPRESSIONS OF MUNICIPALITY STAFF AND STAKEHOLDERS ABOUT ROMED IN PORTUGAL (EXCERPTS FROM THE “EXPERIENCING ROMED” DOCUMENTARY)

“ROMED made some significant changes in the relationship between the Roma community, the society and the municipality. The ROMED Programme gives a very distinctive role to Roma participants in comparison to the former role attributed to Roma people. The programme encourages the Community Action Group to make an accurate diagnosis of the community situation and to present very precise proposals, demanding a serious commitment from the participants in order to implement them.

I think the programme introduces a change in the way the Roma community relates to the rest of society and to the various public institutions”, Ana Umbelino, Torres Vedras, Municipal Counsellor for Social Affairs

“The ROMED programme gives us another approach, since the group, the CAG, is a different group from those with whom the municipality was used to working in its everyday practice. And therefore the action group was, let’s say, a surprise. This group being so young, being a group with different requests, with different aspirations, they show a very big will for change. Therefore, it is also a relief for us, in the sense that it was an encouragement for another kind of intervention”, Anabela Soares, Seixal, Municipal Council, Social Affairs Department

“Our decision to participate in the ROMED Programme was a sure bet. [...] So, we are here to continue our collaboration with you. That is what we want”, Antonio Tavares Figueira da Foz, Municipality Vice-President addressing the ROMED National Support Team in Portugal during a national event.

“For us, this programme, ROMED, was of extreme importance. We had already done some work with the community, but we felt that it was important to bring the community together for this project, creating this large group where they identify the problems, try to propose solutions and then link with the institutions. In the end this is true active citizenship, because it is not enough to say «We want, we have the right». We have rights and we have duties. And I do think that this work in this sense was very rewarding. To sit down with the community, to debate with them, we listen to their concerns, and the most interesting in our project was that the community did not even think of itself as individuals, but they thought in a broader sense of the overall community” Armandina Saleiro, Barcelos, Municipal Counsellor for Social Affairs

60. https://youtu.be/jyoJH_mu-ZM

61. <http://coe-romed.org/articles/romed-external-evaluation-report-published>

62. Evaluation case study – Byala Slatina: <http://bit.ly/2kkvtLK>

63. Evaluation case study – Nyirbator: <http://bit.ly/2jlxHts>

64. Evaluation case study – Prilep: <http://bit.ly/2kSfZ5T>

described by the Head of Strategies and Community Policy Office of the City Hall of **Targu Jiu (Romania)** as a «win-win» strategy for both the community and the local administration.⁶⁵ **For each location, it is extremely important to have a local administration which is open to work and consult with Roma organisations and groups and has a clear vision and long-term strategy for working with the Roma community.** The development of such a long-term vision and commitment requires a strong local civil society – local Roma NGOs in a partnership with the CAGs functioning in strategic synergy, rather than parallel structures.⁶⁶

2.2. What do I have to do and how much will it cost?

If you are an elected official, the first step would be to define the relevant service and person who can ensure the role of “Contact Person” in the municipality. The person fulfilling this role should have an empathic capacity and be generally positive towards the Roma community, as well as be in charge of a relevant department for Roma issues.

The municipality can:

1. start by investing in the training of intercultural mediators, based on the ROMED1 methodology⁶⁷ if there are no mediators trained under ROMED1 in your municipality. This can be done either through national trainings (hiring one of the trainers of the ROMED1 pool⁶⁸ - perhaps in cooperation with other interested municipalities) or through an application to ROMACT T.C.C.⁶⁹;
2. hire as permanent staff trained intercultural mediators who can ensure the basis for ROMED2 by transforming their position from mediator to local facilitator. This would ensure the sustainability of the process in the long-term;
3. invest in the contractual hiring of a national facilitator⁷⁰ (external expert coming from a different municipality) – in order to reduce costs, creating inter-city co-operation and pooling resources to hire a national facilitator for several municipalities can be an effective solution;
4. sign and publish on the website of the municipality a commitment letter (proposed template available in Part V of this publication);
5. get in touch with the co-ordination team that conducted the ROMED2 Programme in your country, or contact the Council of Europe to obtain guidance on organisations able to offer support to local and national facilitators in your municipality⁷¹.

You might wonder why there is the need of a mediator/local facilitator, as well as of a national facilitator. In fact, their roles are indispensable and complementary. While the local facilitator is an essential stakeholder in initiating a CAG and in ensuring its sustainability, an “outsider” (external) expert, the ROMED2 National Facilitator, will ensure the coaching and objective overseeing of the process and relationship between the different parts during the 18 months recommended by the evaluation for a sustainable CAG. **The map of the local stakeholders at local level is illustrated in the Chapter “Can I do it alone? On whom can I rely?” above.**

The human resources recruited and their employment status are important in the ROMED processes. For instance, in **Figueira da Foz, Portugal**, the local facilitator, Ms Tania Oliveira, is an active and communicative person, possessed previous experience in school mediation and gained more skills with the training provided by the ROMED2 National Support Team. Nevertheless, her role has been influenced by her unstable professional situation and she had no previous experience in mediation. After starting the process, she became unemployed and this affected her motivation, with an influence on the dynamics of the CAG. Over time, the situation improved, the CAG made a request and the municipality was able to provide the local facilitator with a temporary job working on the transportation services of municipal children. This example shows that, when the local facilitator is only a volunteer and has an unstable professional and financial situation, there are impacts in terms of group instability.⁷²

65. Evaluation case study – Targu Jiu: <http://bit.ly/2kkvtLK>

66. Evaluation case study – Tetovo: <http://bit.ly/2kLDTxt>

67. Available for download at: <http://bit.ly/220scS3>

68. ROMED1 pool of trainers: <http://bit.ly/2lurvSo>

69. ROMACT Transnational Cooperation Component, Module B – Training of Mediators; organising trainings under ROMACT T.C.C. is restrained to countries of destination of non-national Roma. For conditions of organising trainings please see: <http://bit.ly/2hM13oc>

70. Part V of this publication – Resources and Contacts for Support (p.158)

71. You can write to romed@coe.int

72. Evaluation case study – Figueira da Foz: <http://bit.ly/2litTha>

The ROMED2 National Facilitator working with **Tundzha** municipality (Bulgaria) is extremely committed, very competent and experienced in working with health mediators, community empowerment and facilitation of local processes. As she explained, starting a local process is a responsibility to maintain the trust of local stakeholders – both people in communities and in the administration. Another success is that the local administration has hired eight educational mediators to work in the schools in the framework of educational projects. Even though they could only be hired on part-time contracts, this consistent work with the children and their parents will help to increase motivation and educational results. By raising money from outside sources, the local administration wants to demonstrate the benefits of having educational mediators and, based on that, to persuade the local parliament to support this practice in the future with funds from the local budget.⁷³

Before ROMED, **Torres Vedras, Portugal**, had no mediator dealing with the Roma community and the problems were managed by the social department in charge of issues related to social inclusion, in collaboration with other departments and institutions. The programme highlighted the need for a local facilitator to co-ordinate the work of the Community Action Group (CAG). This was seen as an opportunity to recruit somebody capable of performing the dual role of facilitator and (sometimes) mediator assisting with the work of the social department. Lindo Cambão was a member of the local Roma community and was selected and hired to work within the municipality on the ROMED2 process. One of his first assignments was to help the municipality to improve the level of knowledge about the community living on the territory. A survey was prepared and conducted on the ground by the facilitator, with the support of some members of the CAG. A comprehensive diagnosis was produced, becoming a landmark and an important tool for dealing with the problems of the community. Prior to ROMED2, the lack of information was a handicap preventing more accurate social interventions.⁷⁴

An important factor contributing towards the successful process in **Jarovnice, Slovak Republic**, is the quality of the National Facilitator, Roman Estocak. An educated Roma with a vision and knowledge of the local issues, he has lived in the region for many years and works as a consultant on community problems, a mediator and an assistant. He is currently the regional co-ordinator of the Plenipotentiary for Roma Communities in Slovakia for the Presov region. His vision is that municipalities with a predominantly Roma population need the function (and position) of “crisis manager”. This should be a person familiar with the region, municipality, its problems and the possible solutions. This person should also have information on alternative financial sources and calls for projects, seeing the bigger picture with vision and a three to five year perspective to work with the community and bring it up to a new level.⁷⁵

Nagyecsed, Hungary, was also part of the ROMED1 Training of Mediators. The first mediator completed the ROMED1 training, worked as a mediator and, motivated by the ROMED experience, decided to continue her education (she is currently attending tertiary education). She has also developed professionally and joined the Budapest team of Partners Hungary in 2015. A new local mediator was identified. She is a Roma youngster who completed her secondary education and has highly developed her competences since she joined as a mediator.⁷⁶

In the report of the external evaluation in PART II of this publication, you will find the costs of implementation per country for both ROMED1 (chapter 2.2.5. Cost efficiency) and ROMED2 (chapter 3.3.2 Level and type of resource allocation in ROMED2 municipalities). These can provide you with the necessary guidance on what kind of sums would need to be earmarked in order to put in place such initiatives.

2.3. The contact with the CAG and the community – what to expect?

In a city or village where past conflicts, tense situations or simply mistrust have existed, either within the Roma community or between the community and local institutions, it is normal to apprehend the contact with the community through a structure such as the CAG. You might even feel that you know the community well enough, or that you know what should be done and you can achieve that by liaising with the community through the mediator.

First of all, if you have a look at the chapters above - targeting new facilitators in a municipality – or at the ROMED2 Guidelines, you will perhaps feel reassured in several ways:

73. Evaluation case study – Tundzha: <http://bit.ly/2kkvtLK>

74. Evaluation case study – Torres Vedras: <http://bit.ly/2lO5rp4>

75. Evaluation case study – Jarovnice: <http://bit.ly/2kkvtLK>

76. Evaluation case study – Nagyecsed: <http://bit.ly/2jb6Fd1>

- ▶ The facilitator will work with the community so that they are ready for a dialogue process, not for a challenge towards your institution;
- ▶ The aim of the process is to build mutual trust, for which both sides will be prepared to commit;
- ▶ If this is not already the case, citizens will learn in time what the competence of your institution is and will distinguish between priorities that are out of touch with feasibility and priorities that can be addressed in the short term and in the long term;
- ▶ The expectations of the CAG will be addressed by the facilitator and, when reinforced by a constant dialogue with your institution, they will be in line with reality.
- ▶ Finally, as underlined above, you may be surprised to find that the priorities you or your institution had in mind are more complex, or more difficult to put in place, than what the community needs in the short term;

We recommend you take a look at the ROMACT Handbook addressing local authorities and providing four steps for improving the situation of marginalised Roma in a given municipality. The handbook is available in several languages from the website of the programme.⁷⁷

For instance, in **Byala Slatina, Bulgaria**, the local government explained that the creation of the CAG is extremely important and useful to them for several reasons. Firstly, co-operation with the group allows them to plan programmes based on the real needs of the people in the Roma community. Secondly, through its interaction with the CAG, the local administration verifies and legitimises their policies related to the Roma community. The representatives of the administration indicated that they had been the proactive party in this interaction, with the CAG more passive but nevertheless responsive. A visible success of the co-operation between the CAG and local administration was the complete replacement of the electrical transmission network in the Roma neighbourhood in Byala Slatina. Before changing the network voltage, there had been serious conflict between the representatives of the Roma community and the local electrical company. With the help of the CAG and the local government, the conflict was resolved and the entire electrical transmission network replaced.⁷⁸

In **Prilep, “the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia”**, the work of the local administration with the CAG follows three basic directions. It contributes logistical support, for example, by providing the municipal meeting hall to hold meetings of the CAG. It consults with the CAG on identification of priorities and development of local policies and it works together with the CAG to design concrete programmes and projects.⁷⁹

On the other hand, for the trust to be built between your institution and the CAG, and during the first joint meetings with the CAG, it is important that you:

- ▶ adapt your language so as to not use technical or administrative jargon, which could be perceived as an indirect way to keep the CAG at a distance;
- ▶ keep expectations under a lid by not promising anything - even if certain priorities can be immediately addressed;
- ▶ look into symbolic ways you can demonstrate your support to the CAG: by providing a meeting room within the institution, or by trying to earmark a small fund for the CAG’s local or short-term priorities;

The last point has proven extremely effective in installing a positive co-operation environment between the CAG and the local administrations. It had also led to creative solutions for addressing the relationship between the Roma community and the majority population – for instance, in **Portugal**, several CAGs organised charity events open to all persons in a vulnerable situation (“community soup”, collection of food for the food bank, etc.).

77. <http://coe-romact.org/resources>

78. Evaluation case study – Byala Slatina: <http://bit.ly/2kkvtLK>

79. Evaluation case study – Prilep: <http://bit.ly/2jVBkHP>

Part II

**EVALUATION OF THE COUNCIL
OF EUROPE AND EUROPEAN
UNION JOINT PROGRAMME
'ROMED'**

Full report

This report has been prepared by

Anna Ivanova - Slovakia

Adriana Crisan - Romania

Anasztazia Nagy - Hungary

Fernando Santos - Portugal

Nikolay Kirilov – Bulgaria and “the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia”

Orysia Lutsevych – Ukraine

Mariana Milosheva-Krushe - Team Leader

Roderick Ackermann - Evaluation Manager

Nicoló Franceschelli –Survey of Mediators

List of tables

Table 1: ROMED1 Joint Programme grant agreements	47
Table 2: ROMED2 Joint Programme grant agreements	49
Table 3: Evaluation Objectives	52
Table 4: Evaluation Toolset	53
Table 5: Stakeholders consulted during the evaluation	54
Table 6: Mediator Survey Response Rates	55
Table 7: Direct costs (euro) per trained mediator in the seven focus countries	63
Table 8: ROMED2 (2013-2016) direct costs (euro)	93

List of figures

Figure 1: ROMED Theory of Change	50
Figure 2: ROMED1 mediators trained 2011-2016	61
Figure 3: Mediators certified 2011-2015	61
Figure 4: Utility of the ROMED1 training for the professional development of mediators	67
Figure 5: Impact of ROMED1 on communities	71
Figure 6: ROMED2 concept	78

Introduction

1.1. The context: why ROMED?

With the enlargement of the European Union in 2004 and 2007 the exclusion of Roma (the largest minority in Europe) is increasingly becoming a pan-European issue. Roma communities, especially in Central and Eastern Europe remained outside the mainstream development and increasingly fell in the 'vicious circle' of social exclusion. The available data show that Roma are facing multiple deprivations in virtually all areas of life compared both to the national averages as well as to the non-Roma living in close proximity – long term unemployment, growing dependency on the welfare state system; deteriorating living conditions; reduced access to basic healthcare; and increasing school dropout rates (at the start, or later in the school system) which in turn reproduce poverty and marginalisation on the long-term. The level of social exclusion differs, not only among the countries, but among regions/municipalities and communities and inside each of them.

The main challenges faced by the Roma population are pointed out in the 2011 Roma Pilot Survey conducted by the Agency for Fundamental Rights¹ and in the 2012 UNPD report 'The situation of Roma in 11 EU Member States'² and the Euro Barometer Study (2015) shows there is a rise of anti Roma sentiments and perceptions, and that the negative attitudes towards the Roma vary significantly across Member States.

Recent research have outlined the syndrome of social exclusion of Roma as a complex outcome of the interaction of individual exclusion risks (like low level of education, qualification, poor health and living conditions) augmented by exclusion drivers (ethnic prejudice, structural discrimination) and the specifics of the local context in which Roma live (concentration of the Roma population in economically deprived areas, poor infrastructure in Roma settlements, as well as territorial segregation and isolation in some of the countries).³

The alarming situation of Roma and its further deterioration has put forward the urgent need of integrated long-term policies for Roma inclusion:

- ▶ The need to develop adequate measures and practices addressing the equal access of Roma to quality education, employment, social services, health care, and decent living conditions;
- ▶ The need to face the alarming growth of discrimination against Roma – institutional, individual, and public;
- ▶ The need to build the capacities of all actors – Roma communities, local and central governments – to be able to develop and implement meaningful inclusive policies increasing the chance for accessible services and equal opportunity for development.

The Roma inclusion priority has been increasingly present on the policy agenda of the European Union. There is a growing direct involvement of the European Commission (EC) on the issues of Roma inclusion, also in response to increased intolerance and xenophobia in Europe. The established European Platform for Roma Inclusion has a growing role in shaping up policies for Roma inclusion at the European Union (EU) level. The EC adopted the Ten Common Basic Principles of Roma Inclusion⁴ in 2009.

The 2011 EC Communication on an 'EU Framework for National Roma Integration Strategies up to 2020'⁵ shows the EC's commitment to Roma inclusion in four key areas - access to education, healthcare, essential services (e.g. housing) and employment, in order to reduce the employment gap between Roma and the rest of the population⁶. Through

1. <http://fra.europa.eu/DVS/DVT/roma.php>

2. http://fra.europa.eu/sites/default/files/fra_uploads/2099-FRA-2012-Roma-at-a-glance_EN.pdf

3. Beyond Transition – Towards Inclusive Societies. Regional human development report (Bratislava: UNDP 2011), <http://europeandcis.undp.org/home/show/BCD10F8F-F203-1EE9-BB28DEE6D70B52E1>

4. http://www.coe.int/t/dg4/youth/Source/Resources/Documents/2011_10_Common_Basic_Principles_Roma_Inclusion.pdf

5. http://ec.europa.eu/justice/policies/discrimination/docs/com_2011_173_en.pdf

6. 'Member States are already under an obligation to give Roma (like other EU citizens) non-discriminatory access to education, employment, vocational training, healthcare, social protection and housing through Directive 2000/43/EC.'

this document, the EC also emphasises making full use of the National Roma Contact Points' network and the annual European Platform for Roma Inclusion that brings together national governments, EU institutions and international organisations with Roma civil society organisations, to promote successful inclusion at the grassroots level. A follow up EC communication of May 2012⁷ further demands from member states meaningful targeted actions in the implementation of the National Roma Integration Strategies (NRIS) and a robust monitoring mechanism to ensure concrete results for Roma.

There is increasing attention in EC policies to the importance of education for Roma inclusion – within Roma communities to increase their potential to get out of the vicious circle of exclusion and poverty; as well as in the framework of developing more inclusive societies that understand and practice the European values of human rights, equality and active citizenship:

- ▶ In March 2015 the 'Declaration on Promoting citizenship and the common values of freedom, tolerance and non-discrimination through education' (known as the Paris Declaration⁸) points out the need to promote a more inclusive society through education, to foster social inclusion, to combat racism and discrimination on any ground and to encourage dialogue and cooperation among all relevant policies and education stakeholders. The declaration has been signed by ministers responsible for education from all 28 EU Member States and by the Commissioner for education, culture, youth and sport.
- ▶ A recent EC Study⁹ published for the one-year anniversary of the Paris Declaration,¹⁰ highlights the educational challenges facing Roma communities gathering and analysing evidence on education policies and practices to foster tolerance. The study also reports the importance of establishing partnerships between schools and Roma communities.
- ▶ The 2015 Joint Report of the Council of the European Union and the EC on the implementation of the strategic framework for European cooperation in education and training (ET 2020).¹¹ The document calls for strengthened cooperation in education and training up to 2020 and especially promoting social inclusion. The report proposes six new priorities including improving people's skills and employment prospects and creating open, innovative digital learning environments, whilst cultivating fundamental values of equality, non-discrimination and active citizenship. The report also points out the need to provide inclusive education and training for all different learners, focusing on disadvantaged groups such as Roma.

Despite the progress in developing European and national level policy frameworks and matching them with significant and increasing funding devoted to Roma inclusion, the question of their impact and real results remains on the agenda of almost all meetings and discussions related to Roma inclusion. Do policies and projects make a real difference inside Roma communities and broader society? To what extent do resources actually reach communities in real need?

Sustainability of emerging change is also questionable. Even if successful interventions bring promising results, they rarely grow from 'pilots' into mainstreamed practice and often die out once the funding is over. The cyclical political process could explain this – the frequent political changes with elections can reverse political commitment of both central and/or local administration and slow down the progress of Roma inclusion policy implementation. Weak commitment on the side of the local governments and underrepresentation of Roma in local governments and councils is another.

A major challenge for the effective implementation of Roma Inclusion policies adopted at European and national level is the considerable gap of low understanding, capacities and political commitment at municipal level. 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 desperately needed.

The local level is where European and national policies are transformed into practice. It is the meeting point of three interrelated and equally important areas of Roma inclusion as a process and an outcome:

- ▶ **Roma community empowerment** - 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);

7. http://ec.europa.eu/justice/discrimination/files/com2012_226_en.pdf

8. http://ec.europa.eu/education/news/2015/documents/citizenship-education-declaration_en.pdf

9. http://ec.europa.eu/education/library/study/2016/neset-education-tolerance-2016_en.pdf

10. http://ec.europa.eu/education/news/2015/documents/citizenship-education-declaration_en.pdf

11. http://ec.europa.eu/education/documents/et-2020-draft-joint-report-408-2015_en.pdf

- ▶ **Inclusive institutions** (expanded commitment, capacities, knowledge and skills in working for Roma inclusion, putting in practice the concepts of good governance);
- ▶ **Unbiased and non-discriminatory society at large** (change in negative perceptions, discriminatory attitudes and practice, and overcoming the gap between Roma and the majority).¹²

There is an increased focus on processes of Roma inclusion at the local level. **Due to the years of work of the Council of Europe on testing and promoting intercultural mediation as one of the tools for inclusion at the local level, mediation became increasingly important on the policy agenda at European level.** The Strasbourg Declaration on Roma adopted at the Council of Europe High Level Meeting on Roma on 20 October 2010 fostered the need for developing a 'European training programme on intercultural mediation for Roma communities' which gave birth to the Council of Europe's ROMED programme.¹³

Later on, the work and lessons emerging from the ROMED programme itself contributed to the adoption of the Recommendation of the Committee of Ministers to Member States on Mediation as an Effective Tool for Promoting Respect for Human Rights and Social Inclusion of Roma¹⁴ (September 2012). The subsequent Recommendation of the Council of the EU of 9 December 2013 on effective Roma integration measures in the Member States reiterates the importance of 'training and employment of qualified mediators dedicated to Roma and use mediation as one of the measures to tackle the inequalities Roma face in terms of access to quality education, employment, healthcare and housing'.¹⁵ It also recommends support to active Roma citizenship and participation especially at the local level.

The European Parliament resolution of 12 December 2013¹⁶ on the progress made in the implementation of the National Roma Integration Strategies encourages Member States to 'show more political determination in favour of the effective inclusion of Roma' and refers to Roma mediators' programmes as examples of good practice.

Finally, the 2015 study commissioned by the European Parliament's Policy Department for Citizens' Rights and Constitutional Affairs at the request of the Parliament's Committee on Civil Liberties, Justice & Home Affairs includes policy recommendations for enhanced policies and strategies in Member States supporting a more effective integration of disadvantaged Roma EU citizens and recalls the importance of training of Roma mediators to promote employment among Roma.¹⁷

The Commission is currently undertaking targeted communication activities in EU Member States 'For Roma with Roma'¹⁸ to fight discrimination and stereotypes against Roma population.

1.2. Object of the Evaluation: The ROMED Programmes

1.2.1. The Council of Europe and the birth of the ROMED concept

The practice of employing Roma mediators as intermediaries between the Roma communities and relevant local institutions emerged in the late 80s and early 90s. Starting with pilot non-governmental organisation (NGO) initiatives mostly for school and health mediators, they were later expanded by PHARE to larger scale national programmes in some countries (for ex. Bulgaria and Romania), as well as supported by various donors, in particular Open Society Foundation (OSF) programmes for school and health mediation throughout Europe.

An important multi-country initiative in this direction was the Council of Europe's 'Education for Roma Children in Europe' which was initiated in 2003 and continued until 2009 to implement recommendation No R (2000)4 adopted by the Committee of Ministers in February 2000 'to use mediators from the Roma/Gypsy community for improved communication of parents and schools.'¹⁹

12. <http://eeagrants.org/News/2013/Study-on-Roma-inclusion>

13. <https://mycloud.coe.int/index.php/s/3vwCekl0yLUkNx0#pdfviewer>

14. [https://wcd.coe.int/ViewDoc.jsp?p=&Ref=CM/Rec\(2012\)9&Language=lanEnglish&Ver=original&Site=CM&BackColorInternet=BBDCF2&BackColorIntranet=FDC864&BackColorLogged=FDC864&direct=true](https://wcd.coe.int/ViewDoc.jsp?p=&Ref=CM/Rec(2012)9&Language=lanEnglish&Ver=original&Site=CM&BackColorInternet=BBDCF2&BackColorIntranet=FDC864&BackColorLogged=FDC864&direct=true)

15. [http://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/PDF/?uri=CELEX:32013H1224\(01\)&from=en](http://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/PDF/?uri=CELEX:32013H1224(01)&from=en)

16. <http://www.europarl.europa.eu/sides/getDoc.do?pubRef=-//EP//TEXT+TA+P7-TA-2013-0594+0+DOC+XML+V0//EN>

17. http://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/etudes/STUD/2015/536485/IPOL_STU%282015%29536485_EN.pdf

18. http://ec.europa.eu/justice/discrimination/roma/for-roma-with-roma/index_en.htm

19. [https://wcd.coe.int/ViewDoc.jsp?p=&Ref=Rec\(2000\)4&Language=lanEnglish&Ver=original&Site=CM&BackColorInternet=C3C3C3&BackColorIntranet=EDB021&BackColorLogged=F5D383&direct=true](https://wcd.coe.int/ViewDoc.jsp?p=&Ref=Rec(2000)4&Language=lanEnglish&Ver=original&Site=CM&BackColorInternet=C3C3C3&BackColorIntranet=EDB021&BackColorLogged=F5D383&direct=true)

Based on the interviews with the ROMED Management and the International Pedagogical Team the concept of the ROMED programmes is rooted in the learning from this previous work of the Council of Europe, as well as from exploration of existing practices of mediation among Roma communities and various local institutions in the different countries. While due to all of the above efforts the practice of Roma mediators started to be introduced in some of the countries as a tool for Roma inclusion, there were a number of gaps and challenges. These were discussed, in particular, at a meeting with representatives from 20 countries organised by the COE and the Institute for Intercultural Studies in Timisoara in 2004²⁰.

The need to develop a consistent concept of real intercultural mediation was identified on the basis of the discussions at this meeting and on a survey conducted by the CoE in 2006²¹ on the situation of mediation. Despite the success and diversity of mediation practices, mediation was, in practice, frequently the opposite to what it was supposed to be. The biggest challenge was to unlock the blockages in the school, health care and other public service systems and to work in a more systemic way in order to address the causes of the problems, rather than only their consequences.

Two main milestones were of critical importance for the birth of ROMED as a systemic pan-European effort in the area of effective intercultural mediation:

- ▶ The first milestone was the **Strasbourg Declaration on Roma adopted at the CoE High Level Meeting on Roma on 20 October 2010**. It promoted the development of a 'European Training Programme for Roma Mediators with the intention of streamlining, systematising, adapting, and consolidating the existing training programmes for and about Mediators for Roma, through the most effective use of existing Council of Europe resources, standards, methodology, networks and infrastructure, notably the European Youth Centres in Strasbourg and Budapest, in close cooperation with national and local authorities. It resulted in the launch of the CoE ROMED programme in 2010 and work on effective intercultural mediation became a strategic priority for the CoE.
- ▶ In the framework of the ongoing policy debates at European level about the need for the development of the Roma inclusion strategies in the different countries and the promising start of ROMED on 06 July 2011, **ROMED became a Joint Programme of the CoE and EC DG Education and Culture (EAC)** upon the signature of the Declaration between the Secretary General of the CoE and the EC Commissioner for Education. This elevated the ROMED programme to a higher level initiative, expanding its scope to a larger number of countries in Europe.

The inception phase of ROMED involved the work of experts and practitioners from different countries (especially from Romania) who had much more advanced practice in testing a variety of approaches to mediation.

1.2.2. The ROMED programmes: key phases, objectives and stakeholders involved

The ROMED Programme evolved as two main phases. Both aimed to enhance Roma inclusion at the local level. Although similar, the two programmes differed in their specific objectives, desired outcomes, scope, and stakeholder involvement.

ROMED1 'European Training Programme on intercultural mediation for Roma Communities'

The main focus of this first phase of ROMED was on capacity building of Roma mediators for effective intercultural mediation through a European educational program with common standards and training methodology.

The general aim of ROMED1 was to improve the quality and effectiveness of the work of school, health, employment and community mediators, with a view to supporting better communication and co-operation between Roma and public institutions (school, health-care providers, employment offices, local authorities etc.). To achieve this aim, the ROMED programme focused on the following objectives:

- ▶ To promote effective intercultural mediation to improve the communication and co-operation between Roma and public institutions;
- ▶ To ensure the integration of a rights-based approach in the mediation between Roma communities and public institutions;
- ▶ To support the work of mediators by providing tools for planning and implementation of their activities, which encourage democratic participation while generating empowerment of Roma communities and increased accountability of public institutions.

20. http://coe-romed.org/sites/default/files/Mediators_Analyse_EN.PDF

21. Idem

ROMED1 was a pedagogical programme consisting of two training sessions (the first one of four days and the second one of three days) and a six-month period of practice in between. Focusing on the professionalisation of the work of mediators it also aimed to promote the official recognition of this profession and to create or improve the conditions for the employability of mediators by local, regional, national institutions as well as NGOs in the different countries.

This concept could not be applied only by training mediators. It required the involvement of a broader group of stakeholders, especially from institutions that use mediation services and employ mediators. The main stakeholders involved in the programme included:

- ▶ **National and Local Authorities** played a key role in placing the programme in the national policy context and ensuring the presence of employed mediators in different fields, as well as in the selection of participants for ROMED training;
- ▶ **The National Focal Points** were individuals hired by the CoE to support the monitoring process and provide feedback on national activities;
- ▶ **Mediators in different fields** (health, employment, education, multifunctional mediators, etc.) who participated in the trainings and had the obligation to put in practice the acquired new skills and methods for effective intercultural mediation;
- ▶ **Local and national institutions** as current and potential employers of mediators who took part in the last day of the first training and the first day of the second training, this way learning together with mediators about effective intercultural mediation and the results of the six-month practice.

The main phase of ROMED1 was implemented from 06 July 2011 to 31 March 2013. The programme was financed by two joint programme agreements amounting to €2,000,000, provided as 50%-50% matching funds by DG EAC and the CoE.

Table 1: ROMED1 Joint Programme grant agreements

Joint Programme grant agreements	Starting date	Closing date (with extension)	Amount (in Euros)
EAC- 2011 - 0261 ROMED / Intercultural mediation for Roma communities	6/07/2011	31/03/2012	1 000 000
EAC- 2012-0211 ROMED / Intercultural mediation for Roma Communities	01/04/2012	31/03/2013	1 000 000

The main phase of ROMED1 is completed. As of 31 of March 2013, it resulted in the training of 1,089 mediators from 20 countries across Europe.

ROMED1 training of mediators continued throughout 2014-2016, in response to demand from the relevant national institutions in the different countries, including 'new' countries requesting training of mediators. ROMED1 thus accompanied the implementation of the second phase of the programme –ROMED2. As a result, during the period 2011 – 2016 a total of 1,479 mediators were trained in 22 countries.

ROMED2: Democratic Governance and Roma Community Participation through Mediation

This second phase of ROMED focused on the promotion of the democratic participation of Roma through local processes of mediation, by supporting community organising in disadvantaged Roma communities for their effective interaction with local authorities.

ROMED2 emerged from the lessons learnt from the ROMED1 training of mediators. The main questions were: to what extent could mediators by themselves achieve real change in communities; and what else was needed to stimulate the application of principles of good governance and to promote Roma inclusion? Discussions and learning from the training of mediators outlined the need for deeper action in municipalities where mediators had been already trained through ROMED1.

ROMED2 shifted the focus from capacity development of individual mediators to a process of building the capacity and practice of local stakeholders by stimulating the empowerment of disadvantaged Roma communities and enhancing dialogue between them and local authorities. Mediators trained by ROMED1 were an integral part of this process.

The goal of the ROMED2 Programme is to enhance the participation of members of Roma communities in the decision-making processes at the local level. The Programme provides support to both local administration and Roma communities, enabling both sides to engage with each other and cooperate for concrete positive changes at local level. The programme works simultaneously on Roma citizens' ability to participate and on local authorities' ability to respond.

The approach of ROMED2 is based on three main pillars: effective intercultural mediation; applied principles of good inclusive governance; and community organising and empowerment. The programme invests in local democratic processes which are as important as the outcomes. At the heart of the process is the assistance of the Roma community for self-organising in a Community Action Group (CAG) and gradually building its capacity for constructive dialogue with local authorities and institutions. The objectives of the process are: to identify important problems for the community; to suggest solutions; to include these proposals in the local plans of the municipalities; and to develop initiatives and projects that can improve the situation.

As compared to ROMED1 this new phase of ROMED is much more action oriented. It combines training of local groups and institutions in the main principles of participatory local planning with practical organisation of this planning and its implementation. It educates the local stakeholders and stimulates their learning through doing, thus creating functional capacities for active citizenship and democratic governance which in turn can lead to changes towards Roma inclusion.

The implementation of the ROMED2 process involves several **key stakeholders**:

Community Action Groups – groups of voluntary Roma citizens from the community, who agree to function in an open, democratic and transparent way in order to contribute to the improvement of the situation of the Roma community, based on a constructive dialogue with local authorities and other institutions.

- ▶ **Representatives of local authorities and institutions** organised in Institutional Working Groups, designated employees of local authorities and of other local institutions to engage in dialogue and cooperation with the CAG;
- ▶ **A National Support Team including:**
 - **The National Project Officer (NPO) and the National Focal Point (NFP)** responsible for the coordination of the programme and working under the umbrella of the National Support Organisation;
 - **National facilitators**, individual experts external to the local community and competent to work with both stakeholders mentioned above, and who are in charge of supporting the process at the local level from its initiation until it becomes effective and sustainable;
- ▶ **The local facilitator(who could be a mediator trained through ROMED1)** a Roma person preferably employed to work on Roma issues, with good connections within the Roma community and with good knowledge of the local institutions;
- ▶ **Decision-makers (mayor, local counsellors, etc.) and a Municipality Contact Point**, a member of the staff of the municipality designated to support the process from the institutional side.

ROMED2 programme started in April 2013 and was active in 54 municipalities in 11 countries: Bosnia and Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Italy, Portugal, Romania, the Slovak Republic, "the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia" and Ukraine.

The programme was financed by three Joint Programme Grant Agreements with a total value of €3,100,000 provided as 50%-50% matching funds by EC DG EAC and the CoE.

Table 2: ROMED2 Joint Programme grant agreements

Joint Programme grant agreements	Starting date	Closing date (with extension)	Amount (in Euros)
EAC- 2013-0152 ROMED2	01/04/2013	31/03/2014	1 000 000
EAC- 2014-0161 ROMED2 Democratic Governance and Roma Community Participation Through Mediation	01/04/2014	28/02/2015	1 000 000
EAC -2015 – 0294 ROMED2 Democratic Governance and Roma Community Participation Through Mediation	01/03/2015	31/08/2016	1 100 000

ROMACT, the **new Joint Programme** of the Council of Europe and DG Employment, Social Affairs & Inclusion (EMPL), started in late 2013. It was inspired by ROMED2, but shifted the focus from community empowerment to building the political will and capacity of local administrations to develop and implement local strategies for Roma inclusion together with Roma communities and to access resources and EU Funds for their implementation.

It was agreed that ROMACT would use the ROMED2 methodology, where the CAGs were seen as a resource to use for local planning and project development. It also added targeted capacity building of local stakeholders to access EU funds. During 2014, ROMED2 and ROMACT were implemented simultaneously in four countries: Bulgaria, Hungary, Slovakia and Romania. By the end of 2014 it was decided that ROMED2 would no longer cover these four countries, which remained part of the ROMACT programme only.

ROMACT is not covered by the present evaluation. Therefore, it will be considered only from the perspective of complementarities and synergies with ROMED2.

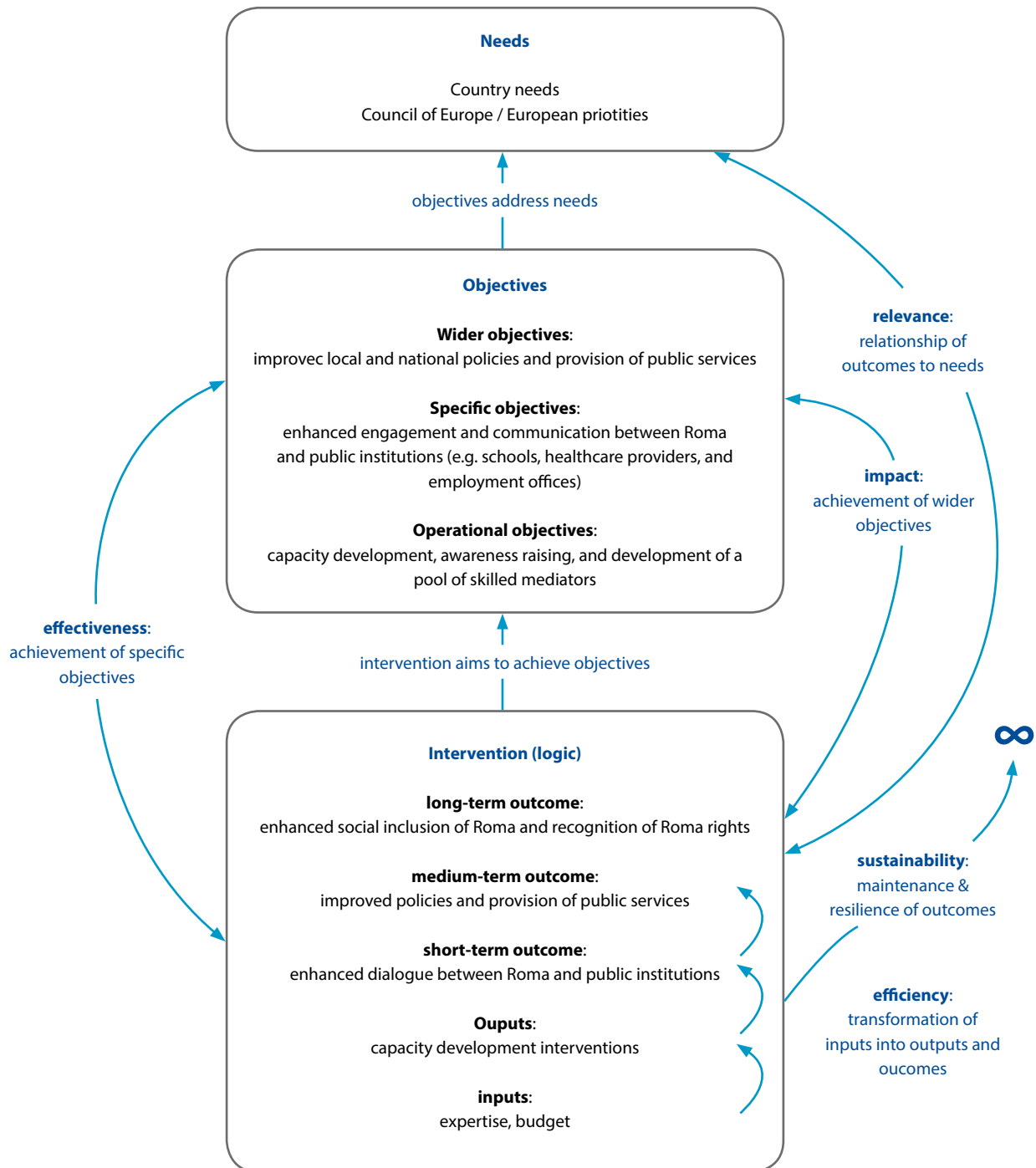
1.2.3. The complexity of the object of the evaluation

All phases of ROMED are highly relevant to the critical need of expanding the capacity for effective Roma inclusion at the local level. ROMED aims to: reduce the gap between Roma communities and institutions and the majority population by supporting capacity building for Roma mediators; and develop effective processes of Roma democratic participation and interaction with local authorities for the development and practical implementation of local strategies for Roma inclusion:

- ▶ ROMED1 invests in developing professional Roma mediators, acting as ‘neutral translators’ able to communicate the needs and rights of the communities to local institutions, and the policies and ways to practice their rights to the communities. However, skilled individuals on their own are not enough.
- ▶ ROMED2 invests in mediation as an instrument for community empowerment – community self-organising in active civic groups to become active participants in local participatory planning. This will help the community to express community needs and interests and to engage in dialogue, as an equal partner, with the local administration. Cooperative work of community representatives with local authorities and institutions will promote the application of good inclusive governance principles.

Figure 1: ROMED Theory of Change below provides a brief overview of the multiple levels of change desired by the ROMED interventions.

Figure 1: ROMED Theory of Change



In a nutshell, the joint programme’s interventions (e.g. capacity building, awareness raising, development of mediation skills at individual and community levels) will contribute to enhanced culture and practice of engagement and communication between the Roma community and public institutions, such as schools, healthcare providers, and employment offices (short-term). This in turn will lead to increased empowerment of communities, more accessible public services and policies that are more inclusive and better address the needs of Roma communities (medium-term), which in the long-term will contribute to better social inclusion and equal access to development for Roma

communities.

Both ROMED programmes have the strategic objective to foster Roma inclusion through effective intercultural mediation. At the same time each of them has its own objective and specific intervention logic involving different approaches and aiming at a variety of changes at different levels.

As outlined in previous sections, ROMED1 is an educational programme aimed at expanding the capacities and empowerment of individual Roma mediators. It focuses on: increasing the functional competencies of mediators; developing a common understanding of the role of mediators; and involving local and national institutions. These are expected to lead to increased support for the recognition of the profession of mediator, and contribute to their employability.

ROMED1's effects relate to processes of individual change and professional development of mediators, as well as system change – of the attitudes, awareness and support of local and national institutions - a precondition for the sustainability of mediation. The complexity of these tasks is further increased by the wide contextual diversity of the 22 countries covered by ROMED1. In particular, there is variable political support for, and recognition of mediators as a profession, and variable financial support for their employment.

ROMED2 in turn is an investment in local processes of increased Roma inclusion based on intercultural mediation, through internalising and applying the principles of good governance and community organising. It aims to create sustainable local mechanisms that will ensure Roma empowerment and participation in the process of local policy development and implementation.

The complexity of the tasks of the ROMED2 programme relate to the need of multiple processes of change at the local level:

- ▶ **Gradual change of attitudes and behaviour at individual level** – of community members, of representatives of local institutions and authorities, and of the broader Roma and non-Roma communities;
- ▶ **Expanding the institutional capacity of local governments** for democratic governance and openness to inclusive policy development and implementation with the participation of Roma;
- ▶ **Stimulating the empowerment process and active citizenship within Roma communities** – first within a core action group of community members that in turn will consult and involve broader parts of the Roma communities.

Each of these processes requires time and good facilitation. Their success depends on a variety of internal and external factors which differ among the broad diversity of municipalities involved in the programme. Also, success is relative and will depend on the local situation – the level of marginalisation of communities, community self-organising capacity, openness and capacity of local authorities and how these have changed with local elections, availability of funding to support local initiatives, etc.

In addition, both programmes are multiple country efforts with different levels of interventions – local, national and European. In this respect, they have complex management structure involving all levels. This increases the complexity of the programmes and it will be important to identify the balance and effective interaction and complementarities among the different levels, as well as the ability of the programmes to accommodate the diversity of contexts and needs of stakeholders involved and to systematise lessons.

Finally, both programmes have expanded. The number of countries covered by ROMED1 increased. In six of the 11 ROMED2 countries, additional resources became available through ROMACT, which simultaneously covered some of the same municipalities as ROMED2 and expanded to new municipalities using the ROMED2 approach but with a different objective and focus.

1.3. Evaluation purpose, methodology and limitations

1.3.1. Evaluation purpose and objectives

Table 3 provides an overview of the overall goal, specific objectives, and purpose of the evaluation.

Table 3: Evaluation Objectives

Goal	Specific Objectives	Purpose of use
Assess the impact of ROMED Programmes' approach	<p>Assess the effectiveness of ROMED1 and ROMED2 respectively in contributing to the situation improvement of the targeted groups, in the framework of priorities and methods set by the Programme;</p> <p>Analyse the impact of the Programme on policies and practices at local, national and European level, in particular as regards education and training;</p> <p>Identify lessons that the Council of Europe and the European Commission, as well as other programme stakeholders should learn from its implementation</p>	<p>To support the implementation Unit in reviewing relevant lines of intervention and adjusting the programmes' activities, for optimal impact on the target groups.</p> <p>The evaluation report has also to 'contribute to the orientation and development of CoE and European Commission's activities in the field of Roma inclusion in general and of its Joint Programmes in particular.'</p>

The evaluation was commissioned to assist learning about the effectiveness and emerging outcomes and impacts from the ROMED programmes at the time of finalising the current phase of ROMED2. From this perspective the evaluation has both a summative and a formative character – summative to identify the results and impacts of the two phases of the ROMED programmes so far, and formative to assist reflection on their further improvement and development in the framework of the overall ROMED strategy.

To meet the above objectives the leading evaluation questions and relevant aspects and sub-questions were organised under the following 6 evaluative areas: relevance, effectiveness as process and results, emerging impacts, efficiency, sustainability prospects and lessons for future applications.

The evaluation should assess two programmes simultaneously: ROMED1 'European Training Programme on intercultural mediation for Roma Communities' and ROMED2 Democratic Governance and Community Participation through Mediation'. As they are strategically linked, the evaluation framework followed a common structure of key evaluative areas and leading questions for both programmes. However, as the two programmes have different objectives, anticipated outcomes and to a certain extent diverse respondents/audiences that can inform the evaluative study specific sub-questions were developed for each of them.

Each of the evaluation question frameworks includes 8-9 lead questions (one to two in each evaluation criterion/ area) and sub-questions within each leading question to be explored during interviews or focus groups with different groups of stakeholders.²²

22. Appendix 4 – Question Guides

1.3.2. Evaluation methodology

Approach

Focus on learning for improvement at both strategic and operational levels guided our approach throughout the evaluation. This entailed facilitating reflection on initial expectations and perceived outcomes as seen by the programme stakeholders, by the direct beneficiaries, as well as outside resource people and organisations in order to provide in-depth understanding of the processes and qualitative changes that resulted from them.

We explored the ROMED programmes, not as predictable, linear mechanisms operating in a vacuum, but as complex systems and learning processes, which themselves are elements within larger, constantly changing systems. This approach responded better to the formative nature of the evaluation and its purpose - to help understand what has worked and why, and what could be done to address remaining issues of concern in a constructive and sustainable way, as well as to the pilot and experimental nature of the two programmes.

Scope

The evaluation was implemented in the following seven countries: Romania, Bulgaria, Slovakia, Portugal, “the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia”, Ukraine, and Hungary. The countries were pre-selected by the EC and CoE, and included in the technical specifications for the evaluation. They have been selected on the basis of coverage in terms of EU membership, enlargement and neighbouring countries, density of Roma population, different stages of the ROMED processes and the commitment of local authorities to the Programme.

All of the focus countries were involved in both ROMED1 and ROMED2, and four of them were also covered by the ROMACT programme.

Methods and tools

The evaluation was based on a set of evaluation tools combining both qualitative and quantitative methods guided by the common framework of the above stated evaluation criteria and specified for each of the two programmes. The table below outlines the set of tools used for the assessment of ROMED1 and of ROMED2.

Table 4: Evaluation Toolset

Programme	Set of evaluation tools
ROMED1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ desk research, ▶ semi-structured interviews with key programme stakeholders at European, and national level in the seven focus countries ▶ survey with all mediators trained by ROMED1 in the seven focus countries ▶ focus groups with mediators trained by ROMED1 ▶ interviews with local stakeholders – institutions and mediators at the ROMED2 case study locations who also participated in ROMED1
ROMED2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ desk research, ▶ semi-structured interviews with key programme stakeholders at European, and national level in the seven focus countries ▶ focus groups with mediators trained by ROMED1 ▶ in-depth case studies of a sample of 15 localities in the seven focus countries where ROMED2 was active

In applying the set of evaluation instruments for each of the programmes we attempted to triangulate as much of the information as possible – to have the same information confirmed by different sources, views and perspectives. This also involved the validation of qualitative feedback with available quantitative data on the performance of ROMED1 and ROMED2, as well as other statistic information in the different countries.

All instruments were based on the general question guide leading the evaluation, but specified for the different audiences of respondents and their specific knowledge and experience with the programme.

The overall evaluation framework and the application of specific tools were consulted with the Evaluation reference group in the inception phase of the evaluation, as well as with the national teams from the seven focus countries at the meeting with NPOs and NFPs organised by the CoE on 10-11 March 2016 in Strasbourg.

The case study locations in the seven focus countries were selected in consultation with the national teams and the ROMED management team. Case studies were intended to be representative of the overall programme, not only of the individual countries. The selection was based on the following criteria:

- ▶ Level of success of the ROMED2 process in each country (one more advanced municipality as process and outcomes, and one that has faced difficulties and challenges);
- ▶ Type of municipality (urban - small town or larger city, rural, share of Roma population, type of Roma community etc.);
- ▶ Type of community action group (selected as representative of the community, or selected as a group of more active citizens without being nominated by their community);
- ▶ Level of openness of the local authorities to the process (very supportive, indifferent or obstructive);

Each case study was conducted based on a common framework and design across the different countries and included:

- ▶ Semi structured interviews with local authorities – the mayor, the municipal contact point and the municipal officials participating in the Joint meeting with the CAG;
- ▶ Focus group discussion with the local CAGs;
- ▶ Semi structured interviews with the national and local facilitator;
- ▶ Semi structured interviews with mediators working in the same locality;
- ▶ Individual or group feedback interviews with people living in the community (wherever possible);

The evaluation was implemented from 15 February to 30 May 2016, and the field work and data collection were undertaken between 17 March and 30 April 2016. The implementation team included country based experts in each of the seven focus countries, as well as team leader and senior evaluation team.

In total the evaluation consulted 363 stakeholders, out of which 348 were stakeholders at national and local level in the seven focus countries. 15 of those consulted were CoE and EAC programme stakeholders, other EC representatives, and other stakeholders at European level. The distribution of participants in the evaluation per type of stakeholder group and per country is illustrated in the Table 5.

Table 5: Stakeholders consulted during the evaluation

Stakeholders consulted In the seven focus countries	Bulgaria	FYROM	Hungary	Portugal	Romania	Slovakia	Ukraine	Total
National teams (ROMED1 and ROMED2) NFP, NPO, trainers, national facilitators	6	5	7	5	11	7	3	44
Mediators/ focus groups	16	8	5	7	34	8	4	82
National institutions including CAHROM representatives	2	10	2	2	2	2	5	25
Local administration and institutions	8	4	6	8	14	11	3	54
Members of CAGs	25	15	11	25	25	6	5 ²³	112
Other stakeholders	6	7	4		1	8	5	31
Totals in-country stakeholders	63	49	35	47	87	42	25	348

23. The reason for the small number of interviews in Ukraine is explained in 1.3.3.

The evaluation conducted:

- ▶ 10 focus groups with 82 mediators (in total for all seven countries) trained by ROMED1 (one per country except for Bulgaria where there were two, and Romania where there two additional focus groups, with school principals).
- ▶ 15 case studies in ROMED2 locations (three in Romania and two in each of the other six focus countries); case studies in the seven focus countries involved group discussions with 112 Roma CAG members, 54 individual and group interviews with representatives of local administrations and institutions, as well as other local stakeholders where possible.
- ▶ Semi-structured interviews with 15 stakeholders at European level, 25 representatives of national institutions and 31 other stakeholders.
- ▶ Over 55% of the consulted stakeholders (194) were representatives of Roma communities – mediators or members of the ROMED2 community action groups.

In addition, the evaluation conducted a survey with mediators from the seven focus countries. The rate of response of approached mediators - overall and per country is illustrated in the Table below.

Table 6: Mediator Survey Response Rates

Country	Mediators trained	Email invitations	Bounced	Reached addressee	Responses received	Response rate	% of trained mediators who responded
Bulgaria	173	109	17	92	28	30,40%	16%
FYROM	134	134	34	100	24	24%	18%
Hungary	40	21	5	16	7	43%	17.5%
Portugal	39	14	1	13	4	30%	10%
Romania	347	228	59	169	58	34%	16.7%
Slovak Republic	42	41	4	37	13	35%	40%
Ukraine	88	25	4	21	4	19%	4%
Total	690	572	124	448	138	30%	20%

1.3.3. Limitations of the evaluation

The main limitation of the evaluation relates to the very short timeframe provided for the implementation of the field work, as well as for the preliminary analyses and the development of the interim report. In practice the field work had to be organised and conducted in a month and half, and even with the granted extension we had only 10 days to systematise the results and findings from the seven countries and develop the interim report.

A second limitation was the low reach out to mediators by the survey, as well as low response. We were provided with email contacts of 572 mediators out of the 690 mediators trained by ROMED1 in the seven focus countries. Of these, 124 emails were not valid and bounced back.²⁴ This meant we were able reach to 64% of all trained mediators, of which only 30% responded to the survey questions. This limits the representativeness of the survey findings, as the mediators who participated in the survey represent only 20% of the trained mediators in the seven focus countries. The use of the survey results was therefore limited to general orientation, and triangulation with the feedback provided by the 112 mediators who took part in the 10 focus groups in the seven countries.

24. The CoE database included emails of participating mediators collected in the period of 2011-2016. Many of these email addresses are no longer valid.

The evaluation team included national experts from (and based in) most of the focus countries. This provided for maximum flexibility in organising meetings with local stakeholders in the limited timeframe. In the case of Ukraine, the national expert was based in another country and data gathering and meetings with stakeholders were therefore carried out in the framework of one field trip. This, together with the very limited time available for data collection for the entire evaluation meant there were fewer opportunities for stakeholder consultations in Ukraine compared with other countries. In addition, the CAG in one of the selected case study locations (Kiev) had recently undergone significant changes and it was possibly to meet with only a few of the new members.

Despite time limitations we succeeded to reach all stakeholders recommended and planned for this evaluation with the exception of very few (3) who did not respond or could not participate due to their busy schedule.

1.4. About the report

The draft report consists of three main sections:

- ▶ The first two sections focus on the assessment of ROMED1 and ROMED2 respectively. Each section covers the horizontal findings on the main evaluation questions organised around the key evaluation criteria related to relevance, effectiveness, impact, and sustainability, also elaborating on the link and synergy between the two phases of the programme. Both sections follow a thematic/program approach outlining common features and country specific differences understood through instruments applied across countries (survey, interviews, focus groups, and case studies in the sample of selected municipalities in the focus countries).
- ▶ The third section includes summary conclusions, lessons and recommendations coming from both phases of the ROMED programmes.

ROMED1 Horizontal findings: Empowering mediators

2.1. Relevance of ROMED1 to Roma inclusion and needs

2.1.1. ROMED's Concept and Vision

The ROMED programme was developed and implemented by the Support Team of the Special Representative of the Secretary General of the Council of Europe for Roma issues, and since 2014 has come under the Strategic Partnership Unit of the same entity within the Council of Europe.

The mission of the ROMED programme has been defined by the Strasbourg Declaration adopted in October 2010 at the High-Level Meeting on Roma, where the representatives of member states agreed that the Council of Europe should implement a *European Training Programme for Roma Mediators* in order to consolidate the existing training programmes and more effectively use existing Council of Europe resources, standards, methodology, networks and infrastructure, in close co operation with national and local authorities.

The concept was designed in the inception phase of ROMED (2010-2011) involving a variety of leading experts in Roma inclusion and intercultural mediation, as well as using training and capacity building resources of the CoE. Their work resulted in the ROMED Curriculum which is the synthesis of the ROMED concept and approach, translating it into a systematic capacity building programme for mediators.

Based on the desk review of the ROMED1 Trainer's Handbook and the interviews with the ROMED management and the International Pedagogical Team the following key aspects of the concept and vision of the programme can be outlined:

- ▶ ROMED1 **aims at improving the quality and effectiveness of the work of school, health, employment and community mediators**, with a view to supporting better communication and co-operation between Roma and public institutions (school, health-care providers, employment offices, local authorities etc.)
- ▶ ROMED1 introduced **a common framework of standards and methods but took a pragmatic approach** recognising the wide diversity of contexts of practicing the mediator's profession and the level of its recognition in the different countries. It focused on supporting all professionals (people with Roma background or from local Roma communities) hired to act as intermediary between the Roma communities and public institutions and whose tasks and responsibilities include facilitating communication and improve the direct co-operation between them.
- ▶ A core place in its methodology **is the concept of real intercultural mediation**. This means that the mediators, their employers, public institutions in general, as well as members of the Roma communities, need to clearly understand and accept co-operation based on the principles of mediation. The real intercultural mediator needs to have a good knowledge of the 'cultural codes' of the community and of the institution. He or she has to be impartial and focused on improving communication and co-operation and on stimulating both parties to take responsibilities and to be actively involved in a change process.
- ▶ **The neutral and impartial role of the mediator in enabling the contacts** between Roma and public institutions is clearly differentiated by other approaches of practicing mediation: the 'Trojan Horse' (the mediator is an instrument of the institution, having as mission to reach out to the community with the aim of changing its attitudes and behaviours); or the 'community activist' (the mediator is perceived as a representative of the community, fighting against the institution, for the rights of the Roma).
- ▶ **The human rights based approach** is another core element of the ROMED methodology. It promotes the idea that the intervention of a mediator is necessary to build trust between Roma and public institutions, not as an act of charity, but as a responsibility for ensuring effective access to fundamental rights of citizens.

- ▶ Mediation needs to contribute to empowerment of Roma citizens to know their rights and to systemic change of institutions to provide accessible and accountable services, rather than reconfirming dependency of Roma community members. The ROMED1 programme proposes a participatory work cycle starting with the set-up of local support teams, both at community level and within public institutions. The work is structured as a cyclic process including participatory planning, implementation and evaluation. All of this has to lead to empowerment, accountability and better direct co-operation.
- ▶ The programme is not perceived as one-time training. **It is viewed as a capacity building process that needs to address the whole system within which mediators are performing their job** and to consider the variety of power relations within the community and among the communities and local authorities. It does not substitute existing training programmes in the different countries, but aims to complement them by contributing to the development of core functional competencies all mediators need.

2.1.2. Relevance of ROMED1 as seen by stakeholders

All the stakeholders approached by this evaluation consider that the focus of ROMED1 programme on supporting the capacity development of mediators is highly relevant to the Roma inclusion priority.

From the perspective of the European Commission, the ROMED programme responds to the need of creating capacities at the local level for effective inclusive processes. Involvement of the Roma community is critical for the success of these processes, and mediators are seen as one of the important instruments in this direction. They can help to reduce the gap between Roma communities and public institutions, and they can serve as role models in their communities. They can make a special contribution towards educating people about their rights and making the services of local institutions much more accessible. In particular, school mediators can assist the process of access to education of Roma children by working with schools, teachers and parents.

The importance of well-trained mediators was also outlined by a number of the representatives of national and local institutions that were interviewed. Mediators are seen as an important link between the public institutions and the communities, expanding the outreach of public services to Roma communities and helping institutions to better understand the needs and problems of Roma people. They assist in gathering real data about the situation of Roma and in this way make services and policies more relevant.

As underlined by both institutions and NGOs or other organisations supporting mediators, one of the main assets of mediators is that they come from the Roma community and know its culture. They are therefore more sensitive to people's needs and can generate more trust within communities. In many cases they have a personal commitment and passion to help people secure better services and thus to practice their rights.

On the more challenging side, the work of mediators faces a number of constraints in all countries with a more or less developed practice of mediation. They are assigned tasks that are not relevant to their function or in their job description. They have very low status within the institution. In certain cases, they are used by institutions to completely 'outsource' the responsibility of solving Roma issues and this serves as an excuse for institutions to avoid direct work with the community. In some countries it was reported that mediators are subject to political influence and trained mediators are substituted by political hires (for ex. Bulgaria).

The application of mediation practice varies across Europe. In some countries, mediators are officially recognised as a profession and their employment in municipalities and local institutions is supported by state budget (e.g. Bulgaria and Romania). In others it is either a new emerging idea, practiced mostly by NGOs (e.g. Ukraine), or an emerging national practice where mediators are employed in pilot national programmes (e.g. Portugal).

As outlined in interviews with external stakeholders, a major issue is that in countries where the mediator profession is institutionalised, there is no monitoring of the practice of mediators. National authorities should ensure that the mediators are not utilised by employers for purposes that are not in line with their intended mission. In countries such as Bulgaria, there is an organised mediator NGO, the Bulgarian Association of Health Mediators, which monitors the quality of employment and work of the mediators, and organises peer support among mediators.

In countries where the profession of mediator is institutionalised, it is up to the local institutions to request a position. In many cases, Roma communities are not aware of this possibility, so it is important that they are informed about their rights in this regard and assisted in requesting this from their local authorities. Addressing this simple gap can help increase the number of municipalities that employ Roma mediators.

The concrete strategic meaning of the ROMED1 training for mediators and respectively its potential for impact contribution in the different countries depended on the local context. Based on the sample of the selected seven focus countries the contexts of application of the ROMED1 programme was quite diverse in terms of existing practice of mediators and specific sectors and fields in which they are engaged, the extent to which they are officially recognised and respectively employed by public institutions, as well as the existence of other training programmes and opportunities for the development of mediators.

In some of the evaluation focus countries, ROMED1 was a **complementary, upgrading effort adding new perspectives and resources to national policies and initiatives:**

- ▶ In countries like **Bulgaria and Romania**, mediators are a well-established practice with years of capacity building history, included in the NRIS. Health mediators in both countries and school mediators in Romania work based on officially adopted standards for their profession and in most of the cases on long-term employment contracts. In the case of these two countries, ROMED1 came as a timely programme that can *upgrade and complement existing national efforts* for increasing the functional competences of employed mediators in different sectors.
- ▶ **In Portugal**, ROMED1 fostered intercultural mediation by adding new perspectives and more resources to the efforts of pilot national initiatives of the Government for municipal intermediation that was going on since 2009. From this perspective ROMED had *synergistic effect* complementing with resources and methodology this programme.

In other countries, the practice of mediators was either missing or not officially recognised as a profession. ROMED **came as a stimulus and potential drive** for the development, expansion and institutionalisation of intercultural mediation as a tool for Roma inclusion. Again, the situation was very diverse, depending on the strategic fit of ROMED1 with national government policies and commitment:

- ▶ **In “the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia”**, the ROMED programme was strategically matched with government efforts to expand and work on the institutionalisation of mediators as a profession. ROMED1 served as a catalyst, activating the interest of institutions at local and national levels in adopting the position of mediators across sectors.
- ▶ **In Ukraine**, ROMED1 brought a pioneer effort in introducing intercultural mediation for the first time in the country, which opened the awareness of national and local institutions of its potential for inclusive public services.
- ▶ **In Hungary**, the profession of mediator is not recognised by the Government and was practiced only through NGO projects. In 2011 during the Hungarian presidency of the Council in Europe, the Hungarian government requested the implementation of ROMED1 in their country. In practice however, other support was not ensured afterwards. ROMED's potential to expand and support efforts for the official recognition and institutionalisation of the mediator's profession could not be realised and the programme had to rely on the support of NGOs only, in an effort to mobilise support from other sources.

Slovakia was a more special case. Both the function and the name of mediation existed but they had different meaning and were applied for different purposes. 'Field social workers' were introduced as a measure within national projects targeting Roma. The approach was evolving over time and since 2011 it is implemented under a 'National Field Social Work Project' with an allocation of almost €30 million. The core task of field social workers is to know the community (individual families) and help solve the problems they face, acting as a bridge between the local authorities and the Roma communities. In practice they play a mediation role, but they are not called mediators. At the same time, there is an officially recognised profession of mediators who work on solving legal disputes. These are legal professionals and have nothing to do with Roma inclusion issues.

ROMED1 had a lot of potential to strategically match national efforts in Slovakia adding to the functional competencies of the *social field workers* active in municipalities, but it failed to use this opportunity strategically. The strategic relevance of the programme remained minimal due to differences between the national and local contexts, specifically regarding who actually mediates and who is recognised as mediator.

2.2. Efficiency and effectiveness of the ROMED1 training process

2.2.1. Setting the ROMED1 framework

The implementation of the programme started in November 2010 with the selection of the first group of trainers and continued with the training of trainers. In the course of the programme **a large pool of ROMED trainers** was created. They are based in different countries, and able to deliver ROMED1 training in local languages. More than half of the trainers are Roma.

Another result at the early stage of the programme was the design and elaboration of **the ROMED1 Trainer's Handbook**²⁵ and the translation of some of the modules and hand-outs in 20 languages. The handbook is a very comprehensive framework built around the core pillars of the ROMED1 mediation approach – cooperation, intercultural mediation, human rights and effective work cycle organised around participatory planning. It consists of 26 modules and 24 handouts, with a strong focus on practice and adaptable to specific training needs of mediators working in different contexts and with different institutions and Roma communities.

The training programme was designed with the intention to provide for maximum flexibility and adaptation according to the local contexts, as well as the specific needs of the different type of participating mediators – health, school, employment, multi sector or community mediators. In addition, it should be noted that feedback from trainers and adaptation to the needs of mediators resulted in on-going improvement of the curriculum and adaptation of the training process.

The training programme consisted of two sessions, the first one of four days and the second one of three days, separated by a period of around six months of practice for the trained mediators. The practical activities were to be monitored and supported by a local support team, co-ordinated by the National Focal Point which is in contact with the Council of Europe. The first day of the second training session was focused on discussion of lessons coming from the practice.

Another important element of the design of the training programme was the participation of local and national institutions during the first day of the first training session and the first day of the second training session. This was to ensure interaction and joint learning among the mediators and relevant institutions, as well as to contribute to the recognition of the mediators and their employment.

A third important resource developed by ROMED was the **European Code of Ethics for Mediators**.²⁶ It consists of a set of core principles and norms that guide the work of mediators. These have been identified based on wide consultation with specialists and practitioners. The purpose of the Code was to serve as a key tool for protecting the mediator against abuse and for enhancing the quality of the services provided.

Setting the structure and organising the effective functioning of this multi-functional team is another important result at the start of the programme. The organisation of the programme was structured as a multi-country team of consultants contracted by the CoE, with coordination and management ensured by the CoE. Methodological coordination was ensured by the International Pedagogical Team and the growing pool of national trainers, as well as by the NFPs. The NFPs are consultants hired in each country to support the CoE with monitoring, to provide feedback on national activities, and to support mediators during the six-month practice. Trainers and NFP were selected through an open competition and selection process.

2.2.2. Direct results of ROMED1 training

The delivery of the first trainings of mediators started in the spring of 2011. For the period 2011-2016:

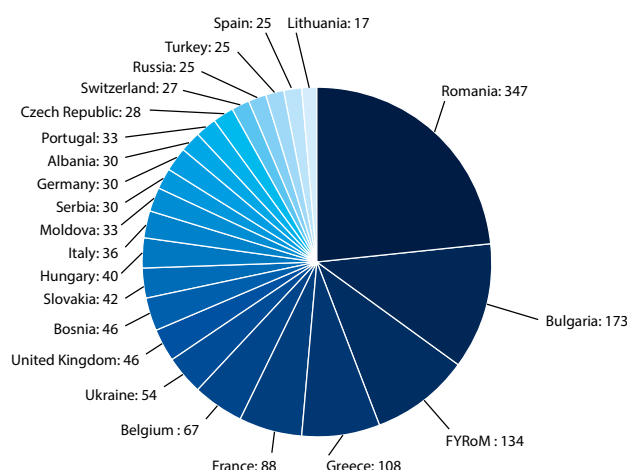
- ▶ **1,479 mediators working in over 500 municipalities were trained in 22 countries across Europe.** Of these trained mediators, 1246 received Council of Europe certificates confirming completion of the ROMED1 courses.
- ▶ A large majority of the mediators (1,089 in 20 countries) were trained during the main phase of ROMED1 (2011-2013). The training of the other mediators from 2014 to 2016 involved new countries approached by the programme, or was based on the demand of the national authorities for additional training in countries already involved in ROMED1.

The distribution of the trained mediators and mediators who received certificates for completing the training of the ROMED1 Joint Programme in the different countries is illustrated in Figure 2 below.

25. Available for download in English: <http://coe-romed.org/sites/default/files/documentation/ROMED1%20Trainers%20Handbook.pdf>

26. http://coe-romed.org/sites/default/files/leaflets/code_eticEN_0.pdf

Figure 2: ROMED1 mediators trained 2011-2016



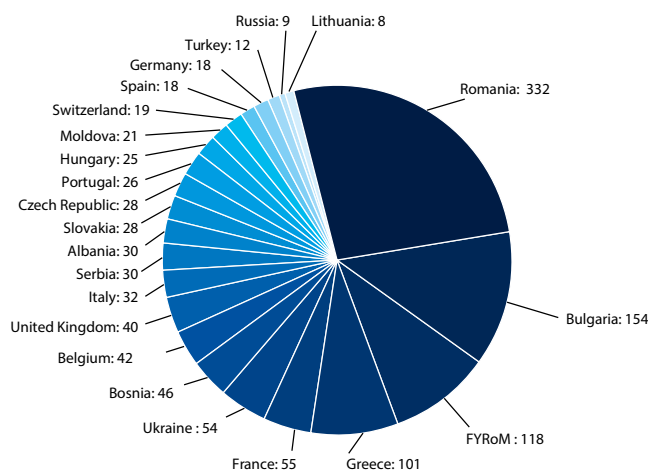
- ▶ **Approximately 90% of the trained mediators are Roma. Over 50% of the trained and certified mediators are women.** The share of women trained varies between countries. For example, in countries like Portugal, the participation women in the ROMED1 training was very low due to cultural factors. The majority of mediators hired by municipalities were men.
- ▶ The share of women also differs among the different types of mediators or sectors they work in. In most countries the percentage of women is the highest among health mediators (over 50%).
- ▶ **An estimated 700 representatives of local institutions** participated in some of the training, enabling direct interaction with mediators and joint learning about the role and approaches of mediation work for Roma inclusion.

Mediators who completed both training sessions and the six-months practice period in between, received a ROMED1 certificate issued by the Council of Europe on behalf of the Joint Programme. Mediators who were not able to attend the second session were able to join a session with another training group in the same country. The CoE certificates were issued to participants based on assessment done in each country by the team of trainers that trained a particular group and the NFP. The NFP then forwarded the final list of certificate recipients to the CoE.

In total, 1,246 mediators (or 84 % of all trained mediators) received certificates for completing the programme. The percentage of trained mediators that were awarded completion certificates varied between the seven evaluation focus countries. The percentage was higher when mediators were employed, or when their training was an obligation of their employment as mediators.

Figure 3 below illustrates the distribution of mediators who received ROMED1 certificates in the different countries.

Figure 3: Mediators certified²⁷ 2011-2015



27. Mediators received a ROMED1 certificate following the completion of the training sessions and practice period.

2.2.3. Selection of participants

The selection of participants for training was based on a set of criteria. One of the most important was that mediators are already employed or have good prospects to be employed by institutions or at least NGOs. However, with the rapid expansion of the number of countries involved in the ROMED1 training, as well due to local circumstances, there were cases when selected participants were not employed after the training. This was the case, for instance, in Hungary where a group of Roma university students, involved in the Romaversitas programme, was trained as the second group of ROMED1 trainees in Hungary.

The main principle in the selection process was that it was done in cooperation with the national and local institutions that employed mediators (or were likely to employ mediators in the future). This principle was respected in most countries, with a variety of practices depending on the context of application of ROMED1 training.

Roma NGOs also contributed to the selection process. In most countries the NFPs who were hired as individuals, also mobilised the Roma NGO they were working for to spread the information to other Roma organisations and partners. In Bulgaria, the CAHROM²⁸ representative suggested involving the National Network of Health Mediators in the selection of health mediators who would participate in the ROMED1 training. The network made a survey among 140 health mediators out of its members to select the best applicants for the training.

In Portugal, “the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia” and Romania participants were selected in the framework of a strategic partnership with ongoing national programmes and/ or strategies aiming to educate a growing number of mediators. In all three countries the cooperation with the national level institutions for the implementation of ROMED training programme was very effective.

The selection process was more problematic in two of the evaluation focus countries:

- ▶ **In Slovakia**, this was due to the need to change the initially appointed NFP immediately before the first training session. The new focal point, the Romani Institute, effectively had to rescue the training and organise a rushed selection of participants for the first training using its own contact lists.
- ▶ **In Hungary**, the partnership with the government became problematic, as it perceived the NFP as politically affiliated to opposition parties. As a result, it did not participate in the selection of the second group of ROMED1 trainees and did not cooperate with the programme

2.2.4. Level of training and distribution of resources among countries

Based on data available for the seven focus countries, there are differences between countries in the number of mediators trained, and in the budget allocation per country.

Stakeholders interviewed perceived ROMED1 as a large scale and well-resourced programme. However, in view of its vast geographic coverage the actual allocation of funding per country is not that big. In the majority of the seven focus countries, the direct cost of the training implemented from 2011 to 2016 was less than €100,000 per country. The main exception is Romania (€494,000) due to the much higher number of training sessions and participating mediators (347). The next two countries in terms of investment were “the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia” (€137,000 for the training of 134 mediators) and Ukraine (€113,000 invested in the training of 54 mediators).

Based on interviews with the ROMED management team, the differences in the number of training sessions, the number of trained mediators, and the level of invested direct resources was due to various factors:

- ▶ The most significant factor was the demand for training of mediators coming from the national governments or other national stakeholders combined with their capacity to support employment. In the case of Romania, the Ministry of Health and the Ministry of Education had already ensured the employment of most of the mediators and requested their training. In the case of “the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia”, the Ministry of Labour and Social Policy was very keen to start more systematic employment of mediators and set the requirement that they should follow the ROMED1 training. In countries such as Hungary and Slovakia, both the demand for training of mediators and the commitment towards their employment was very low.

28. Council of Europe Ad hoc Committee of Experts on Roma and Traveller Issues.

- ▶ Another factor that was considered was the capacity of the CoE and the national teams to influence the authorities regarding the training and employment of mediators. This influence was greater in some countries such as Ukraine and “the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia”, than in others such as Hungary.
- ▶ Other factors included the capacity to identify mediators with suitable profiles and who could commit to the training; the existing level of mediation practice (more established vs. just emerging); and the varied Roma demographics in the countries.

2.2.5. Cost efficiency

Table 7 summarises the available financial information on total direct costs per country, national coordination costs and how they were distributed per number of mediators trained. The cost per unit (trained mediator) does not include the indirect costs (international teams, international training of trainers, overall management etc.).

Table 7: Direct costs (euro) per trained mediator in the seven focus countries

ROMED1 – direct costs per trained mediator by country	Total cost per trained mediator	National coordination per trained mediator	Cost of training per trained mediator	Cost of national coordination as % of total costs	Cost of training as % of total costs
Bulgaria²⁹	1,000	79	921	8%	92%
FYROM	1,022	45	978	4%	96%
Hungary	1,200	100	1,100	8%	92%
Portugal	1,667	154	1,513	9%	91%
Romania	1,424	40	1,383	3%	97%
Slovak Republic	1,000	143	857	14%	86%
Ukraine	1,284	80	1,205	6%	94%
Average	1,228	92	1,137	7%	93%

As it can be seen from the table, the direct cost per trained mediator in the seven focus countries varies between €1,000 and €1,667. It includes the payment of national trainers, direct cost for trainings (accommodation, travel, and food, adapting the training materials, translation, printing and hall rental).

The share of the cost of national coordination varies from 3% of total costs (the lowest in Romania) to 14% (the highest in Slovakia). As it can be seen from Table 7, the cost for national coordination was quite low in the majority of the countries. From the perspective of a training programme, this makes ROMED1 very cost efficient.

However, this cost efficiency is questionable from the point of view of the other objectives of the programme – advocacy for the recognition of the position of mediators and improving their employment conditions, support to networking and peer exchange among trained mediators within the country, etc.

The resources to meet these objectives were very limited which implies that effectiveness was constrained. This was also confirmed by the interviews with the International Pedagogical Team, as well as with some of the NFPs. Limited resources for monitoring, mentoring and stimulating networking and peer support among mediators in each of the

29. The cost per trained mediator in Bulgaria was calculated on the basis of 76 mediators trained explicitly by the ROMED1 programme. The investment of ROMED1 in the training of the group of 97 mediators was only for the cost of the trainer and providing the adapted training methodology. The other costs were covered in the framework of a project funded by other sources.

countries, as well as for more targeted advocacy was among the main shortages of the design of the programme. Another factor affecting the implementation was the pressure for rapid expansion of the geographic scope of the interventions and the expectations to rapidly generate visible results.

2.2.6. Effectiveness of the training processes seen by national teams of trainers and NFPs

Strengths of the ROMED1 training process

Based on the interviews with trainers and NFPs the following strengths of the ROMED training process were outlined:

The ROMED1 Trainer's Handbook provided a comprehensive framework covering a variety of important functional aspects related to the multidimensional work of mediators.

The Trainer's Handbook combines the best of the theories and training approaches in areas like conflict mediation, participatory planning, human rights, case management and communication. Both trainers and mediators consider that one of the added values of the ROMED1 training was that it was organised around the core ideas and practice of rights based approach. This element was missing in other training of mediators, which focused mostly on the specific sector where mediators work (health, education, employment etc.).

The flexibility of the ROMED1 Programme to adapt the training content to the local context and concrete needs of the trainees.

As outlined in interviews with NFPs and some of the trainers, a 'one size fits all' approach does not work. Due to the wide diversity of local contexts, it is unrealistic to expect that a single approach will be relevant to different countries. In many cases, the trainers reported that they used the ROMED1 Trainer's Handbook more as a guiding reference, and used other materials for the practical training, along with examples of practice in their country.

The collaborative approach through the involvement of local institutions in the training was valuable, but not always sufficient.

All interviewees considered the direct involvement of local institutions in the training process to be important. However, its effect on the change of attitudes of local institutions due to their direct interaction with mediators during the trainings was insufficient. Participation of institutions was limited to only some of the days of the training. In addition, participation of local institutions could not be ensured in some of the trainings in the countries (for example in the first training in Slovakia due to the lack of time for preparation, or in Hungary due to the limited or missing cooperation with national institutions).

In some countries, local institutions were directly involved in the whole training together with mediators. Both institutions and mediators considered this a more effective approach.

In Portugal ROMED1, training was organised in partnership with the National Municipality Mediators Programme.³⁰ Roma mediators hired by municipalities were linked to a coordinator from its social inclusion department. Both mediators and their counterparts from the municipality were trained together by ROMED. They considered this arrangement very productive.

In Romania, school mediators were trained together with their respective school directors in one of the groups. This allowed for the development of mutual empathy and of a more realistic planning of future activities. It also required the adaptation of some of the modules, particularly those referring to the awareness of discrimination of Roma and the interaction with Roma parents.

Joint training sessions of social workers and Roma mediators were also organised in Ukraine. They were considered very useful both by mediators and by social workers because they could establish personal contacts, develop working relations, see how cooperation is developed in other regions in Ukraine and learn how they could help each other.

30. http://coe-romed.org/sites/default/files/documentation/Roma%20municipal%20mediator%20project.%20Experimental%20project%20evaluation%20results%20-%20Summary%20report.final_0.pdf

Challenges to the effectiveness of the training process

Interviews with trainers and NFPs identified, among others, the following challenges to the effectiveness of the training process.

The limited time to prepare and adapt the training to the local needs remained a main challenge, especially with the expansion of the programme.

The programme was under pressure to deliver results and demonstrate success quickly. The Strasbourg declaration included a target of 1,000 mediators to be trained in a short period. In addition, the level of consultation in the process of developing the ROMED1 concept and approach differed between implementation countries. While in some countries (for example Romania) a number of stakeholders felt that they were consulted in this initial process, in others (for example Slovakia, Bulgaria, and Hungary) it was felt that there was not enough consultation about the design of the programme. Especially in Slovakia, the prevailing impression was 'that the design of the programme is set and all you have to do is take it and implement it.'

The low quality of the translation of the training materials was an issue in some of the countries for example Slovakia. This required additional clarifications, explanations and editing to make them adequate to the country context. As already mentioned, a serious issue in Slovakia was the confusion of terminology of who is 'mediator', and who actually performs mediation in Roma communities.

Diverse groups of participating mediators – as field of work, or level of experience. Trainers needed to find the balance between those mediators with more experience (including from previous training) and those who were just starting this profession. In a number of countries, the ROMED1 training involved mediators specialising in different types of work, and in some cases, they were called social workers, teacher assistants, etc., instead of 'mediators. This required specific translation of the methodology to relate to the concrete nature of the work of the different type of mediators. As outlined by trainers (especially in "the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia" and Slovakia) there was a need to prepare national training handbooks, not just direct translation of the general methodology into the local languages.

Participating mediators had high expectations of employment as a direct result of the training. In Slovakia, some of the participants who were not employed expected that ROMED1 would lead to employment. Especially in Hungary, where the position of mediator is not recognised, most of the participants in the training had high expectations and motivation when they applied, as they anticipated that ROMED1 would contribute to their recognition and employment. There was dissatisfaction in both countries, as the limited impact of ROMED1 training fell short of these high initial expectations.

Lack of resources to provide for effective monitoring and support during the six months period of practice. During the initial years of ROMED1 training, it was assumed that national and local institutions would take their responsibility in providing better conditions for the work of mediators during the six months practice period. However, while this practice period was effective in some cases, it was not so effective in others, and this depended on the accountability of institutions in the country. A major shortcoming of the programme was the insufficient resources for effective mentoring during the practice period. In later ROMED1 training, there was more strategic planning regarding practice and employability before the first training session.

2.2.7. Relevance of the ROMED1 training process for the needs of mediators

Mediators trained by ROMED1 who participated in the focus groups in the seven countries outlined the following values and challenges of the training process.

The high quality of the national trainers.

In the majority of countries, trainers were much appreciated as very knowledgeable, and well acquainted with local contexts and the challenges involved in the work of mediators. There were very few exceptions where the trainers were considered not adequate. One example is Slovakia, where one of the trainers selected by the CoE was the leader of a Mediation institute (dealing with the legal profession of mediators that is not related to Roma issues/ inclusion). During the training, he was promoting legal mediation, which is not so relevant in the context of ROMED1, as well as the certification services of his institute. This confused the participants.

Interactive and participatory training approach.

Most valuable was the fact that the training approach was focused on local realities. All participants praised the interactive forms of education chosen by the organisers, which included examples and real-life case studies to be solved during the training, active participation of the audience, and the division of the participants attending thematic groups.

Rights based approach and empowerment orientation.

The added value of the programme compared to other types of training was that it included topics like human rights and anti-discrimination, as well as the issue of empowerment of people who usually not participate in the training of mediators.

Comprehensive training modules assisting the work of mediators in a practical manner.

The majority of mediators who participated in the focus groups found the modules related to interaction with members of the Roma communities and facilitating intercultural communication very useful. They also noted the value of training related to strategies for building confidence and consensus based on non-violent communication, planning work cycle (especially assessing community needs).

There were no specific training topics on Roma women's empowerment and other issues. However, these issues were covered in the training and in the discussions about concrete cases raised by mediators from their practice.

Focus on the complexity of the function of mediators and clarity of their role.

Mediators participating in the focus groups considered that the training was unique in putting forward the multiple aspects of the role that the mediators play. Definition of the role of mediators is much needed, as different interpretations could lead to changes in their functions.

However, in a number of cases some doubts were expressed by mediators in terms of the feasibility of playing **the role of 'neutral' or 'impartial' link** between the community and relevant institutions. On the one hand, if the mediators are hired by institutions, they have to follow their job descriptions, as they are part of the local institution. On the other, in the majority of the cases mediators come from the Roma community and they cannot be impartial, as they need empathy and belong to the same community.

The need for further reflection on the 'neutrality' terminology (rooted in conflict mediation) was also outlined in interviews with some NFPs and external stakeholders.

Based on the interviews with the International Pedagogical Team, the concept of mediator neutrality and impartiality is a concept that is not easy to translate into practice. However, it is important to make mediators aware that they are not supposed to pick a side, but support both parties – the community and the institutions so that effective communication is in place and problems are resolved.

The European Code of Ethics for the work of mediators was an important tool for regulating their work, but only in some of the countries is it still remembered.

The Code of Ethics developed by ROMED1 was considered as most relevant by school mediators participating in the focus groups in Romania. It helps avoid involving mediators in resolving all problems and explains clearly what their function is. Effective communication of the Code of Ethics to school inspectors, directors and doctors, contributed to increasing recognition of the work of mediators. Mediator feedback indicates that, in some situations, working conditions improved as a result of the Code in terms of access to facilities such as offices, computers, students' situation and marks. There are also cases when employers adopted the Code of Ethics and attached it to the mediator's job description.

The Code was very highly appreciated and used in Portugal as well. It is viewed by mediators as a very clear and concise statement regarding the role of the mediator, providing a framework that is easy to understand and to explain, and contributing to a more formal recognition of their status as professionals.

In other countries, the Code of Ethics was not noted as a high priority, and nor was it mentioned as one of the most relevant elements of the ROMED1 training.

The six-month period of practice was needed and innovative, but lack support and mentoring constrained its effectiveness as a capacity development tool.

Mediators trained under ROMED1 were given tasks in order to put into practice some of the ROMED1 approaches, developing local support groups with institutions, members of the community, parents etc. They were also supposed to receive close monitoring and support from the NFP during the practice period. This element is generally missing from other mediator training. While positively assessed as a needed and good attempt, mediators provided differing assessments of the effectiveness of the practice period during the focus group meetings.

Mediators faced some significant difficulties when putting into practice some of the ROMED1 elements in their work. They had to go back to the realities of the institutions that they were working for, where in many cases concepts like participatory planning, or the rights based perspective of work were not encouraged. The fact that a representative of the institution joined the opening of the training did not necessarily ensure institutional support for innovations in the work of mediators. In some cases, the functions of the mediator as promoted by ROMED1 conflicted with mediators’ job descriptions. One such example was the case of employment mediators in Bulgaria, who do not conduct fieldwork within the community. They are office-based employees of the local administration and take on cases that are assigned to them.

In this situation, support and mentoring during the practice period was very much needed, but according to mediators, it was generally limited or missing in most of the countries. NFPs support was provided mainly by email or by telephone, or in the course of monitoring the progress of activities.

At the same time, there were some exceptions and examples of good practice:

- ▶ In some countries, for example Romania, mediators and trainers were in contact by mail or telephone and there were cases when mediators approached their trainers individually for advice on certain situations. However, as noted by trainers, consistent and tangible mentoring and assistance was missing.
- ▶ In Portugal, a number of complementary follow-up activities and coaching sessions for mediators were organised in 2012 with the ROMED trainers and NGOs. This coaching model was considered to enhance the confidence of the mediators, with a positive impact on their work. However, according to several of the mediators, more intensive mentoring was needed.
- ▶ In Ukraine, mediators have been supported throughout the programme. The NFP and the Roma organisation ‘Chirikli’ has been supporting the work of mediators through mentoring and assistance, and acting as a liaison between authorities and mediators. It has invited mediators to join other training programmes supported by other donors, or to attend training for civil servants when the topic of Roma inclusion was covered. It has helped to overturn social stereotypes about Roma and It has engaged in dialogue with the social workers and civil servants.

2.3. Emerging outcomes and impacts

2.3.1. Impact of ROMED1 training on the empowerment of mediators

Fostering the professional development of mediators

The survey of mediators explored the utility of the ROMED1 training for their development. Figure 4 below summarises the responses of the 138 mediators who responded to the survey (or 20% of all trained mediators in the seven evaluation focus countries).

Figure 4: Utility of the ROMED1 training for the professional development of mediators

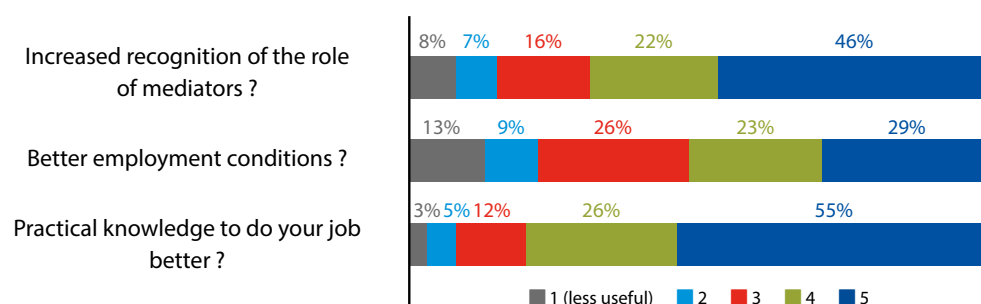


Figure 4 shows that respondents consider the ROMED1 training very useful, particularly regarding the practical knowledge acquired and the recognition of the role of mediators. However, the surveyed mediators are less convinced about the utility of the ROMED1 training with regard to improvement of their employment conditions. The results of the survey were confirmed by findings from the mediator focus groups and interviews with local stakeholders in the seven focus countries. Their responses can be summarised as follows:

The ROMED1 training had a visible impact on the mediators' functional skills to perform in the field.

The ROMED1 programme met expectations regarding mediators' increased functional skills. The participants interviewed for the purpose of this evaluation mentioned that the training was helpful and provided participants with additional skills in the areas of communication, planning, interaction with the community and cooperation with local institutions. Some of them reported that they continue to use the skills and techniques acquired during the training.

In some countries, ROMED1 had an additional impact on the professional development of mediators. Some mediators trained under the ROMED1 programme decided to continue their education, but there are no exact statistics to confirm their number (for example, Portugal, Ukraine, Romania, Bulgaria). This trend cannot be attributed only to ROMED1, but it was among the catalysts for mediators to continue their professional development through higher education.

The tendency of mediators to search for ways to continue their education was also confirmed by the interviews with some outside stakeholders. For example, internal statistics of the National Network of Health Mediators in Bulgaria indicated that more than half of their 196 members are currently studying at universities (various professions). One of the impetuses was the consistent capacity building done by the Network, which broadened the perspectives of mediators regarding their personal and professional development.

In most of the focus countries, ROMED1 training generally did not lead to significant improvements in the employment status and conditions of mediators.

Only 29% of survey respondents considered that the ROMED1 training and the certificate issued by the programme were most useful in providing them with better employment conditions, and 23% believed that it made a limited contribution. The majority of the respondents are negative about the direct impact of the training and certificate to improving their employment conditions. Only 11% consider that these were the basis for their salary increase. Only 22.6 % consider that ROMED1 helped them secure long-term contracts, and these were mostly mediators who found employment as a result of the training ("the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia").

The results of the survey were confirmed in the mediator focus group discussions in the seven focus countries. Mediators' employment status and conditions vary considerably between countries:

- ▶ In countries where the position of mediator is not officially recognised, the trained mediators continue to be employed either by an NGO or by other projects, or they are not employed at all (for example Hungary and Ukraine). Following the training In Ukraine, most mediators were contracted by the NFP's NGO (Chirikli) to provide project – based mediation services to Roma communities basis, based on agreements with social centres in the country.
- ▶ In "**the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia**", the ROMED1 training was requested by the Government to meet its strategy for employing new mediators. For this reason the training resulted in new employment for most of the trained mediators
- ▶ In **Portugal** ROMED1 did not lead to a significant increase in the employment of mediators. After the end of the funding granted by the National Municipal programme, municipalities did not continue employing mediators. Of the 26 mediators trained under ROMED1, six continued an activity related to mediation. Only three of them continued working as municipal mediators and this was due to the implementation of the second phase of ROMED2 in these municipalities.
- ▶ In **Slovakia** and **Hungary** there was considerable disappointment with the limited impact of the programme on the employment of trained. They initially had high expectations that ROMED would lead to new job opportunities, and some interviewed mediators referred to promises of employment that would follow the training. One reason for such high expectations of employment as a direct result of participating in the training was the use of the term 'employing people with a Roma background' in the description and the presentation of the programme.
- ▶ In **Bulgaria** and **Romania**, mediators continue to be hired through permanent long-term labour contracts (except mediators in Bulgaria who are hired through annual project contracts). However, the acquisition of new qualifications did lead to higher salaries. Mediator salaries are generally very low in both countries, usually at the level of the minimal salary. This is more or less the case in other countries too. Other stakeholders confirmed during interviews that there is little prospect for mediator pay increases, as they are specified in their job descriptions, and the mediator profession is low on the salary scale of public administration bodies. Even if mediators have, or subsequently acquire, a university

education, which is the case in a number of countries, they are usually not remunerated according to their newly acquired competences.

Increased shared understanding of their role among mediators across Europe

In interviews and focus group meetings with mediators, we asked the question: what is most important for the role of mediator? Based on the answers they provided, **the summative picture of a good and successful mediator includes:**

- ▶ **Being a mediator is both commitment and responsibility.** This is not just a technical job - it requires full involvement.
- ▶ **Mediators are 'translators.'** They translate Roma issues to institutions, local policies to communities so that they can know their rights. They need to have the ability to reduce gaps and to create trust on both sides, to manage conflicts and promote positive collaboration for solving of issues.
- ▶ **In order to perform their jobs well, mediators need to have empathy** with the community, and to engage with the community but also must be able to manage expectations. They also need to be a model for community education and behaviour.
- ▶ **They need to be well trained and have a strong motivation and inspiration.** They need to be excellent communicators, to have experience in community-based work and to work effectively in the field, identifying support groups and allies.
- ▶ **It is essential that mediators have the trust of the community, and recognition from institutions.** Both the community and the institutions acknowledge their work. Results are expected and demanded.

Fulfilling these multiple roles is not easy. Among the main challenges outlined in the focus group, meetings with mediators are the poverty and marginalisation in some segments of the Roma community and the lack of models and vision resulting from this situation. There is continuing institutional discrimination towards Roma and in some cases, mediators themselves have a submissive attitude.

Despite these challenges, one of the main contributions of ROMED1 was that it put forward a new vision for the role of mediators and promoted it at European, national and local levels. As outlined in some interviews, ROMED1 was the first programme that put the development of mediators and the need for systemic change at its centre, rather than simply training them in specific skills.

Another important contribution of the ROMED1 programme was that it improved understanding of the benefits of employing mediators. If before the activity of the mediator was focused on solving emergencies and single cases (e.g. one child and/ or one family) the ROMED1 approach emphasised the importance of the role mediators in addressing problems before they materialise.

Attitudes and understanding of the role of mediators by local authorities and institutions

We were able to meet with only a limited number of representatives of local authorities and institutions that participated in the ROMED1 training. This was mostly in the framework of the case studies in municipalities involved in the ROMED2 phase, as well as a focus group with school directors and inspectors that we organised in Romania.

Interview feedback from representatives of local institutions indicates that there is clear recognition of the need for mediators. Their role is recognised as very important in ensuring the link between the institutions and the community. The main benefit of employing mediators is that they know people in the community. They can find the right people that can influence the wider community, and they can translate policies and requirements for people in the community. At the same time, they can be very helpful in 'educating' municipalities and institutions about the specificities of Roma communities, the real needs of people, and the ways of approaching these needs. As phrased by a representative of local administration (school policies)³¹ "we learn together with communities and the mediators are our main teachers".

As outlined in the previous section, the impact of ROMED1 on changing the attitudes of local institutions was much more visible where they were trained together with mediators throughout the whole training programme. However, there is a need for an ongoing system to get local institutions involved in capacity building efforts so that they better understand Roma inclusion and community issues, and the role of mediation as one approach to improve the situation. In some cases, representatives of local institutions are subject to politically motivated replacement. For example, some school directors in Romania were replaced following elections.

31. Tundzha municipality, Bulgaria

Feedback from mediators during focus groups meetings suggests that there is some emerging change in the attitude of the local institutions they work for or work with. Previously, mediators were treated as 'second class' by the administration and tended to project a submissive attitude. Today there is more recognition of their role and functions. This cannot be attributed only to ROMED1, but the programme definitely helped raise the profile and importance of the work of mediators.

Another tendency outlined in interviews and focus group meetings is that with recognition of the importance of mediators at the local level, there are increasing expectations that they can solve all problems. In some cases, they are given tasks that may go beyond their competence and their job description. Charging mediators with 'solving problems' can make it more difficult for Roma to gain direct access to institutions, and it may release the institution from its obligation to address problems. Mediators can only facilitate community access to mainstream services.

Peer networking and exchange of experiences at national level

In addition to the capacity development of individual mediators, the ROMED1 training aimed at stimulating peer networking and exchange of experiences among trained mediators within the countries, thus increasing their ability to build collective responses to problems.

Results in this direction were most visible during the training sessions where people worked in groups and there was intensive exchange of experience. In most of the countries after all training sessions were over, ROMED1 did not provide any support to the whole group of trained mediators. The link with mediators was confined mostly to those who continued to be involved in the municipalities covered by ROMED2, especially in countries where the ROMED1 training finished in 2012-2013.

Feedback from the ROMED management team indicates that networking among trained mediators was not strategically addressed during the preparation of the ROMED1 programme. Maybe for this reason, ROMED1 did not have enough resources to support the intended networking and meetings of already trained mediators. However, the programme has tried to encourage mediators to stay in touch and create networks. This resulted in creating national Facebook pages or mailing lists in some of the countries. In several countries, there were more structured efforts for organised networking of trained mediators and in some cases, the programme provided support (including financial support):

- ▶ In Romania ROMED1 provided support for the legal establishment of an association of school mediators;
- ▶ In Bulgaria, an association of employment mediators was registered with help from another project of the Intercultural Centre Amalipe (the Roma NGO led by the NFP);
- ▶ In Ukraine all mediators trained under ROMED1 function as an informal network facilitated by the Roma NGO Chirikli led by the NFP;
- ▶ In Portugal two Roma organisations were formed. One is the NGO Letras Nomadas established by trainers and trainees involved in the programme (which became the National Focal Point for ROMED2) and the newly formed Association of Portuguese Roma Mediators in 2014.

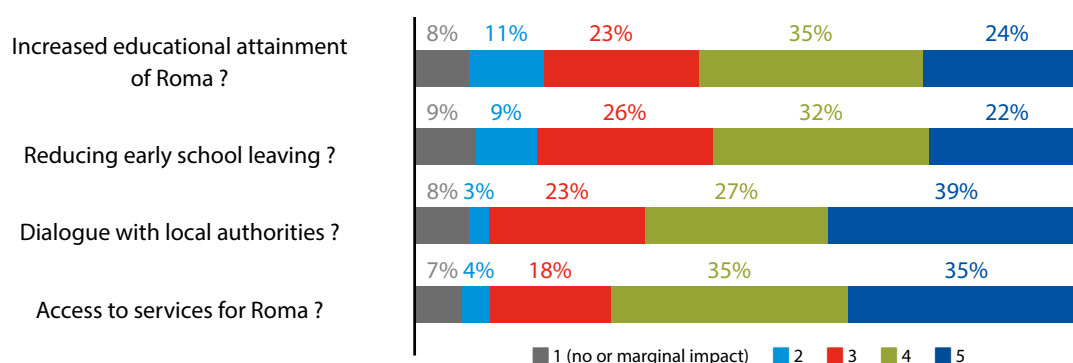
However, most of the newly established associations of mediators are at their initial organisational stages, except Letras Nomadas in Portugal, which quickly became very active due to the fact that it became the National Support organisation for the implementation of ROMED2.

These new associations can make a very important contribution in providing for constant networking, capacity development, and advocacy to improve mediators' working conditions and more generally for Roma inclusion. Outside the ROMED1 Programme, a very good model in this regard is the history of the National Network of Health Mediators in Bulgaria, which has over 195 members - health mediators. It acts as a watchdog organisation, ensuring the quality application of the profession of health mediators. It participates in the selection and examination of mediators, promotes mediators among municipalities, organises training, and participates as an equal partner in meetings with national institutions on various issues related to Roma inclusion.

2.3.2. Emerging impacts towards social inclusion in communities

The main direct impact of ROMED1 as a training programme was on the professional development of mediators. We also tried to explore to what extent the presence of trained mediators has increased Roma communities' access to public services. Figure 5 summarises the answers of trained mediators on this survey question.

Figure 5: Impact of ROMED1 on communities



Overall, mediators rate positively the impact of their work, particularly regarding access to services for Roma, and dialogue with local authorities.

The survey indicates that mediators' assessment of the impact of their work is very positive in Romania, Bulgaria and "the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia". This is due to the fact that mediators in these countries had employment contracts with relevant local institutions. Especially in Bulgaria and Romania, mediators have been working on longer term or permanent contracts which provides for consistency of their impact towards increased accessibility of various public services of Roma communities.

The self-assessment of impact in the areas of education is more modest. As explained in the discussions with the focus groups (especially in Romania with school mediators) overcoming the educational challenges requires processes of consistent work with children, parents and institutions. A major challenge is changing the attitudes of parents who are illiterate or have low levels of education. Another difficulty is the cultural specificities in some the Roma communities. School mediators (as well as health mediators in other countries) have done a lot of educational work with Roma families to prevent the early marriage of Roma girls and to prevent them dropping out of school. However, it is a slow process that cannot bring significant immediate results. As noted by some mediators, "results appear slowly but surely". Every small success is a great step forward, providing new chances for the development of these girls.

Based on interviews with local and national stakeholders, the presence of well-qualified mediators is making a significant difference in the locations they are working in. We were provided with numerous examples of the successful individual work of mediators who helped resolve conflict around housing, helped people to obtain their identification documents, or to access various types of social, health and educational services.

Particularly important is the work of mediators for reducing school dropout amongst Roma children by working with their parents, school authorities and teachers. Health mediators are contributing to increased access to basic health care, immunisation of children, health literacy of mothers and young girls. They are also contributing to preventive care and diagnosis, which were missing before in Roma communities. Community mediators and social workers help solve a variety of issues related to missing infrastructure in Roma settlements as well as other issues.

Feedback from interviews indicates that the issues of Roma women and girls are present in the work of all mediators, especially in the areas of health, education and, to some extent, employment.

However, it is impossible to quantify how ROMED1 directly influenced the accessibility of services to Roma communities. The only data that can be reviewed in this regard are the reports on the mediators' six-month practice period. However, this data is fragmented and was gathered at different times from 2011 to 2015. It cannot provide an overall picture of the continued contribution of mediators towards access to services of Roma after the programme is over. In addition, identifying the attribution of ROMED1 would require a baseline study of the situation before ROMED1, which is missing. The programme had neither human resources, nor time to do such a baseline study and provide for consistent monitoring, due to the political pressure to launch the programme quickly, followed by the pressure to expand rapidly to a large number of countries.

In principle, the evidence of the impact of mediators (including ROMED mediators) on increased accessibility of services should be available from national institutions. We asked various stakeholders in the countries about such data, but it is either missing or fragmented. Based on the interviews, good national systems of monitoring of the impact of mediators as one of the measures for Roma inclusion is limited. There is some research in the different countries but usually in the framework of assessment of specific projects or programmes

Some Roma NGOs gather such information. We found two such examples. One is within the ROMED1 programme and the other one comes from other stakeholders' experience.

The first example is from Bulgaria, where the National Network of Health Mediators, which is gathering systematised information from its members – 195 health mediators (only 30 of them were trained by ROMED1).

Based on the National Network of Health Mediators annual report for 2015, the 195 health mediators in Bulgaria have provided 130 657 services to Roma individuals and families, as well as campaigns. The majority of these services relate to health care prophylactic exams, immunisation campaigns, prevention campaigns, health literacy and information, reproductive health, campaigns and work with families for prevention of early marriages, assisting people with documentation and health insurance, etc. For more than 10 years of the work of health mediators, the immunisation of children in Roma settlements was very low. It is currently 90%.

Currently the National Network of Health Mediators is working together with the Ministry of Health Care to establish a uniform reporting system on monitoring the results from the work of health mediators, which will be sent to municipalities

The other example is from Ukraine.

Based on the information provided by the Roma NGO Chirikli, the informal network of 40 mediators trained by ROMED1 over a six-month period (October 2015 – March 2016) have provided services to 34,683 Roma representatives, or 7,144 families (11 125 are women, 7,890 men and 15,668). They also provide services to around 200 to 300 Roma per month that are internally displaced because of the conflict in the Donbas.

The most popular services include assistance with application for identification documents, residence registration, access to financial subsistence and services (utility subsidies, pensions, and disability payment), information about social protection and basic rights, assistance with social housing and employment, educational support to improve school attendance, medical assistance with access to diagnosis and access to hospitals.

2.3.3. Impact at national level

Level and manner of acknowledgement of ROMED1 by national administrations

ROMED1 applied several main strategies to promote the programme with national level institutions.

First and most important was establishing cooperation with national authorities for the implementation of ROMED1. National authorities were seen as key actors shaping the demand for training matched with the commitment to employ trained mediators. They had to be involved in the selection of mediators, and participated in some of the training modules.

The implementation of this cooperation varied between the countries:

In some countries it was shaped as a structured cooperation. Examples are the synergy of ROMED1 with the National Municipal Programme in Portugal; the active partnership with the Ministry of Education and of Health in Romania which led to the intensive training of a much larger number of mediators; the strategic fit of ROMED1 at the heart of the strategic programming of the government in “the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia”, which introduced the requirement for newly employed, or planned to be employed, mediators to be trained under ROMED1.

In other countries, such as Bulgaria, ROMED1 fitted into the already established priority of mediators as part of the NRIS. The government was supportive of the implementation of the programme, but not proactive in demanding more training (as was the case in countries such as Romania or “the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia”) or including ROMED1 as part of the official training of health or employment mediators.

In Ukraine, ROMED1 raised the interest of the government in mediators as a new concept and solution and triggered discussions around the need for the institutionalisation and recognition of the position of mediators. But the main engine for using the impetus of the programme was civil society (the National Focal Point and Chirikli Roma NGO).

In Slovakia, ROMED1 had very limited promotion and effect at national level. The start of the programme was marked by damage limitation (wrong selection of the initial NFP, and later of some of the trainers, who subsequently became the NPO of ROMED2). Despite the need for capacity development of social workers (who are actually the ones doing mediation work) and the opportunities provided by existing strategic national programmes to support them, ROMED1 had very limited impact. It trained only a small number of mediators, a large proportion of these were not certified.

In Hungary there was some initial cooperation with national authorities at the start of the programme, but this went completely dormant as the government suspected that the different political affiliation of the NFP might lead to a 'not well-controlled network' of Roma mediators. ROMED1 consisted of fragmented training. A large proportion of trained mediators were not certified and, in the context of missing official recognition of mediators, they were not employed by institutions.

The participation of national authorities in some of the training sessions provided a direct link between them and the Roma mediators. This was viewed by the ROMED management team as a possibility to influence and advocate. While this direct encounter opened discussions on critical issues coming directly from the community level, there was not enough time to go into more depth and advocate for some issues.

A second important strategy of ROMED1 to influence the national level was the role of the National Focal Points. Part of their task was to communicate the priorities and values of the programme at the national level, to influence and advocate for changes related to policies affecting mediators. As outlined in previous sections, the NFPs were hired as individuals, however the majority were leaders of prominent and active Roma NGOs in the relevant countries.

Based on the interviews with the NFPs, they were doing as much as possible to promote the programme with institutions. As explained in most of the cases, this was not because of the job (and some did not recall that they had the specific task of structured advocacy for mediators). The most active NFPs were those whose organisations had Roma inclusion and mediation at the heart of their mission. Especially good examples are the work of 'Chirikli' in Ukraine, and 'Sonce' in "the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia".

A third strategy of the CoE was to use as much as possible the potential of CAHROM meetings and discussions. CAHROM is the Ad Hoc Committee of Experts on Roma and Travellers Issues. As an intergovernmental structure, it is a platform for the exchange of information, good practices and experiences.

ROMED1 and the application of intercultural mediation are the focus of a number of the thematic reports of CAHROM from 2012 to 2015. References to ROMED1 training of mediators are present, especially in thematic reports on inclusive education, providing good practices in some of the focus countries (e.g. "the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia") or more challenging ones, like Hungary. The need to reinforce the role of Roma mediators or teaching assistants in pre-schools is also identified. Other reports refer to the role of trained mediators to reduce school dropout rates. ROMED is also acknowledged in other reports related to broader Roma inclusion policies, the role of central and local authorities in their implementation, and fighting anti-Gypsyism and hate speech.³²

Although the target audience of these reports is mainly at expert level, they reflect the evolving perception of governments on thematic points around Roma inclusion. ROMED1, and the importance of mediators, became increasingly evident in experts' discussions and recommendations, and this provided evidence of the acknowledgement of the programme and its influence on national policy debates related to Roma inclusion.

Contribution of ROMED1 to the inclusion of Roma mediators as a priority in national policies

In Bulgaria and Romania, where mediators are officially recognised and are present in the NRIS, the efforts of the NFPs and the CoE aimed to further improve the employment of mediators and their functions. For example, in Bulgaria, ROMED invested in the training of employment mediators. The NFP, through other projects of its NGO, the Center for Intercultural Dialogue 'Amalipe', assisted the process of establishing the network of employment mediators as a legally registered NGO. Later, through other small scale projects, 'Amalipe' tried to pilot a new approach to the work of employment mediators including field work in communities, and advocacy to include field work as part of the functions of employment mediators. But this initiative was not successful.

32. CAHROM (2015)⁶ Thematic report on inclusive pre-school education of Roma children, CAHROM (2012)¹⁸ EN Thematic report on inclusive education for Roma children as opposed to special schools; CAHROM (2012)⁶ EN Thematic report on school drop-out and absenteeism of Roma children; CAHROM (2012)⁷ EN Thematic report on the role of central local and regional authorities in implementing national Roma inclusion policies; CAHROM (2013)²¹ EN Thematic report on combating anti-Gypsyism hate speech and hate crime against Roma

In countries where mediators are not officially recognised, ROMED1 had a different level of contribution depending on the type of partnerships and the local context:

ROMED made a significant contribution to national policies in “the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia”.

The programme put the concept of mediation in the strategic planning of government programmes. It helped achieve synergies between the different policies related to Roma inclusion at national and local levels. Mediators were adopted as a policy priority and became part of the strategy of the government and are a cross cutting element of different sector programmes. The uniform standards for the work of mediators are being developed. The main success factor was the commitment of the government and especially the strategic partnership established between the CAHROM representative and the ROMED NFP, who leads the Roma organisation Since.

In Portugal, ROMED1 contributed to recognising mediation as an important policy instrument.

The National Strategy for the Inclusion of Roma Communities (2013-2020) adopts mediation as the seventh strategic dimension to be followed, with three priorities to be considered: to promote the training of socio-cultural Roma mediators; to mainstream the programme of municipal mediators over the medium-term; and to raise the awareness of public institutions about the role of intercultural mediation as a strategy for more inclusive services. The National Operational Program for Social Inclusion and Employment (POISE 2020), investment priority (9i) focusing on active inclusion, will allocate structural funds for mediation projects at municipal level, in line with the national strategy.

ROMED1 is making significant steps towards the institutionalisation of mediators in Ukraine.

In Ukraine the ROMED NFP, through its NGO Chirikli, was very active in creating an Inter-Agency Working Group for Roma at the level of Cabinet of Ministers, which will oversee the implementation of the Strategy for protection and inclusion into Ukrainian society of Roma national minority until 2020. The group was established on 25 November 2015.³³ It includes six Roma, four of whom were trained under ROMED1, of whom three are Roma mediators. Although the launch of the group was delayed due to the political crisis, it has great potential for effective advocacy to include mediators as part of the strategy in the future. There is a gradual integration of the ROMED1 methodology in state education for social workers.

Most recently, a special course, ‘Mediation as a form of social work with the Roma minority’, was approved by the National Pedagogical Dragamanov University, the Institute of Social Work and Management. The course is included in the curriculum of the Institute and will be taught from September 2016. This is considered an important step towards the institutionalisation of the practice of mediators in the country.

2.3.4. Impact at European level

The ROMED1 programme became highly visible and acknowledged at European level.

One of the most visible and significant contributions of ROMED1 was the adoption of the Recommendation of the Committee of Ministers to Member States on Mediation as an Effective Tool for Promoting Respect for Human Rights and Social Inclusion of Roma³⁴ (September 2012). Based on this recommendation, the CoE encourages governments of member states to:

- ▶ ‘Develop and maintain an effective system of quality mediation with Roma communities and recognise the importance of professional self-regulation by mediators themselves’;
- ▶ ‘[E]nsure that official recognition to the professional status of mediators is given, taking measures, where necessary, to render the employment of mediators more stable, and ensure fair remuneration and adequate working conditions’;
- ▶ ‘[P]romote a favourable environment at local level for the work of mediators.’

The subsequent recommendation of the Council of the EU of 09 December 2013 on effective Roma integration measures in the Member States reiterates the importance of ‘training and employment of qualified mediators dedicated

33. <http://www.kmu.gov.ua/control/uk/cardnpd?docid=248677547>

34. [https://wcd.coe.int/ViewDoc.jsp?p=&Ref=CM/Rec\(2012\)9&Language=lanEnglish&Ver=original&Site=CM&BackColorInternet=DBC2F2&BackColorIntranet=FD864&BackColorLogged=FD864&direct=true](https://wcd.coe.int/ViewDoc.jsp?p=&Ref=CM/Rec(2012)9&Language=lanEnglish&Ver=original&Site=CM&BackColorInternet=DBC2F2&BackColorIntranet=FD864&BackColorLogged=FD864&direct=true)

to Roma and the use of mediation as one of the measures to tackle the inequalities Roma face in terms of access to quality education, employment, healthcare and housing.³⁵

Roma mediators' programmes are referred to as good practice examples in the European Parliament resolution of 12 December 2013 on the progress made in the implementation of the National Roma Integration Strategies. The importance of training of Roma mediators to promote employment among Roma is underlined in the study commissioned by the European Parliament's Policy Department for Citizens' Rights and Constitutional Affairs in 2015.³⁶

The Roma Mediators' Congress was one of the most significant and visible events organised by ROMED1 at European level. It was considered unique as it brought the voices of communities to Brussels. More than 400 mediators from different countries participated in the congress. Furthermore a group of ROMED1 trainers received their certificates for the ROMED1 training from high level representatives of the CoE and the EC. Based on the feedback from mediators who participated in the Congress, this was a very important event for them, contributing to their empowerment. It was visible recognition of the importance of their work in communities. In addition to increasing the visibility of the programme, the Congress of Mediators contributed to networking among mediators from different countries.

There were initial ideas of further developing the European network of mediators by the use of an online platform, but the idea was dropped due to the multiple languages it would have required and the fact that mediators do not always have access to the internet.

The broad impact of ROMED1 was outlined in the analyses developed in 2012-2013 by the French sociologist professor Jean-Pierre Liégeois. Among the numerous aspects of the impact of the programme was the contribution of trained mediators to the development of numerous projects at the local level. Their networking at regional, national and European levels to increase that potential was also important. Mediators not only have an impact on the situation of Roma communities, but they also have an effect on non-Roma, serving as translators and helping them better understand Roma culture. From this perspective, it will be important in the future to invest in cultural mediators as agents for the empowerment of Roma communities, as well as for raising the awareness of the majority population on intercultural issues.³⁷

How did CoE and EC ownership of the programme contribute to impact at different levels?

The fact that the programme was led by the CoE and the EC has helped to generate interest in, and support to, the programme. This increased the involvement of national authorities. Locally, it has raised the recognition of the importance of mediators by local institutions. The European nature of the programme raised the self-esteem of mediators who were trained. Mediators are proud to have a certificate issued by European institutions (the certificates included a joint programmes' logo clearly stating the contributions of both the CoE and EC). However, as outlined in previous sections, the European certificates had limited direct impact on mediators' conditions of employment, and this was mainly in Romania.

2.4. Sustainability

In terms of sustainability we explored two interrelated main aspects:

- ▶ How sustainable are ROMED1 results and emerging impacts?
- ▶ What are the capacities of the in-country systems and stakeholders to continue systematic work in support to quality work of mediators?

Regarding the first question, the main impact of the programme was the investment in the development of mediators. Its sustainability depends on the extent to which mediators continue to work and put into practice the skills acquired through ROMED1.

There is no representative data for the employment status of mediators trained by ROMED1 in the evaluation focus countries. Since the majority of the ROMED1 training sessions were organised three or four years ago, data on the performance of mediators is limited as there is no system to monitor trained mediators after they completed the training.

35. [http://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/PDF/?uri=CELEX:32013H1224\(01\)&from=en](http://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/PDF/?uri=CELEX:32013H1224(01)&from=en)

36. http://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/etudes/STUD/2015/536485/IPOL_STU%282015%29536485_EN.pdf

37. <http://coe-romed.org/sites/default/files/documentation/Developments%20and%20challenges%20in%20Mediation%20ENG.pdf>

The survey of ROMED1 mediators conducted for the present evaluation was an attempt to find answers concerning their employment status. Due to the low response rate, the survey covers only a small share (20 %) of the trained mediators in the seven focus countries. However, it provides some general orientation on the extent to which mediators continue working.

A survey conducted a year after the ROMED1 training indicates that 19.5% of participants stopped working as mediators, 69.5% continued to work as mediators and 11% started to work as mediators (mostly in “the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia”). At present 60% of the mediators are employed, and 40% are not.

Feedback from interviews and focus group meetings in the seven focus countries indicates that the worst situation is in Slovakia and Hungary, where employment of trained mediators is very sporadic. While in Portugal all of the trained mediators were employed on a project basis, only three of them continued working as municipal mediators and this is due to the ROMED2 programme. It is hoped that in the future, with the implementation of the government strategy, this programme will be renewed. The employment of mediators trained by ROMED1 in Bulgaria and Romania is most stable due to the existing policies and standards for employment of mediators in the two countries.

A second important issue related to sustainability is the very low salary of mediators. In a number of cases mediators leave their job to find better opportunities (and some emigrate to other countries in Europe).

Several important aspects of sustainability were outlined in the research of the French sociologist, professor Jean-Pierre Liégeois,³⁸ as well as in an interview with him for this evaluation. They relate to the importance of the recognition of the institutions providing the training and certification of mediators. Developing a good modular system, with credits earned with each module is also linked with the broader professional development of mediators and can later assist them in getting further academic qualifications. The fact that ROMED1 is a European programme can also help link the ROMED1 training with a European vocational certification system.

Despite the effort of ROMED1 to provide certificates for the training, as outlined in previous parts of the report, these certificates were usually not officially recognised and did not contribute much to the recognition of mediators’ qualifications, or to their employment. Qualification and recognised certification remain an important need for the future sustainability of the ROMED1 investment. These need to be linked to the system for paying mediators, so that acquiring a new qualification and better education is better reflected in salaries.

Despite the growing recognition of the importance of mediators, there are very limited national programmes for the training of mediators. If they exist, they are targeted at developing some sector-specific skills needed for the work of mediators in different sectors. In most of the countries it was reported that funding for training like ROMED1 is missing.

At the same time, in most of the countries, the need to support the training and development of mediators was clearly expressed by some representatives of institutions and by mediators.

However, as outlined in interviews with stakeholders never involved in the implementation of ROMED1, even in countries where mediators are recognised and hired, **sustainability is not one act, but a process of systemic change** to develop local institutions, employment programmes and consistent capacity building.

Sustainability of the investment in developing Roma mediators depends on the awareness and consistent involvement of several key actors:

- ▶ **National institutions** recognising the importance of training and capacity development of mediators as part of the NRIS and ensuring funds for this;
- ▶ **Local institutions** recognising the need for mediators and ensuring funding for this;
- ▶ **Roma civil society** (Roma NGOs, networks of self-organised mediators, trainers) doing consistent advocacy with the government to invest in the development of mediators;
- ▶ **Raised awareness in communities** about their right to request that local authorities to hire mediators, especially in countries where the mediator’s position is institutionalised. Such a process will not happen by itself or just as a result of an outside training programme. It requires strategically focused investment, creating local ownership, alliances and consistent interaction of all actors involved leading to the development of sustainable in-country systems supporting mediators as part of Roma inclusion strategies.

38. <http://coe-romact.org/sites/default/files/leaflets/Developments%20and%20challenges%20in%20Mediation%20ENG.pdf>

ROMED2 horizontal findings: Empowering Roma communities

3.1. Relevance of ROMED2 in response to Roma inclusion needs

3.1.1. Transition from ROMED1 to ROMED2: vision and synergies

ROMED2 evolved based on the lessons emerging from the implementation of the first phase of the programme. ROMED1 invested in expanding numbers of mediators trained in a growing number of countries with the assumption that this will 'seed' mediators as agents of change in multiple locations which will lead to the improvement of local interactions for Roma inclusion. A second assumption was that by involving representatives of local institutions in some of the training, this will help create a common ground and interaction between them and the mediators. This attempt to use the training for effective dialogue among local stakeholders proved to be insufficient.

ROMED1 as a short term intervention – effectively seven days of training over a six-month period, could not provide for sustainable change in local communities by itself. Upon returning to their workplace, mediators faced a number of challenges related to the local environment. It was difficult to apply the ROMED1 approach when neither the community nor local institutions were ready. It could not be expected that mediators could change both sides alone. A different type of intervention was needed, going beyond the focus on mediators, and investing in institutional change – active and self-organised Roma communities as recognised partners of local authorities in planning and implementing local policies and initiatives.

ROMED2 is a response to this recognised need for a more systematic approach to stimulate processes of community change and the engagement of local stakeholders with each other in a constructive dialogue. The programme invests in a longer process involving different local stakeholders at the local level.

The new phase of the ROMED programme was designed in synergy with the previous training of mediators:

- ▶ The two phases of the programme shared the same approach to mediation, aiming at responsible and constructive dialogue in the community in search of cooperation to solve issues and problems. But ROMED2 took this approach from the individual level to group and institutional level. It focused on initiating and developing active groups of Roma citizens in communities. In the course of dialogue with local institutions and authorities, these groups are intended to become institutional structures (formal or informal) for consultation on local policies so that the voice of citizens can be taken into account, this way leading to institutional change within local authorities towards more inclusive governance.
- ▶ ROMED2 built on the human resource developed by the first phase of the programme. Previously trained mediators remained a key factor in this process of institutional change. One of the criteria for selecting locations to work deeper in the communities, was the availability of active mediators trained through the first phase of the programme. Mediators thus played a new special role inside the local process – to act as local facilitators, to provide needed information and assist the emerging civic groups in their communication with institutions.
- ▶ In some countries, the implementation of ROMED2 was accompanied by the continuation of training of more mediators based on the demand of governments, this way ensuring the potential dissemination of the results of the community based interventions to other localities.

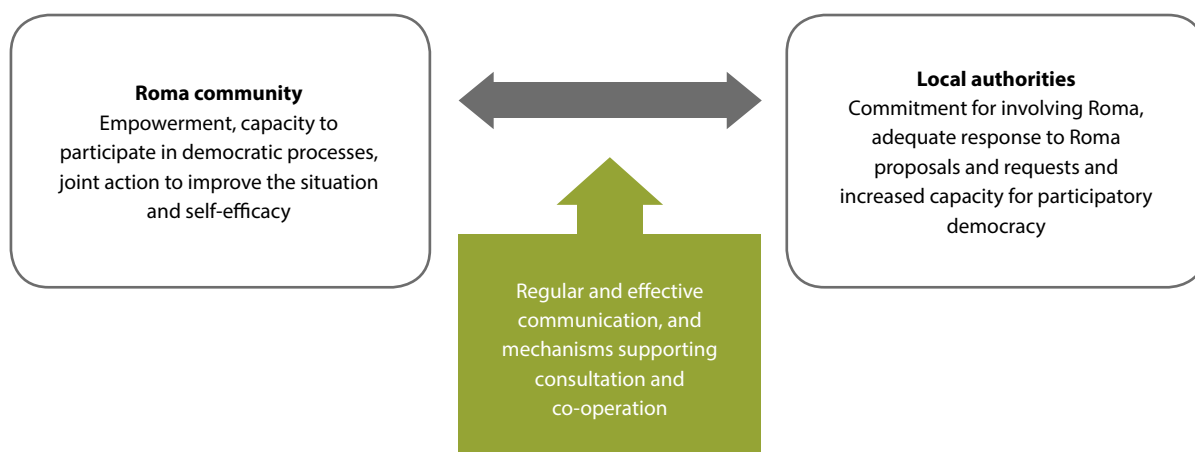
At the same time there were some significant differences:

- ▶ ROMED2 was designed as a process of at least 18 months, in contrast to the short term nature of the ROMED1 intervention (seven days training over six months)
- ▶ At the centre of the new phase of the programme was the Roma community, not just the individual mediators. At the core of the process was the development of community action groups (CAG) as a form of community organising.
- ▶ Engagement of local authorities was ensured as part of the process in a structured way, not as one time encounter during training.
- ▶ Both programmes aimed at capacity building, but ROMED2 was not designed as a series of training activities. **It was a consistent process of democratic citizenship learning**, applying bottom-up participative approaches by introducing new knowledge and putting it into practice. It was assisted by on-going mentoring and support by the programme. The aim was to expand the practical capacity and experiential learning of communities for active citizenship, and of institutions for democratic governance which in turn can stimulate changes towards Roma inclusion.

The aim of ROMED2 was to contribute to a shift from *'a vicious circle of blame and discouragement to a virtuous circle of trust-building and cooperation.'* More precisely, this means moving from dependency and paternalism to empowerment and recognition, stimulating respect for human rights, active citizenship and inclusive implementation of the principles of good governance and of participatory democracy.³⁹

Figure 6, below, illustrates the vision of change behind ROMED2.

Figure 6: ROMED2 concept



Source: ROMED2 Guidelines⁴⁰

Based on the interviews with the ROMED management team and the International Pedagogical Team, ROMED2 was viewed as a systematic local process of up to one year to support an initial cycle (group formation, prioritisation, planning, monitoring and evaluation) until there is a renewal of the cycle with increasing local ownership of the process. Developed plans as part of the process needed to include short term, medium term and longer term objectives. Tangible initiatives meeting the short term objectives needed to be developed and monitored every two to three months. People in communities had to see concrete results in order not to lose patience and trust in the process. Longer term objectives and plans will require larger scale initiatives and will need several cycles of monitoring, evaluation and updated planning.

The vision of the programme was also evolving following its experimental application of change processes in multiple countries and diverse local contexts. It was developed as collective learning across countries at the start of the programme, as well as in the course of its implementation during a number of meetings of the international and national teams. This resulted in the evolving ROMED2 theory of change, which was further adapted to meet identified challenges and risks at the local level.

39. Ibid.

40. ROMED2 Guidelines and resources for national and local facilitators

The initial vision was not confined into a predefined structure with a specified set of outputs to be delivered in fixed timeframe. Interview feedback from international and national teams and local stakeholders indicates that the application of such local processes required a timeframe of at least three to four years in the locality in order to ensure some sustainability. Participative planning and changing the paradigm of power relations and decision making towards the active involvement of citizens is always a long-term process of individual and institutional learning. It requires much more time to seed the idea of participation, and to build trust and ownership in the context of communities living in social exclusion and marginalisation.

3.1.2. Relevance of ROMED2 for Roma inclusion needs

All the stakeholders approached by this evaluation considered that the focus of the ROMED2 programme on the empowerment of Roma communities for democratic participation responds to one of the most critical needs related to the priority of Roma inclusion. It is at the core of European policies related to Roma inclusion, which increasingly underline the importance of building the capacity of Roma communities to become active participants rather than remain a target population, or recipients of assistance and subsidies. It is a practical attempt to apply principles like ‘for Roma with Roma’ and responds to the priority of education to active citizenship and democratic values of human rights, equality and non-discrimination.

The ROMED2 programme fosters the practical implementation of the 10 Common Basic Principles on Roma Inclusion and of the 12 principles of good governance adopted by the Council of Europe.

The European Council recommendation on effective Roma integration measures in the member states, adopted in December 2013, also promotes the same key principles, stating that it is crucial to provide support for *‘the active citizenship of Roma by promoting their social, economic, political and cultural participation in society, including at the local level’*, and that mediation is *‘one of the measures to tackle the inequalities Roma face in terms of access to quality education, employment, healthcare and housing’*.⁴¹

All consulted national and local stakeholders in the seven focus countries consider the focus of ROMED2 on local processes of effective dialogue and interaction between communities and local authorities as highly relevant to the needs of Roma inclusion.

Based on country findings, the two main aspects of relevance can be summarised as follows:

One of the most valuable aspects of ROMED2 is that it puts the Roma community at the heart of the effort.

ROMED2 does not confine participation to the use of intermediaries that claim to represent the community – informal leaders, local NGOs or other intermediary organisations working for Roma. It approaches the community directly, providing for the involvement of ordinary community members in the process and building confidence within communities that their voices matter.

This emphasis on direct communication with community members contributes to their awareness of their rights and the way in which they can be practiced by formulating collective demands based on community needs, rather than individual needs. This perspective is a critical part of the inclusion process itself.

According to all stakeholders from the seven focus countries, the most unique part of the programme is the support given to the creation of CAGs. These provide the space for the direct involvement of the Roma community in the design and implementation of local policies.

Process orientation and flexibility to grasp diversity of the situations at local level

The bottom up approach and flexible methodology which provides room for adaptation to diverse local contexts was another key value noted in interviews. Usually, large scale international programmes miss the diversity of local contexts and the internal diversity of Roma communities. A major strength of ROMED2 is its focus on building social capital within Roma communities enabling sustainable local consultation processes between the Roma community and representatives of local authorities. Such genuine intention for process orientation is not typical of large scale European programmes, which are usually under pressure to deliver planned outputs and stated outcomes.

41. http://www.consilium.europa.eu/uedocs/cms_data/docs/pressdata/en/lisa/139979.pdf

At the same time, interviewees outlined a number of **contextual challenges to the intended effectiveness of local processes** sought by ROMED2. The main contextual challenges can be grouped as follows:

- ▶ **Political crises, instability and growing nationalistic votes** that can change the commitment of local authorities in the process (noted as negative factors in most of the countries);
- ▶ **Level of marginalisation in communities and the time foreseen for developing the CAGs.** In communities with a higher level of marginalisation and lack of previous experience in initiatives for participation or self-organising, a much longer process is needed for the formation of the groups. Expectations about their performance need to be adjusted.
- ▶ **Low level of trust inside communities – in some cases there was a ‘social inclusion fatigue.’** Communities have witnessed various programmes promising inclusion and raising expectations for improvement, but with limited tangible effects. Establishing trust in the genuine intentions of the programme also takes time and consistency of effort.
- ▶ **High local expectations from the programme, including expectations of financial support.** It was reported in most countries that the initial expectations, especially among local authorities, was that ROMED2, as a European programme, would provide not only advice and facilitation, but would also provide funding to solve local issues.

3.2. Effectiveness of ROMED2 assistance to local processes

3.2.1. Design and Guidelines of the local process

ROMED2 support to local processes as vision, approach, concrete methods, key actors and their roles is described in detail in the document ‘**Guidelines and resources for national and local facilitators**’ (or the ‘ROMED2 Guidelines’). As noted in interviews with the International Pedagogical Team, the ROMED2 Guidelines were designed as a flexible framework and resource package. The Guidelines are not a classic training curriculum that follows exactly prescribed modules. They provide an overall approach to local processes with a number of possible tools and options to be used depending on the needs of the local contexts.

There are two obligatory steps in the process which included the creation of a **community action group (CAG)** and facilitating **structured interaction with local authorities**. Both steps had to be implemented in the framework of the application of all phases of the Participatory work cycle promoted by the ROMED Programme (preparation, assessment of the current situation, planning, implementation and evaluation). In the planning phase, the CAGs in cooperation with communities and with local authorities had to define both short term and long term priorities and relevant solutions and initiatives. While the above steps were obligatory, their concrete application was left open and flexible to accommodate the local needs and variety of contexts.

The estimated timeline for putting in practice the whole participatory work cycle was 18 months of consistent work of the CAGs with the support of national support team and national facilitators. To ensure sustainability it was considered that the full work cycle needs to be repeated at least once, especially in terms of monitoring, evaluation and update of plans related to long-term priorities.

The ROMED2 Guidelines are extensive, with sections on each of the steps envisaged in the process, including conceptual and practical sections, supported by a wide variety of facilitation resources and materials. The Guidelines are clearly conceptualised and provide concise but clear descriptions of multiple aspects of the local processes and the links between them.

Based on the feedback of national facilitators and National Support Teams, the ROMED2 Guidelines provide a sound basis for the facilitation of local participatory planning processes. Nevertheless, interview feedback indicates that for two reasons, it is practically impossible to use the Guidelines exactly as they are presented, or to make use of all the proposed tools. Firstly, the Guidelines needed to be adapted to the level of the local groups so that people in the communities can relate to them. Secondly, insufficient time was envisaged for the introduction and implementation of complex, and often very new, principles and approaches. As mentioned above, it was up to the national teams to determine how they were going to use these resources while following the main steps envisaged. A number of facilitators and members of the National Support Team noted that they used the Guidelines mainly as a background resource, while in most of the cases they were relying on their previous experience and knowledge of community based work and facilitation.

It should be also noted that the ROMED2 Guidelines have been constantly updated and developed based on feedback from ROMED2 NFP/NPO meetings, as well as consultations of the Pedagogical team with the national teams of trainers and facilitators.

3.2.2. Setting the ROMED2 framework: Key actors, roles and capacities

The ROMED2 programme was implemented by a set of key teams and actors at the international, national and local levels.

International level organisational framework

At the Council of Europe, ROMED2 was managed and assisted by two teams – the management team and the International Pedagogical Team.

The ROMED2 programme was placed under the Strategic Partnerships Unit of the Support Team of the Special Representative of the Secretary General of the Council of Europe for Roma issues, and was managed by a small team including the head of unit, a programme manager, a senior administrative assistant, a communication officer and an administrative assistant who joined the team later in 2014. The task of the programme manager is to follow the implementation of the programme – both in operational, pedagogical, financial and content terms. The administrative assistants share tasks which often go beyond the ‘administrative assistant’ status, including financial monitoring, operational follow-up, and content analysis. An online reporting system is used to record the evolution of the programme. It is linked to financial and contractual clauses, and was designed in terms of questions responding to indicators elaborated by the International Pedagogical Team in cooperation with CoE management. It is implemented and monitored by the CoE management.

The International Pedagogical Team was initially composed of five experts from different countries and currently includes three experts. The pedagogical team was responsible for the elaboration of the pedagogical approach of the ROMED programme (both ROMED1 and ROMED2), including the Trainer’s Handbook, and its intervention takes place mainly during regular meetings with the national teams. They test and update the methodology of the programmes, help the CoE management to update their publications, and provide training for the National Support Teams.

Based on the interviews and interaction with the CoE management team and the International Pedagogical Team during the present evaluation, we were impressed by the high commitment and professionalism of the experts involved. Both teams are value based, with a passion for making a difference to Roma inclusion, creativity, and openness to different opinions, innovation and risk taking. The two teams are one of the main success factors for initiating and putting into practice the innovative ROMED2 approach across Europe.

International meetings and networking between the ROMED2 National Support Teams is another important element of the organisational setting at international level.

The concept of networking between the national support teams started in September 2013 during the first “Accountability meeting” aimed to gather input for extracting the lessons from ROMED1 and the design of the new approach of ROMED2. The meeting gathered Trainers of ROMED1, National Focal Points of ROMED1, as well as some international partner organisations, such as the Roma Initiatives Office of OSF. The participation of OSF as an outside strategic stakeholder not directly involved in ROMED was very valuable as it brought a new perspective, based on the extensive experience of the Roma Initiative Office of OSF in community based organising. They contributed to the idea of creating the CAGs as catalysts to activate and organise Roma communities.

After the selection of National Project Officers (NPO) and National Focal Points (NFP) in December 2013, the first training of trainers/ facilitators, combined with the first NPO/NFP meeting took place in Bucharest, where close to 80 persons attended (NPOs, NFPs, national facilitators, the International Pedagogical Team and the CoE management team). The methodology of ROMED2 was also tested for the first time during this meeting, and as a result national facilitators were prepared for the interventions in the field.

A second training of trainers took place one year later (December 2014) in Berlin, where the ROMED2 methodology was updated with the facilitators and the NPOs/NFPs.

Since the beginning of the ROMED2 programme in 2013 there have been 12 meetings of the NPOs and NFPs. The pace was most intensive in 2013 and 2014 with seven meetings organised during this period. There were several objectives behind the international networking and meetings of the national teams:

- ▶ Ensure participatory monitoring and collect updates on the next cycles of implementation with a focus on the content and approach;
- ▶ Share and learn from emerging good practices between countries;
- ▶ Become acquainted with improvements and updates in the pedagogical approach of the programme;
- ▶ Look into possibilities of networking for the empowerment of the Roma communities at local level;
- ▶ Develop synergies with other sectors of the CoE working with Roma.

In addition, during all these meetings, bilateral meetings were held between each national support team and the ROMED CoE management for updates on implementation and administrative issues.

The evaluators were able to directly observe two of the meetings of the national teams which included in their objectives discussions related to this evaluation. Based on these observations, the meetings are very interactive and participatory, stimulating open discussions and developing a shared vision and approach of the programme. They have contributed to creating an international programme platform, with the national teams as a sounding board for the methods applied. As mentioned above, these meetings contributed directly to continuous updating of the methodology and the ROMED2 Guidelines for national facilitators.

National level organisational framework

At the national level, the implementation teams (National Support Teams) included national facilitators, NFPs and NPOs. All of them were selected and hired directly by the CoE. More concretely, their roles and observations on their capacities are outlined below.

The national facilitators

The national facilitators had a central role for assisting the processes in localities. As outlined in the ROMED2 Guidelines they were performing the role of the ‘mediator’ in the mediation process between the community and the local authorities and institutions. Their task was complex – to assist the development of the CAG and to facilitate its interaction with the local authorities. They had to identify the best way to use the resources provided in the guidelines, as well as to ‘feel the pulse’ of local stakeholders and optimise their joint action. This role of the national facilitator had to be gradually replaced by local facilitators in the selected municipalities. This was envisaged as one of the steps for sustainability of the local process.

Based on interviews with national facilitators, and in some cases observation of their work, the following findings on their capacities are noted:⁴²

- ▶ **Developing a network of facilitation experts in all countries who are accountable to the community is a major success of the programme.** ROMED2 national facilitators are very competent and skilled experts, the majority of whom are Roma. Most of them have years of experience in working in or with Roma civil society in a variety of programmes for Roma empowerment and local development. All have a high commitment to Roma inclusion and direct work in communities. They perceive their function not as a ‘technical job’ but as a cause and responsibility to local people.
- ▶ **The presence of national facilitators and the quality of their work was highly assessed by local stakeholders** during the focus groups and discussions in the framework of the case studies conducted in 15 selected municipalities. They were viewed as an important external impulse to activate the community and a key factor to maintain the dialogue between the community and the local authorities.
- ▶ **The feedback on the work of individual national facilitators was very positive with very few exceptions.** The only completely negative feedback came from Slovakia, and this related to the work of the first national facilitator for Cicava, who did more damage than good to the local process. There were also references to more problematic situations where national facilitators did not follow the approach of the Guidelines. However, this was corrected with the help of the national support teams.
- ▶ **The frequency of the visits and consistency of support provided by the National facilitators to the local CAGs was of critical importance to the effectiveness and sustainability of the process.** In those cases where

42. The evaluation team observed the work of the national facilitator with the CAG of Tundzha Municipality (Bulgaria) and with the local authorities in preparation of a round table on the achievements and evaluation of the local plan of the municipality. It was attended by representatives from the majority of CAGs and some of the local authorities involved in the implementation of ROMACT in Bulgaria.

the facilitator was changed frequently (e.g. Byala Slatina in Bulgaria, and Cicava in Slovakia) the interventions were not productive and yielded few or no results. Slovak experience shows that in places where the national facilitator lives close by (in the region of the selected municipality) and visits it frequently, real results are achieved. In these cases, the groups exist and are active. In localities where this is not the case, the sustainability of the CAGs is questionable.

The National Project Officer and National Focal Point

Based on interviews with the International Pedagogical Team, the NFPs were much more involved in this new phase of the programme. Both the NFPs and the NPOs of ROMED2 had to be much more aware of the concept and approach, and to be able to analyse the diverse local contexts of its application.

The NFPs and NPOs had the responsibility to coordinate, monitor and assist the quality of work in the different municipalities. They have to monitor the implementation and extract learning from the process, which was shared at the regular international meetings and trainings organised by the program. The NPOs had to provide quality control and guidance to the national facilitators to ensure the adequacy of approach in the different local situations and adapting the methods accordingly. This helped identify deviations from the approach and enabled quick adjustment in situations where the approach was not in line with the ROMED philosophy (for example cases of guidance that imposes decisions on the CAG rather than facilitating the group). Based on our observations and feedback from national and local stakeholders:

- ▶ **A good selection of NFPs and NPOs is among the key factors for the successful implementation of the ROMED2 programme.** All the NPO and NFPs we interviewed are passionate leaders committed and working for Roma inclusion. In some countries there was the need to change the initially selected NPO or NFP (Slovakia, Hungary and Romania). This happened for different reasons, and had different effects on the programme. Only in one case (Slovakia) the wrong selection of the first NPO had a serious negative effect on the programme.
- ▶ **National facilitators could rely on the support of the NPOs when addressing difficult local situations** related to the political context, or problems within the community. This support was considered very valuable both by facilitators and CAGs (examples were provided in Bulgaria and in Hungary).
- ▶ **The backup and support of the NFPs and NPOs was also highly appreciated in municipalities.** In the majority of the countries, the NFPs and NPOs were highly visible at the local level due to their more direct involvement in the process as back up support to national facilitators, or in cases acting as national facilitators themselves.

The National Support Organisation

The introduction of a National Support Organisation was a new element for the implementation structure of ROMED2 (compared to the previous ROMED phase). The function of the National Support Organisation was to provide for the administration of the programme, including distribution of the finances needed for local travel and interventions. In most of the cases this was the organisation led by the NPOs (and in several cases the NFPs also belonged to it).

Based on our meetings in the seven focus countries, **the majority of the National Support Organisations are prominent Roma or civil society organisations with a very good track record** in working on Roma inclusion, mediation and/ or community empowerment processes. The only newer organisation is Letras Nomadas in Portugal, which was established as a result of the ROMED1 programme in 2013. However, it has already built a record as an effective and important new actor in the country, working on Roma inclusion in Portugal with committed and passionate leadership.

At the local level several key elements were envisaged as part of the local process.

The key element was the **CAG**, whose formation and development is assisted by the national facilitator and a local facilitator. In terms of local authorities, the main human resources allocated to the process was the **municipal contact point** appointed by the mayor, as well as an **institutional working group** with the participation of different departments of the administration. In some countries (for ex. Romania) representatives of CAG were also part of the Institutional working group. As the CAGs, the contact points and institutional groups in the municipalities were both an instrument and an outcome of the local processes, their development is reviewed in detail in the next sections of the report.

Local facilitators were envisaged as key actors to assist the organisation of the process at the local level and provide for its sustainability in the future.

Based on the ROMED2 Guidelines, the local facilitator had to be identified usually among the mediators trained by ROMED1 in the same locality. He or she had to assist the national facilitator in the work with the CAG and the local

authorities. Local facilitators were also referred to as a sustainability step. With time they had to continue the support to the local process without the national facilitator. We could not find more details in the guidelines of concrete strategies of how this was planned to happen.

Visits to case study locations identified the following findings on the role and capacity of local facilitators

In a number of the case study locations, mediators were playing the role of local facilitators - some of them trained by ROMED1, and others not. There were also a number of cases where there was no clear local facilitator function. Here, mediators were participants in the CAG but were not aware of their local facilitator role. They were referred to as a contact point assisting the work of the national facilitator (e.g. Bulgaria, "the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia").

Interviewed local mediators/facilitators are very committed people with different levels of experience in their area of mediation work. They helped identify members of the CAG and establish contacts with institutions. Furthermore, they provided needed information and maintained the motivation of people to stay involved.

An issue outlined in all countries was the fact that the methodology did not envisage any remuneration for the work of local facilitators/mediators. It was based on the assumption that mediators are employed by the municipalities and can serve as a support and resource for the local group with no additional payment.

There were only two exceptions to this. In the course of the implementation, the ROMED2 programme decided to provide some remuneration for the work of local facilitators/mediators in Portugal and Hungary. In Portugal, ROMED2 provided small bridging financing for mediators until they were hired on temporary contracts by the municipalities. In Hungary mediators were unemployed later during implementation. Here the CoE agreed to pay them for specific tasks to address the needs of their municipality.

As explained by the CoE's ROMED management team this contribution of the CoE was more of an exception rather than a general possibility provided by the Programme. The CoE did not want to create a precedent in taking over what should have been the responsibility of the state authorities, national or local. Remuneration in Hungary was perceived as a tool to boost the participation of mediators by paying some fees for their facilitation work. This in turn could be used by the National Support team to lobby for the employment of mediators, as their presence brings a valuable contribution to the government initiatives towards Roma.

Based on interviews with the national teams and national stakeholders, as well as the focus groups with mediators, the assumption of the methodology that mediators can serve as local facilitators with no remuneration for this additional function was considered in all countries with the exception of Ukraine as a constraint rather than strength of the design of the programme. Where mediators were hired by the municipality or other institutions, this is a full time job and the job description does not include facilitation of the CAG and its interaction with local authorities. Moreover, remuneration is usually close to the national minimal salary). If mediators were perceived as local facilitators who could substitute for the national facilitator in the over time, some remuneration for this position should have been included in the initial programme design.

3.2.3. Selection of municipalities

The main criteria for the selection of municipalities were local demand, political will, the presence of active persons in local institutions and NGOs, and the availability of skilful mediators, if possible trained under ROMED1. A leading criterion was political will, demonstrated by the readiness of municipalities to sign a memorandum of understanding with the CoE to implement ROMED2. Initial selection was based on visits to municipalities and assessment of the interest of local authorities and community members to participate in the programme. Final selection was made by the ROMED2 management team.

The process of selection was similar between countries, but with some adjustments for the local context. In some countries national authorities were more actively involved in the selection of municipalities. This was mainly in Portugal (The High Commissioner for Immigration and Intercultural Dialog (ACIDI) was the NFP) and in FYRoM where both ROMED programmes were implemented in strategic partnership with the government/ CAHROM representative. In other ROMED2 countries, national authorities were consulted but not actively involved (e.g. Bulgaria) or not involved at all (e.g. Hungary).

ROMED2 sought partnerships with other international initiatives active at the time, such as the OSF programme '*Making the Most of the European Funds*' (MtM). This partnership encountered challenges in some countries, but in others it

worked. For example, in Bulgaria the selection of municipalities was assisted by the local MtM office in Sofia. Interview feedback from MtM indicates that it considered this collaboration interesting and fruitful.

In total, 54 very diverse municipalities from 11 countries were selected to participate in ROMED2.⁴³ Based on the 15 case study municipalities covered by the present evaluation, they are diverse in terms of:

- ▶ **Size** (varying between Roma neighbourhoods in the capital city, district or large towns, to very small villages);
- ▶ **Type of municipality** (urban or rural, some composed of one village, others of 14 to 20 villages);
- ▶ **Level of overall economic development** (some have more active industries, while others are afflicted with poverty and situated in the poorest regions of the country);
- ▶ **Level of openness of the local government towards Roma inclusion** (some already had a long history of initiatives to improve the situation of Roma and a well-developed system for inclusive project development. Others were at the starting point);
- ▶ **Level of self-organisation of Roma communities** (some were marginalised Roma settlements with little history of community based activism. In others there were local Roma NGOs and active Roma churches, and there was political representation of Roma on local municipal councils).

Not only were the selected municipalities diverse, but there was also significant diversity between countries. Some countries were EU member states, with access to structural funds but with different levels of accessibility to these funds at the local level. Others were pre-accession countries, with inclusion of Roma as one of the conditionalities; others were Eastern neighbourhood countries, such as Ukraine, where there was much less support available for such initiatives, combined with severe political and economic crises.

While the majority of municipalities that were initially selected by ROMED2 stayed involved throughout the process, based on the study of the seven focus countries some dropped out at different stages of the process. The reasons for that was a combination of factors, but in most of the cases it was the withdrawal of the initially stated commitment of the municipality for cooperation. Such cases were reported in Bulgaria, Portugal, Hungary, Slovakia and Ukraine.

3.2.4. Effectiveness of the Development of the Community Action Groups

Process and approach

Based on the interviews with ROMED management and the International Pedagogical Team, the vision for the CAG was to model a different way of self-organising and leadership within Roma communities. “We wanted a platform for Roma community participation, to be known and recognised, but also to be open and democratic.”

The ROMED2 Guidelines outline **ten key characteristics of the CAGs**. According to these, the CAG should be:

- ▶ **Local and diverse**, inclusive of different segments of the community, men and women, young and old, experienced and less experienced;
- ▶ **Open** – anyone should be able to join or leave the group at any time;
- ▶ **Democratic and functioning as a team with shared leadership** – no hierarchy;
- ▶ **Based on human rights and focused on community progress**, not on achieving the personal interest of its members;
- ▶ **Transparent** and communicating what the group does and achieves to the broader community;
- ▶ Seeking to formulate **constructive** proposals for change, specifying responsibilities, legal basis and resources and **recognised partner** by the local authorities as a partner for dialogue.

Stakeholders interviewed in the evaluation focus countries noted that these guiding principles are very valuable for the development of the CAGs. They bring the principles of democracy and community organising inside Roma communities. Many of these characteristics are against prevailing trends and normal practice not only within Roma communities, but also in civil society and NGOs generally. ROMED2 tried to overcome this inertia and the usual way of ‘doing business’ by introducing community-based organising principles.

The new CAG principles went against traditional culture in some Roma communities where diversity, especially participation of women, is not always an ‘internal cultural code’, or there is a long history of centralised ‘one-man’

43. This does not include the expanding number of municipalities in Bulgaria and Romania in the framework of ROMACT.

decision-making and dependency on traditional leaders. From this perspective the application of each of these principles required a process of gradual change in perceptions within the community. The way they were put into practice differed between locations and depended on a variety of internal and external factors.

The approach and process of creating the CAG as initially envisaged in the methodology involved several meetings of the national facilitators with the representatives of local communities in the timeframe of 2-3 months. Mediators trained under ROMED1 were one of the key resources in identifying and attracting community members to get involved. The process of developing the group as outlined in the ROMED2 Guidelines included at least three sessions (“first two of them could be done together for example in a weekend and the third one – several months later finishing with the Joint planning meeting with the municipality”).

Based on our review of the ROMED2 Guidelines, the objectives of each session seem extremely ambitious for the short time frame envisaged in all three directions they were set forth – group development, addressing concrete issues and delivering concrete outputs while simultaneously building knowledge, skills and attitudes needed for addressing the chosen issues. Especially in view of the desire of ROMED2 to involve diverse people, including community members with no experience, more time should have been envisaged for the process with the CAGs.

The practice of local application of the process confirms this. National facilitators note that they continuously had to come back to a number of issues that were introduced in the first sessions. The time needed to foster the feeling of belonging to the group, as well as the speed of acquiring new capacities was different for different members. It depended on their previous experience with other initiatives, and in some cases on the level of education (when they had to formulate and write desired outputs/documents). As explained by the international team, based on learning from communities in the course of implementation, the programme started to provide more time for the process for the development of the community action groups.

Most valuable in the application of the process of establishing the CAGs was its flexibility, to accommodate the wide diversity of situations. Some localities required many more visits, and in others the process ran more naturally, by itself. Another important aspect outlined in all interviews with national teams was that ROMED2 wanted to involve the voices of the community, not just of its leaders. The principle of “all citizens have equal voices in expressing real and common needs” was guiding the selection process of CAGs members.

In most of the localities the CAGs were created around active mediators who identified active people. To expand the knowledge on new approaches to wider groups of community representatives in “the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia” it was decided that it is better to involve other people in the CAGs and not include the ROMED1 mediators. ROMED1 mediators were not members of the CAG, but outside partners as employees of the relevant local institutions. In some countries the National team and facilitators were also proactively involved in direct identification of active people (e.g. “the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia”, Ukraine)

Results of the process: composition and dynamics of the CAGs

The process of selecting CAG members varied and depended on the local context and the approach of the national team. In some communities, the groups were selected from a smaller pool of community members, based on their individual interest to get involved in the process. In others, the selection of CAG members was based on a broader democratic process and a search for representation of wider community interests.

Examples of broad and representative selection of CAG members

The Giulesti Sarbi neighbourhood (Bucharest, Sector 6, Romania) organised a meeting attended by over 400 Roma from the neighbourhood. After discussions they elected 27 community members to represent them in the CAG.

The CAG members in **Targu Jiu (Romania)** were selected based on broad community meetings in each of the three Roma neighbourhoods. They had to identify priorities and to elect nine people from each community to represent it in the CAG. As a result, the CAG consisted of 27 members, representative of all communities and coming with a mandate to promote priorities selected by them.

The CAG members of **Tundzha municipality (Bulgaria)** were selected, through community consultations, from all 13 villages with a more significant share of Roma population.

Based on the case studies, a more representative selection of CAG members turned out to be a critical factor for better formulation of collective community demands for discussion with local authorities. It also enhanced the legitimacy of the CAGs as representative of all interests and segments of the communities. Where CAGs represented the interests of only one part of the community, or a narrower interest group, this turned out to be a challenge for effective identification of broader community needs (e.g. Kiev, Ukraine, Nagyecséd, Hungary, Byala Slatina, Bulgaria).

The size and composition of established CAGs is very diverse, reflecting differences in the context of local communities. Based on the case studies, CAG membership varied between six and 27, which was considered by the International team as the optimal number for effective group dynamics and processes.

Personal motivation and interest in the process led community members to get involved. Based on the interviews and focus groups with CAGs in the different countries, the main motivation of people participating in the groups was to see some difference in their communities. A very important driving factor was the wellbeing and better life of children as the future of communities. Keeping this motivation was not an easy process as people wanted to see tangible results from their work.

"We are mothers and we want our children to have education and better chances than us, instead of repeating what we did not have."

CAG members in Tundzha, Bulgaria

In most cases CAG membership fluctuates, and tends to shrink rather than expand. This was also a response to one of the principles of the CAG - to be an open structure with people joining and leaving. While this principle was intended to avoid the CAGs becoming closed, self-centred, and disengaged from the community, it also had some challenges. First, some of the municipalities wanted a CAG with some clear parameters, for example a list of the members as a requirement for official recognition of communication with them. Second, openness of the group and keeping it connected to the community should mean people leaving, but new people also joining.

Based on the review of documents and on interviews, it seems that there is a tendency for CAG membership to shrink rather than expand. This differs between localities, and some CAGs did have a stable membership. If the group remains too small it can limit the process of empowerment to a few individuals, especially if they have no effective links with different parts of the community. At the same time having too many group members can make the process of cooperative planning unmanageable.

The ROMED2 Guidelines do not provide much guidance on the maintenance of linkages with the community, or on CAG membership development and representativeness. Maybe this is due to the fact that the Guidelines focus on a cooperative process of mediation and planning, which requires groups that can be trained and are able to participate in planning.

Stakeholder feedback about CAG experiences suggests that there is a need for more reflection on the community based nature of the CAGs, especially regarding the successes of CAGs where there was a more representative membership selection process. Is it enough to have a CAG made up of a small group of community members? Or is it also important to focus more on facilitating consideration by CAG members about involving more community members to ensure broader community support and involvement?

Shrinking of membership also relates to the issue of keeping people motivated. Keeping the motivation of the group was outlined as one of the greatest challenges across countries. As outlined in interviews from all countries, most important to keep the motivation of people involved is that they see tangible small changes coming from this involvement. This required consistency of the process and respectively the presence of the national facilitator in order not to lose the momentum and trust of the group. The interruption of the programme, especially in 2015, affected negatively the motivations of the CAGs in the four countries where ROMED2 and ROMACT were implemented simultaneously. In other locations the frequent change of facilitators affected negatively the group.

"The programme was very promising but activities took place in waves with months of silence in-between."

CAG member, Bulgaria

Promoting the participation of women is not just about counting the number of women involved in activities. It is a process of overcoming cultural specificities which were stronger in some communities and/ or countries.

In all countries national teams and facilitators consistently sought to involve active women in the CAGs. Specific sessions during the NFP/ NPO meetings contributed to raised awareness amongst the teams about women's issues. Questions related to the participation of women were part of the reporting system of the national teams. Based on the programme statistics and on the case studies, the participation of men is higher than of women in the majority of the groups. However, there are a few groups (for example in Hungary, Bulgaria and Ukraine) which are composed mostly of women. The situation also differs between countries. In countries such as Portugal, the predominant tendency was reduced female involvement in the CAGs, although this was changing over time. For example in Torres Vedras (Portugal) there was a slow increase in the participation of women. In Ukraine women comprised more than 50% of CAG .

As the involvement of CAG members changed over time, this also affected the share of women in the groups. Different tendencies were noted in different countries. In Romania, there was a tendency for women to leave the group due to their family responsibilities. In In "the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia» the share of women CAGs members is falling as the number of participating municipalities increases. On the other hand, in Slovakia women constitute the stable core of the groups, although there are fewer women than men. The overall impression there is that women are better motivated and tend to be permanent members.

Three other aspects of diversity can be also outlined:

- ▶ In a number of CAGs there is significant presence of members of **the Roma Evangelic Church** (Portugal, Bulgaria, and Romania). The involvement of pastors of these churches was a good entry point to large segments of the community.
- ▶ In Romania, ROMED2 tried to involve a wide range of people in the CAGs, not only from the Roma community, because the programme aimed to impact the whole community. In two of the case study locations the group is mixed and **involves both Roma and non-Roma**, and this helps to build bridges between the Roma and majority community groups.
- ▶ **Involvement of organised civil society or locally elected Roma.** In a number of locations, people active in communities approached by ROMED2 were also active in other fields or organisations. These included representatives of local Roma NGOs, representatives of Roma communities who are elected members of local municipal councils, and representatives of community centres or Roma information centres (e.g. CAGs in "the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia" and Slovakia). Stakeholders noted that this participation provided more organisational experience, it increased legitimacy and contacts with institutions, and it led to the provision of office space and support from the local NGOs.

The group dynamic was driven by the participatory work cycle: identification of community needs; definition of proposals for solutions; planning and implementation of initiatives together with the municipalities.

3.2.5. Effectiveness of cooperation between the CAGs and local authorities

Effective interaction of the CAG with the local government is essential for the success of the local processes facilitated by the ROMED2 programme. The starting point for selecting municipalities to participate in the programme was that the local authorities should demonstrate political will and openness to the proposed local processes.

The envisaged steps for cooperation between the CAG and the local authorities are outlined in the ROMED2 Guidelines. Their practical application depended on the type of municipality, the commitment of local authorities to Roma inclusion, and the availability of resources from the local budget or national programmes.

Changes in administration following elections affected the process in some municipalities. Increasing nationalism amongst the local electorate is a disturbing trend that has led to the election of local councillors who are less open to addressing Roma issues and inclusion.

Cooperation was organised around the **Institutional Working Groups**, which have been set-up in each location. They are composed of representatives of the local administration and institutions and the CAG. Each municipality assigned a person responsible for cooperation on Roma issues. These are heads of department or deputy mayors. In some municipalities we met with the all relevant heads of department, who were working together as a team around a shared vision on priorities for Roma inclusion (for example Tundzha in Bulgaria and Jarovnice in Slovakia). The experience of the Institutional Working Group in Targu Jiu is very interesting. This involved all key local stakeholders, including institutions in the areas of education, employment and public healthcare, the CAG, and the two local Roma NGOs with broad support in local communities.

The dialogue is supported through regular meetings of the Institutional Working Groups, where Roma issues are raised. These generally take place once per month. It was also reported that, in many of the case study locations, there is informal communication between CAG members and the local administration, especially in locations where there were good relations, or where CAG members also worked in the municipality or were locally elected officials.

In all visited case study locations, we interviewed the municipal focal point and, where possible, the members of the Institutional Working Group and the mayor. Local authority interview feedback can be summarised as follows:

ROMED2 opened new channels of communication between the Roma community and local authorities. It established a form and a structure for communication, namely the Institutional Working Group and the joint planning sessions with the CAG, which were considered useful. The joint work of local authorities and CAGs was a mutual learning process in applying more inclusive principles in the work of the municipality.

"Before we worked on some assumptions that we developed at our desks. Now we have a direct link with communities and they give us much more accurate statistics on a range of issues. This helps us learn directly with communities and together find what can make a difference for them and for the whole municipality."

Tundzha Municipality, Bulgaria

- ▶ **Investing in the CAG as a group of representatives from the Roma community gives the local government a good tool and partner to solve specific problems.** Purposeful development of such groups makes the programme unique, and in the opinion of local government representatives *"other programmes so far have not provided such direct and constructive communication with the Roma community"*.
- ▶ **The action orientation of the programme, with a tangible focus on solving community problems and creating local plans** was viewed as useful to local authorities.
- ▶ **Organised by CAGs, the community diagnosis of needs in most locations was considered very useful** by the local administration. It helped to identify the real problems and to design plans and measures that were more realistic.
- ▶ **Interaction between the CAGs and local authorities was much more frequent and efficient when members CAG members were also members of the local administration or were Roma local councillors** (for example in "the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia" and Slovakia), or when they were mediators or a similar profession (e.g. community workers, social workers and health assistants (Slovakia)) and they were in direct contact with the local authorities on a daily basis due to their professional responsibilities.

- ▶ In some countries (e.g. Ukraine) some of the main problems related to **changing the composition of the CAGs which made the process unstable**. Another challenge was the high turnover of public officials due to elections or reforms at the local level.
- ▶ Finally, **the biggest challenge was the lack of resources from state and local budgets**, and limited donors to support local initiatives.
- ▶ **Political changes due to elections (of mayors, or of the majority within the local councils) were identified as a challenge in a number of the visited locations**. Replacement of key people who supported the process in local administrations undermined interaction between local authorities and CAGs, especially in cases where the CAG was not institutionally recognised (e.g. the resignation of the deputy mayor in Bucharest, Sector 6).

The effectiveness of the interaction between the CAGs and the local authorities varied between locations and depended, for example on:

- ▶ The size of municipality;
- ▶ The organisation of the CAG;
- ▶ Whether or not Roma had local political representation;
- ▶ The openness of the local administration and support of the local council;
- ▶ The existence of national programmes and availability of funding in support of local initiatives for Roma inclusion and the extent to which the relevant municipality was covered by the priorities of these programmes.

The following paragraphs provide examples of successful interaction that were noted at case study locations:

The main results from the cooperative process were the local action plans developed by local authorities together with the CAGs, and adopted in the local development plan in a great number of the municipalities in the seven countries. In some of the countries a facilitating factor was the good momentum and timing. For example, in 2014 all municipalities in Bulgaria had to develop local strategies and plans for Roma inclusion in order to be included in EU Structural Funds Operational Programme priorities. The level of implementation of adopted plans varies between municipalities depending on national strategic priorities and national programmes supporting Roma inclusion.

Timely solving of urgent community needs identified by the CAGs. Examples included:

- ▶ Addressing lack of access to drinkable water in villages;
- ▶ Access to waste collection services;
- ▶ Street lights and improved road infrastructure;
- ▶ Access to public transport (bus stops close to Roma neighbourhoods),
- ▶ Resolving conflicts around housing.

As a sign of successful cooperation and recognition of the CAGs, some municipalities are starting to support their CAGs. Some municipalities provided technical and organisational support (e.g. municipalities providing rooms for CAG meetings in Portugal, Romania, and Bulgaria). As a sign of increasing trust and recognition of the CAGs some municipalities provided small financial support for CAG initiatives, for example to organise the International Roma Day (e.g. in Bulgaria, “the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia”, Ukraine, and Portugal).

There were also cases where municipalities employed members of the community at the request of the CAGs (e.g. in Portugal the seven ROMED2 municipalities created approximately 30 jobs over almost two years, generally on temporary contracts. In Bulgaria, Tundzha municipality provided employment for eight school mediators on part time project contracts).

While most of the examples were in the framework of local cooperative planning and implementation processes, this did not always run smoothly. Where the cooperative process was not working and local authorities did not respond to urgent community problems, the effectiveness of interaction depended on the capacity of the local CAG to put pressure on decision makers through community based advocacy action.

Community based action to restore transport services in Giulesti Sarbi Roma neighbourhood of Sector 6, Bucharest, Romania

Due to the catastrophic state of the main road connecting the Roma neighbourhood to the city, the transport services were interrupted. In order to attend school, children had to walk for more than a kilometre in an unsafe area.

Over 200 petitions and complaints from community residents were sent to the City Hall. Due to the lack of response, CAG members and Roma NGOs organised a peaceful protest in September 2014. As a result the metropolitan administration of Bucharest repaired the road and the transport services were restored in October 2014.

3.3. Efficiency of allocation of human and financial resources

In terms of efficiency of resource allocation, we had to explore two main aspects:

- ▶ Reconciling the aim of close and efficient synergies with the need to maintain a clear distinction of resources between ROMED2 and ROMACT which were implemented simultaneously in four of the seven focus countries;
- ▶ Level and type of resource allocation in the selected municipalities to generate the desired results of ROMED2 – facilitating factors and challenges.

3.3.1. Synergy between ROMED2 and ROMACT and differentiation of resources (Bulgaria, Hungary, Slovakia and Romania)

As outlined in the introduction, ROMACT started as a Joint Programme of the CoE and DG Employment shortly after the start of ROMED2. During 2014 the two programmes were implemented simultaneously in four of the seven focus countries – Bulgaria, Hungary, Romania and Slovakia. In late 2014, it was decided that these four countries would continue to participate only in ROMACT.

ROMACT is not the subject of this evaluation. As it was implemented simultaneously in four of the seven focus countries the evaluation team had to explore it only from two perspectives: firstly, to identify the complementarities between the two programmes as strategies and resources, and secondly, to pinpoint the differentiation between their resources.

Based on interviews with the ROMACT management and DG Employment, the aim of ROMACT was to build the capacities of local authorities to develop and implement policies, strategies and services that are inclusive of all. The programme has four clear cut phases with clear benchmarks and desired outputs for each of the phases. The main synergy with ROMED2 was in the second phase of ROMACT – *'Agreeing on what needs to be done to improve the living conditions of Roma'*. This phase accommodated the creation of the CAGs, the community needs assessments, and the development of the joint action plans and local strategies, although in a much shorter period.

The main difference between the two programmes is that in ROMACT the CAGs were not at the centre of the process. They were a counterpart representing the views of the community and a tool for participatory municipal planning. The rest of the ROMACT phases were focused on targeted capacity building aimed at developing concrete plans and projects to integrate Roma communities and for accessing EU funding. For this, in addition to national facilitators, ROMACT also worked with experts who assisted municipalities in accessing European funds (project development and applications).

Stakeholder feedback in the four countries indicates there is a lack of clarity on the synergy between the strategies of the two programmes. As noted in one interview, the synergy was that *"ROMACT practically absorbed ROMED"*.

The main difference is that ROMACT shifted the focus, from communities and their empowerment, to local authorities and development of their capacity to generate successful project proposals. From this perspective the two programmes view Roma inclusion differently.

Moving the focus, objectives and desired outcomes, from community empowerment, to increasing the awareness and capacity of local authorities led to very different programme processes that require different approaches and different types of resources, and expertise.

Limiting the space for the process of activating local communities and accelerating the formation of CAGs was interpreted as a *“deviation from the original idea of ROMED2, not a synergy”*.

Another difference is that ROMED2 has a clear process orientation to meet its Roma community empowerment objective, which was valued by all national teams. ROMACT is perceived more like a project aiming at delivering outputs and outcomes in the form of projects successfully applied by municipalities and inclusive local approach to social inclusion.

ROMED2 was designed in a very participatory way involving the collective thinking of national teams and experts from the different implementation countries. Their feedback suggests that there could perhaps have been more dialogue about the envisaged interaction of ROMACT and ROMED2, and how ROMACT might affect local ROMED2 processes.

The merging of the two programmes in the four countries, first as parallel efforts in the same municipalities, and later only as ROMACT, caused much confusion amongst the national teams and in municipalities. It was reported that in some cases it also affected the selection of municipalities.

The shift of objective, meaning and approach with the merging of the two programmes was also perceived as counterproductive to the objective of ROMED2. It was sending to local stakeholders (especially the community action groups) the message that empowerment is not so important. It was effectively confining empowerment to participatory project generation. The main benchmark was successfully applied projects. This made the task of national teams and facilitators challenging and they did their best to continue the local processes started in the initial ROMED2 municipalities.

ROMACT is expanding to new municipalities. Even though it is stated that ROMACT applies the ROMED2 process, the actual process in the new places is different. As outlined in the interviews in the four countries *“there are no resources [in ROMACT] to do real empowerment process through the development of CAGs”*.

Based on the interviews with the ROMED management team, avoiding the overlap of resources between the two programmes was ensured centrally by clear differentiated allocations from the two budgets. It was also carefully monitored. This relates mainly to the implementation in 2014 when the programmes were running simultaneously in the same localities. At that time local allocation of resources was 50%-50% between the two programmes.

The link between the two programmes was referred mostly through the perspective of avoiding duplication of resources, rather than of how the investment of the two programmes could be strategically optimised to increase impact in localities. While we could evidence shared understanding among all levels of the ROMED2 teams about the synergy between the objectives, desired outcomes and optimisation of resources between ROMED and ROMED2, we could not identify the same in terms of strategic linkage between ROMED2 and ROMACT.

3.3.2. Level and type of resource allocation in ROMED2 municipalities

Table 8 below summarises the allocation of resources in the different countries for period 2013 to 2016. This shows that ROMED2 allocations are modest.

Table 8: ROMED2 (2013-2016) direct costs (euro)

ROMED2	Number of Municipalities	Total Direct costs	National Coordination	Training and Local interventions	National coordination as % of total costs
ROMED2 Direct costs (2013-2016)					
FYROM	10	286,000	46,000	240,000	16%
Portugal	9	246,000	36,000	210,000	15%
Ukraine	7	201,000	31,000	170,000	15%
ROMED2/ROMACT Direct costs (2014)*					
Bulgaria	6	127,000	24,000	103,000	19%
Hungary	6	138,000	26,000	112,000	19%
Romania	10	186,000	32,000	154,000	17%
Slovak Republic	5	85,000	14,000	71,000	16%
Totals	53	1,269,000	209,000	1,060,000	16%
<p>*ROMED2/ROMACT direct costs for Bulgaria, Hungary, Romania and Slovak Republic until 2014 are estimated at 50%-50% from the budget of each programme. From 2014 on, work in localities in these four countries was funded by ROMACT only.</p>					

The resources for national coordination include the payment of the NPO, the NFP and administrative costs of the national support organisation.

The sums in the column 'training and local interventions' cover diverse resources:

- ▶ Fees and travel expenses of national facilitators working in the different municipalities;
- ▶ Travel, food, facilities rental, and materials for the meetings of facilitators-CAG meetings;
- ▶ Travel costs for the needs assessments;
- ▶ Cost of local authority-CAG meetings;
- ▶ CAG training costs and local administration costs (including national meetings, roundtables, advocacy activities, etc..)

The average annual direct cost of training and local interventions was approximately €12,000 per ROMED2 municipality. The average annual direct cost per ROMED/ROMACT municipality (2014) is also low. The highest is Hungary (€18,666), followed by Bulgaria (€17,166), Romania (€15,400) and the Slovak Republic (€14,000). In practice, when run in parallel in 2014, the two programmes used the same teams and national facilitators. ROMACT had additional resources related to the objective of developing local administration capacity to generate project applications (an additional expert to support this objective and additional training and meeting costs).

ROMED2 can be considered a cost-effective process, achieving a lot in terms of community engagement with limited financial and human resources directly allocated to support local processes. But it is questionable from the perspective of local empowerment and development of local ownership.

Feedback from interviews with all national teams, and the focus groups meetings with CAGs and local authorities, indicates that lack of support at the local level significantly constrained the programme's impact. The financial resources reaching the local level (to cover meetings costs and CAG expenses) are a very small share of the overall modest resources allocated to support to the process at municipal level:

- ▶ A major constraint on the effectiveness of the empowerment process at the local level was that **there were almost no resources to support the work of the CAGs**. As noted by some of the NPOs: "We had in the budget money

for renting of meeting rooms, of multimedia and computers in order to show slides and educate the CAGs. Instead we could have invested this resource in the group".

- ▶ Most of the costs for the meetings and work of the CAGs were linked with the visits of the national facilitator, and this made groups dependent on the frequency of these visits. The municipalities provided meeting rooms in some cases, but this was not the practice everywhere. In other cases, CAGs were hosted by local NGOs which made their offices available for meetings.
- ▶ A second gap in the ROMED2 approach is that it relies on external resources and the local municipal budget to fund identified initiatives. However, these are not always available, and in some cases it is necessary to undertake additional work to access these resources. **The need for small funds in support of start-up initiatives to activate communities and increase trust and visibility** was noted in interviews with ROMED2 and external stakeholders from all seven evaluation focus countries.
- ▶ **The rule was that local facilitators were not paid**, on the assumption that they would be the mediators hired by the municipalities. As outlined in the previous section, in many cases mediators were actually unemployed, or if they were employed, they had a full time job, on the minimum salary, with a job description that did not include facilitating the local process. The CoE ROMED management team later decided to make minimal payments to local facilitators/mediators in Portugal and Hungary.

From the perspective of the ROMED management and pedagogical teams, the programme should not provide resources other than human resources to enable the processes at local level. This was agreed at the outset of the programme with all national teams. This was to avoid making CAGs too dependent on the programme, which would have been a risk if it had financed local initiatives or local facilitators directly, instead of helping local actors to look for existing local and other funding.

This is always a risk, and there are many examples of programmes that have resulted in unsustainable solutions because of this. However, there are also good examples of **how financing can be provided at the local level as an incentive that can stimulate the search for other resources. Matching grant contributions, for instance, can serve as 'seed money' that will assist local community campaigns and actions that in turn will result in the empowerment of local people, but will also attract other resources.** The lack of financial resources at the local level was as a significant constraint in all focus countries. With this in mind, it would be worth exploring more flexible and alternative ways of supporting the local process.

3.3.3. Efficiency of contractual agreements and provision of financial resources

Feedback from the national teams and facilitators on the efficiency of contractual agreements and the regularity of the provision of financial resources varied between countries. While it was very positive in countries like Portugal, Ukraine and "the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia", in all four ROMED2/ROMACT countries there were serious interruptions in the process which undermined effectiveness.

Interview feedback from the ROMED management indicates that, in 2015, a new EU contractual arrangement, PAGODA ('Pillar Assessed Grant or Delegation Agreement'), came into force. PAGODA replaced the EU Contribution Agreement which had been used for the contracts between the CoE and the EU for a decade.

The negotiations between the CoE and the EU to fine-tune all the legal and operational implications of this new arrangement took several months. The present agreement with the EU covering the ROMED programme, with the start date of the Action on the 31st March 2015, and of the second ROMACT agreement with the start date of the Action on the 01 December 2014, were concluded under the new PAGODA arrangement. However, because of the long negotiations, the CoE only had access to funds from the EU in August 2015.

This situation disrupted implementation of the programmes in the field. Countries funded under the ROMACT programme, including four evaluation countries (Bulgaria, Hungary, Romania, and the Slovak Republic), were more seriously impacted than countries funded under the ROMED Programme, which include three evaluation focus countries ("the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia", Portugal and Ukraine). While the negative impact on the ROMED programme was mitigated by the CoE's 50% budget share, the CoE's 20% contribution to the ROMACT programme was not sufficient to cover all the needs of the programme for the period in question.

As a direct consequence, the contracts for the operational costs and fees for the members of the team were interrupted for several months and the implementation of the programme at national and local levels was delayed. National teams and facilitators worked under consultant contracts, renewable on a three-monthly basis. In theory, the contracts were supposed to be renewed automatically. Feedback from interviews with national teams and facilitators in Bulgaria,

Hungary, Romania and Slovakia indicated that contracts and payments were delayed for up to eight months.

Although the majority of country teams continued working with communities, this interruption had serious negative consequences. In some localities, the process was interrupted or very irregular. Some national facilitators left for another job resulting in discontinuity, and in some cases (e.g. Cicava in Slovakia), this ultimately resulted in the locality dropping out of the programme. Overall, this undermined the fragile trust that had been established within Roma communities and local stakeholders with so much effort the previous year.

3.4. Emerging impacts towards stimulating change in Roma communities

3.4.1. General observations on impact

Feedback from interviews carried out in the course of this evaluation at international, national, and local levels, highlights several issues that need to be considered when exploring the ROMED2 programme's effectiveness with regard to stimulating change in Roma communities. They can be summarised as follows:

Stakeholders have diverse expectations about the programme's impact

ROMED2 is funded by DG EAC and this suggests that project activities might be expected to have some educational impacts. This is further suggested by the aims and intended results stated in the project proposal, as funded by DG EAC. These generally focus on raising awareness of Roma communities of the benefits of education, interaction with school authorities, on work with mothers as *'natural mediators to encourage their children to recognise the value of education'*.⁴⁴

The Joint Programme's logframe, agreed with DG EAC, guides the work of the CoE.⁴⁵ The aims and results given in the logframe focus on the functional aspects of the ROMED2 process – empowerment of communities and changed local environments which should lead to integrated approaches to Roma inclusion covering various priorities identified by communities, one of which could be education. The participation of women (mothers and girls) is a crosscutting issue, not an objective in itself.

The empowerment of communities for democratic participation is the main intended impact of ROMED2

All levels of the ROMED2 programme implementation, including the CoE team, national teams, and local stakeholders, have a shared understanding of ROMED2 as a local cooperative process helping the development of integrated approaches to Roma inclusion. Central to the programme is the aim to achieve strong community capacity to self-organise (development of the CAGs), and to express priority needs and provide potential solutions to community issues. This needs to be matched by an environment in which cooperative local authorities adopt these needs and priorities in local policy implementation (joint planning process and institutional working groups).

Impact in terms of increased community access to services, including education, can be achieved only in the long term as a result of consistent implementation of the adopted plans and the capacity to attract the necessary resources.

"ROMED2 is a process. It thinks in terms of 'small victories' in building the local dynamics of change, rather than immediate large scale impact."

The ROMED teams

Expectations and attempts to measure the impact of ROMED2 need to be realistic

ROMED2 is a relatively short programme. It started in April 2013 and was originally planned to end June 2016, although it has recently been extended to February 2017. In practice the programme started in late 2013 or early 2014 in all countries. In four of the evaluation focus countries, where ROMED2 and ROMACT were implemented together,

44. ROMED2, Narrative Report, April 2013-March 2014. Appendix2 – Description of tasks of ROMED2.

45. Information on purpose, results and status of activities as in programme log frame on 09 January 2016 <http://www.jp.coe.int/CEAD/JP/Default.asp?TransID=349>

the practical implementation of both programmes was less than two years. This was due to the interruption of the programme for between six and nine months on account of delayed contracting and financing of local processes. External factors also reduced activities. These included national or local elections, and the need to restart the process following political changes in some municipalities.

As noted in the interviews with the national teams, the first year of ROMED2 (2014) was limited to the initiation, introduction and testing of the local cooperative planning, and development of community structures and sensitisation of local authorities to cooperation. Outcomes with prospects for real impact started to emerge only in the second year, 2015.

Expectations about impact should be realistic and correspond to the level of resources invested

The programme has very modest resources at the local level but expectations for impact are high, locally and internationally. Much larger investment over a much longer period is required to change the lives of people in marginalised communities.

ROMED2 as a programme investing in local processes could only contribute by demonstrating another way of 'doing business.' It has formed community action groups that will gradually activate communities. It has created a new shared space for Roma communities and local authorities to meet, and plan and work together. This will gradually lead to sustaining new approaches to Roma inclusion at the local level. It is also important to consider how, and to what extent, the limited resources that ROMED2 invested have generated synergies with other resources available from national programmes, local municipalities or other donors.

Impact has a relative meaning, depending on the local context:

It is not possible to offer a unified definition and benchmarks for impact across municipalities and countries in terms of changes in the lives of Roma communities. Country contexts vary significantly and there are major differences in the level of local political support for Roma inclusion. 'Success' is understood differently by different municipalities. How they understand 'success' depends on the local context, for example:

- ▶ Size of the municipality;
- ▶ Existing level of economic and social development;
- ▶ Level of marginalisation and segregation of Roma communities;
- ▶ History of self-organisation and political participation of Roma;
- ▶ Openness and capacity of local authorities for Roma inclusion.

3.4.2. Contribution to Roma community empowerment

The most visible direct contribution of ROMED2 to the empowerment of Roma communities was the development of the CAGs in the municipalities covered by the programme. It was the result of systematic capacity building (training, mentoring and coaching) provided to the CAGs, and facilitation of their interaction with local authorities.

From an educational perspective, *ROMED2 tested and successfully applied innovative experiential learning and capacity growth in the area of democratic citizenship and inclusive governance*. This made an important contribution to empowerment:

- ▶ By assisting the development of core active groups of citizens, ROMED2 helped to create **new community leadership capacity** within the Roma communities, that was able to express the interests of the community and participate in local development, while gradually mobilising the broader community.
- ▶ By facilitating joint work between the CAGs and local authorities and institutions, the programme initiated learning around the practical application of good and inclusive governance principles. This resulted in the development of a **new interactive space for shared leadership and responsibility for Roma inclusion** within municipalities

At individual level, CAG members have gained new skills and self-esteem resulting from learning and practicing active citizenship

During focus groups meetings, CAG members demonstrated enhanced self-esteem in the majority of visited locations. For some CAG members this was a first experience in democratic participation, and was their first encounter and direct work with institutions. As noted during focus group meetings, it is very empowering that the opinion of a community member has the same value as the opinion of someone who is working in local institutions. CAGs members in Portugal

stated "Now we feel like more important people".

Increased individual self-esteem, as active citizens, has motivated some CAG members to continue their formal education

This was an unanticipated result of ROMED2. In some of the municipalities where CAG members had limited education, they decided to continue their formal education as a result of their participation in the CAG. For example, in Tundzha municipality in Bulgaria, two women from poor villages who did not finish secondary education continued their education after joining the CAG. Now one of them works as a school mediator. Both are proud that they can be role models for their children, as well as for their communities.

An interesting case was provided in Portugal, which is described below.

Assisting access to university education of active young Roma in Portugal

Some active young CAG members in Portugal expressed an interest in continuing their education at university. To assist them, the ROMED2 national support organisation Letras Nómadas raised funding for eight Roma scholarships under "Programme Escolhas" (a national programme that receives applications for inclusion projects). The Portuguese government recognised the merit of the initiative and deliberated the funding of 25 additional Roma scholarships for 2016-2017.

At group level, the programme created new informal community structures composed of active people that were able to negotiate and cooperate with local authorities

As reported at focus group meetings with CAGs, for a number of communities this was the first experience of developing collective demands, based on agreed priorities, for inclusion in local policies. It is important that in some municipalities this process involves representatives of the most marginalised groups in the community, which do not usually communicate with the municipality.

The recognition of the majority of CAGs by municipalities is another significant victory for the programme

In most of the visited locations, it was the first time that a local action plan was developed collaboratively within the community, and in most cases accepted by local authorities. Roma communities usually do not participate in the development of these plans, except where they have some representation. Functioning communication channels were established between the municipalities and CAGs. However, only in a few places has this started to be institutionalised, with some CAGs becoming part of municipal consultative bodies. In other places, CAGs are taking steps towards becoming legally registered civic associations, which gives more independence and legitimacy with local authorities.

The CAGs are demonstrating a new model of active citizenship in their communities

CAG members are part of the community and live within it. They are constantly interacting with people, asking about their needs and suggestions, and meeting with women, youth, and families. The success of CAGs in negotiating with local government to achieve visible results in addressing issues prioritised by the community, is based on broader community involvement. Here, people are developing the belief that their voice also matters.

CAGs may also have an important role in terms of democracy

In several cases, CAG members worked, prior to elections, to motivate the community to vote, in some cases for the first time. CAGs were reported to have been effective in mobilising voters in Portugal and Hungary (elections for minority self-government).

While all of the above are signs of emerging impacts, and can be seen as significant achievements, they are just initial steps in the process of empowerment. Ensuring sustainability will require CAGs to continue working effectively over a longer period. While the CAGs we met with were promising, all are at an initial stage of development. Some are still dependent on the national team and on facilitators. They require mentoring, training and financial assistance to enhance their sustainability and scale-up their activities. It will be critical to assist CAGs with community engagement to expand their reach to different parts of the community and interests groups.

3.4.3. Emerging concrete impacts towards social inclusion at community level

General overview

The extent of implementation of agreed local plans varies between the 15 case study municipalities in the seven focus countries. Most are in the early stages of implementation. Although the plans were adopted relatively recently, mainly in 2015, initiatives of different scopes and in different sectors are already being implemented. Usually they are projects developed by the municipality and funded by national programmes, and partly supported by local budgets. In some cases, projects initiated by the CAGs were funded from other sources (donors and programmes) attracted by the effort of the national teams, especially in Hungary and Ukraine.

All case study municipalities provide evidence of initiatives that are bringing, or expected to bring, concrete impacts towards social inclusion in different areas:

In the majority of locations there are initiatives leading to improved living conditions and infrastructure. These include the repair of roads, access to public transport, improved access to running water, electricity, street lights, regular garbage collection, formalisation of Roma settlements and development of cadastral planning, solving housing issues and avoiding conflicts.

In most of the case study locations there are tangible education-related results. They include:

- ▶ New or refurbished kindergartens;
- ▶ New schools built in villages;
- ▶ Children better prepared for mainstream education, who otherwise would end up in special schools;
- ▶ Initiatives to overcome segregation in schools;
- ▶ Initiatives to raise parents' awareness of the importance of education, especially for girls;
- ▶ Adult learning programmes to help people finish their education.

A more in-depth overview of educational achievements and impacts is provided in the next section of the report.

Citizenship and solidarity - several CAGs in Portugal organised solidarity initiatives (e.g. collecting food products to donate to social care institutions) with an important impact for the image and reputation of Roma communities. These initiatives showed that they are also willing to give and to help, despite their own difficulties. A number of CAG initiatives in Ukraine supported internally displaced persons.

A number of initiatives addressed women's issues. The most prominent initiatives focused on preventative health care, campaigns to prevent early marriages, and education of young mothers. Examples of such initiatives were provided in case study municipalities in Bulgaria, Ukraine, Romania and Slovakia, but there is no systematic data their impact. In some countries gender issues are integrated into local policies. For example, in Transcarpathia (Ukraine) the regional administration proposed to appoint an Adviser to the Deputy Governor on Roma Gender issues.

All these initiatives started to produce small but visible results in the communities. As suggested by the CAGs, the fact that they were approved proves to the broader community that the opinion of Roma can be taken into consideration and action can be taken. These results provide active CAGs with new arguments to convince other members of the Roma community to participate more actively in the development and implementation of various initiatives.

Impacts in the area of education

From an educational perspective, the main contribution of ROMED2 was in the area of informal education of active members of the Roma communities in democratic citizenship.

This, together with the practice of interaction with communities (to identify needs) and with local authorities (to develop and implement initiatives) had two important impacts: empowerment of core civic groups within Roma communities, and experiential learning by local authorities in participatory work and involvement of Roma communities.

The newly functional CAG infrastructure and established working relations with local authorities resulted in new initiatives, some of which will generate impact in different aspects of formal education. However, due to the wide diversity of local contexts in the 15 case studies locations, **it is difficult to generalise horizontal findings and conclusions on impacts per area or sector** (for example, education, employment, housing):

- ▶ **The meaning of each of these initiatives and their impact is unique to each locations.** It is rooted in the local context and provides learning for:
 - The process (the set of factors that help or hamper the empowerment of communities and more inclusive local institutions); and
 - Improvement of the situation in communities (the concrete activities and the emerging impacts they are generating).
- ▶ **The open nature of the programme. There were no predefined sectors and priorities.** Prioritising of needs and types of initiatives was left open to local stakeholders – the CAGs and the local institutions. As outlined in previous chapters this was one of the main merits of the programme. This bottom up approach ensured more ownership of the process, but it also generated diverse priorities and initiatives to meet these priorities.
- ▶ **ROMED2 promoted integrated, rather than sectoral, approaches for Roma inclusion.** From this perspective, the impact of initiatives was much broader than their sector or category. For example, the mentioned community-based campaign resulting in the repair of the road and the rehabilitation of public services in Bucharest, Sector 6 had a concrete impact on improved infrastructure. But it also had an impact on access to education for children, who could not go to school without public transport. This was actually the main driver that mobilised the Roma community to get organised in a civic protest and put pressure on the municipality.
- ▶ **Finally, emerging impacts cannot be directly attributed solely to ROMED2 interventions.** They depend on numerous local factors, including history of work in the area of education (of individuals, institutions and civil society involved), and attracting outside resources which in turn generated the concrete educational impacts. From this perspective we can talk about the contribution of ROMED2 rather than attributing educational impacts directly to it.

In the majority of the 15 case study locations there are initiatives directly or indirectly linked to education.

There are diverse initiatives, the importance of which is unique to each locality. In some rural communities, such as Valea Seaca in Romania, the main educational achievement was overcoming the barrier that children lacked birth certificates and could not be enrolled in school. In other communities, education initiatives were covered by consistent long-term educational strategies, searching not only for full coverage and enrolment of students but for increased quality of education.

Based on the case study municipalities, the types of educational initiatives are usually determined by the interrelation of a set of local factors:

- ▶ **Level of poverty and marginalisation of the community** – in more marginalised communities, there is a tendency to prioritise more immediate basic problems, such as living conditions, making a living, garbage collection, etc. Prioritising education requires that the community horizon is extended beyond immediate needs, to the future of the community. At the same time, children are perceived as the main asset, even in most marginalised Roma communities. This can serve as an entry point for starting or expanding initiatives to improve their education.
- ▶ **Recognition of education as a priority by CAG members** – CAG members are part of their community and reflect its level of vision beyond marginalisation. While the level of education of CAG members is an important factor, it is not the only one. As outlined in previous section, CAG members with no education were motivated to continue their studies because they recognised their lack of education was a barrier to their communication with institutions. A tendency noticed in the different case studies is that the involvement of women and youth in the CAGs contributes to the inclusion of education as community priority. Another critical factor was the capacity of national facilitator assisting the process and their understanding of education as a priority.
- ▶ **Experience of local authorities and recognition of the importance of education** – the case studies indicate that there are local authorities have differing attitudes to educational challenges in their municipalities, and differing capacities to address them. In some cases, these challenges are approached in a more fragmented way, especially when the municipality is poor, or has no previous experience in Roma inclusion initiatives. Results are much better when initiatives are based on a consistent, long-term vision that emphasises the importance of education.

The following paragraphs provide education-related examples from some of the case study municipalities.

Visible and consistent impacts resulting from shared long-term vision (municipality-CAGs) that prioritises education

Reducing school dropout levels from 30% to 15% in Tetovo and Prilep, “the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia”

Both Prilep and Tetovo have identified education of Roma as a long-term priority in their local development strategies. This priority is recognised by the younger members of the CAG in Prilep, and the CAG in Tetovo, which is supported by the Roma NGO ‘Sonce’. Both CAGs have contributed to the development of the local strategies in the area of education.

An important contextual factor is that education of Roma is a priority in national strategies, and is supported by national programmes providing funding for local educational initiatives. Another important factor is the synergy between the ROMED1 and ROMED2 programmes, and between both programmes and national Roma inclusion policies.

By providing training to tutors in the two municipalities, ROMED1 contributed to their mediation capacity. This, together with the consistent support for their employment by municipalities had already achieved visible results in the communities. Due to the work of appointed educational tutors in the local schools, the percentage of children dropping out of school has been reduced from 30% to 15% in both municipalities.

Due to effective interaction between the CAGs and the municipalities, a number of projects were developed and funded by different sources, and these have contributed directly to increasing the level of Roma education. Initiatives include the reconstruction and rehabilitation of kindergartens and schools. Other initiatives relate to incentives for education. In Tetovo, 150 stipends for the completion of secondary education with a particular vocational specialisation were provided to Roma students with guaranteed employment after graduation. In Prilep, the Roma Perspective association, together with the contact points in the municipality are currently developing a fundraising strategy to create a fund for the implementation of small education projects.

Another example of visible impact resulting from the effective interaction of CAGs and municipalities based on a shared vision for education comes from Bulgaria.

Tundzha municipality, Bulgaria:

“Investing in all our children, including Roma, is investing in our future as a municipality”.

This is the ‘human mission’ and shared motivational drive for local development by both the CAG and the municipality. Long-term vision in the area of education has guided Tundzha Roma inclusion policy over the past 10 years. As a result of this, the municipality was first in Bulgaria to ensure full coverage and enrolment of children in preschool and school education. This was achieved by providing free of charge pre-school day care for all children, full board and food in schools, and free transport for all children from the villages to the schools and kindergartens.

By creating the CAG, ROMED2 assisted the municipality in identifying the specific educational needs in each of the 13 villages with a more significant Roma population. This resulted in a set of new initiatives for improving school and kindergarten infrastructure, as well as the quality of teaching and working with parents of Roma children. A new general school was built in one of the villages, that is more accessible to students from the surrounding villages. A new kindergarten in another village provides 50 Roma children with preschool education and thus enhances their prospects of being enrolled in school. Educational projects allowed the hiring of eight mediators in all schools in the villages.

“Full enrolment is not enough. We also need quality of education to make our children from the villages more competitive”. Currently the municipality and the CAG are developing projects for improving the quality of teaching in rural schools in the municipality.

The municipality also supported 77 adult Roma from two villages to complete their basic education which will enhance their prospects of finding work.

Innovative initiatives resulting from broad stakeholder consultations, organised by a proactive CAG with a clear priority on education, and working in cooperation with local authorities.

Nyirbator Municipality in Hungary provides an interesting ROMED2 example.

Roma education as an opportunity: creating human resources needed for economic growth. Nyirbator Municipality, Hungary

The CAG in Nyirbator was led by a majority of active women. The two leading priorities identified by the group were education and employment. With the assistance of the national ROMED2 team and the mayor, the CAG organised issue-based meetings with a variety of local stakeholders to identify the best solutions in both priorities:

- ▶ An educational institutional meeting brought representatives of public and private schools, the municipality and the CAG together to discuss the main educational challenges of the Roma children such as segregation, cooperation with parents, and school drop-out.
- ▶ A joint meeting with the representatives of local companies and institutions called the attention of the companies to the available Roma human resources.

These efforts supported by ROMED2 produced concrete results in the area of education:

- ▶ Based on the initiative of the CAG, a second school bus was introduced for pupils commuting from the Roma settlement to their school. This greatly improved the access of Roma children to mainstream education.
- ▶ The local council adopted a local scholarship programme for primary and secondary school students with multiple disadvantages, jointly financed by the municipality and by local companies. The aim of the programme is to ensure completion of secondary vocational school, and to provide a skilled labour force for local companies. The programme is planned to start in the 2016/ 17 academic year with between 50 and 100 students per year from Grade 5 to the final grade of vocational school.
- ▶ The municipality approved a sports scholarship program for talented disadvantaged students, which is expected to start in September 2016.
- ▶ The municipality also hired two school mediators, who monitor the attendance of children and facilitate communication between Roma parents and the school.

Proactive action of ROMED CAGs focused on fighting school segregation

Removing segregation practices in schools. Cicava, Slovakia

The CAG focused on removing possible segregation at schools and promoting the active involvement of Roma parents in school activities. The CAG mobilised mothers of students who were about to move from the primary school in Cicava to secondary school in Vranov nad Topľov, where Roma children from Cicava had to eat their lunch separately from the non-Roma children in a second shift. The active mothers, with the support of the school principal, managed to overcome this prejudice and all students started eating together in one shift.

3.4.4. Potential impact of ROMED2 at national level

The ROMED2 programme was built on local pilot interventions.

In some of the focus countries, meetings were organised between participating municipalities. However interview feedback suggests that more sharing of experiences, and more strategic dissemination of the ROMED2 approach through existing in-country networks of municipalities and civil society organisations.

National government support for this phase of ROMED2 varied between countries. In some countries (e.g. “the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia”) ROMED2 was implemented in synergy with existing national programmes and in close cooperation with the government. In others (e.g. Slovakia), ROMED2 did not succeed to link up with existing national programmes, one of which developed community centres in 150 municipalities with extensive national funding.

Despite its grassroots nature, the programme influenced national policies in some countries. Examples include:

- ▶ **In Romania**, the application guide for project proposals for the Human Capital Programme requires integrated measures for Roma communities. This application guide was influenced by the original idea of ROMED2, and will continue to shape the situation until 2020.
- ▶ **In Ukraine**, the NFP and the national support organisation 'Chirikli' have been very active in organising civil society to contribute to the NRIS. As a result, the National Strategy includes text about 'including Roma associations in the participation of community development, in particular in decision and development of policies that impact the development of Roma minority'. The NFP was very active in contributing to the development of the Strategy. Although, ROMED2 started in 2014, whereas the strategy was approved in 2013, the ideas of mediation practiced in ROMED1 revealed the importance of community empowerment for sustainable and effective Roma inclusion.

3.5. Sustainability prospects

The initial vision for sustainability of local processes supported by ROMED2 was to create mechanisms that would remain and ensure continued participation of Roma in decision making. There is a very brief section on CAG sustainability in the ROMED2 Guidelines for facilitators. It outlines three options:

- ▶ Keeping the CAG as an **informal group of citizens**, with which municipal authorities consult on a regular basis;
- ▶ **Registering the CAG as an NGO** with the mission to contribute to local development by facilitating the participation of Roma citizens in the decision-making processes;
- ▶ **Transforming the CAG into an official municipal consultative structure**, through a formal local council decision. This last option was based on the example of the neighbourhood councils in Timisoara in Romania.

Interview feedback from the International Pedagogical Team indicates that, during the start-up phase, a decision was taken to leave the options for CAG sustainability open rather than recommend specific actions because of the differing situations in each country and municipality. For example, not all countries have provisions for official consultative structures, like the neighbourhood councils in Romania. In some countries there are not enough Roma NGOs and registering a civic association was a preferred option (e.g. Portugal). In others, there are too many Roma NGOs and there is a growing concern about the way they function, which is not always participatory or representative of the communities (e.g. Romania).

Another envisaged step for ensuring the sustainability of the local processes was the role of local facilitators, usually fulfilled by mediators in the same locality. They had to take over the facilitation of the local process from the national facilitators provided by the programme.

We were unable to find clear evidence about the success of this strategy from a sustainability point of view. Firstly, in a number of countries, the local mediators were not aware that they were the local facilitators who were expected to take over the coordination of the process from the national facilitators. Secondly, we could not find clear evidence of concrete strategies to expand the capacities of local mediators so that they can take over as local facilitators. The only exceptions were Portugal and Ukraine, where the national team had consistent strategies for coaching and supporting the capacity of individual local facilitators. In the majority of the case studies locations, the key actor for the facilitation of the local process remained the national facilitator. In some municipalities other people from the CAG were emerging as the contact person for the group, not the mediators (examples were provided in Romania).

Another issue raised by outside stakeholders relates to the need of more in-depth reflection of the role of local mediators in the CAGs. As mediators are part of the municipality staff they can serve as resources for the CAGs, but they cannot drive their organisation. There is a need to develop leadership within the CAG as a structure which is not neutral – it clearly represents the interests of the community in dialogue with the local government.

The majority of the CAGs established in the seven focus countries are still active and are in different stages of institutionalisation:

- ▶ Some CAGs continue to meet as **informal groups** to discuss community issues and, in some cases, to initiate concrete actions when emergency situations occur without the presence or support of the facilitator.
- ▶ Some CAGs have decided to register as **civic associations**. There are examples in all of the focus countries. They consider that registering as a civic organisation that is rooted in the community provides more legitimacy for working with local governments, as well as more access to funds to sustain activities.
- ▶ There are also attempts to set up a **community consultative structure**. For example, in Timisoara in Romania, CAG members initiated an election process in the community to set up a consultative structure;

- ▶ In other countries it is considered that a better option for sustainability will be to develop a strategy for **synergies with existing structures in the community** (e.g. the Community Centres in Slovakia)
- ▶ Another option considered in different countries is to sustain the CAG by **working in partnership with existing local NGOs that can support their work**.

Most CAGs continue to need mentoring and support to become sustainable. Even successful groups consider that it will be very difficult to continue on their own without support from the national teams. This also applies to the CAGs that have been transformed into newly registered civic associations and NGOs. They are still very young organisations and need assistance in developing capacities for effective and accountable functioning, and in continuing to apply the participatory principles at the heart of the CAG concept. ROMED2 provided assistance in developing capacities for participatory planning, but it did not include focused development of capacities for effective community organising and leadership. This requires specifically targeted coaching and mentoring.

Based on the interviews with national teams and local stakeholders, it is vital for CAG sustainability to maintain their motivation through visible small successes. Without this there is a risk that the CAGs will become dormant or even disappear. Small but tangible changes in the community maintain interest and help to keep people actively involved. They also increase the trust of the broader community. Some actions require minimal funding but can generate impetus and change. Maybe for this reason, in a number of locations, the CAGs have decided to formally register as NGOs, because this form provides the best possibility for attracting outside support for community initiatives.

The advantages and risks of the different options for institutionalising CAGs were discussed during the international meetings of the national teams, the pedagogic team and the ROMED management. Feedback provided by the international teams about the case study municipalities indicates that the increasing tendency of CAGs to formally register as an NGO poses a serious risk that these new organisations will repeat the deficiencies of existing NGOs in terms of reduced community participation. If they become another local project holder, they may lose their authenticity as a new type of open, participatory, democratic self-organising with shared leadership. The trimestral reports from national teams also provide information about potential CAG sustainability.

At present, the discussion on sustainability has been intensified in view of the end of the current ROMED2 contractual period, and the decision to move ROMACT out of the first municipalities selected by ROMED2 in some countries (e.g. Bulgaria). A challenge in this regard is that the ROMED2 and ROMACT programme teams do not have a clear shared vision of success and sustainability should be assessed.

The issue of sustainability was also discussed with the national teams, and was covered in feedback on the draft evaluation report. As noted in interviews in the seven focus countries, and during the June 2016 meeting of NPOs/NFPs (when the draft evaluation findings and recommendations were discussed), the sustainability of the investment of ROMED2 cannot be confined only to the issue of sustaining the CAGs.

Sustaining the local cooperation processes will depend on a number of interrelated factors:

- ▶ Sustained commitment of local authorities to continue the cooperation;
- ▶ Strong CAGs as community based structures to demand such commitment;
- ▶ Availability of national policies and programmes supporting local inclusive processes;
- ▶ Accessibility of funding at the local level to support community suggestions and local plans.

Based on the interviews with local stakeholders there are a number of challenges to sustainability. In more marginalised communities much longer processes are needed to get people organised. Building trust within the community also takes time.

Others challenges relate to the attitudes of local authorities - changing the institutional behaviour will take time. In some cases, local administration commitment and strategic vision for Roma inclusion might not be supported by the local council (e.g. Tundzha in Bulgaria). Elections can pose a serious risk, if this leads to changes in administration personnel. For example, in some locations, newly elected mayors completely reversed all their predecessor's Roma inclusion policies and frameworks (e.g. in Kavarna municipality in Bulgaria).

"Politicians come and go, but people in communities remain."

CAG member

As emphasised in all interviews with the CAGs, national teams and facilitators, **strong self-organised communities are vital for the sustainability of the democratic participation of Roma communities in local decision making.** Maintaining the interest and commitment of the local government in the process will depend on the capacity of active people and groups in the Roma community to demand this commitment. Another important factor, evident in several countries, is the involvement of elected Roma representatives on local councils who can advance the Roma agenda at the local policy-making level.

As noted by a participant at the NPO/NFP meeting in June 2016, during the discussions on the draft evaluation report, *“we talk about the sustainability of the CAG, but we should tackle the sustainability of empowerment instead”*. This is a very important issue that can help in thinking and strategising about the sustainability of the ROMED2 investment. It is also critical that the ROMED and ROMACT vision for the empowerment of Roma communities is clarified, and that the two programmes define how they can contribute effectively.

If the sustainability of the **CAG** is the main priority, then the investment will be limited to one group within the community. If this group is not representative and well linked with the different parts of the community, this could lead to a situation where the process of institutionalisation actively limits sustainability to a narrow part of the community. If the CAG is legally registered as an NGO, this may repeat the shortcomings of some of the existing Roma NGOs which are focused on projects and the interests of the people inside the NGO, rather than the interests of the broader community.

If the sustainability of local **Roma empowerment** is the main priority, then it will be an investment in the whole Roma community. This will require that the CAG effectively represents different community interests and remains an open platform for participation, that can mobilise and link different interest groups within the community. It should be accountable to the whole community. Then, if registered as a civic association, the CAG can become a new type of civic community-based organisation that can express the interests of the community and mobilise its involvement in local decision making in the long-term. Existing community based organisations provide examples of good practices, and learning from them can be of benefit to ROMED2.

Finally, it is important to consider the availability of national policies requiring local inclusive processes, and sources of funding for this. In some countries, such funding exists, and the issue is more a matter of developing capacities to access it. In other countries, funds are not always available in localities that need it most. As suggested by the participants at the June 2016 NPO/NFP meeting, giving visibility to programme achievements could help secure support for the continuation and extension of the programme. It could also help advocacy for more accessible funds at the local level where the Roma inclusion process needs to happen.

Conclusions and lessons

4.1. Conclusion and Lessons from ROMED1 'Training of Mediators'

4.1.1. ROMED1: key conclusions

ROMED1 was a large scale European effort developed by the Council of Europe and supported by the joint programme of the CoE and DG EAC to invest in the capacities and quality of work of mediators across Europe. With comparatively modest resources, it trained 1,479 mediators from more than 22 countries between 2011 and 2016.

ROMED1 developed and spread a new vision for the role of mediators at European, national and local levels. It is the first programme of this scale to have at its centre the development of Roma mediators and the need for systemic change to enable their effective functioning – it did not simply train mediators in specific skills.

ROMED1 significantly increased the functional capacities of mediators and by raising the profile of their work, it enhanced understanding of their complex role and the importance of their work..

There was limited impact on mediators' employment status and working conditions, especially in the countries where this profession is not recognised. This caused disappointment among trained mediators in some countries. In countries where mediators are recognised as a profession, there were minimal changes to their conditions of employment – their salaries remain low and there are no incentives for professional development.

The presence of well qualified mediators is making a significant difference for Roma communities in the locations they work in. We were provided with numerous examples of successful individual work. However, good national systems, to monitor mediators' working conditions and the impact of their work on Roma communities, are missing or limited.

ROMED1 had limited influence on national policies towards better recognition of mediators and their role. Its influence was most evident where there were strategic synergies between the programme and national programmes, where national governments were clearly committed, or where NFPs and their organisations mobilised effective advocacy actions.

The sustainability of the of ROMED1 investment will depend on national policies the capacity of and in-country systems to provide official recognition and continue capacity development for mediators. Based on the seven focus countries covered by this evaluation, there is progress towards recognition of mediators in some of the countries (e.g. "the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia" and Portugal). However, except for Portugal, there are no systematic programmes, and funding for training and capacity building for mediators, even in countries where the profession of mediator has been recognised for a long time (e.g. Bulgaria and Romania).

4.1.2. ROMED1: key lessons

Intercultural mediation is an important horizontal skill that complements substantive professional competence. There is a great need for a clear definition and understanding of the role of mediators to avoid the emergence of multiple interpretations of their functions.

Continuous development of mediators' functional competencies is critical for increasing the impact of their work. A one-time training is not enough. This requires comprehensive programmes including training and practice that will enable skills to be upgraded over time..

'One size fits all' international training does not work. Training content has to be continually adapted to diverse and changing local contexts, and to the concrete needs of trained mediators. The ROMED1 Trainer's Handbook was viewed as a general guiding reference, on the basis of which trainers contextualised the methodology. Additional

national training guidelines with concrete local cases and examples would help to enhance acceptance of the methodology by other national programmes.

Lack of continuous monitoring and mentoring of mediators reduces the effectiveness of the programme, especially during the practice period. A major shortcoming of the programme was the lack of resources to provide effective mentoring. Consistent monitoring, together with peer support among mediators, needs to be envisaged as a strategy and supported by the allocation of relevant resources. Without this, the effectiveness of the practice period is limited.

Participation of local institutions in the training of mediators increases their understanding and acceptance of intercultural mediation. It enhances the positive recognition of mediators' work within institutions over time. Ideally, these institutions should be involved in the entire capacity development programme, and they should be encouraged to make a clear commitment to support mediators during the practice period.

It is better to concentrate the training of mediators in fewer countries rather than spreading resources too thinly. ROMED1 was extended too quickly to too many countries and this limited its strategic performance. Impact on national systems would have been greater if the right strategic niche and partnerships had been identified at the start of the programme, together with strategies for targeted promotion of the methods and curriculum.

More time is needed at the outset of the programme to ensure in-depth assessment and mapping of the country contexts, and more consultation with key stakeholders (including civil society). This will help adapt the programme to the local context, identify the right leading teams, ensure strategic positioning of the training of mediators and create alliances in support to intercultural mediation.

The training of mediators has greater impact if organised in partnership with existing national programmes to exploit strategic synergies, including concrete commitments by national governments regarding the employment of mediators. One-time training of mediators with no strategy to link the trained mediators with national systems produces only limited and fragmented results.

The sustainability of an outside training programme is likely to be limited if there is limited interaction with the key in-country key actors and they have no ownership or direct involvement. Key stakeholders who can contribute to the sustainability of the support provided to mediators include national authorities, local institutions, and civil society (Roma NGOs, and organisations supporting mediators and the development by mediators of effective mediator networks).

Influence at the national level for improving policies and practices of mediators requires leadership and targeted investment. ROMED1 relied mostly on the leadership of national institutions and their involvement in training, as well as on the individuals hired as NFPs. But clear strategies and resources for national level advocacy and promotion were missing.

Advocacy for, and promotion of, better national policies for mediators are more effective if they are led by organisations rather than individuals. ROMED1 relied on the NFPs hired as individuals. The most active NFPs were those who led NGOs that had Roma inclusion and mediation at the heart of their mission. In some cases, (e.g. Ukraine) they succeeded in building broad NGO coalitions in support of NRIS policy change, including the position of mediators.

Networking and peer support among mediators is very much needed but requires strategically focused investment. ROMED1 provided space for shared learning during training and encouraged continued networking. This led to the creation of mediator networks in some countries, but clear targeted support and resources for their development was missing. If they are assisted to grow as effective associations, these networks could make an important contribution to the sustainability of policy and practice changes in the area of intercultural mediation.

4.2. Key conclusions and lessons from ROMED2 'Democratic governance and participation through mediation'

4.2.1. ROMED2: key conclusions

ROMED2 built on the lessons of ROMED1 training of mediators and focused on creating effective local participatory processes bringing together members of Roma communities and local authorities to plan and implement together local policies for Roma inclusion.

The programme created conditions for effective participation of Roma communities and joint work with municipalities. This included developing infrastructure for participation – the Community Action Groups (CAGs) and the institutional working groups with concrete objectives for this participation - developing local plans and their implementation. Local processes were assisted by outside facilitators providing training and assistance, and acting as mediators between the community and the local administration.

From an educational perspective, ROMED2 succeeded in testing and applying innovative experiential learning and capacity development for democratic citizenship and inclusive governance. This contributed to the creation of new community leadership capacity within the Roma communities, that were able to express the interests of the community and participate in local development. By bringing together the CAGs and the local authorities, ROMED2 developed interactive space for shared leadership and responsibility for Roma inclusion in municipalities.

The main results of the ROMED2 cooperative processes were the local action plans developed by the CAGs and adopted in the local development plans of most of the localities. Although only recently adopted (mostly in 2015) initiatives have already been planned or implemented in different localities, and these are having concrete impacts on social inclusion of Roma in different areas.

Cooperation between the CAGs and the municipalities has led to timely resolution of immediate problems in communities, such as community infrastructure, accessibility of public transport, access to waste collection services, resolving conflicts around housing, access to running water etc.. There are also a number of initiatives increasing access to education.

A number of initiatives improve school infrastructure and access to education for Roma children and adults, overcoming segregation practices in schools, and creating scholarships for Roma children and students. Each of these initiatives has an important impact which has a unique meaning for the locality. In some cases, initiatives are part of a shared, long-term vision reflecting the importance of education for the future of local development. In other locations, it is the first step in developing such a vision.

ROMED2 had only limited influence at the national level due to its pilot nature, building on locally based interventions. Impact at the national level was greater when ROMED2 was linked with strategic national programmes, or the ROMED2 National Support Organisation had a more proactive advocacy and communication strategy. More systematic strategies and more resources will be needed in order to disseminate lessons from localities and influence national programmes and policies.

ROMED2 has started important change processes at the local level but their sustainability is still fragile. More time is needed for processes aimed at empowering communities and changing local institutions and authorities towards more inclusive attitudes and practical work with Roma representatives. Despite successes, they are still at an initial stage and will need further support to ensure their sustainability.

Disruption of local processes reduced implementation of activities to less than two years and seriously affected the trust and credibility of the programme at the local level. This also undermined sustainability. In the four ROMED2/ROMACT countries there were gaps of six to nine months in implementation due to slow negotiations between the CoE and the EU regarding the new EU contractual arrangement, PAGODA. However, this delay affected only the four countries transferred to ROMACT, where the CoE's contribution was only 20%. The CoE was able to mitigate this negative effect in the remaining ROMED countries through its higher, 50%, contribution.

Lack of clarity and communication regarding synergies with other programmes, such as ROMACT, caused confusion at national and local levels in the countries where the programmes were implemented simultaneously. Shifting the focus from empowerment of Roma communities to developing local administration capacity in participatory project generation narrowed the space for the process of activating local communities. It accelerated the

formation of CAGs as an instrument, not as a key actor of democratic participation. This was interpreted by national teams as 'deviation from the original idea of ROMED2, not as a synergy'.

4.2.2. ROMED2: key lessons

Community empowerment and democratic participation

Community empowerment requires consistent support, and time, to activate multiple change processes at individual, group and community levels. The presence of outside facilitators assisting these processes helps communities to expand their vision, gain new knowledge and practices, and to access new resources.

Strong community self-organisation is critical for sustaining the success of the local cooperation processes. The CAGs that were created have acted as catalysts for activating the community, as well as for putting collective demands for improvements to local authorities. They can be a key factor in maintaining local authority commitment for continuation of new local cooperative processes.

"If somebody from another community asks how we managed to achieve so much, our answer will be: the community is well organised –we know very well what we want, dedicated and committed people are involved, and there is constant dialogue with local authorities. We have to show that we are strong and reliable long term partners."

(CAG, Targu Jiu, Romania.)

Diverse representation of Roma community members in the CAG ensures that the process is kept open to broader community issues, and is not limited to specific interest groups. This can help consolidate the community around a longer term vision for empowerment and inclusion of Roma. This in turn is the force that drives work on specific causes and issues.

The presence of active and well-educated Roma and local Roma organisations working on specific issues can serve as a strong support network for the developing CAGs. This can be of mutual benefit for both the CAGs and the Roma NGOs. CAGs can benefit from the legitimacy of Roma NGOs due to their previous good record of work with local authorities. Creating CAGs around various issues or for an overall planning process can increase the constituency of Roma NGOs within the Roma communities. It can also contribute to a better representation of community needs and interests by Roma NGOs.

Community representation is difficult and less successful if the members of the CAG and the mediator are economically dependent on the municipality. In some poor rural communities, Roma community members depend entirely on the municipality for their income. In such a hierarchical situation, when the municipality is the main employer, it can be difficult to ensure that mediation is impartial, as can communication between the CAG and the municipality on an equal footing.

Support to small self-started community actions can catalyse the process of empowerment by gradually developing local capacity and greater self-esteem, maintaining motivation, and increasing trust among community members. ROMED2 provided only human resources and technical assistance. It relied mainly on generating projects to support community initiatives from the budget of the municipality or with outside funding. Due to the different opportunities for funding, and the gap between the momentum created in the community and the eventual success of the project application, this approach was not sufficient as the only source of support for empowerment initiatives. This led to disappointment and undermined trust in the process in many communities.

Local Roma inclusive governance

Openness and determination of local authorities to cooperate on Roma issues is crucial for sustaining the involvement and participation of Roma in local policy process. This emerged as a general lesson from all case studies. Different experiences exposed a range of critical issues:

- ▶ The personal, individual commitment of key people in the local administration is very important. But the process can be interrupted if it is not backed up by institutional commitment and human resource changes in the local administration.
- ▶ Ensuring the commitment of the mayor and local administration at the start of the process is important, but this commitment will be much more sustainable if it is supported politically with a vote by the local council.

- ▶ The support and involvement of the local council throughout the process can enhance the sustainability of local authority support.
- ▶ Representation of Roma on local councils and in the local administration is a key factor for ensuring long term political commitment in the local administration.

The direct involvement of active Roma community groups roots local policy in real community needs and issues.

In a number of locations the local administration considered that CAGs helped them learn about communities and to interact more directly with them. As a result, new initiatives were based on real needs, and there was more direct feedback on implemented policies.

Small rural municipalities need to be linked in active partnerships with other actors, especially with NGOs, in order to access EU funding. Such municipalities depend on additional outside resources to advance the process of Roma inclusion. But their capacity is often limited and they may not be eligible for national programmes. Through increased partnership with NGOs, they can access the necessary additional expertise and human capacity.

Addressing emergency needs on a temporary basis might be an option if it is part of (and conditional on) the development of a comprehensive integrated solution that is coordinated with national strategies and financial support. It is not realistic to expect immediate improvement in completely segregated settlements faced with total exclusion, anti-Roma prejudice, weak NGOs, and lack of resources (e.g. Kortina in Slovakia). Creating integrated solutions requires a clear strategy, time and resources.

Education

Informal education of Roma communities members in active citizenship is critical for the empowerment of Roma communities. The creation and development of the CAGs has expanded the capacities and vision of active community members. This cannot be achieved by one-time training. It requires continuous coaching and mentoring provided by outside facilitators who understand the complexity of Roma empowerment. The CAGs became practical schools for active citizenship and at the same time the source of active community change, thus turning into an engine for democracy, learning, and education for the entire community.

Increased individual self-esteem as active citizens motivates Roma community members to continue their formal education. In some municipalities where CAG members did not have a high enough level of education for effective participation in the groups, they decided to continue their formal education. Their motivation was that, as members of the CAGs, they need to serve as role models for their community, and better education will help them stand as more equal partners in the joint work with local institutions. (e.g. case study Tundzha municipality, Bulgaria; Roma university scholarships initiated by ROMED2 in Portugal).

Experiential learning of local authorities of the benefits of consulting with representatives of Roma communities in local policy planning and implementation improves local governance. The channels that were established for structured communication between the local authorities and the CAGs have contributed to informal education of local administration representatives in participatory approaches and hearing the voices of Roma communities. A new interactive space has emerged for development of skills and shared responsibility for Roma inclusion in municipalities.

The ROMED2 integrated approaches to Roma inclusion, with bottom up community prioritisation of needs and initiatives, provided different entry points for addressing, directly or indirectly, education issues. This increased ownership of the process based on priority needs as identified by communities. Often, initiatives not directly linked with the formal education sector had a real impact on access to education. For example, in Bucharest, Sector 6 (case study) a community based campaign led to the repair of the road and the restoration of public services, which in turn helped children go to school. Similarly, the work of health and educational mediators participating in CAGs to prevent early marriages meant that young girls did not drop out of school (examples of such initiatives were provided in the case studies in Bulgaria, Ukraine, Romania and Slovakia).

Making education a priority requires extending the perspective of community members beyond the immediate urgent needs of survival towards the future of the community. The case studies in more marginalised communities indicated that there is a tendency to prioritise more immediate problems related to basic needs –drinking water, basic living conditions, making a living, rubbish collection, etc. Resolving some of the immediate problems increases trust in the community and enables the community to think beyond immediate survival. Even in the most marginalised communities, children are the top priority and this can serve as an entry point for starting or expanding initiatives to improve their education, which in turn will expand their opportunities compared to their parents.

Involvement of women and youth in the CAGs helps to ensure that education is one of the leading priorities for local development. In a number of the case study communities where educational initiatives had been developed, there was strong presence of women whose main motivation was to ensure a better future for their children, which will depend on their access to better education. Mobilising mothers' interest groups in the community has led to effective combating of segregation against their children in schools (e.g. Cicava in Slovakia). Involvement of an educated Roma youth interest group in the CAG in Tetovo ("the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia") has expanded the work of the CAG towards education, has raised professional aspirations of young Roma, and has increased opportunities for them.

The effectiveness of initiatives to address educational challenges in municipalities depends on the experience and coherent vision of local authorities about the importance of education. Evidence from the case studies indicates that education is approached in a more fragmented way, by single projects, mainly for infrastructure improvement. This is especially so in poor municipalities with little or no previous experience of Roma inclusion initiatives. Municipalities with longer experience of Roma inclusion initiatives have developed a consistent, long-term vision recognising the importance of education, and this results in more integrated actions addressing various aspects of education, including full coverage of children, work with parents, and quality of teaching (e.g. case studies Tudzha Municipality, Bulgaria, in Prilep and Tetovo, "the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia").

Long-term policy vision for Roma inclusion centred around Roma education as an investment in the future of local development is a critical factor for sustaining the impact of local cooperative efforts. Several municipalities demonstrated this. It took them more than 10 years to develop and start testing this vision. They started from small initiatives and projects that proved to local politicians that such a vision is possible. In some cases, the presence of active local Roma civil society helped to establish this vision.

The availability of national programmes providing resources to support educational initiatives at the local level is essential for stimulating practical impacts in the area of education. While the education of Roma is a priority in most of the NRIS, putting this priority into practice requires targeted programmes and funds that are accessible at the local level. The case studies locations in "the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia" (Prilep and Tetovo) provide good examples of the importance of strategic synergy between different national programmes in support of education. Consistent support to educational initiatives has led to a reduction in the school dropout rate from 30% to 15% in both municipalities.

Identifying Roma as a future skilled human resource needed for local economic growth opens municipalities to new education initiatives. Usually, Roma are considered only as a problem for local development, not as an opportunity. Shifting this perception can have an impact on both education and employment. This is the case in Nyirbator, one of the municipalities visited in Hungary. Here, thanks to ROMED2, the interest of companies in qualified workers led to the establishment of a scholarship programme for Roma students funded jointly by local companies and the municipality.

Targeted facilitation of broad stakeholder consultation and involvement leads to **innovative initiatives that mobilise existing local resources.** The ROMED2 national team and the local facilitator in Nyirbator municipality in Hungary organised a series of stakeholder meetings focused on educational challenges and opportunities in the locality. Bringing together schools, local authorities, local businesses and representatives of Roma communities led to the identification of concrete interests for improvement and increased the motivation and involvement of diverse local stakeholders. This included the agreement of local companies to provide resources matching municipal funding for the Roma students' scholarship programme.

4.3. General conclusions

Both phases of the ROMED programme (ROMED1 'European training programme on intercultural mediation for Roma communities' and ROMED2 'Democratic governance and community participation through mediation') **were very successful pilots, testing new approaches to functional capacity development for Roma empowerment and inclusion.**

Both programmes created a strong community around mediation as a tool for empowerment of Roma which is a tremendous resource for change at local, national and European levels. The majority of this community are Roma, working in different capacities and roles and with shared values and approaches – teams of trainers, coordinators, facilitators and mediators and community action groups.

ROMED as a whole became a school for democracy, empowerment and good governance, educating mediators, community members and local governments in new functional approaches based on participation and cooperation that can help address the challenges of Roma inclusion in different sectors and areas –access to education, health, jobs, and improved living conditions and infrastructure.

A Roma-community-centred approach for successful inclusive processes at the local level is feasible and beneficial. Emerging outcomes and impacts in the communities supported by ROMED2 provide growing evidence of this. This new functional approach can serve as a model for the bottom-up creation of new national participatory planning systems with the direct involvement of Roma communities.

ROMED had an important meaning at the European level.

Promoting mediators and community-based models for Roma inclusion based on mediation became a priority for the CoE. Direct operational work with Roma communities provided for experiential learning directly from localities across Europe. This is a good basis for further conceptualising and promoting innovative approaches across Europe and building strategic alliances around them.

ROMED led to the development of bottom-up policy recommendations based on input from local actors - local institutions, and especially Roma communities. Getting the agreement of national governments and signing common declarations foster shared political will for Roma inclusion.

The main factors for the success of the ROMED programme included:

- ▶ *The commitment and hard work of the CoE ROMED management team and international experts*, as well as the growing networking among implementation teams with shared values across different countries in Europe.
- ▶ *Consistent support from DG EAC providing flexible space* for piloting, experimenting, and applying innovative processes, and learning from their impacts.
- ▶ *The commitment of national teams, trainers, facilitators and the national support organisations.*
- ▶ *The support of national institutions and CAHROM* representatives in some countries.
- ▶ *Increased motivation of mediators and members of Roma communities* resulting from capacity development and learning from new active participation practices.
- ▶ *Growing political commitment and increased local authority awareness* of the benefits of applying new approaches oriented to empowerment and overcoming dependency of communities.

The main bottlenecks and challenges for the implementation of the ROMED programmes included:

- ▶ The programme was flexible in accommodating contextual differences, but it *lacked resources and strategic space to explore in more depth the situation in each country*, including existing needs, and potential alliances and synergies. Additional challenges for both programmes came with contextual changes and shifts in political commitments in different countries and localities, especially around elections.
- ▶ The two programmes were experimental pilots requiring systematic learning from their experiences, and strategic clarity regarding how, and for what purposes, these lessons will be used. Support *strategies to mainstream the lessons were limited and there was a lack of clarity in the definition of success* and how this success will be disseminated and sustained.
- ▶ Strategic capacity to learn and increase the potential impact of the ROMED programmes was reduced by the tendency for rapid expansion of the programmes – for ROMED1 the number of countries involved, and for ROMED2 the additional resources of ROMACT in six of the 11 countries, using the ROMED2 approach but with a different objective and focus.
- ▶ Rapid expansion of the programmes meant that the limited resources available to address their ambitious objectives were spread too thinly. This reduced their effectiveness, especially at the local level where resources in support of local processes was insufficient.
- ▶ Under pressure to deliver visible success quickly, and to prove the effectiveness of ROMED models, the CoE was involved as direct implementer ensuring the management of multiple country teams. This was another factor that limited its strategic role and the use of its resources to extract lessons and further develop strategies for sustained ownership of the models in the different countries.

There is strong demand to continue the training of mediators and the processes started at the local level:

- ▶ In most of the countries, the need for continuing training and development of mediators was clearly expressed by some institutional representatives, and especially by mediators. A variety of needs were identified for continuing enhancement of specific and functional skills in different areas, as well as the need for systematic training of new mediators.
- ▶ In all countries there was a clear recommendation that support to established CAGs and local processes in the initially selected municipalities needs to continue. If it is stopped now, it would waste ROMED investments of previous years. Community empowerment through sustainable community structures and institutionalised dialogue with local authorities can not be achieved in less than three years.
- ▶ In-country systems and stakeholders lack the capacity to continue systematic work to ensure that these processes are sustained. In the countries where mediators are recognised, there is a demand for training, but funding for this is limited or missing. Targeted support for Roma empowerment and participation in local decision making is very limited.
- ▶ Despite some success with advocacy and promotion of ROMED methods and approaches at the national level, achieving ownership and sustainability of the ROMED processes and results requires further efforts and continuing support.

Recommendations

5.1. General recommendations

- 1. The ROMED programme needs to continue in order to valorise the investment done so far.** If the programme stops now it will lead to more disillusionment in Roma communities. It will be one more project-based experiment that had some effects, but had a limited implementation timeframe.
- 2. The continuation of the ROMED programme needs to be based on a more strategic framework, with greater clarity on mission, ownership and sustainability.** This will better focus the programme and enhance its impact on the basis of learning from the previous pilot phases of ROMED1 and ROMED2.
- 3. In the next phase it is important to clearly communicate the mission of the programme – ROMED: ROMa Empowerment for Democracy, rather than its instrument (Roma MEDIation).** It corresponds better to the nature of the programme which evolved from training into investment in complex processes to stimulate local democracy and Roma participation.
- 4. The next phase of ROMED needs to be developed with a clear strategic and focused investment in sustainability.** While maintaining its openness and flexibility, it will be important to make the step from a pilot/ experiment to a strategy addressing who will take responsibility to mainstream good working practices into national and local policies and practices, and how this will be done.
- 5. While keeping the overall vision and principles of the programme, it will be important to develop more specific country-based strategies** for its application both at local and national levels. Strategies have to be based on careful needs assessment and participatory planning, involving a variety of stakeholders, and facilitated by national teams. This will help exploit potential synergies with national programmes and the efforts of other actors, which will increase the impact of the programme. It will also assist in adapting the approach, strategies and expectations to existing contextual challenges and bottlenecks.
- 6. Stimulating the ownership of national and local stakeholders needs to be central in the next phase to ensure continuation of the efforts at country level.** Some important steps towards increased ownership involve:
 - **Clear strategy for links and synergies with existing national programmes,** or in their absence, strategies for stimulating the debate and development of new policies and initiatives.
 - **Systemic work to build advocacy evidence cases** for the successful application of local processes that can be used in a targeted way to support advocacy efforts for mainstreaming the approach at country level.
 - **Enhancing the role of the current national support organisation from programme administrator** to strategic implementation partner, thereby developing its capacity to facilitate the process in each country in the long term.
 - **Developing broad support coalitions and alliances around the programme.** This will require participation of both national and local institutions, but also civil society.
- 7. Make a strategic shift in the role of the Council of Europe – from direct project implementer to strategic leader, coordinator of the efforts of national partners,** and convener of the growing platform of key stakeholders across Europe. This role fits better with the strengths of the CoE and will enable to better utilise its tremendous political and knowledge resources. This shift will entail the following steps:
 - **Subcontract the in-country implementation to the national partners based on developed national strategies for implementation.** Transferring responsibility for the success of the programme to the national level will increase ownership and enhance sustainability. It will also enable the CoE's ROMED team to focus on strategic oversight and monitoring to identify lessons and their policy implications.
 - **Develop a strategic advisory group or a working platform around the programme,** including key actors supporting Roma inclusion – other donors, experts and practitioners. This will assist strategic oversight of emerging effectiveness and impact of the programme, as well as expanding strategic alliances around the initiative.
 - **Expand the human resources and capacities** of the CoE international teams to be able to provide strategic

cross-country monitoring and identification of lessons that can be used to update strategy and dissemination.

- **Continue the good practice of cross-country learning** through the meetings of the national support organisations, and inviting strategic outside stakeholders who can help expand the vision of the programme.
- **Develop a more targeted strategy to promote/ disseminate lessons and to support the ROMED programme** through existing CoE platforms – the CAHROM network, the Alliance of Cities, youth networks, etc..
- **Increase synergy with other programmes within the CoE** - assist the dissemination of the ROMED approach through other Roma inclusion programmes managed or assisted by the CoE, including strategic partnership programmes with the EEA and Norway grants in different countries.

5.2. Specific recommendations

5.2.1. Recommendations regarding ROMED1

1. **Situate any follow-up of training for mediators within the new ROMED strategic framework** with a view to increasing ownership, developing in-country capacity for sustainability, and broadening support for mediator capacity development in each country. The aim should be not to supply training based on country demands, but to support building the in-country capacity to recognise the needs of mediators and provide for their development and training.
2. **Any future ROMED mediator training has to be based on clear commitment and matching resources from the national authorities** -to provide employment for mediators, but also to support training with financial resources (partially or completely overtime).
3. **Focus support on developing the capacities of the newly established associations and network of mediators** in each country. This will help develop new actors in each country that can continue working on promoting the true mediation approach, as well as monitor improvements in mediators' employment conditions. Exchange of experiences among networks from different countries can also contribute to their capacity development.
4. **Help align resources for intercultural mediation in each country – ROMED trainers, networks of mediators and Roma civil society** for better peer support and developing in-country 'communities' to support intercultural mediation.
5. **Develop national guidelines further adapted to national contexts, while using the overall framework of the ROMED Trainer's Handbook.** Experience from previous training can be very helpful to enrich the training with examples from the country. National guidelines may be easier to transfer into the national systems needed to train mediators.
6. **Assist the development of a system to monitor mediators' working conditions and their impact.** This can serve as a model to be disseminated among governments to enhance their capacity to monitor the impact of mediators on increased access to services from Roma communities.
7. **Allocate resources to assist the advocacy efforts of national partners for** recognition of the position of mediators (in the countries where it is still not recognised) and for allocation of government training programmes for mediators in each country. In this, it is important to develop partnerships with national training institutions (universities or NGOs) and to include in advocacy the important issues of recognised certification of modular training for mediators and the potential linkage of better payment for mediators in recognition of their new qualifications and education.
8. **Support more systemic monitoring of the implementation of the Strasbourg declaration signed by national governments.** In addition to CAHROM, civil society and networks of mediators can contribute by developing annual reports on the situation of mediators in each country.
9. As suggested in some of the interviews it will be important in the future to **invest in cultural mediators as agents for empowerment of Roma communities**, as well as for raising the awareness of the majority population about intercultural issues. This can help improve the dialogue between Roma and non-Roma.

5.2.2. Recommendations regarding ROMED2

The following recommendations for ROMED2 are based on (1) suggestions from stakeholders consulted at national and local levels, and (2) analysis of lessons emerging from the implementation of ROMED2:

1. **Design the continuation of ROMED2 following the new strategic framework focused on clarity of mission, ownership and sustainability.** This will help better define expectations for success, the timeframe needed for this success, and synergies with other programmes and actors in working towards this success. This will also help answer operational questions, such as the selection of localities, strategies to phase in and phase out, as well as how lessons from supported municipalities can be more widely mainstreamed.
2. **Sustainability of local process needs at least three years of continuous support. However, when considering the local election cycle, ideally four or five years are needed.** This will help test the viability of the approach in at least one local election cycle and the extent to which results will be sustained in the event of political changes resulting from elections.
3. **Explicitly focus the approach on empowerment of Roma communities with clarity on the desired impact.** Lessons from the first three years of the ROMED2 approach outlined in this evaluation report can serve as basis for further discussions on conditions and factors that help or hamper local empowerment processes. This can help further adjust the approach to the development of community action groups in terms of their capacity to engage with, and activate, the broader community and represent their interests. This will also ensure the sustained commitment of local authorities and institutions to include Roma in local policy development and implementation.
4. **Define clear progressive indicators for success in terms of empowerment and the desired impact on local processes.** This can help clarify the criteria and process for selecting municipalities. It can also facilitate better targeting of assistance to CAGs and their interaction with local authorities when they are created and as they develop. This will also assist more strategic monitoring and identification of lessons that can help further dissemination of the model.
5. **Continue the good practice of providing outside facilitators for the process, but with more clarity on their tasks with a view to strengthening local ownership and sustainability.** Sustainability of local processes should guide the work of national facilitators from the very start of the process. This will emphasise the development of local capacities for sustaining the process - institutional development of CAGs as formal or informal structures, local facilitation, and capacity for advocacy and interaction with local authorities.
6. **Increase the level of direct resources available to support local community empowerment processes.** In addition to human resources (facilitators and experts), some concrete financial support for the activity of the CAGs will accelerate empowerment processes locally. It needs to be provided as an incentive and made conditional on mobilisation of other support over time. More concretely:
 - Small scale support to provide for space and coordination of the group (local facilitator or coordinator).
 - **Introduce a small seed fund to support community initiatives. This can assist local community campaigns and actions that will in turn help to empower local people, and will attract other resources** – from the community, the municipality or from other sources. Such a seed fund catalyse the empowerment of CAGs and communities by expanding their capacities to raise support for their initiatives. It will also strengthen legitimacy and the involvement of local administrations, and eventually, it can be used as a model for municipalities to support community initiatives.
 - **Support the local groups in expanding their knowledge and access to other funding opportunities.** This should be one of the tasks of the national support teams. It can help the CAGs to gradually develop their capacity to diversify support to local initiatives.
7. **Foster the focus on education as an engine for empowerment of communities.** While it is important not to restrict the process of identifying priorities for communities, stimulating more discussions and initiatives relating to the future of children may be a way to expand community horizons beyond current marginalisation. Practice has proved that the future of children can be an engine for the empowerment of communities. Such initiatives can also help to develop the long term vision of municipalities, with education as the core of sustained, integrated approaches to Roma inclusion. Some potential steps that could strengthen the impact of ROMED2 on education include:
 - **Develop strategic partnerships with actors with specific expertise in different approaches to improved access of Roma to formal education**, such as the Roma Education Fund (REF). This will expand education expertise within ROMED2. It will also promote synergies between ROMED2 and REF in different countries.
 - Maintain the scope of the programme combining informal education (active citizenship and empowerment) and formal education (access to quality education, reduced drop out, pre-school education). In this it will be

important to focus on work with parents, as parents are the first teachers to their children. Stimulating parents' involvement in school life (parenting committees and meetings) will increase their awareness of the importance of education, but will also enhance their capacity as active citizens.

- **Make sure that the composition of the CAG involves members that have a genuine interest in educational initiatives.** One possibility is to develop a set of interest groups (of mothers, youth, women etc.) around education that work together with the CAGs on concrete initiatives related to education.
 - Facilitate consultations and meetings with diverse local stakeholders to ensure broad support coalitions for educational initiatives. Some of the lessons from the case studies provide good practices that can be studied and further developed.
- 8. More specific initiatives and approaches to involvement of women and youth could increase the outreach of the CAGs to different parts of the community.** Including youth more proactively in activities will educate the next generation in active community citizenship. More specifically targeted initiatives involving Roma women could stimulate their involvement.
- 9. Continue the support to local processes and CAGs in the initial ROMED2 localities for at least two more years to enhance sustainability.** This includes also the four countries that were 'transferred' to ROMACT but without ensuring the sustainability of local empowerment processes. We suggest differentiated approaches:
- **Invest further in locations with the most successful processes.** The models used in these locations can be used for promotion and dissemination. Local governments and CAGs can serve as strategic partners for the national support teams in assisting other municipalities and communities in adopting the approach.
 - **Assist locations that have already made a promising start, with a clear plan for enhancing the sustainability** of the local process, and monitoring of the process.
 - **Identify locations where the process started but has since stalled** and identify the best phase-out strategy to minimise damage to the local community.
- 10. Dissemination and scale up of ROMED2 approach to other localities needs to be done strategically and ensuring sustainability of interventions.** ROMED2 has generated change processes that cannot be scaled up and implemented by the Council of Europe by itself. Scaling up pilot efforts to new municipalities needs to be based on clear strategies for alliances with key actors within each country, and internationally. At the same time alliances and synergies must be built around the core mission and vision of ROMED2 – empowerment of communities. Some concrete steps could include:
- Organise 'taking stock' conferences around ROMED2 with the participation of key national and international stakeholders and donors to share the experience and increase interest and matching support for promising locations;
 - Look for synergies with existing or potential national programmes that can use the ROMED2 method in their work at community level;
 - More targeted presentation and dissemination of the approach and its results in the framework of in-country networks of municipalities, as well as internationally;
 - Sharing experiences and providing capacity building for Roma NGOs to integrate some of the elements of the ROMED2 approach in their work;
 - Strategic alliances with other donors and programmes supporting local level Roma inclusion processes.
- 11. Stimulating the dialogue between Roma and non-Roma is a new emphasis that needs to be introduced into the ROMED programme at the local level.** Investment in the awareness of the local majority population is also an investment in the sustainability of local Roma inclusion processes. Overcoming the complete divide and hostility between the majority and Roma communities would help dissuade anti-Roma voters from electing local officials opposed or indifferent to inclusion processes. It will be very important to assist municipalities in developing new communication strategies addressing the majority population about the concrete benefits and results of Roma inclusion processes, thus gradually shifting negative perceptions and prejudice.
- 12. The capacity development of locally elected Roma representatives is another important area for consideration in the next phase of ROMED.** As outlined in one of the interviews: 'There is a vicious circle in which recommendations and good practices are lost on the way between the European level and the local level where Roma live'. Roma political representation in local councils is critical for sustaining the process of Roma participation and inclusion. A need was expressed for investment in capacity development for Roma representatives in a number of countries.

List of Annexes

The following annexes are provided as separate documents⁴⁶.

Annex 1: Case studies of the ROMED2 process applied in 15 municipalities in the seven focus countries covered by the evaluation

Annex 2: Summary country findings

Annex 3: Stakeholders interviewed for the evaluation

Annex 4: Question guides

46. All annexes can be found on the ROMED website: <http://bit.ly/2m4NhFT>

Part III

COUNTRY INFOGRAPHICS

Facts about **ROMED**

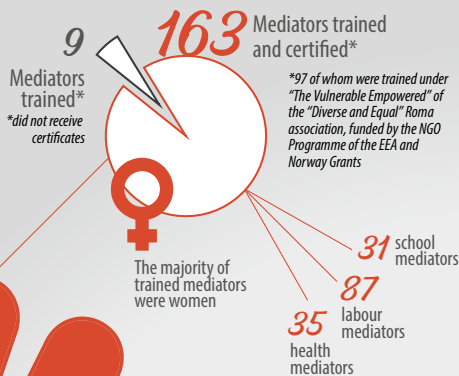
in Bulgaria

**based on the findings of the external evaluation

Based on the two focus groups with trained mediators [...] the most valuable aspect was that the Programme focused on the role of the mediators and the human rights and empowerment perspectives of their work, which are lacking in other training for mediators.

Country Findings for Bulgaria,

Case Studies
Byala Slatina
Tundzha



Training of Mediators

ROMED1

2011-2013

>70% of the health mediators trained by ROMED1 are still working in their municipalities*

*Based on the interviews with the NNHM (Network of Health Mediators in Bulgaria)



Led by health mediators trained under ROMED1

The professions of health and employment mediators are officially recognised, although the former is better established.

Professional standards have been developed and health mediators are hired on long-term contracts by the municipalities which are funded by the Ministry of Finance.

All stakeholders participating in the evaluation, especially at local level, consider that ROMED2 is very relevant to the needs of Roma inclusion. Its main value is that it puts the empowerment of the Roma community at the centre of the work and aims to create sustainable mechanisms for its active participation in local development processes.



10-24 members in each CAG created in the 6 municipalities, with slight decrease in 2015

The main motivation of the people to join the groups was to contribute to tangible changes in the life of their communities. An especially strong driver was the future of their children and their education, in order to offer them a better future.

The creation of the CAGs contributed to the individual empowerment of their members and, in some cases (for example in Tundzha), CAG members decided to continue their education in order to assume their new positions of people responsible for dialogue with institutions.

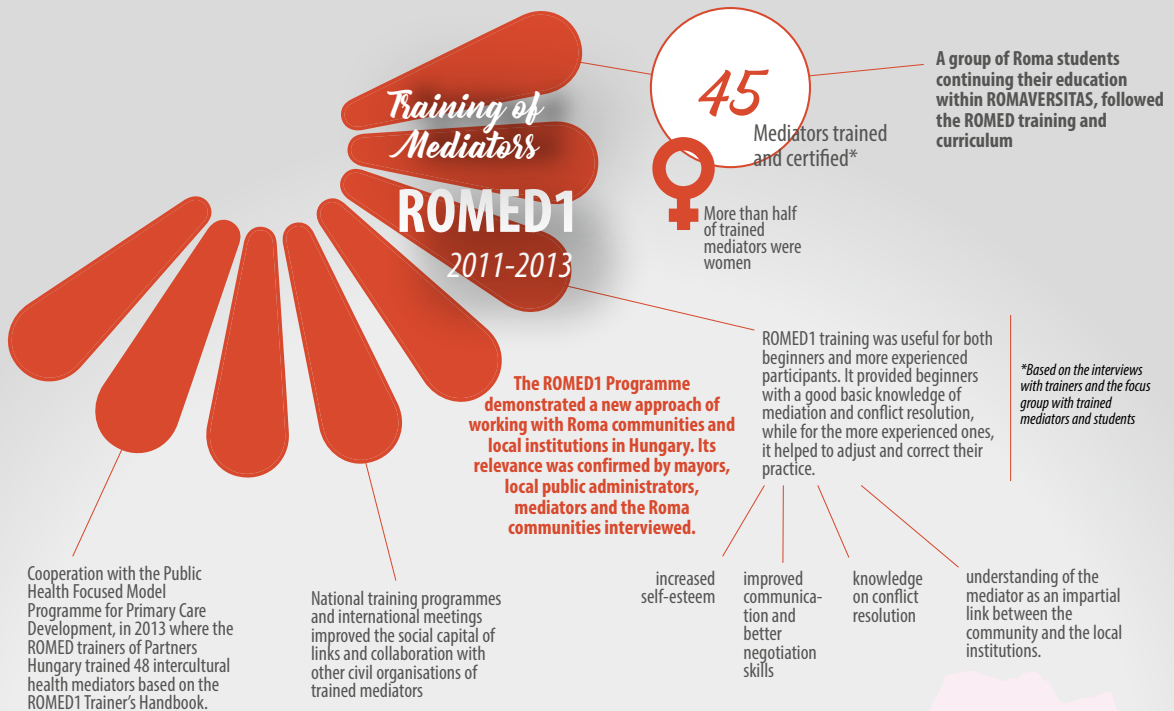
The priorities developed by most of the CAGs and adopted by the plans also follow these areas, outlining the most urgent problems to be resolved in the short term as well as long-term priorities for development.

Democratic governance and community participation through mediation

ROMED2

2013-2015

Concrete results mainly in infrastructure in 5 out of the 6 municipalities involved in ROMED2 by 2015



Country Findings for Hungary,

Case Studies Nyirbator, Nagyecsed



ROMED2 is very relevant and necessary in the Hungarian context due to the anti-Roma attitude of society, as well as central and local administration officials. Intercultural mediation and community empowerment are ways of solving tensions in society and providing for equal access of Roma to development.

Facts about ROMED

in Hungary

**based on the findings of the external evaluation

Informal civic education of community members through regular training of the CAGs in topics such as

citizenship, structure of public administration, community work (door-to-door visits), needs assessment and problem identification.

The National Democratic Institute (NDI) and Partners Hungary ensured additional training for CAG members and a very small amount of financial resources for action implementation.

Examples of concrete results

Jaszfenyszaru: The local municipality committed to renovating some houses in the Roma community from the local budget. A needs assessment and planning of costs is ongoing at the moment.

Education Nyirbator: Following the request of the CAG, the municipality introduced a second school bus for the pupils from the segregated area.

Nagyecsed: The CAG successfully organised proper refuse collection and transportation in the Roma settlement and cancelled the illegitimate debts of the households to the refuse transportation company.

7

Municipalities

Jaszfenyszaru, Nyirbator, Nagyecsed, Pecs, Bag, Szeged, Gyulaj

2

localities dropped out during the implementation (Szeged and Bag)

Joint Action Plans adopted in 4 out of the 5 municipalities where ROMED2 was implemented

In three locations, the Joint Action Plans were included in the local policy or programmes of the municipality, including budgetary allocation for some of the implementation expenses.

Democratic governance and community participation through mediation

ROMED2 2013-2015

Facts about **ROMED**

in Portugal

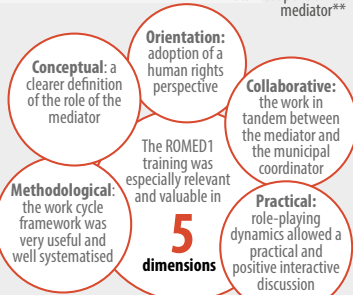
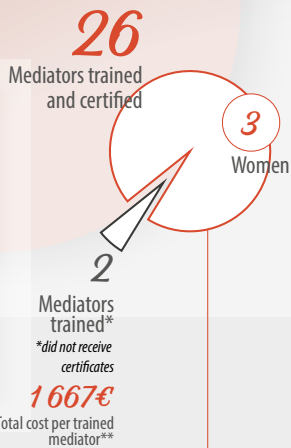
**based on the findings of the external evaluation



October 2009 - National Programme on mediation launched by ACIDI (ACM) - 15 municipalities

2011 - Extension to 7 additional municipalities

2013 - Launching of ROMED as complementary module



Country Findings for Portugal,

Case Studies
Figueira da Foz,
Torres Vedras



ROMED1 contributed to reinforcing the importance of intercultural mediation in Portugal, working also as a "programme certification" or as a "valuable brand", adding value to the national programme of municipal mediation and improving its potential for communication

"Sometimes the process (for example, group dynamics) is more important than the operational results (for example, organisation of a specific event)"

7

CAGs created in 7 municipalities

Moura Torres Vedras Figueira da Foz Barcelos
Elvas Beja Seixal

Examples of successful interaction of CAGs with Local Authorities

Technical and organisational support

Most of the municipalities provided rooms for the meetings and/or allowed the use of public equipment for cultural events of the community.

Employment

Most of the municipalities provided local jobs to members of the community following the CAG's request; in seven municipalities, approximately 30 jobs were created over almost two years, generally on temporary contracts.

Municipal diagnosis of Roma community

In Torres Vedras, the facilitator, with the support of the CAG, conducted a survey of the local community.

Conflict prevention

The municipality of Elvas was planning an intervention in a complex neighbourhood and the mayor asked for advice from CAG members.

Housing Improvement

In Beja, several houses in a poor neighbourhood presented isolation problems; the CAG gathered materials for covering the ceilings and prepared the intervention with municipal support.

Local planning for Roma inclusion

In Seixal, the municipality is preparing a local strategy for Roma inclusion, planning actions on several dimensions.

Institutional communication

In Elvas, when a formal request from the CAG is made, there is always a formal answer with an explanation for accepting or refusing the proposal, representing good practice in terms of interaction.

2 Encounters at national level involving youth and women

Letras Nómadas identified several young men and women and prepared a project called "Opré Chavale", obtaining funding for university-level Roma scholarships under "Programme Escolhas"



Documentary "Experiencing ROMED2" produced by the National Support Team in Portugal



ROMED1
Training of Mediators

ROMED2
Democratic governance and community participation through mediation

2013-2015

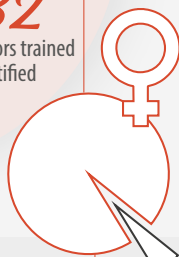
Facts about **ROMED**

in Romania

**based on the findings of the external evaluation

332
Mediators trained and certified

The majority of trained mediators were women



"The process of interaction (between CAGs and local authorities) was more successful in medium or small-sized cities and rural communes"

large cities:
Timisoara, Buzau, Botosani
Craiova, Bucharest 6th sector

medium to small cities:
Aiud, Targu Jiu, Calarasi

villages:
Valea Seaca, Toflea
Cumpana, Budesti

Factors which influenced the Romed2 process

The commitment of the municipalities

Most of the municipalities showed their commitment throughout the Programme by the continuous support provided by the municipal contact person or by the mayor of the municipality, but there were also municipalities that avoided taking responsibilities by putting on hold, delaying or using bureaucratic techniques (for example, Timisoara, Bucharest Sector 6 and Craiova)

The engagement and the experience of the facilitators:

All national facilitators had proven commitment and extensive experience in working directly with Roma communities in the field of social inclusion, building local capacities and empowerment

The CAG profile and its dynamic

In the locations where CAG members were elected by the community and involved the right people, the whole process ran much more easily and smoothly (for example, Targu Jiu); in some cases, the dynamic of the CAG's development was influenced negatively by the migration of people (for example, Valea Seaca)

Prior to ROMED1, mediators had a submissive attitude toward institutions, whilst institutions had a superior attitude to Roma mediators and the Roma community. The ROMED approach brought a new human fundamental rights-based perspective.

Mediators are a well-established practice with years of capacity building history, included in the NRIS

15
Mediators trained*
**did not receive certificates*

ROMED1 came as a timely programme that can upgrade and complement existing national efforts for increasing the functional competences of employed mediators in different sectors

1424€
Total cost per trained mediator**

The estimated needs for Romania are 40 school mediators per county, or over 1,600 school mediators for the whole country

Country Findings for Romania,

Case Studies
Valea Seaca,
Bucharest & Targu Jiu



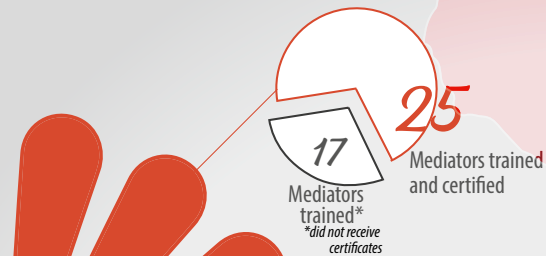
Training of Mediators
ROMED1
2011-2013

Democratic governance and community participation through mediation
ROMED2
2013-2015

Facts about **ROMED**

in the Slovak Republic

***based on the findings of the external evaluation*



The concept and practice of mediation (and the vocation of mediator) existed before ROMED1 but was applied in a different legal context. The country has had a Mediation Act since 2004 (Act No. 420/2004) that defines mediation as an activity for resolving disputes out of court performed by a mediator (an independent expert with a Masters in Law who has undergone special training in mediation). Consequently, ROMED1 restrained to a smaller intervention in the Slovak Republic as compared to other countries.

Training of Mediators

The participants interviewed state that the training was helpful and provided them with additional skills. Some continue using the skills and techniques acquired during the training.

ROMED1

The introduction of six months of practice with the subsequent exchange of experience on possible responses was also considered successful and highly-praised.

2011-2013

Mediators trained under ROMED1 were very valuable as a human resource in introducing ROMED2



In ROMED2, the results are the best in localities where the mediators have become local facilitators (Jarovnice).

The overall impression is that women are better-motivated and tend to be permanent members.

The ROMED2 Guidelines were considered as adequate, in particular its components with a practical focus (project management, financial reporting, etc.)

Democratic governance and community participation through mediation

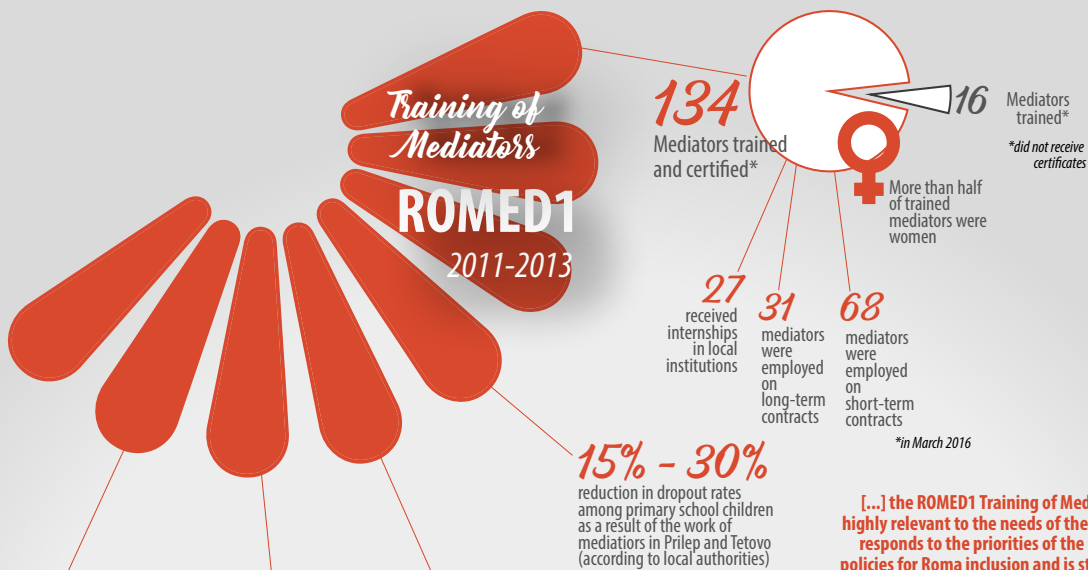
ROMED2

2013-2015

The priorities of the Joint Action Plans of the CAGs coincide with the priorities envisaged in the state Roma integration strategy and its implementation plans, which is most logical since the funding for Roma integration at local level reflects the state policy for integration of MRC and is matched by funding from existing state-managed and EU-funded programmes

The experience in Slovakia shows that the approach of ROMED2 is more tangible in small localities/villages where the interactions between Roma and non-Roma are more direct and the problems of Roma communities are more visible and less abstract for the non-Roma.

In many localities, concrete results are visible – **refurbished kindergartens, children better prepared for mainstream education** who would otherwise end up in special schools, etc. In such cases, CAG members have been involved in the work leading to these results.



There are visible preconditions for sustainability. The main one is the commitment of the Government to allocate funds to employ more mediators.

A direct effect of ROMED1 was the employment of 20 school mediators funded by the Ministry of Education, with an allocated budget of 50,000 EUR.

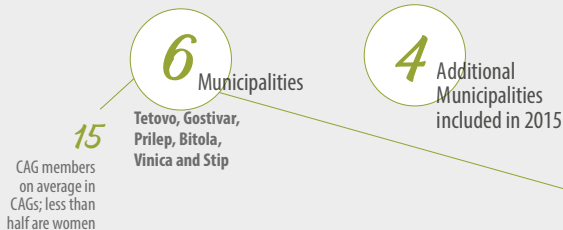
Strong support at national level from the CAHROM contact point resulting in ROMED1 becoming a programme of strategic importance for the implementation of the country's strategy for Roma inclusion

[...] the ROMED1 Training of Mediators is highly relevant to the needs of the country. It responds to the priorities of the national policies for Roma inclusion and is strategically linked to the implementation of planned measures of the NRIS in the areas of education, access to healthcare and community development.

Evidence for this commitment is the case of the joint project of the Ministry of Education with the Roma Education Fund. Whilst in the beginning the REF was providing most of the funding (80%) and the national contribution was only 20%, now the Ministry is already providing 80% of the costs for the employment of tutors and educational mediators, with only 20% coming from the REF.

Facts about ROMED in "the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia"

***based on the findings of the external evaluation*



ROMED2 is viewed as a strategic continuation of ROMED1, going deeper into the processes at the local level by developing active groups within the community and developing the capacity of these groups and local authorities to work together.

Among the strengths of most of the CAGs is that they represent the interests of bigger groups inside the communities. This helped with the mobilisation of support from other community members for suggested initiatives.



In the case of Prilep, the CAG succeeded in raising 300,000 EUR for the construction of the mosque from members of families who are working abroad. This was a significant matching of funding to the 30,000 EUR initially provided by the municipality's local budget and the Ministry of Transport and Communications.

Democratic governance and community participation through mediation ROMED2 2013-2015

The effective interaction between the CAGs and the local authorities resulted in developing Joint Action Plans that were adopted in all six municipalities. All municipalities decided to include funds from their own budgets in support of initiatives from the local plans.

All six initial ROMED2 municipalities, together with the CAGs, are working on a number of project applications to access opportunities for funding from existing national programmes, as well as from IPA funds.

Facts about ROMED in Ukraine

**based on the findings of the external evaluation

The ROMED1 curriculum was evaluated as useful both by the mediators and local government officials, including social workers. The diversity of topics ranged from effective mediation and the Code of Ethics for Mediators, to confidence building in the community and peer support. At present there are three trainers in Ukraine who can deliver the ROMED1 curriculum.

In the framework of the case study of the Darnytsia administration of Kyiv, the local official who participated in the training stated that it helped her better understand the importance of mediators. They are indispensable in navigating both the hierarchy and the close-knit family relations in the Roma community.

ROMED1 Curriculum (Trainers' Handbook) served as basis for the curriculum of training of social workers - State Dragomanov University and the Institute for Youth and Family



The ROMED2 approach puts Roma communities at the centre of it. It gives Roma a voice, starting with dialogue from inside the community about what their needs are. It helps deliver services, as well as institutionalise cooperation with the state.

54 Mediators trained and certified

The majority of trained mediators were women

providing the necessary skills in tackling Roma issues

Contribution of ROMED1 to the professional development of mediators*

*based on focus group answers

an improved standing of Roma issues with the local authorities;

a network of mediators that could provide peer support

improved communication skills vis-à-vis local authorities and Roma communities.

Local authorities perceive mediators as individuals who, first of all, are backed by the trust of Roma communities.

Training of Mediators

ROMED1

2011-2013

Employment situation of the

54 mediators trained in ROMED1

42

mediators trained by ROMED1 were employed by Chiricli with the support of different donors.

*data of March 2016

6 17

also have their own Roma NGOs, with the rest working on an individual basis.

have an additional source of income and are employed.

Country Findings for Ukraine

Case Studies Darnytsia (Kiev) Pereyaslav-Khmelnytskyi



medium-sized city: Kirovograd

1

2

Oblasts: Zakarpattia oblast, Odessa oblast

smaller communities: Pereyaslav-Khmelytsky, Darnytsia (district in Kiev)

2

5 Municipalities



7 members on average for each CAG, and usually more than half are women.

Democratic governance and community participation through mediation

ROMED2

2013-2015

At local level, the Programme contributed to the development of Action Plans to implement the strategy. As a result, two municipalities, Pereyaslav-Khmelnytsky and Zakarpattia, have included in the local budget funding for Roma inclusion

ROMED2 helped improve the following services in various sectors

Education
New Sunday Roma language and cultural programme established (Darnytsia)

Conditions in settlements
Water and sewage systems were installed in the settlement, assistance was provided with construction materials and wood for winter in Uzhgorod, in cooperation with two charitable foundations, Blago and House of Charity

Documentation
Agreements with the State Centres for Homeless to register Roma, who need registration to apply for passports

Healthcare
Over 5,000 Roma were registered for general health check-ups, over 2,000 children were vaccinated and over 2,000 underwent TB scans

Employment
Active work with the heads of municipal employment centres to increase awareness on Roma unemployment and promote the idea of special training programmes for Roma

Part IV

**ASSESSMENT OF THE ROMED
PROGRAMMES FOR COUNTRIES
NOT COVERED BY THE EXTERNAL
EVALUATION**

4.1. ROMED in Bosnia and Herzegovina

Disclaimer: The present document was elaborated based on the “Annex 4 - Questions Guide” of the External Evaluation Report of the ROMED Programme. It is neither part, nor a product, of the external evaluation conducted by Blomeyer & Sanz s.a.

4.1.1. Introduction

The last official census¹ (2013) in Bosnia and Herzegovina states that the country has 3,053,000 inhabitants, 2.73 % of whom have been categorized as “others”². Based on the National Population Census from 1991, 8,864 individuals claimed to be of Roma origin. The unofficial number of Roma however increases to 35,000 in the Federation BiH, over 3,000 in Republika Srpska and around 2,000-2,500 in Brčko District.

Among the 17 national minorities present in the country, Roma are the largest in number, as well as the most discriminated against. Because of the complex state structure and rotation of power between the three constituent nations, neither Roma nor other minorities are eligible to run in presidential elections or for seats in the House of Peoples. However, they can run for local elections. The lack of personal documents has led to the exclusion of many Roma from practicing basic political and social rights, such as the right to vote, social welfare, education, access to healthcare, etc. This has also created additional barriers in the exercise of property rights. The inability to obtain documents is associated with poverty and low social status.

As in other neighbouring countries, the low educational level of Roma in Bosnia and Herzegovina (BiH) is also alarming. According to research³ conducted by the Ministry of Human Rights and Refugees (MHRR) and the BiH Agency for Statistics (2013), as well as the final report by UNICEF BiH, the rate of primary school attendance by Roma children is 69.3% in Bosnia and Herzegovina. Key barriers that restrict opportunities and access to quality education are extreme poverty, change of residence, poor understanding of the importance of education by parents etc., as well as insufficient financial resources at national level to implement all of the measures included within the Action Plan on Roma education.

A complex economic situation and the negative impact of the global economic crisis, coupled with low levels of education and job qualifications, are the primary causes of the difficult state of affairs in the employment of Roma. Not being registered at the Employment Agency leads to the situation whereby unemployed Roma do not benefit from social allowances and healthcare.

A total⁴ of 4,406 Roma households in need of housing interventions were registered in BiH. Many Roma continue to live in informal settlements, often deprived from access to basic utilities (electricity, sewage treatment, waste disposal, drinking water etc.). This was also the reason why so many Roma could not benefit from any of the state programmes designed for the returnees and reconstruction of their property.

According to the Constitution⁵ of Bosnia and Herzegovina, the following institutions have key roles in ensuring Roma rights: the Council of Ministers, **the Ministry of Human Rights and Refugees (MHRR), the Ministry of Security, the**

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1. Census of Population, Households and Dwellings in Bosnia and Herzegovina, 2013 Final Results, census report available at: <http://www.popis2013.ba/popis2013/doc/Popis2013prvolzdanje.pdf>
 2. The official term for national minorities and individuals who do not identify with any of the three constitutive nations (Bosniaks, Croats or Serbs).
 3. “Research of multiple indicators – MICS – on Roma population in Bosnia and Herzegovina 2011–2012”, generated on: November 12, 2013. Document available at: <http://microdata.worldbank.org/index.php/catalog/1774/datafile/F3/V506>
 4. More information available at : https://www.ertf.org/images/Reports/The_situation_of_Roma_in_BH_16102015.pdf
 5. Constitution of Bosnia and Herzegovina available at: https://advokat-prnjavorac.com/legislation/constitution_fbih.pdf

Ministry of Justice, the Directorate for European Integration, the Gender Equality Agency, the Government of the Federation BiH, the Government of the RS and the Government of Brčko District of BiH. The Sector for the Protection of Human Rights was established within the MHRR with funds allocated from the state budget and appropriate donors. A more active policy for improving the situation of the most vulnerable Roma was initiated in 2002 with the appointment of the **Roma Board** within the BiH Council of Ministers as an advisory and co-coordinating body.

A guiding document⁶ addressing the complexity of the multiple social exclusion problems of the Roma population has been produced within the framework of the project “Support to the Ministry of Human Rights and Refugees on the Revision of Roma Action Plans in the field of Employment, Housing and Health Care” supported by the Office of the United Nations Resident Coordinator in Bosnia and Herzegovina (UN RCO); United Nations Development Programme (UNDP); International Labour Organization (ILO); United Nations Children’s Fund (UNICEF); United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA); United Nations Refugee Agency (UNHCR) and the International Organization for Migration (IOM). Bosnia and Herzegovina also joined the Decade of Roma Inclusion (2005-2015) in 2008, marking an important commitment of the Government to providing financial resources for the implementation of the Action Plan for Roma (activities aimed at addressing housing, employment, healthcare and education). The Roma Board has the authority to monitor, initiate and propose activities aimed at more effective implementation of the Decade of Roma Inclusion 2005-2015, the activities of which continued after 2015 within the framework of the new initiative “Roma Integration 2020”, jointly funded by the European Commission and Open Society Foundations.

4.1.2. ROMED1 key findings

Unlike other countries in which the ROMED1 and ROMED2 Programmes were implemented and where ROMED1 was first introduced over several years of implementation, in Bosnia and Herzegovina the two programmes were launched simultaneously. While ROMED1 trainings were being organised, the freshly trained mediators would return to their municipalities and help initiate the ROMED2 Community Action Groups, as explained further below.

According to national facilitators and the BiH support team, the implementation of the ROMED Programme (both ROMED1 and ROMED2) made communities more open to dialogue with authorities. This meant that priorities could be identified more easily and that barriers in communication between the community and local authorities were substantially lessened.

The ROMED1 Training of Mediators (ToM) was beneficial for the trainees, as they were given the opportunity to learn more about the available tools for mediation and thus use them in their work. ToMs were mostly attended by young Roma mediators (males and females) who already had a profound understanding of community issues.

From the beginning, the Programme was supported by the MHRR and World Vision BiH. The Council of Europe established a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with «World Vision Bosnia and Herzegovina» in the field of mediation in Roma communities and the effective implementation of the Programme. The MOU aimed to exercise advocacy at local and national level, as well as to promote the institutionalization and employability of mediators. This cooperation was expected to show most results in addressing the four pillars: housing, health, education and employment. As a result, World Vision mobilized funds to support the work of 22 mediators in 10 municipalities. Unfortunately, the mediators have not yet reached their full usage as a valuable resource, nor has their potential become entirely visible throughout the country. However, it is important to mention that three mediators still managed to find employment in public institutions.

After the official launching event on 18 November 2013, two sessions of Trainings of Mediators took place in Sarajevo: the first being organised from 10-13 December 2013 and the second from 10-13 April 2014. The period of practice, which according to the methodology should extend to six months, was reduced to four months in light of the need for trained mediators in the municipalities in which ROMED2 was being initiated.

Because of the proven past collaboration between the Roma Resource Centre «Romalen Kakanj» and other Roma NGOs in BiH such as CARE International and World Vision, a National Support Team was identified comprising very qualified and experienced experts and trainers. The process of identification, selection and coordination of active Roma youth to participate as trainees in the ROMED1 training was also done very efficiently. It was important to recognize young people who were ready to work on their capacity-building and assist the members of their communities.

6. The content of the document is available at: <http://www.mhrr.gov.ba/PDF/LjudskaPrava/hrv-rom-eng.pdf>

The 1st ROMED ToM was attended by 46 Roma mediators (23 male and 23 female). All 46 participants had a minimum of secondary education, with some of them currently enrolled in university and with an extensive experience in Roma issues in their municipalities. These mediators' fields of work ranged from education, pre-school education and health, to administrative assistance in obtaining personal documents (birth certificates, health insurance). Representatives of public institutions (e.g. the Roma Inclusion Officer of the Municipality of Kakanj/the Public Relations Officer of the Municipality of Visoko) participated and have been actively cooperating in the follow-up.

The 2nd ROMED ToM was attended by 53 Roma mediators (34 male and 19 female) from nine municipalities (four in the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina, four in the Republika of Srpska and one from Brčko District). Gender and age balance played an essential role during the selection process of the participants. All mediators were previously active in their respective NGOs, covering a wide range of different activities in their work: educational assistance for children in and out of the school system, outreach activities in Roma communities regarding health issues, administrative assistance, cooperation with local governments and municipal officials, liaison with local stakeholders, housing issues etc. The training was also attended by national and local stakeholders: representatives from the MHRR, the Roma Inclusion Officer of the Municipality of Kakanj, the Deputy Mayor of the Municipality of Tuzla and Pašić, Brčko District, the Technical Advisor in the Ministry of Education and the Roma Inclusion Officer in the Government of Brčko district.

The second training session gave participants the chance to exchange their experiences and knowledge gained during the previous training session and in the period of practice. The participatory planning technique was used to address concrete problems in the local community, as well as to develop the action plans according to the resources of the municipalities included in the ROMED Programme. The most relevant elements for improving the work of the mediators from the ROMED1 curricula were the innovative, comprehensive and adjusted approaches to particular situations and needs of mediators and their communities.

According to the National Project Officer, the practice period between the ToM sessions was highly valued by the mediators because of the concrete tasks assigned to them. At least half of the identified mediators became active volunteers, providing assistance and support to all members of the communities. After the training, the work of 22 mediators was financially supported by World Vision BiH. Needless to mention, the mediators have been constantly advised and mentored by the ROMED Programme's National Support Team. The Council of Europe certifies the mediators and grants them with badges upon request to facilitate better recognition by local institutions. This also serves as accreditation and gives an important leverage in the process of assistance to Roma communities.

Altogether, there were 53 mediators trained in at least one of the training sessions in Bosnia and Herzegovina, with 46 mediators certified by the Council of Europe and European Union. The remaining seven mediators received certificates of attendance.

In terms of education, in the municipalities where trained mediators were active, it was reported that Roma children started to be more present in pre-school and primary education, with drop-out rates reduced. ROMED significantly assisted in this by encouraging and coaching mediators to assist Roma parents in the process of enrolment into schools. Particular attention was paid to improving the quality of education. Educational mediators constantly followed the success-rate of Roma children. In particular, schools used the capacity of mediators to monitor both the presence and reasons for absence of children in schools. In this way, the parents had a greater obligation to follow the educational process of their children, whilst the children were also aware of the mediators' presence and thus could not skip any classes. This system greatly reduced the drop-out rates of Roma children. There were also several initiatives for providing small financial contributions (stipends) for Roma children, as well as proposals for cost-free education.

According to the ROMED National Focal Point for BiH, the mediators positively contributed to accessing services in the communities. Community members were informed in a timely manner about the ways of obtaining IDs and health insurance and enrolling children in pre-school and school. Thanks to the mediators' active commitment, the rate of Roma children registered in the birth register increased. Particular attention was placed on prenatal development in pregnancies. It is also important to note the drop in the percentage of people without IDs (from 40% to 30%). In addition, the active participation of mediators helped to reduce mistrust between the municipal authorities and communities, thereby facilitating the process for Roma to obtain their basic rights.

The importance of the mediators could also be drawn from the fact that in practice their responsibilities are much higher than those given by default. More specifically, the communities expect constant support from the mediators in finding solutions to their daily struggles. This applies also to situations in which there are no legal procedures available to resolve certain problems. That is why the mediators need to be additionally stimulated to give their best and continue helping their communities. Needless to say, mediators cannot work for free and thus more permanent financial allocations are more than necessary.

Besides capacity development, the Programme has also been working towards achieving better recognition and employment of mediators by local institutions. The representatives of institutions maintain personal contacts with local mediators and so can easily get in touch with them, either when there is a need for action or when the authorities feel they have less capacity to approach specific issues.

According to the National Support Team, even though the Programme received strong institutional support from the MHRR (also CAHROM Representative and National Contact Point for the Strategy for Roma Inclusion), as well as Roma experts working in different institutions at national level, the ROMED1 Programme as a resource still demonstrated limited outreach towards other state institutions. This lack of information leads to a certain fear of accepting mediators as part of institutional settings. This is a priority because the Programme needs to be incorporated better within state structures to become sustainable. To this end, visibility could be enhanced by stronger pressure from the Special Representative of the Secretary General for Roma Issues of the Council of Europe on the key institutions dealing with Roma issues in BiH. Moreover, in this way ROMED could become of crucial importance for the implementation of the Strategy for Roma inclusion, as well as a capacity-building resource for all existing local programmes dealing with national policies. An example of the insufficient recognition of the Programme is the fact that only three mediators were employed by the state institution during the entire duration of the Programme in BiH (2013-2015). A significant percentage of mediators received financial support from other stakeholders (World Vision, Care International), which is indeed positive but not enough in the long term. Thus, genuine sustainability can only be guaranteed if the Programme becomes more present and recognized within the state system, with mediators financially supported and employed by national and local authorities.

One example of the Programme's good practices is certainly the recent organization of the 1st Roma Political Academy in Bosnia and Herzegovina in which ROMED1 mediators played a crucial role. The event was organized in the framework of the ROMED1 Programme, with financial support from the Alliance for Roma Inclusion and the Unit of Electoral Assistance and Census of the Council of Europe. The mediators were actively involved in all the phases, starting with the identification of candidates, going into communities and leading awareness-raising workshops and even participating themselves in the training. The Academy was implemented in four modules with the aim of preparing 20 Roma for the local elections (held on 2 October 2016). The first module consisted of two training sessions which took place on 13 and 27 August. In the second module, the ROMED NST, together with the mediators, organised 10 awareness-raising workshops in Roma communities to draw attention to the importance of voting. The last two modules were held after the elections and targeted the Roma who had obtained seats in the local councils. The end result of the Academy was that 10 out of 20 candidates were elected in local councils in nine municipalities, many of whom were mediators, including the election of a young Roma woman, also a ROMED mediator, for the first time ever. This was an extremely important step, since these newly-elected councillors now have the power to impact the local budgets and include Roma in important initiatives.

4.1.3. ROMED2 key findings

The National Support Team in BiH considers that the ROMED2 Programme is real, feasible and adjustable to the needs of all actors in terms of understanding necessities and capacities. According to national sources, prior to ROMED no programmes similar to either of its phases (ROMED1 and ROMED2) had been implemented in Bosnia and Herzegovina on a similar scale. The Programme uses a specific methodology to foster new initiatives, especially when it comes to the active political participation of Roma at local level.

In other countries participating in the Programme and subject to the external evaluation conducted in 2016, ROMED2 was viewed as a strategic continuation of ROMED1, going deeper into the processes at local level by developing Community Action Groups (hereinafter referred to as CAGs) and working on their capacity, as well as that of local authorities, to operate jointly. The process in BiH however went in a different direction prioritizing the role of mediators and community participation in both phases of the Programme. Here the mediators are the ones who communicate the priorities identified by CAGs during the meetings of the Local Action Groups (composed of representatives of local authorities and CAG members). In this manner, Roma citizens involved in the CAGs contribute to the tailoring of measures and policies to needs, whilst at the same time combating the general opinion/truism that all Roma communities share the same issues.

The ROMED1 and ROMED2 processes in BiH were initiated simultaneously, which was much more challenging and intensive than in other countries. The official launching took place on 18 November 2013 in five municipalities: Bijeljina, Brčko, Donji Vakuf, Kakanj and Visoko. At a later stage, three additional municipalities joined the Programme: Prnjavor in February 2014, Tuzla in March 2014 and Vukosavlje in April 2014. This ambitious plan to implement two phases in a

common timeline was feasible only thanks to the commitment of the aforementioned national partners: the Ministry of Human Rights and Refugees, the NGO “Romalen Kakanj” and World Vision Bosnia and Herzegovina.

The municipalities where ROMED2 was implemented requested to join because they either recognized the importance of the Programme or had previously faced difficulties in approaching community issues and thus needed more efficient mechanisms in order to enter into dialogue with the Roma. One important selection criteria was whether the municipality had at least one active Roma NGO, which could then partner with the NST. Needless to say, the number of Roma residents as well as the presence of trained Roma mediators also played an important role in the selection.

In the first quarter of 2014, the National Support Team identified the CAG members. The CAGs bring together mediators, Roma community leaders/members, and Roma NGO representatives. Unlike in other ROMED2 countries, meetings were often attended by representatives of the Ministry of Human Rights and Refugees (MHRR). In fact, the CAG were formed around the mediators who played a pivotal role in identifying members. They suggested potential members to the National Programme Officer (NPO) who then became proactively involved in the mobilization process.

The complex state organization and various administrative levels also represented a challenge for a given CAG to cover all the appropriate channels of public administration. In addition, a high level of mistrust and frustration accumulated towards any Roma-related project was a factor that hampered the effectiveness of the process. It required a great effort from the mediators to convince the communities that the ROMED Programme had a different methodology to any other past project when Roma were often misused but almost never helped. In line with this, the mediators helped the establishment of the CAGs in every municipality participating in the Programme.

ROMED2 enjoys legitimacy with local authorities due to the high credibility of the National Support Organisation, especially the NPO, Mr Mujo Fafulic. Visits to all municipalities were conducted with the specific purposes of negotiating with the local authorities on the implementation of the ROMED Programme and obtaining signatures of municipal mayors for the commitment letters. In all localities, the Programme was accepted as an instrument for developing local capacity in order to put into practice the national strategies and programmes for Roma inclusion. Specific needs included communication skills, enhancing participation when dealing with specific issues and targeting new initiatives in local communities.

The municipalities created Local Action Groups (LAGs), composed of representatives of the local authorities and CAG members. The meetings of LAGs and CAGs provided a platform for effective dialogue and negotiation on finding solutions for the pre-identified priorities. The process of interaction was clearly structured through at least one monthly meeting, during which participants consulted on and developed the Joint Action Plans.

Municipal authorities planned the allocation of resources for the implementation of Local Action Plans within the different budget lines concerning the Roma and national minorities in general. In most cases, resources are insufficient to cover the wide-range of issues, however there is a will to increase the contribution in the future. Currently, adopted Local Action Plans and allocated resources could be obtained in Bijeljina, Kakanj, Donji Vakuf and Prnjavor. The municipality of Visoko is in the phase of adoption of the Plan. With the help of the ROMED2 facilitators, a number of project proposals were drawn from the LAG meetings. These proposals were then also sent to different donors for allocation of financial resources.

Prior to ROMED2, members of the CAGs had little or no capacity to adequately formulate and communicate collective needs to local authorities on behalf of the whole community. Thanks to the intervention of ROMED2, Roma communities managed to take charge of identifying priorities, with the assistance of mediators. Moreover, the CAG members started to actively interact with local authorities and become more present in those places where local policies and measures were designed. The ROMED2 Programme significantly increased the visibility of the Roma communities in the country and served as a school for gaining knowledge, skills and practical capacity for active citizenship. This was also beneficial for local authorities to become more sensitive to the issue and thus effectively respond to the requests of the communities. Important to note is that administrative issues were dealt with by the mediators, whereas more tangible needs (in the field of education and infrastructure) were negotiated during the CAG and LAG meetings.

Some visible results of ROMED2 relate to improved infrastructure in Roma neighbourhoods. Initiatives were launched to improve telecommunications, street lights, access to facilities, etc. Kakanj municipality, for example, launched an initiative to build a day care centre in the Roma settlement for Roma children and youth.

In November 2015, the ROMED National Support Team and Romalen Kakanj (National Support Organisation) organised a National Workshop and donors meeting for national and international organisations, as well as embassies in BiH. The idea was to present and highlight the importance of the ROMED Programme in Bosnia and Herzegovina. Indeed, a great

number of organisations recognised the importance of ROMED and thus initiated partnerships with Romalen Kakanj. One such organisation is Minority Rights Group, which planned a partnership with the ROMED NST in order to promote Roma mediators at international level.

There is still much to be done on the visibility and recognition of the Programme in Bosnia and Herzegovina. The timeframe of ROMED2 is too short to provide more sustainable ground for the initiated local processes, especially having in mind that a stronger accent was placed on the role of mediators. This is why all stakeholders of the Programme were pleased to hear that a future joint programme between the Council of Europe and European Union will include BiH as a beneficiary country and follow up the work initiated by ROMED.

There is however increased local awareness of the direct benefits of the ROMED2 phase, expressed both by members of the CAGs and local institutions as follows:

- ▶ Local authorities recognised CAGs as local partners in bringing closer the real needs of the community. Effective consultation at LAG meetings increases the potential for development of successful initiatives and projects that can attract funding from other stakeholders;
- ▶ The members of the CAGs have an increased capacity to interact with the local administration and community. However, the groups will still need support from the NST in order to make steps towards becoming sustainable community structures.
- ▶ The complex state organization in the country with various administrative levels also represents a challenge for the CAG to cover all the appropriate channels of relationships with administration.

4.1.4. Lessons and recommendations

The main lesson to retain from the implementation of the two ROMED phases in Bosnia and Herzegovina is that **Roma mediators are an important resource for approaching Roma issues and finding solutions at local level.** Even though the ROMED2 phase shifts the focus from the mediator to the Community Action Groups, in the case of Bosnia and Herzegovina, the mediator is a pivotal pillar of the overall process of community participation. This is significant since one of **the issues concerning CAGs and LAGs in BiH is that they are less sustainable as structures, becoming fragile around electoral periods and being subject to changes according to power shifts.** In contrast to that, **mediators have the advantage of remaining individuals who are continuously accountable to their local communities,** regardless of the political context at local and national levels.

Secondly, the **inclusion of CAG members into local public structures is important for the process in general.** One example supporting this claim is the present situation of the newly-elected local councillors who now have the possibility to influence the allocation of funds for Roma issues in their municipalities.

Last but not least, good cooperation with other stakeholders, as well as effective collaboration between the Roma NGOs with the NST, has been another success factor in building sustained support for the ROMED Programmes at the different decision-making levels.

There is a strong demand for the continuation of the Programme, both by training and supporting new mediators, as well as by continuing to support the processes of community participation and dialogue at local level. Some of the main recommendations for the continuation of the Programmes include:

- ▶ **The ROMED Programme needs to continue,** both in providing support to finalising the institutionalisation of the profession of mediators and in increasing the sustainability of the local processes initiated;
- ▶ **The new phase of support for capacity development of mediators needs to be based on investment in increased national ownership of the Programme.** The Programme needs to achieve better visibility and recognition at national level in order to become more sustainable in the long run. Further on, this means the allocation of various funds from different stakeholders and other contributions from national resources to the ROMED training programmes over time;
- ▶ **The support to the initial ROMED2 municipalities needs to continue, with a clear focus on developing the capacity of the local CAGs for sustainability.** Plans for sustainability of the local processes need to be developed for each municipality, defining clear benchmarks of success and sustainability;
- ▶ **New municipalities have made requests to join the Programme. In expanding the Programme/methodology to new municipalities, it is of the utmost importance to use the emerging successful models** of the first group of localities, as well as practices proven successful coming from other ROMED countries.

4.2. ROMED in Germany

Disclaimer: The present document was elaborated based on the “Annex 4 - Questions Guide” of the External Evaluation Report of the ROMED Programme. It is not part, nor a product of the external evaluation conducted by Blomeyer & Sanz s.a.

4.2.1. Introduction

According to Council of Europe estimates, around 105,000 Roma and Sinti live in Germany. Alternative sources state as high as 300,000, including those coming from Eastern Europe (Romania and Bulgaria), or ex-Yugoslav countries (Bosnia and Herzegovina, the “former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia” and Serbia). Since ethnic data collection is not practiced in Germany, official figures concerning the Roma and Sinti population do not exist.

The history of Roma in Germany is marked by the Second World War and persecutions during Nazi rule, as well as by decades of civil society mobilisation for the recognition of Roma rights. National Roma and Sinti civil society is thus well-developed in Germany, with a strong stance on how Roma rights should be approached. As an example, the *Central Council of German Sinti and Roma*⁷ regrouping nine Roma and Sinti organisations contributed to the elaboration of the German response to the European Commission’s EU Framework for National Roma Integration Strategies up to 2020.² However, the *Central Council of German Sinti and Roma* opposed having special regulations for Sinti and Roma for fear of encouraging segregation and discrimination. While most *Länder* and *Stadtstaaten* do not *de facto* implement the NRIS, Berlin has recently adopted a state strategy and action plan for the inclusion of immigrant Roma, whilst Baden-Württemberg has agreed to a framework agreement with the *Landesverband* (of the *Verband Deutscher Sinti und Roma*) and created a state council for Roma and Sinti issues, thus putting the implementation of minority protection and NRIS into a single framework.

The involvement of Roma civil society in the compensation of Roma survivors of deportation and concentration camps, the official recognition of the Roma Holocaust in 1985, and the fight against other discriminatory practices are proof of a matured political participation of the Roma and Sinti community in Germany.

In 1997, upon ratification of the Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities by the German government, the federal government officially recognised Roma and Sinti as one of the four national minorities in Germany, along with the Danes, the Frisians, and the Sorbs. In Schleswig-Holstein for instance, special measures were implemented: already in 1993 Sinti school mediators were employed, the housing project “Maro temm” targeting the Sinti population was implemented between 2007 and 2012. Other states included parts of the FCNM in their state agreements with the Landesverbände.

The immigration of Roma from ex-Yugoslav countries started with the labour migration programme of the federal government of West Germany in 1968. Labour migration programmes with Spain (1960), Greece (1960), Italy (1955) and Turkey (1961) also led to the subsequent immigration of Roma from those countries. The immigration of Roma refugees from Romania and Yugoslavia in the 1990s and from Roma EU citizen from Bulgaria and Romania in the 2000s brought a different perspective concerning Roma rights, as well as an additional challenge in the handling of the European dimension. Local synergies begin to emerge between Roma and Sinti organisations, individuals and NGOs addressing non-national Roma and involving them in advocacy for the rights of all Roma. At national level, the *Central Council of German Sinti and Roma* has been extending its action for several years now on the rights of immigrant Roma⁹.

Upon arrival in Germany, many Roma from the Western Balkans applied for asylum. Some of them obtained a more permanent status, whilst the vast majority received a “tolerated status” (*Duldungstatus*). According to an official statement of the German government, 99% of Kosovar asylum applications were rejected¹⁰. In September 2014, in

7. Zentralrat Deutscher Sinti und Roma <http://zentralrat.sintiundroma.de/>

8. http://ec.europa.eu/justice/discrimination/files/roma_germany_strategy_en.pdf

9. <http://zentralrat.sintiundroma.de/westbalkan/>

10. <https://www.euractiv.com/section/justice-home-affairs/news/german-government-plans-to-accelerate-deportation-of-kosovar-refugees/>

response to the increasing number of refugees from Syria and Afghanistan, the German government declared Serbia, Bosnia and Herzegovina and “the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia” to be safe countries, followed by Albania, Kosovo¹¹ and Montenegro in February 2015. The German government then proceeded with a wave of deportations of nationals of Balkan countries with “tolerated status”, many of whom were Roma. Local and international NGOs and organisations reported that Roma were often subject to violence from the majority population upon return to their country. Meanwhile those remaining in Germany under “*Duldungstatus*” continue to experience difficulties in accessing employment, social protection, healthcare and education services¹².

In 2016, a social fraud scheme abusing Roma from Bulgaria was uncovered by the Jobcenter in Bremerhaven and possibly reproduced in Kiel as well as in Duisburg. This social fraud involved local associations that went as far as attracting Romanian and Bulgarian nationals to come to Germany and comply with their alleged scheme. Most of those drawn into the scheme were thought to be of Roma ethnicity, being more vulnerable and therefore in greater need of such “services”. “Private advisors” had multiple functions in this fraud by providing fake employment contracts and helping immigrants set up small businesses (for the most part inactive), thereby giving access to social benefits under certain conditions and sometimes even serving as money-laundering schemes for well-established companies. Advisors would take a share of the gains and often offer substandard but overpriced housing for their clients. In many cases, immigrants would still work directly for the persons or associations in exchange for payment far below the minimum wage. The fraud in Bremerhaven is thought to have covered around 1,300 cases amounting to millions of euros. Some German public figures refer to the scheme as “modern-day slavery”. However, while generally the Roma persons caught up in the scheme are not considered to be responsible by the authorities – investigations focusing instead on the management of associations (Bremerhaven) or activities of individuals (Kiel) having conducted such fraudulent activities – many Roma have been left with extremely high private debt ratings. Some have even chosen to move away in haste, with a negative impact on the schooling of their children who were suddenly withdrawn from school within the school year.¹³

4.2.2. ROMED1 key Findings

Although at federal level there is neither Roma mediation training nor recognition of the position of Roma mediator, different initiatives have been taken for more general mediation and integration programmes, as well as locally-tailored training programmes. At federal level, the “*integrationslotsen*” play a similar role to ROMED1 mediators, although targeting a more general public (not specifically Roma). In certain municipalities, private NGOs (Berlin and Munich) or state institutions (Hamburg) conducted locally-tailored Roma mediators’ training with a wider range of competences (communication, mediation, legal issues, structure of schools, etc.) over a longer period of time (two to three years). An NGO from Munich added a curriculum developed by the *Bundesverband Mediation*¹⁴ to their Roma school mediators’ training programme. The training programmes in Berlin and Munich also integrated the ROMED1 curriculum, thus – as mentioned below - participants received a ROMED1 certificate which helped in many cases to document knowledge and capacity when mediators did not have any other formal degrees to provide to the schools they were working in. A pioneer in Roma school mediation in both Germany and Europe as a whole was the Verband Deutscher Sinti and Roma in Kiel, where Sinti school mediators have been trained and hired since 1993.

ROMED1 in Germany was organised in three training cycles between 2011 and 2015. The *Dokumentationszentrum Deutscher Sinti und Roma*¹⁵ acted as National Focal Point for the first group trained under ROMED1. The first training cycle was conducted throughout 2011 within three different training sessions (April 2011, May 2012 and November 2012). Whilst generally the ROMED1 training cycle includes only two training sessions, an “intermediary” session was necessary to enable more mediators to benefit from it and receive a certificate at the end of the training cycle, which in this case lasted for a year and a half.

The first training session took place in April 2011 over three days. The selection of, and contact with, potential mediators was ensured by the Commissioner for Immigration and National Minorities (*Der Beauftragte für Aussiedlerfragen und*

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11. All references to Kosovo, whether the territory, institutions or population, in this text shall be understood in full compliance with United Nation’s Security Council Resolution 1244 and without prejudice to the status of Kosovo.
 12. in 2010 only 11% of Duldung holders were employed in Germany, according to a study of the Federal Office for Migration and Refugees’ called: “Immigrants in the low-wage sector with special attention to Duldung holders and those allowed to stay”
 13. Media sources : <http://www.radiobremen.de/politik/nachrichten/sozialbetrug-bhv100.html> and <http://www.radiobremen.de/politik/themen/oeztuerk106.html>
 14. <http://www.bmev.de/>
 15. <http://www.sintiundroma.de/start.html>

*nationale Minderheiten*¹⁶⁾ and the national conference of education ministers (*Kultusministerkonferenz*¹⁷⁾, together with the contribution of state organisations of German Sinti and Roma (*Zentralrat Deutscher Sinti und Roma and its Landesverbände*), as well as an informal network of Roma and Sinti education projects. This network was set up in 2007 within an EU-financed national awareness-raising programme on the implementation of anti-discrimination laws. Out of the 32 registrations initially received, only 14 participants attended the first session.

Participants came from the cities of Bremen, Cologne, Kiel, Göttingen, Freiburg, Munich and Berlin and, for the most part, were Roma mediators with extensive experience in school mediation. Although not part of the ROMED1 process, it was reported that school mediators in Hamburg were hired by the *Behörde für Schule und Berufsbildung Hamburg*¹⁸⁾ with a long-term employment perspective. Among the mediators who did participate in the training, those from Kiel had a more sustainable employment situation. All others were financed by short or middle-term project funding. Half of the participants had previously attended preparatory trainings in communication, school system regulations and conflict management as an introduction to their work as mediators.

The second training session took place in May 2012 and introduced 12 new participants to ROMED1, thus repeating the training programme of April 2011. During the practice period (between April 2011/ May 2012 and November 2012), the mediators maintained close contact with the NFP. As a result of the ROMED1 training, it was reported that the **Code of Ethics** as presented by the Programme was translated and included as an appendix to the employment contract of school mediators in Bremen. Participatory planning sessions were also organised in Berlin and Straubing.

The second part of the ROMED1 Training of Mediators took place in November 2012, thus giving participants the necessary time to put into practice the notions acquired during the first session. 21 participants attended the training, 11 of whom were women. Five participants from the first two sessions could not attend the meeting for personal reasons. The training was hosted by the NFP, *Dokumentationszentrum Deutscher Sinti und Roma*. By the end of the session, 16 people had completed the praxis tasks and received mediator certificates.

As mentioned previously, two “local” school mediator groups were organised in Munich (four persons trained and certified) in 2014, all employed by *Madhouse e.V.*, and in Berlin (five persons trained and certified) in 2015, where the local NGO *Regionale Arbeitsstellen für Bildung, Integration und Demokratie e.V. (RAA)* has been employing Roma mediators since 2001. These additional nine persons were not trained in the classical ROMED1 format. Instead of conducting two sessions of three days’ duration with six months’ practice in between, the training sessions were organised over longer periods of time (on average one year), through one day training sessions and continuous contact and follow-up provided by the trainer. All of the mediators received ROMED1 certificates at the end of their training cycle.

In total, ROMED1 trained and certified 25 mediators (mostly school mediators and mostly women) in Germany between 2011 and 2015, with very different situations in terms of employment and target population. While a few mediators were – and still are in 2016 – employed on a long-term basis, many mediators worked on temporary contracts or even on a voluntary basis. Some were employed by their state or contracted by their municipality, whilst others were employed by NGOs. Some of the mediators work with the national Roma and Sinti populations, others with the non-national Roma from the Balkans (with *Duldung*-related specificities and imminence of deportation), and with Roma from Romania and Bulgaria.

In several cases, the first training session was not sufficient for the mediators to fully include the work cycle participatory approach proposed by ROMED1 into their ordinary practice, although after the second training, they appeared to be better prepared and more confident in this. In some cases, the lack of support from the school or municipality did not enable mediators to introduce participatory planning as the new working scheme. Some mediators accepted support from the trainers and carried out participatory planning meetings in their schools in 2012. Nevertheless, according to the trainers’ reports, many of the mediators considered that, even without introducing participatory planning and the work cycle approach, the ROMED1 training changed remarkably their perspective on their work and helped them become aware of their own agenda. In this manner, they were able to promote better access to quality education for Roma children and to manage discussions of neutrality without being on the side of school or Roma families with this perspective. Thus, they succeeded to overcome the “Trojan horse” and “activist” roles and develop their own profile as Roma school mediators who improve communication and co-operation between Roma parents, children and teachers.

16. http://www.aussiedlerbeauftragter.de/AUSB/DE/Themen/deutsche-minderheiten/deutsche-minderheiten_node.html

17. <https://www.kmk.org/aktuelles.html>

18. <http://li.hamburg.de/>

School drop-outs and absenteeism were the main issues that school mediators had to deal with during the training in 2011. Furthermore, one organisational issue reported in the work of school mediators in Germany was the difference between the city states (*Stadtstaaten*) and the *Flächenländer*. In cities such as Hamburg, Berlin and Bremen (*Stadtstaaten*), where the concentration of Roma pupils is higher, school mediators can focus their work on some schools which often are close to each other. In *Flächenländer*, however, institutions face a problem in the organisation of the work of mediators. The lower concentration of Roma pupils and the greater distances between schools pose a logistical and financial problem for the sustainable employment of school mediators in such contexts and explains why mediators act mostly within larger urban areas. This is important since a mediator works better when fully integrated into the institution where s/he becomes a role model for Roma and non-Roma students to help them overcome their prejudice.

A delegation composed of nine persons, six women and three men, including mediators, trainers and the NFP, participated in the Congress of Mediators organised by the Council of Europe and European Commission in Brussels in January 2013. The event helped mediators from all implementation countries get to know each other and it is assumed that synergies were created in this manner. Some of the mediators trained under ROMED1 became facilitators within ROMED2. At the moment, there is no specific national network of Roma mediators active in Germany. Despite this, conferences and meetings in the framework of broader Roma education projects taking place approximately every two to three years offer an opportunity on national level to bring together Roma school mediators from all over Germany in order to exchange their experiences. In this respect, the "Remembrance, Responsibility and Future" Foundation (*Stiftung «Erinnerung, Verantwortung und Zukunft», EVZ*) might continue its commitment and fund yearly conferences for Roma and Sinti who work in early childcare and schools.

In 2016, a number of municipalities responded to the call for applications of the Transnational Cooperation Component of the ROMACT Programme, which includes a module on Training of Mediators (Module B) based on the ROMED1 curriculum. The ROMED1 training sessions are thus continuing through this channel, upon request from municipalities. Most municipalities requesting this Training of Mediators come from Germany (Dortmund, Duisburg and Bremerhaven). 17 mediators were scheduled to attend the first session of the training in September 2016, to be followed by a second session for 12 participants planned for February 2017 in Bremerhaven.

4.2.3. ROMED2 key findings

ROMED2 started in Germany in 2014 with a launching event in Berlin on 24 October 2014. Six municipalities were initially selected for implementation (Hamburg, Berlin, Mannheim, Munich, Bremen and Kiel), mainly based on the presence of trained mediators in the municipalities (Bremen, Hamburg, Kiel, Munich, Berlin). Furthermore, local synergies with Sinti organisations were also taken into consideration, for instance in Mannheim where the ROMED2 National Support Organisation, *Hildegard Lagrenne Stiftung*, is located, or in Kiel where the *Verband Deutscher Sinti & Roma Landesverband S.-H. e.V.* has extensive experience in school mediation for Roma and employed 13 school mediators.

Among the selected municipalities, Berlin and Munich were by far the largest (3.5 million and 1.5 million inhabitants respectively), however the work of the ROMED2 facilitators was either dropped (Munich) or restrained to a *Bezirk*, as was the case in Berlin (firstly in Berlin Mitte with 346,542 inhabitants, then in Berlin Lichtenberg with 264,858 inhabitants) and in Hamburg (Hamburg-Mitte, Hamburg-Altona and Hamburg St Pauli). The remaining selected municipalities ranged between 250,000 and 550,000 inhabitants. No rural or small-sized municipality was selected for implementation in ROMED2, the main reason being the lack of Roma mediators who could ensure the role of local facilitators.

Commitment to the implementation of ROMED2 was expressed informally by all the municipalities initially selected. This was also expressed through the participation of staff from most municipalities in the first National Workshop organised one day prior to the launching event. However, only a few of the municipalities formalised their political commitment through the signature of commitment letters addressed by the Council of Europe (Berlin-Mitte, Kiel and Dortmund).

By the end of 2015, a series of changes were necessary in the list of initially selected municipalities: in Berlin, the initially formed CAG of Berlin-Mitte consisting of 30 Roma from Romania quickly dissipated (three months after its creation) due to its members' full-time work in other cities. From April 2015 to November 2016, the Berlin trainers worked with a group of Romanian Roma in Berlin-Lichtenberg, which was also dismantled due to internal, family-based conflicts that could not be solved. In October 2016, the facilitators in Berlin initiated a new CAG composed of Roma women mainly from Bulgaria. After an attempt at mobilisation in Bremen-South followed by Bremen-North, the National Support Team and a local supporters started redirecting the area of intervention to Bremerhaven, with the innovative component of both Sinti and non-national Roma membership. For 2017, an additional focus on Roma women is planned here as well. The one year work with a group of young Roma and Sinti as a CAG in Mannheim ended in November 2016, when members prioritised individual problems and left the group. A second approach to working with adult Sinti on the basis of setting

up a social Sinti football club has not yet developed enough to restart in Mannheim. On the other hand, the municipality of Dortmund was added in autumn 2015, when the municipality started to increase their focus on Roma inclusion by organising an annual Roma cultural festival "Djelem, Djelem". It was at the initiative of Roma participating in that festival that the National Support Team started working with a CAG in Dortmund.

Unlike the structure of most National Support Teams, the team in Germany was mostly composed of local facilitators (rather than national facilitators), with the Hildegard Lagrenne Foundation as support organisation providing the administrative basis for functioning and the National Focal Point playing the role of national facilitator in most municipalities. This came as a natural adaptation of the ROMED2 approach, since the NFP, Mr Christoph Leucht, is also a member of the International Pedagogical Team and, as such, one of the developers of the ROMED2 methodology. He thus provided guidance and direct involvement in all the CAGs in Germany, whilst ensuring connection and advocacy at federal and international levels at the same time.

Nonetheless, the establishment and development of the CAGs was particularly challenging in Germany in light of the arguments listed above. It is difficult to sustain long-term participatory processes with, on the one hand, a part of the community that is under threat of deportation or whose members cannot find housing solutions, and, on the other hand, those who have been supported for years by a number of social service NGOs, which acted to solve their problems on their behalf, thus creating the illusion that the individual's own commitment was not necessary for obtaining one's rights. Those CAGs that did take shape after several attempts learnt from the experiences of peers in previous CAGs and were coached in building particularly strong resilience in the face of challenges.

Thus, a series of factors could be identified as crucial in the establishment and the sustainability of the CAGs in Germany:

The situation of the persons attracted in the CAG in the initial phases of the ROMED2 process: the administrative and, in particular, the housing situation of Roma involved in the CAGs played a crucial role in the manner in which these CAGs advanced or were sustained;

The level of involvement and political commitment of local authorities: in Dortmund for instance, where the group benefits from the strong support of the municipality contact person, the CAG organised itself as an NGO ("Romano Than") and could rely on the support of the contact person in reaching the relevant stakeholders that could provide solutions to their needs (e.g. Roma families living in flats without electricity and without heating during the winter);

Availability of alternative resources for financing the activities and priorities generated by the CAG: organising events, establishing information centres or organising language classes upon request are less costly and more easily funded by alternative sources (other NGOs, foundations and also local or federal budgets) than heavy infrastructural projects as is often the case in other countries involved in the ROMED2 Programme;

Flexibility of employment opportunities for CAG members: although no official figures are available, based on the profile of CAG members in the active ROMED2 municipalities, most persons involved in ROMED2 found jobs in the formal or informal sector. This factor goes hand in hand with the logic of empowerment brought by ROMED2, but is outweighed by the serious issue of housing (regardless of the municipality, one of the following cases would very often apply to Roma: lack of available flats, discrimination against Roma by landlords, or landlords abusing Roma families into accepting very poor quality housing at high prices);

The experience and connections of local facilitators: the process advanced the most in municipalities where the facilitators were very well-connected with Roma families. This was the case in Hamburg where Mr Sichelschmidt plays a crucial role in mobilising the CAG composed mostly of Serbian Roma, as well as in Dortmund, where the involvement of Mr Dzemailovski in ROMED2, as well as in other initiatives mostly concerning Roma youth, has been an incentive to better mobilisation. However, out of the six local facilitators initially involved in ROMED2, three still work in the Programme and four new local facilitators joined the activities (Munich didn't start, the trainer from Mannheim left because of the lack of commitment, the trainer from Bremen left because of personal reasons).

Recommendations for continuation of the ROMED2 process

The relationship between the national Roma and Sinti and the non-national Roma should be fostered but not forced upon members of the different communities. In terms of membership in the CAGs, almost all the groups formed through the ROMED2 process are composed of non-national Roma coming from ex-Yugoslav countries, Romania or Bulgaria. Attempts at synergies between Roma and Sinti organisations and non-national Roma-composed CAGs have been fostered since the beginning of the Programme, notably through the selection of *Hildegard Lagrenne* Foundation as National Support Organisation. In several municipalities, the emergence and results of the CAG have also encouraged the coming closer together of Sinti organisations and Roma immigrants, as is the case in Kiel and Bremerhaven.

As previously mentioned, in Bremerhaven a mixed Roma and Sinti CAG works since August 2016. Should this group take shape, it will constitute a model not only within Germany but also in countries such as France and Belgium with mixed participation, proving that there should not be a competition between national and non-national Roma and that differences can be overcome in the interests of all.

Find solutions for the sustainability of the CAGs: after approximately one and a half years of implementation in February 2016, the National Support Team met in Berlin to discuss the future of the ROMED2 Programme. During the subsequent meeting of National Project Officers and National Focal Points in Strasbourg, the Programme's management team announced the progressive closure of the Programme and the importance of transition from CoE/EC-funded resources to other contributors. The National Support Team decided to create local NGOs in 3 of 5 municipalities to continue the work of the CAGs and their projects. The NGO founding process is complete in Dortmund and undergoing in Kiel and in Hamburg; in Bremerhaven, the involvement of Roma in the organisation of the German Sinti is planned as an alternative to the creation of a new NGO; in Berlin given the numerous already existing Roma-NGOs providing cooperation opportunities, the CAG will rely on synergies to continue its work.

Transfer the support to external, alternative financial resources to compensate for the loss of resources resulting from the closure of the ROMED2 programme (payments of local facilitators, implementation costs and travel): for the further Programme's implementation in Germany, the setup of new CAGs and the financing of local activities new external resources opportunities for the financing have to be generated. The National Support Team estimates that fundraising for the continuation of networking and local support will not be too difficult, as there are several federal programmes, foundations or calls for proposals which offer funding opportunities.

Improve access to and quality of German language classes: one of the requests voiced by all CAGs was ensuring attendance in German classes for foreigners and improving their quality of teaching, so that Roma who attend them can communicate better in German faster. Romanian and Bulgarian Roma have sometimes limited access to federal-provided language classes, since these are mainly organised for non-EU nationals. Their registration is only possible under certain conditions and if there are places left unoccupied by other non-EU applicants.

Raise awareness of the negative role of "private advisors" amongst German municipalities: many national, regional and local authorities in Germany and other Western European countries fear an influx of vulnerable migrants to their municipality should they provide quality integration services. However, the aforementioned fraud cases of "private advisors" in Bremerhaven and Kiel show that the vulnerable situation of Roma creates a market for illegal activities that not only uses social benefits in a fraudulent manner, but also organizes the immigration of new "clients" to the municipality. People involved, either by force or ignorance, in such schemes are discouraged to follow a path of empowerment through, for instance, language courses, vocational training and formal employment. The community-organising process of ROMED2 and **the setup of proper and free counselling centres** in the municipalities would be an effective alternative to helping overcome the risk of dependency and exploitation of EU Roma citizens from "private advisors".

4.3. ROMED in Greece

Disclaimer: The present document was elaborated based on the “Annex 4 - Questions Guide” of the External Evaluation Report of the ROMED Programme. It is neither part, nor a product, of the external evaluation conducted by Blomeyer & Sanz s.a.

4.3.1. Introduction

According to estimates of the Council of Europe in the absence of officially recorded data, the number of Roma in Greece in 2011 varies between 200 000 and 300 000, out of a total of 11 300 000 inhabitants, reaching approximately 2.7%. There is no Greek legislation officially recognising the Roma population of Greece as a national minority. More specifically, according to the Greek Constitution, the only officially recognised minority is the Muslim minority in Thrace.

Many Roma came along with the rest of the Greek refugees during the Asia Minor War in 1922 and settled in Agia Varvara, Petralona, Amaliada (Ilida, Peloponnese) and other regions of Greece. Others came in 1956 with the exchange of population between Greece and Turkey. Throughout the centuries, many have become indigenous Greeks, whereas after the developments in Eastern Europe in the 1990s and the opening of borders, Greece has been hosting Roma immigrants from Eastern European and Balkan countries such as Romania, Bulgaria and Albania.

Greek Roma are deeply rooted in Hellenic society and history, as their presence has been officially recorded in the Greek territory since the Byzantine Era. Furthermore, they have been equally involved in the struggles of Greece, from 1821 to the Second World War and the National Resistance, from the period of 1940 – 1944 to the current reality.

Roma in Greece, unlike those in other EU countries, neither recognise themselves as a distinct ethnic group from the Greeks, nor as an ethnic minority¹⁹. Many also speak the Romani language in addition to Greek, and maintain specific cultural traits, but more generally they consider themselves primarily as Greek citizens, with equal rights and responsibilities.

In practice, this kind of equality has not yet been achieved, especially in extremely poor and deprived areas where the situation of Roma as equal citizens is debated and their inclusion is still at risk, due to their living conditions. Indicatively, in many regions of Greece, the housing issue remains unresolved for the Roma, thus many still live in huts with basic shortcomings concerning electricity and the water supply. Although a National Roma Integration Strategy was adopted by the Greek government in 2011, the situation of the most vulnerable Roma populations has worsened during the country's turbulent period due to the financial crisis and the political instability subsequently created. Moreover, with the refugee crisis, the issue of Roma inclusion in Greece has become secondary, both at European and at national level.

Recently the Greek Ministry of Labour established a Special Secretariat for Roma Issues (Ειδική Γραμματεία για θέματα Ρομά) acting as focal point for the monitoring of the implementation of the National Roma Integration Strategy, bearing responsibilities transferred from the Social Solidarity portfolio.

4.3.2. ROMED1 key findings

ROMED1 was initiated in Greece in 2011, at a time when Roma mediation and the training of mediators had already been tackled since the mid-90s by the General Secretariat of Lifelong Learning policy²⁰ (Γενική Γραμματεία Λαϊκής Επιμόρφωσης), under the authority of the Ministry of Education. The agency organised seminars on specific thematic units, including legal issues. Other non-governmental organisations dealing with the issue of social inclusion of Roma, have both made use of mediation and provided training to a number of Roma mediators, during the implementation

19. According to their own testimony, found in the reports of the Trainers of ROMED1 and the National Facilitators of ROMED2, during the interventions of both Programmes

20. <http://www.gsae.edu.gr/en/>

of their respective programmes. However, unlike other European countries, at national level there were no large-scale initiatives until the launching of ROMED1.

Compared to previous projects, the new element introduced by ROMED1, besides the fact that it was a pan-European joint programme of the Council of Europe and European Union, was the introduction of a complete, organised methodology and training materials for effective intercultural mediation. An important innovation, which was also used as a tool in the work of the mediators, was the **Mediators' Code of Ethics** which, for the first time, explicitly set out the role, responsibilities and rights of mediators.

ROMED1 came about as a response to the need to train mediators during that period in Greece, not only to help mediation become a solid and effective profession, but also to enable mediators to play a significant part in the social inclusion of Roma. Indeed, the programme came to fill the gap in the training of mediators, as well as to introduce a Code of Ethics for Roma and non-Roma persons that were already working as mediators between the Roma community and local institutions, most of whom had never attended any kind of relevant training on intercultural mediation. Unfortunately, to date, the profession of mediator has still not been recognised.

Implementation of the ROMED1 Programme

The ROMED1 Joint Programme of the Council of Europe and European Union aimed at the training of representatives of the Roma community on intercultural mediation based on human rights was initiated in Greece in 2011, and conducted in three training cycles between 2011 and 2015. During the first phase of implementation of the programme, the necessary contacts were made by the support organisation (Antirropon NGO) with representatives of the civil society and official stakeholders such as the competent "Inter-Ministerial Committee" (Διυπουργική Επιτροπή), composed of the Ministries of Education, Labour, Health and Interior.

In terms of selection of participants for the first training cycles organised between 2011 and 2012, after consultations with stakeholders of the central government, municipalities, regions, universities as well as the Roma community, it was initially decided that trainings would be attended by persons already working as school mediators in the Educational Programmes²¹ of the Universities of Athens, Thessaly, Aegean University and Aristotle University of Thessaloniki, as well as health and social mediators of the Social Medical Centres in municipalities with Roma communities.

During these two training cycles, a total of 79 mediators from 33 locations were trained, 35 of whom were women. The majority worked as school mediators in educational programmes of the aforementioned universities, whereas others worked as mediators in Social Medical Centres (Ιατρο-Κοινωνικά Κέντρα), within municipality structures in certain areas of Greece.

The first training cycle was organised in two sessions in May 2011 and February 2012, during which 24 mediators were trained, of whom four were women; **in the second training cycle** (November 2011 and June 2012), a total of 51 mediators were trained, out of whom 17 were women. In accordance with the ROMED1 curriculum, the training was conducted in two separate sessions with six months of practice in between. While the majority of mediators were Roma, the training also included non-Roma mediators who had extensive experience of work in Roma communities and who enjoyed the same level of trust and skills as their Roma peers. In 2015, following the increased needs arising from the implementation of the ROMED2 Programme, a **third training cycle** was organised with the participation of 33 people - mostly new members of the Community Action Groups from the areas of implementation of the ROMED2 Programme, 20 of whom were women, bringing the total number of trained and certified mediators up to 101 and the areas represented to 35.

According to the mediators' evaluations after the training, while after the first training cycle participants left with the need to enrich their work with more quality features, they often did not feel free to take initiatives. Furthermore, they were required to cope with administrative issues associated with the inclusion of an additional procedure in the application request to welfare structures, or to gather the necessary forms for enrollment of children in schools, which represented additional work often beyond their responsibilities.

According to the trainers' reports, even though the programme did not foresee direct support in the field during the practice period, the need for such support was stressed and requested by most mediators over the telephone.

21. "Roma Children's Education" (Πρόγραμμα Εκπαίδευσης Παιδιών Ρομά) Programme under the Ministry of Education and implemented by several universities <http://www.keda.uoa.gr/roma/>

Despite some visits in the field, according to the NFP's reports, mediators felt the need for further support. In addition, all mediators at that time referred to the process of the trainings as necessary and "refreshing", as most had felt disappointed and stressed with their work and the process provided them with the opportunity to share with their colleagues the problems they faced and to realise that, despite the differences, in most of the cases the problems were common.

A highlight of the ROMED1 Programme was the congregation and the decision of 79 mediators at the closing of the second cycle of trainings in Thessaloniki in 2012 to establish the «**Association of Greek Roma Mediators and Partners**» («Ένωση Ελλήνων Ρομά Διαμεσολαβητών και Συνεργατών») which had an elected interim administration of 13 persons with representative geographical distribution, and a workers' body with the objective to strengthen their role and enhance their working conditions. Via this body, they would strive for the recognition and institutionalisation of their profession. They also wanted to establish a network for the exchange of ideas, experiences, best practices and peer support through their communication in order to support, in the best possible manner, their local communities, as well as to act equally for the Roma community in Greece.

Finally, notable is the disappointment of most of the mediators resulting from the absence of the Greek team from the European Conference of Mediators held in Brussels in 2013. Despite their eagerness for their voice to be heard at European level and to exchange experiences with their colleagues from the other implementing countries of ROMED1, they eventually decided not to participate, since they were not able to express themselves in any language other than Greek. Unfortunately the organisers were not able to provide interpretation into Greek.

Conclusions

The implementation of the ROMED1 programme led to discussions at national level concerning the promotion of Roma mediation as a necessary process in programmes related to Roma inclusion, and also regarding the official recognition of the profession. This set in place an informal (at the time) rule, which has since been formally accepted, namely that any programme in favour of Roma shall include the Roma community with regard to consultation and implementation, as the community itself is more aware of its needs and how these could be met.

According to the National Support Team and a focus group of mediators, the negative context of the country due to the economic crisis affected on a large scale the situation of mediation in Greece and the Roma community. In certain cases, this general context led to phenomena of xenophobia and racism towards vulnerable social groups, and even violent acts against Roma mediators and Roma communities during the implementation of the programme. Indicative of the situation were the attitudes of rejection from non-Roma parents in areas of Anthili in Lamia and Sofades in Karditsa, when a decision was made by the local authorities to close down ghetto schools in marginalised areas and Roma children were transferred to other mixed schools in various districts. The role of mediation in this case was rendered very difficult by the overall economic and societal context.

Besides the deterioration of their living conditions, like in other ROMED countries, despite the important role they play at local level, mediators' wages remain very low. Their positions are mostly temporary and consequently the mediators are not covered by health insurance. As such, they are obliged to take additional jobs that prevent them from fully dedicating themselves to mediation. Often, they fulfil the role of mediator on a voluntary basis.

According to the mediators' evaluations after the ROMED1 trainings, many felt that their work status and conditions were not impacted by the training. The certificates issued by the Council of Europe were neither recognised by any stakeholder in Greece as a formal educational certification, nor was the profession of mediator, but they declared themselves more empowered by the process and recognise that the training on intercultural mediation was necessary for them.

Firstly, since it was a nationwide initiative which tried to include a considerable number of stakeholders, a wide debate on the subject of Roma mediation opened up. In this manner, the role of mediator was in fact acknowledged, at least at the level of consciousness of the majority of Greek society. Nonetheless, the ambition of the profession to be officially recognised and to set the basis for the regulations concerning working conditions was not met. According to the members of the Mediators' Association, they will continue to work for this through this structure, which since 2015 has been officially established under the legal form of a non-profit organisation.

Secondly, based on the legacy of the European Code of Ethics and the experience gained during the implementation of the programme, the mediators consider that they are not starting from scratch, but rather in the midst of an effort that, with adequate support at European and national level, may very soon achieve the desired outcomes.

Taking into account the elements described above, a set of conclusions can be drawn concerning the future of mediation in Greece:

The continuation of training of mediators is necessary: since the training took place several years ago now and new data has since emerged at national level, as well as on the development of mediation as a whole, both as a profession and as a theory, it is proposed to continue, deepen and expand the training to other involved parties.

Training on intercultural mediation should be organised for stakeholders in direct contact with mediators: according to the NFP's reports, the training of colleagues and associates of the mediators on the basic principles of intercultural mediation (social workers, teachers, psychologists, nurses, doctors, etc.) when they are working in specific institutions or structures for the social inclusion of Roma, is something that would help them better understand the role, obligations and rights of the mediator, and hence would foster better cooperation and results.

The tools developed through the ROMED1 programme could be adapted and used in the work with other categories of vulnerable persons: the theory of social mediation and methodology of intercultural approach are tools that can be used and spread to other groups of population of refugees and to people with disabilities.

Communication and promotion of the results of the programme should be intensified and spread towards a more general public as a basis for improvement of the living conditions of vulnerable groups, with the ultimate aim of social inclusion.

Peer networking should be supported at national and European level: a thematic national conference on the current situation of mediation in Greece could be an excellent opportunity for the dissemination of the programme's results and experiences in Greece. According to some mediators', another initiative could be to support their further education through informal methods, by fostering their participation in trainings, seminars and meetings organised by the European Union or the Council of Europe at national and European level.

Advocacy should be intensified for the recognition of the profession of mediator and for the inclusion of mediation in the Greek NRIS: mediators have expressed that they feel trapped in the Greek reality especially since, to date, the National Strategy for Social Inclusion of Roma did not include regulations and solutions. This is despite the fact that Roma, as mentioned above, have put forward their proposals. Nevertheless, they still remain hopeful and invest at national and European level in the improvement of their communities' living conditions.

More practical support is needed for mediators at European level: in addition to moral recognition, which exists largely, mediators need more practical support, either from the European Commission and the Council of Europe or the National Support Team, by continuing consultations and training, depending on the possibilities of course, or from the competent bodies implementing national and local policy. This would be highly beneficial to national and European society if supported, given the great dynamic with these 113 representatives of the Greek Roma community and a large social capital gained after so much effort over the past years.

4.3.3. ROMED2 key findings

Relevance of the Programme and selection criteria for the intervention areas

Greece was among the first countries to initiate the implementation of the ROMED2 Programme, with a launching event that took place in Athens in October 2013 attended by numerous representatives of the central and local political foreground of the country and representatives of the majority civil society, as well as important representatives of the Roma community.

The representation and participation of Roma communities was a process that had already been experimented in Greece, with decade-long historical precedents of Roma local associations and national federations working to assert their rights. The missing element was the ability to seek and find allies in the process and the method to install a dynamic of trust between the community and local authorities. In most cases indeed, Roma tended to consider the central and local political power as a rival rather than a partner.

The selection criteria of the municipalities involved in the programme included a solid political will of the local government, but also the **history of social inclusion policies for the Roma** at local level, as well as *the size and level of the living conditions of the Roma communities* residing in the geographical limits of these municipalities. During the initial phase of the programme, all municipalities signed a commitment letter for their participation in the programme. The

positive element in this regard is that municipalities went a step forward and issued Municipal Decisions for validating their participation in ROMED2. This was the case in Karditsa, Amaliada, Menemeni and Halandri.

Another important priority of the National Support Team was the geographical coverage of the programme, which led to the selection of municipalities in the main areas of Greece: Iraklion (Crete), Ilion (Attica), Ilida (Peloponnese), Komotini (Thrace) and Mesolonghi (West Greece), whilst Karditsa (Thessaly) and Ampelokipi-Menemeni (Thessaloniki) were integrated in the second phase. In the beginning of 2015, in the endeavor to establish the Community Action Groups, the intervention of the programmes was interrupted in the municipalities of Iraklion, Ilion and Komotini due to both the lack of involvement and commitment of local authorities and the high costs related to transporting the (Athens-based) National Support Team to more remote municipalities (Iraklion). In mid-2015, the municipality of Halandri entered the programme with an intensive pace of implementation favoured by its proximity to Athens and thus to the base of the National Support Team.

In early 2015, discussions were initiated on the transition of Karditsa and Thessaloniki to ROMACT. Although the National Support Team and the municipalities worked intensively over six months to ensure a smooth transition in the two locations, in the end the European Commission took the decision not to extend the programme to other countries beyond the six already included. Developments in Greece relevant to the economy after the Referendum of July 2015 were also a factor contributing to this decision.

This understandably had a negative impact both on the CAG and on the local authorities, since expectations had been needlessly created. The cancellation of the transition had, on the one hand, an impact on reducing the trust that the local authorities had towards the National Support Team of the Programme and, on the other, generated frustration inside the communities due to the fact that the discontinuity of interventions coincided not only with the political developments in Greece, but also with developments within the European Union.

Creation and composition of the Community Action Groups

The main result of ROMED2 was the establishment of Community Action Groups, open structures where any citizen who wanted to contribute to defining priorities of the community was welcomed and trained on democratic citizenship. The CAGs also benefitted from the inclusion of representatives of local associations, who brought their extensive experience to the dynamic of the CAGs and provided valuable counselling to the National Support Team in Greece. Their role was also enhanced by their prior training under ROMED1 and their subsequent inclusion in the CAGs during ROMED2. **Examples** in this regard were the Roma Women's Association of Dendropotamos in Thessaloniki, the «Association of Greek Roma St. George» in Amaliada, as well as two local associations in Halandri. It is indicative that, where the leadership of the local Roma association was not cooperative, the participation of the Roma community, and therefore the outcomes of the programme, did not achieve the expected results.

The interventions of the National Support Team in the effort to establish Community Action Groups were not conducted in a homogenous process in all implementation areas of the programme. Instead, a different approach was used every time, as there were differences in the size, living conditions, social characteristics and potential of the Roma communities.

The programme included larger Roma communities, like Dendropotamos with approximately 3 000 Roma residents, but also smaller ones, such as Ilida with approximately 1 400 residents in both its Roma communities, Papakafkas (Παπακαυκάς), Tschleika (Τσιχλείκα) and Mesolonghi with approximately 1 800 Roma residents.

Furthermore, some communities are settled within the residential tissue such as Halandri that lies close to the heart of Athens; communities also reside remotely, far from the decision-making centres such as Karditsa. The differences were clear with regard to the housing issue as well, since in some areas the living conditions could be considered decent, whilst in others people were still living in shacks.

With regard to the educational background and professional activity of CAG members, there were also differences between the areas of intervention, despite the fact that the level remains low and there was the need for more trainings and interventions in some areas in order to assist in the clarification of their priorities. In respect of gender, most of the Community Action Groups are now balanced, except in Ilida in the city of Amaliada, which is exclusively composed of men, and the CAG of Dendropotamos in the municipality of Ampelokipoi-Menemeni, consisting of 11 women and three men.

Implementation of ROMED 2 in the areas of intervention

Despite the turbulent context of the implementation of the programme, the National Support Team worked intensively since the launching for the establishment of four Community Action Groups (Ampelokipi-Menemeni, Karditsa, Mesolonghi and Ilida), while four joint meetings with local authorities were organised (one in every municipality) in order to prepare for the drawing up of four Joint Action Plans.

During the implementation of ROMED2, and in addition to the developments at European level, Greece went through three electoral processes: one at regional and local level in 2014 and two at national level, in January and September 2015 respectively, as well as a national referendum in July 2015. All of these resulted in serious consequences for the programme as well.

Particularly challenging was when the National Support Team had to delay implementation of the programme in the first half of 2014 in order to avoid interference in the political foreground before the local elections in May 2014. The programme's activities were thus postponed and, moreover, in some cases (Karditsa, Mesolongi, Amaliada) the relationship at local level with the implementing municipalities had to be reset due to changes that resulted from the elections. Finally, due to budgetary cuts and a resulting weaker capacity on the side of municipalities, even where there was political will, the result was that they could not respond to the priorities that had been identified by the Community Action Groups, in order to formulate joint action plans, due to the lack of financial resources. The refugee crisis which strongly affected Greece from 2015 onwards also had an impact on how national authorities addressed Roma issues during the same period.

With regards to the training process, according to the National Facilitators' reports, the training interventions within the Roma community and with the Community Action Groups became schools of active citizenship: over these years, the CAGs learned to work as a team, to create working groups and to take responsibilities. They learned to gather elements and to use them for strengthening their argumentation, to exchange ideas, to set priorities of their communities and to make proposals for addressing their issues.

The CAGs initiated through ROMED2 had an effect on the evolution of some of their members, particularly in the field of education where not only was there an improvement in the school attendance of their own children; in some cases this resulted in the continuation of their own education, through 2nd chance school for adults or evening high schools and lyceums. CAG members in Karditsa (Dendropotamos), Halandri and even Ilion (where ROMED2 withdrew in 2014) reported that the process inspired them to continue their education.

There was also an increased interest in trainings relevant to active participation as citizens, since they consider themselves and their community as an integral part of local and national society. The nature of these topics, however, demands a long-term involvement to become viable as a process and the programmes aiming to achieve that must have a longer timeframe of implementation in order to obtain visible results.

Conclusions

According to the reports of the NFP and the NPOs, since October 2013 until the present, the ROMED2 programme has been at the centre of discussions between representative of the Roma community, the Mediators' Association and state level institutions concerning Roma participation in Greece, due to its methodology and its manner of intervention in local communities which have been acknowledged by all stakeholders. Moreover, taking over the ROMED1 mission at times, ROMED2 has also held a significant role in the discussions at national level for the official recognition of the profession of mediator and tries to support the Association of Greek Roma Mediators in every possible manner.

In addition, the ROMED2 programme has been recognised as a valuable tool in the facilitation and monitoring of the National Roma Integration Strategy (NRIS), thanks to the close connection between the National Support Team and the National Centre of Social Solidarity (Εθνικό Κέντρο Κοινωνικής Αλληλεγγύης) which, at that time, assumed the role of National Focal Point for the monitoring of the implementation of the NRIS. In the meantime, the role of monitoring and focal point for the NRIS was designated to the newly-established Special Secretariat for Roma Issues.

The "Association of Greek Roma Mediators and Associates" is already in cooperation and consultation with the aforementioned Special Secretariat for Roma Issues (Ειδική Γραμματεία για θέματα Ρομά) and the Ministry of Labour, while there are also proposals for the Inter-Ministerial Committee. The Chairman of the Association, Mr Konstantinos Paiteris, along with an additional active member of the Association and Chairman of the Roma Women Association of Dendropotamos, Ms Annoyla Magga, were invited, among other representatives of the Greek Roma Community, to make proposals to the respective committee in the parliament.

It is worth mentioning here the natural link between the ROMED2 Programme and the intra-municipal network “Rom Network” (Δίκτυο Ρομ), the Director of which, Mr Manolis Rantis, was present during the discussion for the establishment of the Mediators’ Association, offering support and valuable guidance. Mr Rantis became one of the two National Project Officers of the ROMED2 Programme, putting his vast experience to the service of municipalities, local administrations’ staff and Roma communities.

Among the conclusions concerning the ROMED2 programme in Greece, the following are the most remarkable.

The programme was an effective school for the active citizenship for Roma citizens in Greece: it increased the knowledge among the Roma community with regard to human rights and their responsibilities as active citizens at local level as well, increasing furthermore the consultation capacity of the Community Action Groups with respect to local authorities. They also learned how to prioritize their problems and needs and how to conquer their goals step by step.

The involvement of all competent stakeholders at local level brought an important added value: the long-term vision and implementation has been a key to the success in the formation of the CAGs and the results in the co-operation with local authorities. Through the holistic approach and the “bottom-up” consultation process, identification and prioritisation, this is now a recognised methodology which tends to be used by any organisation implementing programmes for the social inclusion of Roma. In this regard, the ROMED2 Programme played a prominent role, as the perspective of the National Support Team, in their opinion, was almost always long-term. Their main concern was always how the Community Action Groups and the communities they represent would become sustainable and continue their efforts once the programme had ended as well.

The national and local political contexts had a crucial impact on the effectiveness of the implementation: due to the nature of the programme, both the political will and the financial crisis had a crucial part to play concerning its smooth implementation. Unfortunately, the political impact and the economic and social changes at European and national level affected implementation by impeding, many times, the interventions of the National Support Team, both in the communities and the municipalities. For instance, in 2016 a blockade of roads by Greek farmers prevented the team from intervening outside of Athens for a period of time.

Among the recommendations for the continuation of the programme are the following:

Training sessions with the CAG should be conducted by more than one facilitator: according to the National Facilitators themselves, limiting each training session to only one National Facilitator reduces the efficiency and facilitation, especially with large groups. Indeed, there were trainings where a second Facilitator was needed, either because of the number of the participants or the different profile of participants. In their opinion, gender, age, the level of knowledge and experience are factors to be taken into account in the organisation of trainings. For example, there were trainings in which there were more female participants present when the Facilitator was male, or vice versa.

It is of vital necessity to allocate resources to the Community Action Groups and the Association of Mediators to enable them to meet regularly at central level and exchange experiences, good practices and solutions to the problems that their community faces. It is indeed a very good learning experience as the mediators themselves have frequently stated, but they could also constitute an equal participant in the dialogue on policies implemented or to be implemented from now on, for the social inclusion of the Roma community. Moreover, through the ROMED2 process, they learned a lot about the way dialogue is conducted at political level and the benefits it can have for their community, even if this knowledge was derived at the micro-level of the municipality.

The educational process in previous years with the Community Action Groups and the communities they represent reveals a need for the creation of new groups initially at local level and consequently at national level as well: more and more young people approach the training process as an opportunity of empowerment and to acquire additional knowledge and experience. At times, according to their testimony, they felt the need to be represented at national and European level to enforce their rights, arising not as much from their origin, as from their human status, especially their status as youth. It is a fact that, “in the middle of the crisis in Greece”, young people are affected the most. This applies especially to Roma who neither have the same access to the formal education process in order to acquire qualifications due to their living conditions, nor the same access to the labour market which is of even greater need. In their opinion, it is a vital necessity to be supported by National and European Stakeholders.

Social capital created during the years of ROMED implementation should be valorised: despite the fact that Greece is still under economic austerity, initiatives with regard to the Roma community at local and national level have been more targeted. It is crucial that these initiatives include all of this social capital gained during the last years in to further advance the social inclusion of Roma in Greece.

Dissemination of the ROMED2 method should be ensured at national and local levels: the implementation of ROMED2 has resulted in a valuable methodology and material, a National Support Team and trained certified mediators which could all form part of smaller or bigger initiatives of civil society. This effort and its results, if continued, could continue to have in the present, as well as in the future, an effective impact regarding Roma social inclusion in Greece.

Part V

**THE LEGACY OF THE ROMED
PROGRAMMES - RESOURCES
AND INSPIRATION**

ROMED2 - EXAMPLE OF COMMITMENT LETTER

Dear Mayor,

[details about the institution / NGO addressing the local authority]. After careful consideration of the situation of the Roma community in **[Municipality]**, we would like to propose the application of the ROMED2 experience in our city / village. As proven by the results of the aforementioned programme¹, we trust that such a long-term initiative will help Roma persons and the wider **[Municipality]** population to attain better living conditions in a fairer environment.

According to this methodology, the responsibility is two-fold: whilst local authorities are expected to provide effective governance and quality public services to the whole local population, including the Roma, local Roma citizens need to actively engage with those local authorities and participate in the development and implementation of local public policies. To address these important challenges and responsibilities, both local authorities and Roma communities need a reinforced capacity, which we aim to provide backed up by the tools and experiences provided by the ROMED2 experience, developed by the Council of Europe and European Commission between 2011 and 2017.

The implementation of the ROMED2 methodology in our city / village would imply your commitment to:

- ▶ promote Roma inclusion at local level, based on the principles of Good Democratic Governance formulated within the Council of Europe framework;
- ▶ involve the Local Council in supporting the participation of the municipality throughout the whole duration of the programme and contributing to the achievement of their objectives at local level;
- ▶ designate a person with decision-making authority in your staff to be in charge of supervising the whole process related to participation in the programme;
- ▶ ensure the effective commitment of various municipality services with representatives of the local Roma community, in order to develop and implement, based on a participatory process, a joint local action plan including short-term and medium-term targets for improving the situation of Roma and their access to public services;
- ▶ ensure the participation of relevant staff members in training sessions and capacity-building activities planned within the framework of the proposed methodology; support the implementation of positive changes in current administrative practice that may be identified (by your administration and the Roma community) as a result of the aforementioned training sessions and structured dialogue with the Roma community;

The **[institution / NGO addressing the local authority]** will:

- ▶ organise training sessions and expert visits to the municipality, advise on the review of local policies from the perspective of inclusive good governance and participation of the Roma community;
- ▶ provide human and financial resources, within the limit of its appropriations, for the implementation of the ROMED2 methodology, in particular as concerns expert support;
- ▶ ensure the contribution of experts and partner organisations in the implementation of the ROMED2 methodology;
- ▶ enable the linking between ROMED2 and other related programmes at local, national and international levels;

We look forward to your reply and working with you within the framework of the ROMED2 Programme.

Yours sincerely, (name and function)

I, the undersigned, Mr/Ms, Mayor of municipality, hereby confirm the commitment of the municipality I represent to implement the ROMED2 methodology under the conditions specified in the above letter and in its appendices. I have designated (title, name) Mr/ Ms..... as the person responsible for accompanying my municipality's participation in the Programme.

1. We suggest to attach country findings and case studies in the appropriate languages, found here: <http://bit.ly/2kkvtLK>

ROMED2 - CHARACTERISTICS OF THE COMMUNITY ACTION GROUP

1 **Local:** focused on a disadvantaged area with a significant (majority) Roma population

This means that the ROMED2 approach is an “area-based approach”. It targets mainly disadvantaged compact Roma communities but of course it does not exclude non-Roma who may share the same situation if they live in the respective area.

2 **Diverse:** the group includes people previously involved in similar activities and new people, men and women, of all ages and members of various subgroups

The natural tendency may be to have mostly men who had previous involvement in relation to authorities or as collaborators with various NGOs. The facilitator and the local facilitator need to insist on having a balanced participation, including women and young people. Also, if the community includes different Roma subgroups, members of all subgroups should be involved.

3 **Team:** all members are equal, no hierarchy

There is a natural tendency for any group to look for a leader to follow. This avoids monopolising decision making by a person or a small group and empowers more members to take an active role. The best way to support this is to promote a shared leadership and to ensure that different people take leadership at different moments and for different activities.

4 **Democratic:** decisions are made in a democratic way, if possible through consensus, having heard all opinions

It is important to hear all opinions, look for consensus and, only when a consensus is not possible, to make decisions through voting. This will maintain the cohesion of the group, will empower the weaker members and will stimulate participation.

5 **Open:** anyone can join or leave the group at any time

There is a natural tendency for any group to set boundaries and distinguish between members and outsiders. By keeping the group open, there are more chances for democratic sustainability and even those who in the beginning did not trust the idea might join later and bring important contributions.

6 **Focused on community progress:** the group aims for the well-being of the entire local community not just that of its members

This focus on the “common good” also contributes to gaining the trust of community members. There might be requests from group members to be paid for their participation but facilitators and local facilitators need to make it clear that the CAG is a voluntary group dedicated to improving the situation of the whole community.

7 **Transparent:** the decisions, action and achievements of the group are communicated to other members of the community

Community members should know what the group is doing and this will encourage other people to get involved or to provide support from outside. This will also reduce the risk of generating the rumour that CAG members only act for their own personal interests.

- 8 **Constructive:** the group seeks to formulate constructive proposals for change, specifying responsibilities, their legal basis and the resources needed

As opposed to protest groups, the CAG does not adopt a confrontational approach. The CAG not only asks for things to be done for the Roma but also proposes concrete and realistic ways for improvement and offers support.

- 9 **Based on human rights:** takes as a starting point the principle of equality of rights

The CAG is not asking for favours or charity, but rather proposes measures to ensure effective access to rights of Roma community members.

- 10 **Recognised:** is recognised as a partner in dialogue by local authorities

Like various other consultative structures, the CAG needs to be acknowledged by the authorities as an official consultative body of the respective Roma community.

ROMED2 - ACTIVITY ON GROUP BELONGING

(MODULE INTRODUCED BY THE GREEK SUPPORT TEAM)

Objectives

- ▶ to enhance group belonging
- ▶ to enhance the capacity to focus and listen to each other

Time

10-20 minutes according to the number of participants

Resources

- ▶ a whiteboard or flipchart
- ▶ a piece of paper
- ▶ markers (two or three different colours)
- ▶ adhesive tape

Preparation

The team of facilitators in Greece found it easier to use this method in the beginning of the training or after a break if the training is organised over a full day. The meeting room needs to be big enough to allow for the group to position themselves in a circle. Alternatively, this activity can be organised outdoors if such space is available. Since this is also a memory game, the activity will not be very effective if the group has more than 15 participants.

Procedure

The facilitator enters the circle and provides the explanations on the rules of the activity. Each participant introduces herself/himself by stating her/his name and one word that begins with the same letter as their first name, and which represents a trait of their personality. The facilitator is the one starting the chain by providing his name and word of her/his choice. Besides their name and word, each participant also introduces the persons who had spoken before her/him, as well as their chosen word. The last person in the chain will have to provide the names and words of all the persons in the circle.

Optionally, the activity can be organised around the characteristics of the Community Action Group – where, instead of choosing a word that defines their personality, participants choose the characteristic of the CAG that seems most important to them. In this case, the facilitator can place pieces of paper around the room with the ten characteristics of the CAG, so that they are visible to all participants.

Note: The Greek facilitators noted during the activity that male participants had difficulties remembering women's names, which allowed for a discussion on gender balance once the activity was complete. Additionally, the activity was helpful in addressing a conflict between two CAG members, who were guided by the facilitator into standing next to each other in the circle (and consequently holding hands).

RESOURCES AND CONTACTS FOR SUPPORT

The following list provides some of the persons and organisations involved in the ROMED2 process. If you would like to get in touch with them, please write to us at romed@coe.int, or check the ROMED website².

ROMED International Pedagogical Team		
<p>Mr Calin Rus, Director of the Intercultural Institute Timisoara, Romania</p>	<p>Ms Alexandra Raykova, Expert, Bulgaria</p>	<p>Mr Christoph Leucht, Expert, Germany</p>
ROMED2 Support Organisations		
<p>BOSNIA AND HERZEGOVINA “Support Centre for Roma – Romalen Kakanj” Website: http://czp-romalen.com</p>	<p>GERMANY Hildegard Lagrenne Foundation Website: http://de.hildegard-lagrenne-stiftung.eu</p>	<p>GREECE Antirropon Website: http://www.antirropon.eu</p>
<p>HUNGARY “Partners for Democratic Change” Hungary Website: http://www.partnershungary.hu</p>	<p>PORTUGAL Letras Nómadas Website: http://bit.ly/2InvhNE</p>	<p>SPAIN ROMED España Facebook page: http://bit.ly/2me0vcl</p>
<p>UKRAINE International Charitable Organisation Roma Women Fund “Chirikli” Website: http://chirikli.com.ua</p>	<p>“THE FORMER YUGOSLAV REPUBLIC OF MACEDONIA” Roma Democratic Development Association “Sonce” Website: http://sonce.org.mk/wp/</p>	
<p>ROMANIA Romano ButiQ Website: http://romanobutiq.ro</p>	<p>BULGARIA Integro Association Website: http://www.integro-bg.org</p>	<p>SLOVAK REPUBLIC Škola doktorán – Wide Open School n. o. Website: http://www.skoladokoran.sk</p>

2. <http://coe-romed.org/romed2/national-support-teams>

RELEVANT PUBLICATIONS AND MEDIA RESOURCES

<p>ROMED1 Trainer’s Handbook</p> <p>Download at: http://bit.ly/220scS3</p>	<p>ROMED1 Mediators’ Code of Ethics</p> <p>Download at: http://bit.ly/2jtjnDw</p>	<p>Recommendation CM/Rec(2012)9 on mediation as an effective tool for promoting respect for human rights and social inclusion of Roma</p> <p>Download in English and French here: http://bit.ly/2iL4qJP</p>
<p>ROMED2 Guidelines and Resources for national and local facilitators</p> <p>Download at: http://bit.ly/2j5RXjG</p>	<p>Evaluation case studies in 15 municipalities (7 focus countries)</p> <p>Download in English + country language at: http://bit.ly/2kkvtLK</p>	<p>Evaluation Summary country findings (7 focus countries)</p> <p>Download in English + country language at: http://bit.ly/2kkvtLK</p>
<p>“Experiencing ROMED” Documentary</p> <p>Watch it at: http://bit.ly/2lq334S</p>	<p>“PAROVEL” Documentary</p> <p>Watch it at: http://bit.ly/2jAW9lr</p>	<p>ROMACT Handbook</p> <p>Download in English + 6 languages at: http://bit.ly/2mWpH5n</p>
<p>Development in mediation - Current challenges and the role of ROMED by Jean-Pierre Liégeois</p> <p>Download in English and French here: http://bit.ly/2mWwP1F</p>	<p>The Council of Europe and Roma: 40 years of activity by Jean-Pierre Liégeois</p> <p>Available for purchase here: http://bit.ly/2mLQTXK</p>	<p>SRSR Roma portal of the Council of Europe – other resources and publications</p> <p>Website: http://bit.ly/1C4N1jo</p>
<p>COMPASS Manual for Human Rights Education with Young People</p> <p>Available here: http://bit.ly/1MgY7DV</p>	<p>BOOKMARKS, a manual for combating hate speech through human rights education</p> <p>Available here: http://bit.ly/2mMw0vo</p>	<p>MIRRORS, Handbook on combating antigypsyism through human rights education</p> <p>Available here: http://bit.ly/2n3nAjk</p>
<p>Dosta! Toolkit</p> <p>Download in English and French here: http://bit.ly/2lHpWEB</p>	<p>Community Organisers UK Resources for community organising</p> <p>Available here: http://bit.ly/2mKcRjX</p>	<p>Other Roma-related publications and pedagogical resources</p> <p>Youth Department of the Council of Europe http://bit.ly/2mw5SVa</p>

If you belong to an authority (local or national) concerned with Roma Inclusion or if you are a Roma citizen concerned with the empowerment of your community, this publication is for you!

The ROMED2 Experience is not just “an experiment”. It has become a proven methodology of education for change - a pilot if you like - in sparking not only the involvement of Roma persons directly in the decision-making processes in their cities or villages, but also a new path for community empowerment and personal growth – with many examples of small and not so small victories, as well as the testimony of Roma persons involved in Community Action Groups stating that they feel today more confident and more committed as citizens and individuals. It is also a methodology that grew out of the ROMED1 Training of Mediators and bloomed through the implementation of ROMED2.

This publication carries an important legacy from the programme, offering to any stakeholder willing to achieve Roma participation in their city or village:

- ▶ examples of how ROMED facilitators tackled the most sensitive areas in community organising for Roma;
- ▶ the results of the external evaluation of the programme;
- ▶ infographics and the assessment of implementation of the programme in a series of countries, including some local case studies;
- ▶ resources and contacts for stakeholders wanting to implement the ROMED2 methodology;

Participation and empowerment are words used so often, they tend to become void of meaning. What ROMED tested and offers is the way to make these words actually fulfil their meaning.

www.coe-romed.org

ENG

The Council of Europe is the continent’s leading human rights organisation. It comprises 47 member states, 28 of which are members of the European Union. The Congress of Local and Regional Authorities is an institution of the Council of Europe, responsible for strengthening local and regional democracy in its 47 member states. Composed of two chambers – the Chamber of Local Authorities and the Chamber of Regions – and three committees, it brings together 648 elected officials representing more than 200 000 local and regional authorities.

www.coe.int

The European Union is a unique economic and political partnership between 28 democratic European countries. Its aims are peace, prosperity and freedom for its 500 million citizens – in a fairer, safer world. To make things happen, EU countries set up bodies to run the EU and adopt its legislation. The main ones are the European Parliament (representing the people of Europe), the Council of the European Union (representing national governments) and the European Commission (representing the common EU interest).

<http://europa.eu>

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