

## Common Basic Principles on Roma Inclusion

*Roma people are disproportionately affected by social exclusion, prejudice and discrimination. Roma communities have been part of European societies for centuries, often marginalised and sometimes persecuted. Over the last two decades, it is apparent that the socio-economic situation of many Roma people has stagnated or even deteriorated in a number of EU Member States. Many Roma people experience unemployment, low income, reduced life expectancy and poor quality of life. This represents a human tragedy for the individuals concerned as well as an immense loss for society as a whole. Moreover, far-reaching exclusion entails social instability and represents a problem in economic terms. Therefore, the issue of addressing the problems which affect Roma people is increasingly recognised as being extremely urgent in both ethical and practical terms. The European Union recognises there is a need for more active and effective policies concerning Roma inclusion. The practical delivery of these policies rests above all with the Member States and, in particular, with regions and municipalities. Although the numbers and socio-economic conditions of the Roma in individual Member States vary greatly, there are several common denominators. Moreover, experience from several Member States shows that there are general policy approaches which have proved to be useful and can thus be recommended to others.*

*In this context, the following Common Basic Principles are proposed:*

### **Principle No 1: Constructive, pragmatic and non-discriminatory policies**

Policies aiming at the inclusion of Roma people respect and realise the core values of the European Union, which include human rights and dignity, non-discrimination and equality of opportunity as well as economic development. Roma inclusion policies are integrated with mainstream policies, particularly in the fields of education, employment, social affairs, housing, health and security. The aim of these policies is to provide the Roma with effective access to equal opportunities in Member State societies.

## **Principle No 2: Explicit but not exclusive targeting**

Explicit but not exclusive targeting of the Roma is essential for inclusion policy initiatives. It implies focusing on Roma people as a target group but not to the exclusion of other people who share similar socio-economic circumstances. This approach does not separate Roma-focused interventions from broader policy initiatives. In addition, where relevant, consideration must be given to the likely impact of broader policies and decisions on the social inclusion of Roma people.

## **Principle No 3: Inter-cultural approach**

There is a need for an inter-cultural approach which involves Roma people together with people from different ethnic backgrounds. Essential for effective communication and policy, inter-cultural learning and skills deserve to be promoted alongside combating prejudices and stereotypes.

## **Principle No 4: Aiming for the mainstream**

All inclusion policies aim to insert the Roma in the mainstream of society (mainstream educational institutions, mainstream jobs, and mainstream housing). Where partially or entirely segregated education or housing still exist, Roma inclusion policies must aim to overcome this legacy. The development of artificial and separate "Roma" labour markets is to be avoided.

## **Principle No 5: Awareness of the gender dimension**

Roma inclusion policy initiatives need to take account of the needs and circumstances of Roma women. They address issues such as multiple discrimination and problems of access to health care and child support, but also domestic violence and exploitation.



## **Principle No 6: Transfer of evidence-based policies**

It is essential that Member States learn from their own experiences of developing Roma inclusion initiatives and share their experiences with other Member States. It is recognised that the development, implementation and monitoring of Roma inclusion policies requires a good base of regularly collected socio-economic data. Where relevant, the examples and experiences of social inclusion policies concerning other vulnerable groups, both from inside and from outside the EU, are also taken into account.

## **Principle No 7: Use of Community instruments**

In the development and implementation of their policies aiming at Roma inclusion, it is crucial that the Member States make full use of Community instruments, including legal instruments (Race Equality Directive, Framework Decision on Racism and Xenophobia), financial instruments (European Social Fund, European Regional Development Fund, European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development, Instrument for Pre-Accession) and coordination instruments (Open Methods of Coordination). Member States must ensure that use of financial instruments accords with these Common Basic Principles, and make use of the expertise within the European Commission, in respect of the evaluation of policies and projects. Peer review and the transfer of good practices are also facilitated on the expert level by EURoma (European Network on Social Inclusion and Roma under the Structural Funds).

## **Principle No 8: Involvement of regional and local authorities**

Member States need to design, develop, implement and evaluate Roma inclusion policy initiatives in close cooperation with regional and local authorities. These authorities play a key role in the practical implementation of policies.

## **Principle No 9: Involvement of civil society**

Member States also need to design, develop, implement and evaluate Roma inclusion policy initiatives in close cooperation with civil society actors such as non-governmental organisations, social partners and academics/researchers. The involvement of civil society is recognised as vital both for the mobilisation of expertise and the dissemination of knowledge required to develop public debate and accountability throughout the policy process.

## **Principle No 10: Active participation of the Roma**

The effectiveness of policies is enhanced with the involvement of Roma people at every stage of the process. Roma involvement must take place at both national and European levels through the input of expertise from Roma experts and civil servants, as well as by consultation with a range of Roma stakeholders in the design, implementation and evaluation of policy initiatives. It is of vital importance that inclusion policies are based on openness and transparency and tackle difficult or taboo subjects in an appropriate and effective manner. Support for the full participation of Roma people in public life, stimulation of their active citizenship and development of their human resources are also essential.