

Promoting Roma Integration at the Local Level

Practical guidance for NGOs and public authorities



Guidance manual based on the RrAJE Programme



European Dialogue in association
with the East Anglian Gypsy Council

European Dialogue

European Dialogue is an independent, not-for-profit organisation, working in partnership with civil society organisations primarily from Central and Eastern Europe.

European Dialogue facilitates the exchange of good policy and practice from the UK and elsewhere in human rights, conflict resolution, community development, anti-racism and democratic institution building.

European Dialogue's programme areas are Roma Rights, Russia and the Caucasus, Balkan Peace and Integration, and the Future of Europe.

Published:
European Dialogue
175 Goswell Road
London EC1V 7HJ
UK
Tel: +44 (0) 7253 3337
Fax: +44 (0) 7253 5790
info@europeandialogue.org
www.europeandialogue.org

First published 2005

ISBN 0-9549740-0-X

Design and layout:
Elizabeth Campling, European Dialogue

Printed:
Centre-Point Colour (UK) Ltd

Promoting Roma Integration at the Local Level

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Guidance manual based on the Roma Rights and Access to Justice in Europe Programme

Prepared by Dr Robin Oakley

**Programme Consultant
for European Dialogue**

April 2005

Foreword



Peter Mercer MBE
Chairman of the RrAJE programme

Prior to developing the RrAJE programme, I had been working with European Dialogue and Dr Robin Oakley for a number of years on Roma-related projects. Following a successful European Workshop on Roma-police relations, the British Department for International Development (DFID), co-funders of the workshop, again supported us to develop the strategic Roma Rights and Access to Justice in Europe (RrAJE) Programme. RrAJE worked with Roma NGOs to develop models of good practice of how to combat anti-Roma discrimination and promote social integration and inclusion at the local level in pre-EU accession states.

It gave me great pleasure to be appointed Chairman of the RrAJE Programme as it offered an opportunity to be involved in the social, cultural and educational development of Roma living in Central and Eastern Europe. This carried on my many years of work, both internationally and nationally through the East Anglian Gypsy Council, to improve the quality of life in Roma communities. I believe that of all the projects that I have been involved in over the last twenty five years or so, the RrAJE Programme delivered the most positive and sustainable results for the Roma community.

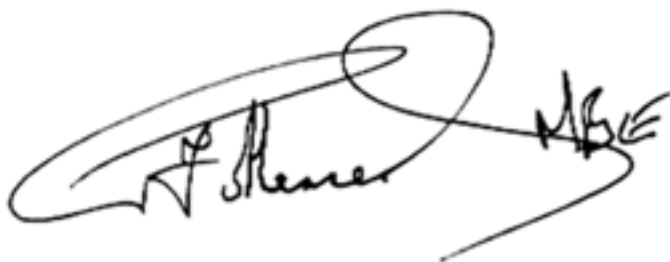
As you will see when you read this manual, a lot of the work and success of the Programme has been contributed by the Roma themselves - Roma participation and empowerment were primary aims and the key to our success. Another important aim of the Programme was to create equal strategic partnerships between the Roma NGOs and statutory agencies such as Local Authorities, Education and Health Departments and Policing institutions, to work together to

develop and implement social policy which would benefit Roma people. In the short amount of time that we had to deliver such a complex programme (2001 - 2004) we succeeded in making institutional changes within local government and to start to see real changes 'on the ground'. Our Roma partners are continuing to push for this progress, and I hope that as time goes on, more local and national governments will begin to adopt some of the recommendations and lessons learnt from our Programme.

I am also pleased that during this time, we met and worked with many people from national and local government in Central and Eastern Europe, who were more than willing to work with the Roma community, and with our team of British consultants. So there are opportunities for change. I would like to thank everyone involved in the RrAJE programme for his or her work and commitment, without which it would not have been so successful.

I hope that this manual will provide a useful tool for the Decade of Roma Inclusion 2005-2015. This is a great opportunity to make some real changes in Roma living conditions, and to integrate Roma communities, with respect for their unique culture, into the benefits of mainstream society. The manual offers models of how local/national governments, in partnership with Roma communities, can develop and implement sustainable, strategic and cost-effective action plans and policies to improve the situation for Roma and to promote social cohesion and prosperity for all.

Finally, I would like to acknowledge the work of one of our RrAJE consultants, Richard Crowson, who died in January this year. The work that Richard carried out in Pardubice (Czech Republic) on behalf of the Roma community, will always be remembered. Not least by the young Roma in Pardubice, and the municipality, who made him a 'free man' of the city for working with them to set up an Equal Opportunity Policy across all public services.



A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'A. Hume', followed by the letters 'MBE' in a stylized, bold font. The signature is written on a white background.

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Introduction



Introduction

The aim of this manual is to provide practical guidance for public authorities and NGOs on methods for promoting integration of Roma at the local level in Europe, especially in countries of Central and Eastern Europe. The guidance is based on the experience of the Roma Rights and Access to Justice in Europe Programme (RrAJE).

Roma are the largest pan-European minority, with a significant presence in every major European state. However, across Europe, Roma continue to experience severe levels of poverty, disadvantage and social exclusion. The situation of Roma is particularly acute in countries of Central and Eastern Europe, where the majority of Europe's Roma population reside.

The prospect of accession to the European Union brought strong pressure on states in Central and Eastern Europe to address the situation of Roma. Policies and strategies have been formulated at the national level, and new legislation introduced to combat discrimination. However, effective implementation of these new laws and policies has been limited. In particular, little attention has been paid to the importance of implementation at the local level – the level at which public services are delivered and at which citizens can gain access to their rights. One of the challenges is the ability to convert good intentions into practical action, and in particular, at the local level.

The RrAJE Programme (2000-2004) was designed to help to meet this need for implementation at the local level. Its aim was to develop models of good practice that could be used by public authorities and NGOs operating at the local or municipal level. Projects were established in six cities or regions in four countries in Central/Eastern Europe: Bulgaria, the Czech Republic, Romania and Slovakia.

The purpose of the manual is to draw out the key lessons from the RrAJE Programme about appropriate methods for promoting access to social rights and justice for Roma communities at the local level. The main body of the manual consists of guidance relating to four key areas: minority empowerment, partnership-building, the development and implementation of integrated local strategies, and 'mainstreaming' and institutional change. On each subject, general guidance is followed by practical examples drawn from the RrAJE Programme. Although the manual is focused on Roma-related issues in the Central and Eastern European context, it is also relevant for addressing Roma issues more widely across Europe, and much of the guidance is relevant to the situation of ethnic and national minorities generally.

The Context: Roma in Central and Eastern Europe



Typical conditions of the Roma settlements in Eastern Slovakia

The context: Roma in Central and Eastern Europe

Roma are one of the longest-established ethnic minorities in Europe, and are dispersed across virtually the whole of the continent. Over the centuries they have sustained and developed strong cultural traditions, and have played significant roles in Europe's social and economic life. However, they have also been subject to social exclusion in a variety of forms, including slavery, persecution and genocide.¹

The majority of Roma in Europe today live in countries in Central and Eastern Europe that previously formed part of the Communist Bloc. During the Communist period, Roma were subject to a policy of forced assimilation, which suppressed many aspects of their traditional culture and identity, and which forced settlement by those groups which had remained nomadic.

Since 1989, Roma have been affected greatly by the transition from state-centred to market economies in countries of Central and Eastern Europe. Whereas many had employment under the former regimes, in which at doctrine level there was a policy of inclusion, Roma have been largely excluded from any economic and social gains arising from this transition. This is partly because they were unequipped to compete on the open labour market, and partly because they are often discriminated against in access to employment, education, housing, health care and social benefits. International organisations such as the Council of Europe, the Open Society Institute, the World Bank, the UN Development Programme, the OSCE and the European Roma Rights Centre have all been active in documenting the serious disadvantage faced by Roma communities in the transition countries, and in encouraging governments to address this problem.²

¹ David M. Crowe, *A History of the Gypsies of Eastern Europe and Russia*, New York: St Martins Press, 1994; Jean-Pierre Liegeois & Nicolae Gheorghe, *Roma/Gypsies: A European Minority*, Minority Rights Group 1995; Will Guy (ed), *Between Past and Future: the Roma of Central and Eastern Europe*, University of Hertfordshire Press 2001; Ian Hancock, *We are the Romani People*, University of Hertfordshire Press, 2002.

² OSCE, *Report on the Situation of Roma and Sinti in the OSCE Area*, 2000; UNDP, *The Roma in Central and Eastern Europe: Avoiding the Dependency Trap*, 2002; World Bank, *Roma in an Expanding Europe: Breaking the Poverty Cycle*, 2003; European Commission, *The Situation of Roma in an Enlarged European Union*, 2004; European Roma Rights Centre, country reports and quarterly journal *Roma Rights*.

In a brief overview, it is neither feasible nor appropriate to provide a detailed examination of the situation of Roma in Central and Eastern Europe. It is sufficient to record that, despite some degree of national variation, a broad picture is clear and consistent across the region. The main features of this picture can be summarised as follows:

- ❖ Extensive and severe poverty and socio-economic disadvantage amongst Roma populations across the region, covering fields such as employment, education, housing, and health, and affecting all age-groups.
- ❖ A high degree of residential segregation in some countries.
- ❖ Extensive discrimination against Roma in access to employment, housing and services, and in the criminal justice system; discrimination being indirect and institutional as well as direct and personal.
- ❖ Disenfranchisement, and inability to access rights, due for example to lack of identity papers, lack of legal title to dwellings, etc.
- ❖ Incidents and threats of racially-motivated violence against Roma, probably far more numerous than is officially recorded.
- ❖ Strong, routine, unthinking prejudice and hostility against Roma among the majority white population, characterised by rigid negative stereotyping of Roma.
- ❖ Massive ignorance of the reality of Roma life, culture and history.
- ❖ Tolerance of and collusion with such stereotypes on the part of the authorities (e.g. 'racial profiling'), and a failure to challenge these structures and images on the part of the media and education system.
- ❖ A negative impact of all of the above on Roma life-styles and capacity for self-help, including an increasing 'dependence' on welfare benefits, and a loss or weakening of traditional Roma culture, language and community structure in many areas.
- ❖ Very limited contact and communication between Roma and non-Roma, other than in impersonal and negative situations.
- ❖ Absence of representation of Roma in positions of power and high status, and of Roma participation in decision-making processes.
- ❖ Marked deterioration in the situation of Roma in many parts of CEE particularly since the collapse of communist regimes in 1989.
- ❖ Emergence of increasing though still small numbers of educated young Roma activists and professionals, and of Roma NGOs.

- ❖ Poor understanding by public authorities of the problem; and limited, often reluctant and mainly ineffective efforts to address the challenge at both national and local levels.

Most countries of Central and Eastern Europe have been actively seeking accession to the European Union, and the first wave have now successfully acceded in 2004. From the outset, discrimination against Roma and other ethnic minorities presented a major stumbling block to accession for these countries. The 'Copenhagen criteria' set out conditions that bear directly on the situation of Roma. The Anti-Discrimination Directives that implement Article 13 of the Treaty of Amsterdam require all states and applicants to have appropriate legal measures against discrimination in place. However, even where measures of this kind exist, they are in most cases poorly implemented.

With varying degrees of EU and other financial support (e.g. under the PHARE Programme), governments in accession countries with substantial Roma populations have been developing and implementing national-level strategies to promote the integration of Roma. Despite the merits of many of these strategies, the quality of their implementation is variable, and there are major concerns about resourcing and sustainability.

There are also concerns about how they can be implemented effectively at the local level. The level of the municipality is the level of the delivery of most public services, particularly in the social field, as well as being the main level of organised community action. Relatively little systematic attention has been paid to date to the need for integrated and sustained action at the local level, including empowerment of local Roma communities. This is the important area of need in which the RrAJE Programme aimed to make its contribution.

The RrAJE Programme



The RrAJE Programme

3.1 Programme overview

The broad goal of the three-year RrAJE Programme was to help to combat discrimination and to promote Roma social inclusion by supporting Roma empowerment and the development of integrated strategies at the local level. This was achieved by undertaking programmes of work in selected municipalities within EU accession countries of Central and Eastern Europe that have substantial Roma populations. The aim was to produce models of good practice for local-level strategies that can be disseminated both nationally and also transnationally within the region. The RrAJE Programme received its core funding from the UK Department for International Development (DFID), and (following a development phase during 2000) ran from February 2001 to January 2004.

RrAJE began working during the first year in the Czech Republic in the municipalities of Brno and Pardubice, and in Bulgaria in Lom and in the Fakulteta District of Sofia. During the second year, work was extended to Botosani in NE Romania, and the Presov region in NE Slovakia. In each municipality, the programme offered support for Roma NGOs to form partnerships with the public authorities to develop and implement strategic plans, aimed at promoting civic integration of Roma and ensuring equal opportunities. The aim was to address needs in fields such as policing and justice, education, housing, employment and social welfare in an integrated manner. The programme aimed to help empower Roma communities to improve their access to rights and justice in these fields by building the capacity of Roma NGOs and community groups, and by promoting and supporting institutional development and the implementation of equal opportunity policies within local government and other public bodies.

The RrAJE Programme made UK and other international experience on these matters available to its local NGO and institutional partners, by providing the services of expert consultants on ethnic minority issues, by undertaking training programmes, and by organising visits and internships in the UK and elsewhere. Resources were made available to help initiate innovative projects designed to establish models of good practice in specific fields (e.g. local training programmes, community development work), and assistance was provided for raising funding for more substantial projects. A series of national and transnational workshops and conferences was held to disseminate the results of the Programme, and the results were also presented at meetings and conferences organised by international bodies.

3.2 Local-level projects

The sites for local projects were chosen primarily to reflect the diversity of local-level circumstances of Roma in Central/Eastern Europe, so that the results of the programme would have relevance across a wide range of settings. A second requirement was the existence of a Roma NGO and/or municipal authority with demonstrable commitment and capability to act as lead partner for implementation of the RrAJE Programme in the locality.

Brno, Czech Republic

Brno, the historic capital of Moravia and second largest city of the Czech Republic, has an estimated 3% Roma population, many of whom are concentrated in an inner-city neighbourhood with high unemployment and poor quality housing. Following earlier cooperation with the Council of Europe, Brno had already adopted a general strategy for ethnic relations and Roma integration, which focused particularly on supporting the activities of a Roma community centre in this neighbourhood – the Roma DROM Centre. The RrAJE Programme worked with the DROM Centre and an associated NGO, IQ Roma Servis, to help to strengthen their capacity as community-based organisations, in particular by supporting the development of a small team of community development workers, who in turn established a Roma consultative forum. With strong support from the local mayor, a formal Partnership Board was established with the sub-municipality covering the neighbourhood, and this provided a framework within which specific joint activities were developed. An integrated strategic plan was drawn up with the assistance of social scientists at Masaryk University. Policing and community safety issues were identified as a priority, and a training programme for local police was planned and delivered jointly by police and Roma community representatives.

Pardubice, Czech Republic

Pardubice is a mainly modern industrial city in eastern Bohemia, with a relatively small and dispersed Roma population of around 1%. The city had already established a Roma Council as a forum for the Roma community, and from which delegates were chosen as representatives on a municipal Roma Liaison Committee. Prior to the start of the RrAJE Programme, a British consultant had been engaged to assist the municipality to develop and implement an equal opportunities policy as a framework for addressing Roma and other related issues, and this existing initiative was then incorporated into the wider RrAJE Programme. Initially, research was undertaken to establish the circumstances and needs of Roma living in the city. Following this, an awareness-raising training programme was delivered to over 500 municipal staff by an experienced Czech training organisation. At the same time, a Strategic Plan for Equal Opportunities was developed and formally adopted by the municipality, and is now in process of implementation. The post of Equality Officer was established, to support and monitor the implementation of the policy. In order to strengthen Roma NGO capacity in the city, the RrAJE Programme stimulated and supported the formation of a new NGO by a group of Roma from the younger generation.

Fakulteta District, Sofia, Bulgaria

The Fakulteta District is the largest Roma neighbourhood in Sofia, with an estimated population of 35,000. The District suffers from severe infrastructural problems, with housing that is illegally constructed and of poor quality, and very high levels of unemployment. Residents have low levels of educational attainment, and a single dilapidated school serves the whole area. Working with an experienced community-based NGO, the Romany Baht Foundation, the RRAJE Programme decided to focus on education as the cornerstone of any long-term strategy to improve the situation of Roma in the Fakulteta District. Training and other support was provided to Romany Baht to strengthen its capacity to engage constructively with the public authorities on this and other issues. An Advisory Audit Commission was established with the support of Sofia Municipality to systematically assess educational needs and provision for Roma children in the Fakulteta District. The results of the research formed the basis of a municipal action plan as well as a lawsuit on behalf of Roma children experiencing educational discrimination. Training on discrimination awareness and equal opportunities was provided for senior officials in the Sofia Municipality. Action was also taken at community level to improve the facilities of the existing school, both to improve its educational services and to enable it to act as a resource and communication centre for local people generally.

Lom, NW Bulgaria

Lom is a port on the River Danube in NW Bulgaria that has experienced a collapse in its manufacturing industries and commerce following the end of the communist era. The Roma population live in four segregated neighbourhoods on the edges of the town, and constitute almost half of the total population. A Roma-led NGO, the Roma Lom Foundation, had already been successful in raising international funding for a range of initiatives, and was widely respected for its work by all sections of the community. The RRAJE Programme worked with this NGO to strengthen its capacity to play a leading role in improving not only the situation of the Roma community but also the future development of Lom generally. Training was provided on NGO management and project planning, to enable the NGO to benefit fully from spacious new premises and the expansion of its teams of volunteers. The NGO stimulated the municipality to adopt a 'Declaration of Justice and Fairness', and to establish a formal Commission (funded by the municipality) to develop and implement programmes to improve services and opportunities for the Roma community. Training was provided for officials to support this development. The Commission elaborated a strategic plan focusing on nine key areas, including health, education, policing, small business development, and political participation. By the end of the project there had been positive outcomes in all of these fields.

Botosani, NE Romania

Botosani is the county town in one of the poorest regions of Romania. It has a relatively small Roma population who are mainly concentrated in two neighbourhoods, the historic centre and a group of large deteriorating housing blocks. A local Roma NGO, Divano Romano, had recently been formed following a successful project to establish a scheme for 'health mediators' between Roma families and health agencies in the town. The health mediator project had been coordinated by the Bucharest-based NGO Romani CRISS, and CRISS worked with the RrAJE Programme to build the capacity of Divano Romano to act as a partner for the municipality in addressing Roma issues generally. With strong support of the Mayor and his Roma Deputy, a Joint Commission was established, with representation from all the main departments of the municipality and from other public authorities. The Commission undertook to develop a plan for implementation of the Government's National Strategy for Roma at the local level, and for this purpose formulated a local 'vision'; undertook a needs analysis; and then formulated a detailed action plan which identified key priority areas. The priority actions (many of which were low cost) were then implemented, using local, RrAJE or other external funding. They included a project to ensure all Roma possessed valid ID cards; the establishment of a welfare office and advice centre; a housing renovation project; and a Roma women's project. Training programmes were also provided to equip teachers, police and health practitioners to support the plan.

Presov Region, NE Slovakia

The Presov region is home to the majority of Slovakia's substantial Roma population, who live predominantly in segregated settlements with inadequate infrastructure and high levels of unemployment. The Slovakia project was the sixth and last to join the RrAJE Programme, and operated on a regional basis rather than in an individual town or settlement. The Roma NGO partner was the Community Centre ZOR in Kezmarok, which already had substantial experience of working on Roma issues in the region, both with Roma communities and local authorities. The aim of the project in Slovakia was to stimulate activity by local mayors to tackle the problems of Roma segregation and disadvantage, and to do so in cooperation with the local population. A training programme for local mayors and municipal officials was organised, which led to the establishment of a Forum of Mayors working on Roma issues. Training was also provided for local Roma community activists to encourage participation in local municipal decision-making, and eleven settlements were targeted for this activity. Subsequently a Roma Civic Forum was established across the Presov region to promote dialogue for Roma with local authorities and to promote new initiatives, including securing access to EU funding for social and economic regeneration.

3.3 Programme management

The RrAJE Programme was developed and managed by the UK-based NGO, European Dialogue, and delivered by a core team of UK consultants working in association with Central and Eastern European NGO and municipal partners. A team of consultants worked with Roma NGO and municipal partners in each locality, providing support and advice based on UK and other European experience of addressing racial and minority issues at the local level.

The main NGO and community partners were the following: in Bulgaria, the Romany Baht Foundation and the Human Rights Project in Sofia, and the Roma-Lom Foundation in Lom, NW Bulgaria; in the Czech Republic, the DROM Community Centre and IQ Roma Servis in Brno, and the Roma youth organisation DARJAV in Pardubice; in Romania, Romani CRISS in Bucharest and Divano Romano in Botosani; and ZOR-Kezmarok in the Presov region of Slovakia.

The core team of consultants was led by Peter Mercer MBE, President of the UK East Anglian Gypsy Council. Other programme consultants include Dr Robin Oakley (consultant to UK and European agencies on racial/minority issues), Richard Crowson (former Race Equality Adviser, London Borough of Islington), Arthur Ivatts (former Chief Inspector of Education for Gypsy/Traveller Children in the UK), Rajinder Sohpal (Director, Reading Council for Racial Equality), Makhan Bajwa and William Ekinu (Greenwich Council for Racial Equality), and Mitřa Castř-Kanerovř (Charles University, Prague).

Local level strategies for minority inclusion basic principles



Promoting integration at the local level: Basic approach

4.1 Introduction

This chapter sets out a basic approach to the promotion of Roma integration at the local level. It provides answers to the following questions:

- ❖ What is meant by 'integration'?
- ❖ What is meant by the local level?
- ❖ Why is action at the local level important?
- ❖ What organisations need to be involved at local level?
- ❖ What are the key areas for action?
- ❖ Should action focus on Roma, or minorities/equality generally?
- ❖ What is the role of national government?

The answers given to these questions in this and the following chapters are based primarily on the experience of the RrAJE Programme and its local partners. However, they also draw on a wider range of experience of work undertaken both in the UK and across Europe to promote integration of ethnic minorities at the local level, and to combat discrimination and other forms of social exclusion.

In most respects the guidance that follows is not specific to the needs and circumstances of Roma. Much of it applies to the situation of all ethnic and national minorities that experience systemic discrimination and socio-economic disadvantage, and it may therefore be used as a basis for local-level policies that address racism and the situation of minorities generally.

4.2 What is meant by 'integration'?

In the context of a democratic multi-ethnic society, 'integration' essentially means the inclusion of all ethnic groups on an equal basis without loss of group identity.

Integration is sometimes confused with the idea of assimilation. Assimilation means the incorporation of one ethnic group by another, resulting with the group losing its distinct culture and identity. Dominant ethnic groups may attempt to assimilate minority groups in this manner, as a way of avoiding having to adjust themselves to the requirements of a modern multi-ethnic society. Minority groups are usually very sensitive to pressures on them to assimilate, and may actively

resist such pressures. It is important therefore to distinguish integration from assimilation as a policy goal, and to explain this idea clearly to all ethnic groups to gain their support.

Integration does not mean that all groups can necessarily maintain different or even conflicting values and cultural traditions as they might if they were living in isolation. A successful integrated society requires certain common values and procedures that enable all ethnic groups to live successfully alongside one another. A shared legal and political framework, within which all can participate and all are treated equally, provides the essential framework for integration, and provides the context in which common standards and values can be negotiated and agreed. National laws and policies normally define what these shared values and standards should be, thus allowing different groups freedom to follow their own cultural or religious traditions in all other respects.

However, implementing these shared values and procedures in practice is much more complex than simply applying the law, as they need to be negotiated and built into the fabric of everyday activities and relations between different ethnic groups. Promoting integration through a wide range of actions at the local level is therefore also an essential tool for building a successful multi-ethnic society.

4.3 What is meant by the local level?

The term local-level needs to be understood in a flexible manner, to enable it to be relevant to geographical circumstances and the governmental structure of the particular state.

Geographically the local level is typically that of the town or village, together with the surrounding area. It might even be a large town or city, or a region encompassing several smaller towns or villages. Socially, it is an area which has a distinct identity for those who live in it: they feel they belong; they may see, meet and know personally others who live there; and they feel they have direct common interests (or maybe conflicts) with these other residents.

From the point of view of this guidance, however, what is more important is the administrative meaning of local. All European nations have levels of government and administration below that of the state, but how these are established varies greatly. Reflecting the growth of towns as politically independent units following the decline of feudalism across most of Europe, a strong tradition of local autonomy exists in many countries, with directly elected mayors and councils at town and village level. On the other hand, the rise of nation states challenged and constrained this development, resulting in towns being more directly administered or regulated by the state, or in devolved state administrations (such as prefectures) co-existing alongside locally elected bodies.

In this guidance, the main focus is on the municipality – the locally-elected government of city or town, together with its administrative area. This area may be exclusively urban, but more commonly it embraces the surrounding rural area,

including villages, suburbs or even smaller towns. In these sub-areas, there may also be sub-administrations, resulting in a complex administrative structure. Further complications may arise due to the way in which different governmental functions are allocated to different levels, or shared between elected local government and the devolved administration of the state.

What is local therefore needs to be defined according to the particular circumstances. It should identify the level at which effective action can be taken to address the issues – in this case the need to develop and implement strategies for Roma integration. Although the guidance that follows focuses principally on how action can be taken at the level of the municipality, this should be understood flexibly, and the guidance can be applied to a range of levels and governmental arrangements.

Within the RrAJE Programme, five projects focused on individual municipalities, and one on a region which included a substantial number complexity referred to above. For example, in two instances the primary municipal partner was in fact a sub-municipality of a large city, which limited the extent to which autonomous action could be taken at this local level. In one case the support from the central municipality proved crucial in securing action by the sub-municipality, while in the other the sub-municipality was constrained in what it could do by lack of support from the centre. In a third instance, the municipality included several outlying villages, as well as segregated Roma settlements on the border of the town. And in the regional project, a larger municipality acted as lead partner for a group of mostly small municipalities, each with their own directly elected administrations. In most cases, some relevant functions were administered at the regional or county level by devolved central government bodies, while others were administered directly by the elected municipal government. All these factors had to be taken into account in identifying the appropriate level for 'local' action, and appropriate structures built accordingly.

4.4 Why is action at the local level important?

Experience of combating exclusion of Roma and other minorities across Europe shows that taking action at the local level is important for the following reasons:

- ❖ In most countries of Europe that have a significant Roma population, national strategies are now in place to promote Roma integration. However, national-level policies and strategies relating to minorities are unlikely to be effective unless some mechanism is found to implement them at the local level.
- ❖ The situation of Roma varies from locality to locality, as does the situation of the population generally. Therefore it is important that national-level policies relating to Roma are implemented flexibly, and adapted to meet local needs.

- ❖ The local level, especially that of the municipality, is the level at which the delivery of most public services is administered. Action needs to be taken to ensure these services meet the rights and needs of Roma, along with all other sections of the local population.
- ❖ Directly-elected municipal and other local authorities have political autonomy to decide on their approach to Roma issues. Action therefore needs to be taken at the local level to influence political decision-making on matters relating to Roma integration.
- ❖ The local level is the level at which Roma, like other minorities, can most easily organise to exercise their rights, represent their interests at political level, and engage collectively in the civic process. This can be achieved through the formation of local NGOs, including both Roma community associations, and NGOs working on civil rights and community issues generally.
- ❖ The level of the municipality, and especially the local neighbourhood, is the level of meaning in most people's lives, i.e. which they know, care about, operate in, and feel they can have some direct control over. In order to promote civic participation by Roma, and other excluded or marginal groups, local strategies need to reach not just regions and municipalities, but also right down to neighbourhood level.
- ❖ The local level is the level at which most innovation takes place, as enterprising individuals and NGOs develop creative practical solutions to new problems. National policy-makers should be willing to support local-level enterprise and innovation, and then enable others to learn from it through promoting the dissemination of local 'good practices'.

4.5 What organisations need to be involved at local level?

All organisations that have the ability to make a positive contribution to the integration of Roma should be involved in action at the local level. Public authorities are particularly important because they have legal and constitutional responsibilities to ensure that the rights of all citizens are recognised and implemented. Civil society also has an important role to play, both to advocate its interests at the political level and to cooperate actively in problem-solving.

- ❖ Elected municipal authorities have a crucial role as the democratically-elected representatives of the local population. They have important powers and responsibilities, often relating to a wide range of functions (e.g. housing, social welfare, education). They are often major local employers. They need to provide leadership on issues relating to Roma integration, and offer a model of good practice that others can follow.
- ❖ Regional-level administrations of the central government (e.g. prefectures) likewise have a crucial role. They too may be responsible for important functions and services at the local level, and can help to

ensure that national government policy on Roma issues is translated into practice at the local level.

- ❖ Public authorities with particular functional responsibilities need to be involved, to ensure that the needs and rights of Roma are addressed effectively in their everyday operations locally. Authorities concerned with education, health, welfare, housing, policing and criminal justice will be particularly important.
- ❖ Local Roma NGOs are also essential because they can articulate the interests and concerns of local Roma people, and promote and support the participation of Roma in the civic process generally.
- ❖ Other civil society organisations at the local level may also be able to make an important contribution by focusing on Roma-related issues in their fields of activity, which might include human rights, legal advice and community development.
- ❖ Private businesses may also have a role to play, as they are local employers and may provide local services. They may be willing to contribute to their local community in various ways, including by sponsoring particular activities.

4.6 What are the key areas for action?

Effective integration of Roma at the local level requires action in four key areas:

- ❖ Roma empowerment, based on community development.
- ❖ Building of partnerships between public authorities and Roma communities.
- ❖ Formulation and implementation of integrated strategies.
- ❖ Institutional development and change in local public authorities.

Experience in the RRAJE Programme and more widely in Europe generally shows that action in only one, two or three of these areas will not be sufficient to produce sustainable outcomes. Action in all four areas is therefore essential.

This section outlines the reasons why this set of actions is important and how they are connected. Detailed guidance on appropriate action to be taken in each area is provided in the following four chapters.

a) Roma empowerment

Roma, like other minorities, need to be empowered so that they can articulate their interests and concerns, and play a full and equal part as members of the wider civil society.

History shows that minority empowerment is one of the most important long-term driving forces for equality and change. There is a need for equalising power relations between the majority and minorities, and for enabling minorities to find their own voice and capacity for self-advocacy. Only by this method will it become possible for a structure to emerge in which minorities can gain genuine equal opportunities at the same time as maintaining their distinctive ethnic identity. For this reason, the principle of minority empowerment underlay all action undertaken within the RrAJE Programme.

RrAJE and wider experience also shows that community development and the formation of community-based NGOs are the primary tools for minority empowerment at the local level. Effective minority empowerment must be built on community-wide foundations, using the tools of self-help, individual participation, and the formation of associations and other forms of community-based organisation. However, while self-help can play an important role, its capacity in modern societies is limited by the dominant influence exercised over people's lives by large-scale organisations, particularly in the public and political spheres. The promotion of participation by individual members of minority communities in these institutions, and the formation and strengthening of associations to represent the interests of minorities within and alongside them, are therefore essential mechanisms to achieve minority empowerment. For these reasons, a primary goal of the RrAJE Programme was to help to establish effective models for community development and the functioning of NGOs in Roma communities.

b) **Partnership-building**

The building of partnerships between Roma NGOs and local/municipal authorities is the most effective means for addressing Roma issues in the public domain.

Experience in Central and Eastern Europe, as well as in the UK and widely across the world, shows that as minorities begin to mobilise and express their interests in an organised manner, the anger and frustration caused by oppression and exclusion is normally articulated in criticism of the dominant institutions and an aggressive campaigning style. While this may be effective in raising awareness of the need for change in dominant institutions, and in exercising pressure for change, it does not by itself facilitate such change and - by inducing defensiveness - may even have the opposite effect.

Minority NGOs, while maintaining this awareness-raising and campaigning role, therefore also need to find ways to assist institutional change at a practical level. The experience of the RrAJE Programme (which in turn drew on that of longer-established minority and anti-racist NGOs in the UK and elsewhere) shows that the formation of partnerships, designed to achieve agreed common objectives in the field of equality and anti-discrimination, is the effective way forward. These need to be formalised, for example in the form of Joint Commissions or Partnership Boards. Partnership structures provide NGOs with equal status in a working relationship while still remaining independent, rather than simply being

used as a vehicle for community consultation or being co-opted into processes on the dominant institutions' own terms.

c) **Integrated strategies**

Integrated strategies are required if discrimination and disadvantage affecting Roma are to be tackled effectively.

Currently in Central and Eastern Europe, many initiatives aimed at tackling discrimination and disadvantage affecting Roma are of limited duration and are targeted at one particular field only, such as employment, housing, access to justice or education. Potentially good initiatives often have limited impact because they fail to take account of the interconnection between these fields.

For interventions to be effective, they need to form part of integrated strategies that address all the relevant dimensions of Roma disadvantage, and that recognise the need for planning and sustainability over a medium- to long-term period. The underlying importance of the economic situation of Roma communities needs to be recognised, and given that poverty and unemployment are conditions often shared with sections of the wider local population, strategies for economic regeneration generally may be of fundamental importance for improving the situation of Roma in particular. For these reasons, a key objective of the RrAJE Programme was for integrated strategies for Roma integration to be developed through Roma/municipal partnerships, with attention also to the need for underlying economic regeneration where appropriate. In some contexts, however, it may be appropriate to adopt a strategy of focusing initially on a core field such as education, and then reach out to other areas of life from this foundation (as in the case of the RrAJE project in Fakulteta district of Sofia).

d) **Institutional change**

Municipal and other local authorities also need to undergo a process of institutional development to ensure they relate to Roma communities on a fair and equal basis.

The formation of partnerships and strategies will not prove effective unless the public institutions themselves are capable of operating fairly and effectively in an environment in which minorities have equal status and power. Given that most public authorities are established organisations staffed predominantly by members of the majority group and with long-established routine practices and procedures, there is obvious potential for systemic or institutional discrimination to take place.

Staff training on issues relating to minorities and discrimination is an important tool for implementing change, but there is extensive research to show that training alone is insufficient. The same is true for recruitment of staff from minorities. Clear leadership, effective management and supervision, practical guidance, monitoring of performance, and effective complaints procedures are all

required as well, if the necessary institutional change is to be secured. Specialist posts or units focusing on equality issues need to be established within the organisation, though not to separate off the issue, but rather to act as advocates and advisers for mainstreaming equal treatment throughout the functioning of the institution.

4.7 Should action focus on Roma, or minorities/equality generally?

When addressing issues that affect the Roma community, there are arguments both for and against keeping an exclusive focus on Roma issues – as opposed to focusing on minorities or the promotion of equality generally.

The arguments in favour of focusing exclusively on Roma issues are the following:

- ❖ The particular needs and concerns of Roma can be addressed directly.
- ❖ There is no dilution of or distraction from focusing on Roma issues resulting from attention to issues affecting other groups.
- ❖ Roma can take the lead on initiatives, participate extensively, and exercise major influence in decision-making.

However, there are also dangers of focusing exclusively on Roma issues. These include:

- ❖ The rationale or justification for addressing Roma issues may be seen as weaker if the approach is Roma-specific rather than if it is part of a broader plan to ensure equal treatment of all groups.
- ❖ Political and budgetary support may be easier to secure if work on Roma issues forms part of a broader programme on minorities, equality or social inclusion.
- ❖ Roma-specific programmes may be competitive for resources with other programmes for minorities, or may be resented by the non-Roma population generally.
- ❖ Roma-specific programmes may have the effect of contributing to stereotypes of Roma as a problem, unless they are accompanied by public education and opinion-forming strategies designed to change public attitudes towards Roma.

These various considerations need to be explored and assessed, and the most appropriate approach identified according to the specific circumstances.

Differences in approach within the RrAJE Programme

Within the RrAJE Programme, some local partnerships chose to focus their activity specifically on the situation of Roma, while others chose to address Roma issues within a broader framework of minority issues and equality generally.

In the Fakulteta District of Sofia activity focused specifically on the situation of Roma, as the Fakulteta is an area exclusively inhabited by some 35,000 Roma inhabitants.

In Botosani both the Joint Commission and the activities set out in its Action Plan were specifically focused on Roma issues. However, the Declaration of Principle noted that Botosani has always been a multi-ethnic city, and the Mayor proposed that at a future stage the Joint Commission might broaden its terms of reference to address minority or equality issues more generally.

In Brno although work was primarily focused on Roma issues, the formal partnership structure that brought together the public authority and civil society representatives was defined as an Equalities Partnership Board. The strategy for addressing Roma issues was also formulated in more general terms, as a 'Social Inclusion Strategy'. The NGOs involved in the partnership were mainly Roma NGOs, but also included an NGO representing refugees and asylum-seekers.

In Pardubice where a strong lead had been taken from the outset by the municipal authority, the approach taken for addressing Roma issues was to initially develop and implement an equal opportunity policy for the municipality. Roma-focused activities were developed within this broader policy framework, including capacity-building through establishment of a new Roma NGO led by a group of young people.

4.8 The role of national government

National government policy is highly dependent on local-level implementation for its effectiveness. The role of national government in stimulating and supporting action at the local level is therefore crucial. How this can be done will depend on the particular governmental structure of a state, and the degree to which specific governmental functions are decentralised.

Where functions are carried out at regional or local level by devolved governmental authorities, national government can directly control action at the local level on Roma and minority issues. Where responsibility for relevant functions lies with locally elected government bodies, national government may need to influence action indirectly.

In particular, national government should:

- ❖ Use law and policy directives to ensure that local authorities take appropriate positive action to promote Roma integration.
- ❖ Ensure that effective law is in place to combat discrimination and overt racism against Roma.
- ❖ Ensure that adequate resources (including funding, and expert advice) are available to support necessary action at the local level.
- ❖ Promote pilot projects to demonstrate good practice at the local level.
- ❖ Monitor whether its policies on Roma issues are being implemented effectively at the local level and whether they are having the intended outcomes.

Minority empowerment



Mariana Buceanu (Romani CRSS) and Rubina Ferritu (Divano Romano) working together on a Roma health mediators project in Botosani

Minority empowerment

This chapter sets out the actions that need to be taken for Roma, as a minority ethnic group, to become empowered to participate on a full and equal basis in the wider society. It provides answers to the following questions:

- ❖ What is meant by 'empowerment'?
- ❖ Why is empowerment important?
- ❖ What is the role of NGOs in Roma empowerment at local level?
- ❖ How can the capacity of local Roma NGOs be developed?
- ❖ How should Roma NGOs relate to the local Roma community?
- ❖ How should local Roma NGOs relate to the public authorities?
- ❖ What is the role of law in Roma empowerment?
- ❖ What actions can be taken to increase the participation of Roma women?
- ❖ What actions can be taken to increase the participation of young people?
- ❖ How should Roma NGOs relate to the wider non-Roma community?

5.1 What is meant by 'empowerment'?

Minorities, in the social meaning of this term, are groups that are excluded from full participation in the life of a society. A minority has been defined as:

"A group of people who, because of their physical or cultural characteristics, are singled out from the others in the society in which they live for differential and unequal treatment and who therefore regard themselves as objects of collective discrimination."³

Minority status, therefore, is not just about actual or perceived difference, nor is it simply about the numbers of people in a population. It is essentially about equality and about relationships of power - about which groups possess the power to discriminate against others, and which groups lack the power to prevent themselves being treated unequally.

³ Louis Wirth, *The Problem of Minority Groups*, in *On Cities and Social Life*, University of Chicago Press, 1964

Empowerment is therefore what is needed by minorities in order for them to challenge discrimination and to secure their rights to full and equal participation in the life of the society in which they live. It basically refers to the resources, skills and confidence that ethnic minorities – and thus Roma - need to acquire in order to overcome discrimination and the accumulated disadvantages resulting from social exclusion in the past.

5.2 Why is empowerment important?

Empowerment is important because, without it, minorities will be unable to challenge their existing status and treatment, and the established structure of society is unlikely to change. Moreover, empowerment is the democratic route to stability, and prevents discontent among minorities from festering into anger.

Established structures have many mechanisms that tend to maintain the status quo. They involve established ways of thinking and of behaving that are regarded as normal and may be difficult to change. Ideologies develop that justify and explain why things are as they are.

All this can impact very directly on the situation of minorities, such as Roma. Negative stereotypes of minorities justify their disadvantage, by constructing an image of minorities as being less capable or having other negative characteristics. By 'blaming the victim', the real causes of the disadvantage can be concealed and denied.

Empowerment therefore needs to enable minorities to challenge not only particular instances of unequal or unjust treatment, but also the structures and ideologies on which their disadvantaged status is based. In the case of Roma, these reflect a long history of negative imagery and of social exclusion, whose continuing effects need to be overcome.

Minority empowerment alone, however, will not be sufficient to bring about the necessary change. In modern societies, the main source of power lies in the governmental institutions and other large organisations that exercise the principal control over people's lives. These need to change also (see Chapter 8). What minority empowerment can achieve is to enable minority – and thus Roma – voices to be heard in the decision-making processes in government and elsewhere, to enable minorities to be partners in the institutional change process, and to enable them to take greater control over meeting their own needs and to secure greater access to the full range of their rights and opportunities.

5.3 What is the role of NGOs in Roma empowerment at local level?

The empowerment of minorities needs to be achieved as far as possible by minorities themselves. The essential requirement in this process is for minorities, and thus Roma, to be able to organise themselves, both to meet internal community needs and to represent their interests externally. This will need to be done by the establishment of local-level NGOs in the form of Roma community associations.

Experience in the RrAJE Programme, and of Roma and minority empowerment elsewhere, suggests that the approach should be based on the following principles:

- ❖ The main objectives of Roma NGOs at the local level should be to promote and support Roma participation and self-help, and to represent and mediate the interests of Roma in relation to public authorities and other external agencies.
- ❖ Roma NGOs – like any NGOs – should ensure that in their operation, they work actively towards empowering the wider Roma community, rather than appropriating power for their own benefit of their own organisation and its leaders. Experience shows that there is always a danger that, once formed, NGOs may lose sight of their basic purpose and become isolated from the communities they aim to support and represent.
- ❖ Roma NGOs should therefore ensure that they are accountable to their local communities on a regular basis, and should encourage the highest possible level of participation by local people in their work. In this way they will secure the trust and confidence of local people, will continue to be well-informed about community concerns, and will be able to gain the maximum influence with the public authorities on account of their wide basis of support.
- ❖ The existence of a variety of Roma NGOs in a local area should in principle be regarded as a sign of a healthy state of affairs in civil society locally. What is important is that each has clear objectives and constituencies, that each is able to promote a high level of participation, and that all are able to cooperate effectively for common purposes. A proliferation of small NGOs which lack specific aims and which compete with one another are likely to obstruct Roma empowerment.
- ❖ Roma NGOs need to ensure that they promote participation of groups whose voices may not normally be heard on an equal basis within the community or externally. Such groups include young people and Roma women. Separate NGOs may need to be formed to empower these groups within the Roma community.
- ❖ Where there are different sub-groups within the local Roma population, this needs to be reflected within the structure of local NGOs, and public authorities need to be aware of internal diversity within the Roma community.
- ❖ More broadly-based NGOs, that are not Roma-led and that represent the interest of all sections of the community, may be able to make an important contribution to Roma empowerment. Examples would be community associations representing all residents in areas where Roma live, and NGOs providing advice on rights and opportunities of local citizens. Roma participation in such broader-based NGOs will help to ensure they relate to the Roma community effectively.

- ❖ Public authorities need to acknowledge the importance of Roma empowerment and the importance of the role of Roma NGOs in promoting this. They need to give practical (and, where appropriate, financial) support to this process, to establish partnerships with Roma NGOs to promote Roma empowerment and participation.

The approach of the Roma Lom Foundation

The Roma-Lom Foundation (RLF) is a well-established Roma NGO operating in the town of Lom and its surrounding area in the Montana region of NW Bulgaria. Almost half the population of Lom are Roma, and all groups have suffered from the economic decline that followed the collapse of communism. The RLF has a strong record of developing initiatives, especially in the fields of health and education. Among the principles that underlie its approach are (a) the promotion of maximum Roma participation and self-help, and (b) working with the non-Roma as well as the Roma population. From its spacious (and self-renovated) premises in the centre of town, where many activities are based, the RLF reaches out to all four of the segregated areas in which Roma are resident, and its staff are well-known in these areas. The RLF has more than a hundred volunteers working on its projects and activities, and encourages a wide range of self-help activities in the four localities. It also promotes Roma participation at the political level, both through voting and encouraging Roma to stand for election to the municipal government. At the same time it works to build bridges between the Roma and non-Roma population, including by offering its services to both groups and by involving non-Roma in its projects.

5.4 How can the capacity of local Roma NGOs be developed?

The capacity of local-level Roma NGOs to carry out this role is dependent on a number of factors being in place. The key factors are the following:

- Clear long-term goals and short-term objectives** for the NGO, and a programme of work designed to achieve these.
- The capability of the various individuals** who work in the NGO, whether as staff or volunteers, to carry out the necessary tasks and to work together as a team while doing so.
- Effective internal administration** of the affairs of the NGO, especially financial administration.
- Effective leadership** of the NGO, both internally and also externally in relation to the Roma community and to the wider community and public authorities.

- e) **Premises** at, or from which, this work can be carried out, together with the necessary office equipment and materials.
- f) **Ability to access funding** to support the administration of the NGO, to cover the expenses of workers, and to cover the payments to those who are employed.
- g) **Recognition and appreciation of their role**, demonstrated by formal support and involvement by the authorities.

In order to develop the capacity of NGOs in the above fields, the following methods can be used:

- ❖ **Training** can be provided, or accessed, to develop the skills of workers in the NGO, including training to develop management and leadership skills, and training on financial administration and fund-raising.
- ❖ **Mentoring**, and other forms of direct advice and support to individuals can be provided, to help individuals to develop their skills and confidence over a period of time while they are carrying out their roles.
- ❖ **Consultancy** can be provided by specialists or by those who already have experience of NGO capacity-building, to assist new or less experienced NGOs to develop their capabilities – for example with regard to team-building, developing work programmes, and reviewing the operation of the NGO generally.
- ❖ **Other NGOs**, both Roma and non-Roma, may be able to help in these ways at little or no cost, by transferring skills and sharing experience that they already possess.
- ❖ **Municipal and other public authorities** should also be able to help, for example by providing premises and other material resources, and making 'service agreements' whereby the NGO undertake tasks such as providing advice and mediation to local communities in return for financial payments that can help to cover the basic operational costs of the NGO.
- ❖ **National governments and donor agencies** can also help by recognising the importance of NGO capacity-building, and developing programmes to promote it as well as allowing costs for such work to be included in tenders and funding applications generally.

Developing Roma NGO capacity in Botosani

The NGO Divano Romano had recently been established in Botosani prior to the introduction of the RRAJE Programme. It was a small voluntary organisation, without premises, and had begun to work with the Roma community and the public authorities on health issues and a crime prevention project. In order to build its capacity to operate as a partner for a strategic approach to Roma integration in Botosani, a variety of steps were taken. First, the Mayor agreed to provide two rooms, free of rent, in a building close to where many Roma live, and a small amount of funding was then raised to renovate these and secure essential services. Secondly, the president of the NGO assembled a small team of six workers, each with a specific field of experience and responsibility. Training was then provided for this core group, covering subjects such as team-work, personal skills, and cooperating with authorities. Thirdly, the national-level Roma NGO partner in Romania, Romani CRISS, provided training for the president on organisational management and financial administration, and arranged for her to spend a month as an 'intern' in their Bucharest office. Fourthly, small amounts of funding were then secured to enable members of the core team to participate in specific projects and activities that formed part of the action plan for Roma integration in Botosani.

Strengthening existing NGO capacity in Lom

At the outset of the RRAJE Programme, the Roma Lom Foundation was already one of the most capable and experienced Roma NGOs in Central/Eastern Europe. It had a strong record of successful fund-raising and of implementing projects, especially on social and educational issues, and was a significant provider of services and support to the Roma community in Lom. However, this very success, together with the commitment to develop a more strategic approach in partnership with the municipal government, was presenting a new challenge to the administration and management of the organisation. A more formal structure was needed, to underpin (though not displace) the strong personal bonds between staff that had so far carried the NGO forward. An experienced consultant on NGO development worked with the staff to review their existing structures and processes, and to explore how these could be developed to respond to the opportunities ahead. As a result a new structure was established, with redefined responsibilities among a clearly identified management team, along with more strategic forward planning mechanisms in place of the previous project-based approach. Together these provided a framework for improving the effectiveness and efficiency of an already successful organisation.

5.5 How should Roma NGOs relate to the local Roma community?

The most important task of a local Roma NGO is to build effective relationships with the local Roma community. The ultimate goal of the NGO should be to empower the members of that community, to enable them to exercise their rights in all spheres, and to secure the same opportunities and quality of life as the rest of the citizens.

Roma NGOs therefore need to relate to the local Roma community in the following ways:

- ❖ The NGO needs to ensure that all local Roma are aware of the existence of the NGO, its role and activities, and how they can benefit from and provide support for its services. Those who work in the NGO need to make personal contact with local people on the widest possible basis for this purpose.
- ❖ The direction of NGOs should reflect the priorities of the communities they serve.
- ❖ The NGOs should be seen to be implementing the strategies of participation, engagement and democracy as living examples.
- ❖ The NGO's approach should as far as possible be able to help people to find ways to exercise their rights and to meet their needs by themselves, rather than by the NGO doing this for them. This requires provision of information and advice, especially through meetings and personal contact.
- ❖ Where people lack the skills and experience for solving problems for themselves, practical assistance and support may be needed. NGOs should hold regular 'surgeries' for this purpose.
- ❖ In complex or disputed cases, or where legal or other expertise is required, NGOs may need to act on behalf of local people in dealings with public authorities. Alternatively they may need to refer people to other NGOs that have the necessary expertise and resources.
- ❖ As well as assisting people to solve their personal or family problems, NGOs should encourage and assist people to participate as fully as possible in the wider civic process. This should include participation in decision-making processes at every level, including in local and national elections.
- ❖ NGOs should also promote participation in their own work on the widest possible basis. Local people should be encouraged to attend meetings, to visit the NGO's office, and to work as volunteers. People should be consulted on, and participate in decision-making about, the policies of the NGO and its work programme.
- ❖ NGOs should make special efforts to communicate with, and promote participation of, groups within the Roma community who may otherwise be excluded from these processes – particularly women and young people.

- ❖ Community development workers should be appointed and provided with training to support all of the above activities.
- ❖ The NGO's premises should where possible be located in the area in which the majority of Roma people are resident. Meetings and 'surgeries' should also be held in other areas where Roma live, and other premises should be secured for occasional use for this purpose.
- ❖ Public authorities should encourage and assist Roma NGOs to consult with and promote participation by people from the local Roma community on the widest possible basis. When cooperating with Roma NGOs they should check to ensure that the NGOs are genuinely representative of the constituencies they claim (in the same way that they should check any NGO that claims to be representative). By working with NGOs that are not representative in this way, they could obstruct rather than promote effective Roma community empowerment.

Roma community development workers in Brno

In Brno, a young Roma activist, Martin Gina, was appointed under equal opportunity procedures in the Roma NGO IQ Servis to promote community development and Roma participation in the affairs of the municipality. He established a Roma Forum as a consultative body for Roma workers and activists in the area, including several young Roma who had been engaged by Brno City Council as 'street workers' (outreach community workers). The Forum was provided by the Brno Central sub-municipality with a low-cost office, which also served as premises for the NGO. Training on community development and other skills was provided for members of the group, who functioned as points of advocacy and communication between the Roma community and the various public authorities in fields such as housing, welfare, health and education. For example, in housing blocks where Roma live, they helped residents to form tenants councils to articulate their interests and solve problems collectively. In collaboration with the city's Employment Office, they identified suitable individuals to be employed as caretakers for each block. The Forum also organised public meetings on issues of concern to the local Roma population, and a Women's Forum was formed to promote participation by women.

Promoting Roma participation in elections in Slovakia

Despite the substantial Roma population in NE Slovakia, the level of Roma involvement in local affairs has been extremely low. The regional Roma NGO 'KC-ZOR', based in Kezmarok, organised a training programme to increase Roma participation in forthcoming local and national elections, by raising voting levels and increasing the number of Roma candidates to become municipal councillors. Around fifteen people from each of eleven Roma settlements in the Presov region attended the training, and as a result twenty-seven of the sixty six Roma candidates who came forward were elected into

office. To sustain this new level of Roma involvement in civic affairs, KC-ZOR then helped to establish local 'community centres' in six of the settlements.

To follow-up the successful election results, round-tables were held to bring together the Roma councillors and local mayors so that they could engage in dialogue and joint planning. This in turn led to the establishment of a Roma Civic Forum, which brings together Roma NGOs and local authorities on a regional-level. Through this regional-level forum, local actors can meet with senior regional and national government officials, and explore the potential for projects and external funding that can help to combat the poverty and social exclusion of the Roma population in the region.

5.6 How should local Roma NGOs relate to the public authorities?

In order for Roma integration to take place effectively, Roma communities need public authorities to:

- a) Recognise and respond to their particular circumstances and needs.
- b) Treat them at all times fairly and equally.
- c) Take action when they have been victims of discrimination or injustice.

In this situation, Roma NGOs have a dual role which potentially has both positive and negative elements:

- 1) They need to be the 'critic' who challenges the authority if it does not address the situation of Roma, or if its officials treat Roma inappropriately;
- 2) They also need to be the 'friend' of the authority, who helps to identify what needs to be done and helps the authority to take the necessary actions.

Building a relationship with local governmental and other public authorities is therefore a potentially difficult task for Roma NGOs, because of this apparent conflict in their role.

- ❖ If the NGO criticises the authority, the authority may respond defensively by criticising the NGO in return, and by rejecting its offer to be a friend as insincere. The NGO may be able to mobilise external legal or other pressure on the authority, but by doing this it risks losing the opportunity to cooperate directly with the authority to change the way it operates.
- ❖ If, on the other hand, the NGO does not challenge the authority when it fails to address Roma needs or treats Roma people negatively, then the authority's behaviour is unlikely to change. The NGO may be accepted as a friend by the authority (provided it remains uncritical), but it is also likely to lose the confidence of the wider Roma community who wish to see change. The NGO is then in danger of becoming a 'buffer' between the authority and the community, and of becoming an obstacle to – rather than an agent for – change.

The NGO therefore needs to develop the capacity to play both roles simultaneously. It needs to persuade the authority that, on issues relating to ethnic minorities that experience systematic exclusion, what it needs is a 'critical friend'. This, the NGO should say, is in fact what any good friend should be: someone who is committed to the relationship, but will tell you honestly and openly when things are wrong and will then help you to put them right.

From the NGO's perspective, this approach to relations with public authorities has been described as one of 'constructive engagement'. The responsibility for how it relates to Roma and other minorities lies with the authority itself and not with the NGO: the NGO's role is to engage with the authority to help to ensure it meets this responsibility. The commitment of the NGO, however, should be that it will do so in a constructive rather than a negative manner. This means that any negative criticism should be accompanied by positive suggestions for how things can be improved or changed, and where appropriate an offer to assist in this process.

Experience shows that it can take time - often a number of years - for relationships between NGOs and public authorities to reach a point where this type of cooperation can be stable and effective. There is need to build up mutual trust and confidence, and a good understanding of each other's roles and working practices. Conflicts and misunderstandings will surely occur as the relationship develops: the important point is that each side should be able to acknowledge them and learn from them, rather than allowing them to destroy the relationship.

Romani Baht Foundation's relations with local authorities

Romani Baht Foundation, a community-based NGO in the Fakulteta District of Sofia, has tended to adopt an adversarial relation with the local public authorities, as part of its strategy to secure rights and justice for local residents. In particular it has used the threat of legal action (and indeed taken such action when necessary) against public authorities or other agencies as a means of achieving its goals. More recently Romani Baht has also sought to work on a cooperative basis with the authorities to find solutions to problems, and to promote institutional change in the way Roma are treated. While this has been welcomed by some authorities, others have remained suspicious that the NGO may not be trusted to maintain this approach, and may turn round again and criticise them or take them to court. The NGO is developing the capacity to handle this situation, but it can take time to build up trust when relations have previously been adversarial. Evidence of its success is that it has now taken over the running and financing of its formal partnership structure with the municipality, although the latter still provides premises and administrative support.

⁴ Jonathan Stanley, "The Role of Racial Equality Councils in the UK", in Robin Oakley (ed.) *Tackling Racist and Xenophobic Violence in Europe: Case Studies*, Council of Europe 1997

Building independent NGO capacity in Brno

The initial community-based partner organisation for the RrAJE Programme in Brno was the DROM Roma Centre, which is located in the heart of an inner-city area where many of Brno's Roma population reside. DROM is a well-established community centre, with a widely respected Director, good relations with all the public authorities, and a strong record of providing a range of social, educational and advice services to the local community. DROM, however, is not registered as an NGO, because it receives almost all its funding from the municipality. For this reason it is not able to act as an independent advocate on Roma issues, which can challenge the municipal authorities when appropriate. A separate Roma NGO, with close links to DROM though at the time largely inactive, was therefore mobilised for this purpose by several activists (though in full consultation with the DROM Centre and the authorities). This NGO, 'IQ Roma Servis' was able to attract external funding for projects, staff and premises, and now works alongside the DROM Centre as an independent body which can also play a campaigning role on Roma issues.

5.7 What is the role of law in Roma empowerment?

The rights of Roma, as individual citizens and as a minority, are enshrined in national and international law. Roma empowerment should be directed towards enabling Roma to access those rights. This requires ensuring that:

- ❖ Roma are aware of their rights.
- ❖ Roma know how to access these rights.
- ❖ Support is available to assist Roma to access these rights.

Public authorities therefore need to take steps to ensure that Roma, like all citizens, are aware of their rights regarding the services they provide and the powers that they exercise. Methods for doing this include:

- ❖ Providing written information.
- ❖ Organising or attending local meetings.
- ❖ Providing advice desks at local offices.
- ❖ Supporting NGOs to provide advice and information locally.

Establishment of a welfare office in Botosani

For many years a small team of municipal officials in Botosani worked hard in cramped premises to meet the welfare needs of citizens, many of whom were Roma. The offices were hard to find and there was no space for meetings or interviews. During a study visit to the UK, the Mayor saw how the local government had cooperated with local community organisation to establish a local welfare and advice centre in the neighbourhood where most minority residents were living. On his return to Botosani, he secured the former premises of a bank in the area where most Roma lived, and converted it into more spacious offices for the municipal welfare department together with a public advice centre. Members of the public could now walk in both to receive their benefits, and to obtain advice on their rights and other problems. He also provided premises in a nearby street for a newly-formed Roma NGO, whose president acted as his adviser on matters relating to the Roma community. This NGO has been very active in promoting awareness of rights and opportunities among the local Roma population, and in encouraging people to make use of the new facilities.

NGOs have an important role in helping to ensure that Roma have access to their legal rights. The actions NGOs can take include:

- ❖ Providing Roma directly with information about rights and how to access them.
- ❖ Providing practical assistance in accessing these rights (e.g. by assisting with written documents, accompanying people to meetings, etc.).
- ❖ Assisting Roma to make complaints and secure redress when their rights have been breached.
- ❖ Assisting Roma to take legal action, or act on their behalf, in cases of discrimination.
- ❖ Assisting Roma to obtain legal representation if they have been arrested or charged with a criminal offence by the police.
- ❖ Campaigning and providing practical assistance to Roma to ensure that public authorities treat Roma in accordance with their legal rights.

The legal work of Romani Baht Foundation in Fakulteta

Romani Baht is a well-established community-based NGO in the Fakulteta District of Sofia, which has an estimated population of 35,000 Roma. From its beginnings, Romani Baht has placed a strong emphasis on promoting and securing the legal rights of Roma. It has a lawyer working full-time on its staff, who combines providing legal advice on rights and justice to local residents with taking cases on their behalf to the Bulgarian and international courts. By offering these services and being located in the centre of the Roma residential district of Fakulteta, Romani Baht has been able to win not only the confidence of the local community, but also real battles with public authorities to help Roma to secure their legal rights. Romani Baht sees its legal work as an essential foundation for its wider activities on behalf of Roma in the local area.

The role of the human rights monitor in Botosani

In Botosani, the staff of the NGO Divano Romano includes an officer who acts as a 'Human Rights Monitor'. This is one of ten regional posts in Romania that have been funded under a national programme, coordinated by Romani CRISS, to improve Roma access to justice at the local level. The role of the Monitor is to identify and document cases of discrimination and injustice against Roma, to advise victims of their rights and methods of redress, and to arrange for access to legal representation where appropriate. To support the work of the Monitors, Romani CRISS provides them with specialist training and arranges access to lawyers either from its own Human Rights Department or at the local level. In Botosani, the Monitor has helped to bring successful cases of discrimination in access to discos and other facilities in Botosani. This work not only helps victims to secure their rights, but also raises awareness of the reality of discrimination amongst the majority and those responsible for service provision to the public.

5.8 What actions can be taken to increase the participation of Roma women?

Traditionally Roma women are active and influential within the family and in particular social and economic activities. However, they often have a much lower level of participation than men in the wider community, and in relations with public authorities, NGOs and other service-providing organisations, including those (such as health agencies and schools) whose activities may directly affect their lives and domestic roles.⁵

⁵ Nicoleta Bitu, *The Situation of Roma/Gypsy Women in Europe*, MG-S-ROM, Council of Europe, 1999; European Monitoring Centre on Racism and Xenophobia, *Breaking the Barriers: Romani Women and Access to Public Health Care*, 2003.

In order to increase the participation of Roma women in these spheres, the following actions should be considered:

- ❖ Roma NGOs should make sure they communicate with, and promote participation of, women as well as men within the Roma community.
- ❖ Roma women's groups could be formed for this purpose, and funding could be sought to support their activities.
- ❖ Roma women could be appointed as community development workers and given training to support this work.
- ❖ Activities to promote the participation of Roma women should focus initially on fields which are of direct personal concern to Roma women or for which they have responsibility. These fields should include health, child care and education.
- ❖ Opportunities should be created for Roma women to develop their personal skills and to further their educational skills if they left school early.
- ❖ Opportunities should be created for Roma women to develop their personal skills and to further their educational skills if they left school early.
- ❖ Vocational training could also be provided, and opportunities be created for women to gain work experience as volunteers and also to secure paid employment.
- ❖ Local government should provide resources to support such initiatives, and all public authorities in fields such as health, child care and education should actively create opportunities for Roma women.

A Roma women's project in Botosani

Building on her experience of working as a 'health mediator' in the Roma community, a Roma woman from one of the nearby villages decided to establish a new Roma NGO (Divano Romano) to promote the interests of Roma in Botosani. With the support of the RrAJE Programme she built up a small team, several of whom were likewise women who were active on health and educational issues. Already this strong presence of women in the NGO was unusual for a local Roma organisation, and attracted some criticism in more traditional quarters. However, it remained a priority for her to reach out into the community rather than become isolated from it. She therefore established a small 'women's project' for this purpose, in which she recruited a further group of local women (including several non-Roma) for whom she provided training, so that they in turn could work as volunteers or on projects on issues particularly affecting women's lives. These were primarily in the fields of health, child-care and education. By this means she aimed to increase the capacity for self-help among Roma women and their families, and also to increase generally the participation of Roma women in civic affairs in Botosani.

5.9 What actions can be taken to increase the participation of young people?

The importance of involving young people in the work of NGOs and in civic processes generally is often overlooked. Also, young people may often exclude themselves because they have other interests, and may not feel comfortable in environments dominated by older generations. Yet young people represent the future of the Roma community, and the outcome will depend on how they view this future, and on their personal achievements and how they contribute to this future.

In these circumstances, and in order to increase the participation of young people, the following actions should be considered:

- ❖ Roma NGOs should make sure they engage with young people, and promote their involvement in community activities and in the wider civic process.
- ❖ Action to promote participation of young people should begin in school, with activities designed to create awareness of civic responsibilities among all young people, and to create opportunities for young people to become (and see benefits in becoming) 'active citizens' from an early stage.
- ❖ A Roma Students Forum could be organised, to bring together young people from different schools to exchange and articulate their views.
- ❖ Roma NGOs should organise specific groups and activities to increase participation of young Roma people. These activities should reflect young people's interests and be managed in a way that young people find interesting and enjoyable. Young people could be given responsibility for managing their own activities.
- ❖ Youth workers could be appointed and provided with training to support initiatives of this kind.
- ❖ Public authorities should find ways to stimulate the interest of young people, including young Roma people, in civic processes, through visits, talks, mentoring, placements, and other appropriate methods. These activities would be organised in partnership with Roma NGOs.
- ❖ Young Roma people – as they become older and more experienced - could be encouraged and supported to establish their own NGO, to represent their own views and interests alongside other NGOs in the locality.

Young Roma establish an NGO in Pardubice

In Pardubice there were several Roma NGOs, but there was a lack of coordination and little participation on the part of the younger generation of Roma. When a training programme was introduced as part of the city's strategy to promote 'equal opportunities', a number of young Roma came forward to participate. With the support of the municipality and the RrAJE Programme consultant, they subsequently decided to establish a new Roma NGO which could bring fresh ideas and impetus to Roma civic involvement in the city. With their commitment and energy, they quickly established an organisation (DARJAV) that has been welcomed as a partner by the local government and other public authorities, and that has already been able to establish premises and secure funding (both from the municipality and central government) to support its staffing and activities. These include advice work, support for pre-school and school-age children, after-school activities, social and leisure events, and generally promoting communication between the Roma community and the public authorities.

5.10 How should Roma NGOs relate to the wider non-Roma community?

The primary goal of Roma NGOs at the local level should be empowerment specifically of the Roma community. However, Roma NGOs should also work with non-Roma individuals and organisations for this purpose, as well as with the public authorities and other local organisations. In addition, they should work towards improving relations between Roma and the non-Roma population generally, and breaking down ethnic segregation.

For these purposes, the following actions should be considered:

- ❖ Roma NGOs should be willing to engage non-Roma workers and volunteers where appropriate, although management of the NGO should be the responsibility of representatives of the Roma community.
- ❖ Roma NGOs should cooperate with other NGOs in order to achieve goals relating to the Roma community. They should also encourage and assist non-Roma NGOs to relate to the Roma population, to involve them and to meet their needs.
- ❖ In mixed neighbourhoods, or in towns generally, Roma NGOs should consider making some or all of their services available to non-Roma, in order to promote solidarity between groups and good community relations.
- ❖ Roma NGOs should consider establishing specific projects that directly bring Roma and non-Roma people together to work on issues of common concern (e.g. local housing conditions, schools, or issues affecting

women). This can help to combat mutual ignorance and negative stereotyping, and build mutual understanding and good relations between the two groups.

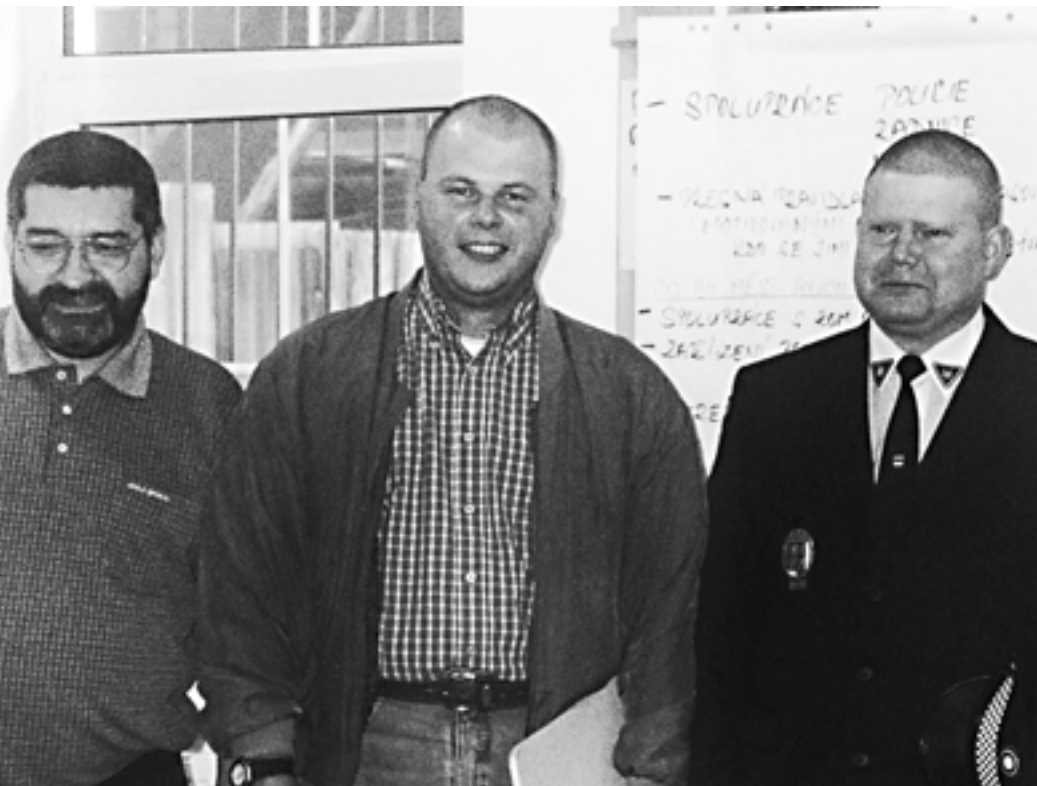
- ❖ Forming mixed tenants, residents or parent-teacher associations can have the same effect.
- ❖ Local government and other public authorities can also support the work of Roma NGOs in building good community relations by involving them as partners in projects that can contribute to this broader goal. In this way, Roma NGOs will be recognised and valued as contributing to 'mainstream activities' that benefit the community generally.

Examples of multi-ethnic cooperation

Lom The Roma-Lom Foundation sees itself as working for the benefit of the community as a whole, while particularly focusing on the empowerment and needs of the Roma population. Non-Roma staff work alongside Roma in the RLF office. The RLF takes care to ensure that non-Roma do not feel that special privileges are given to Roma through its work, but rather the aim is to ensure equal chances for all groups. Special attention has been given to supporting schools which currently bring together Roma and non-Roma children, to promote equal opportunities and mutual understanding between the two groups.

Botosani Divano-Romano recognised the willingness of non-Roma women to become active in its 'women's project', and also the benefits of having a mixed team of volunteers. The project has helped to build bridges between women of different groups. Likewise, in planning for social and economic regeneration in the area where many Roma live, it was judged essential to take a 'neighbourhood-based' approach. Roma and non-Roma would jointly benefit from the results, and would have experience of working alongside one another to achieve common goals.

Building partnerships at the municipal level



Miroslav Žima (DROM Roma Centre), Roman Žilka (Crime Prevention Unit) and Emil Zárzavil (Head of Brno North District Police) in the AKORD partnership in Brno

Building partnerships at the municipal level

This chapter sets out the actions that need to be taken in order to build successful partnerships between the Roma community and public authorities, in order to promote Roma integration. It provides answers to the following questions:

- ❖ What is meant by 'partnership'?
- ❖ Why is the 'partnership approach' important?
- ❖ What are the conditions for successful partnership?
- ❖ Who should be involved?
- ❖ What roles should the various partners have?
- ❖ What is the process for building and sustaining partnerships?
- ❖ What skills and abilities are required?
- ❖ What formal partnership structures should be established at municipal level?
- ❖ How can partnerships be established in specific fields of action?
- ❖ How can partnerships be established at the neighbourhood level?

6.1 What is meant by 'partnership'?

In its most general sense, 'partnership' is when two or more parties make a commitment to work together on an equal basis to achieve a common purpose.

There are four important elements in this definition: the commitment, the cooperation, the basis of equality, and the shared purpose. If any of these elements are missing, there is no genuine partnership: all elements need to be present.

In the context of relations between Roma and public authorities, the idea of partnership can be contrasted with relations where the authority seeks to exercise 'control', or where the authority opens dialogue with the minority but restricts this to 'consultation' only.

- ❖ **Control** Historically, public authorities have often decided how they will treat minorities, such as Roma, without taking into account the views of these minorities at all. Obviously, the idea of partnership is completely absent here: the relation is one of dominance and control.

- ❖ **Consultation** In modern democratic societies, public authorities increasingly recognise the right of minorities to be consulted before deciding on their policies, and therefore make formal arrangements for consultation with them. But although this is an important feature of good practice in a democratic process, consultation is not the same as partnership. After consultation, the authority can make its decision on its own, and still disregard the views of the minority. There is no commitment, or ongoing cooperation, or necessary equality in their relationship.
- ❖ **Partnership** Partnership constitutes a different conception of the relation between civil society and the state: a relationship in which civil society and the state work together as equals. Each recognises that the other has a role to play in helping them achieve their goals, and they therefore agree to cooperate for this purpose. Their mutual dependence enables them to treat each other as equals. It is their willingness to commit themselves to a structured relationship of this kind that is the defining feature of partnership.

6.2 Why is the 'partnership approach' important?

Relations between public authorities and minorities often involve a long history of mutual suspicion, hostility, distrust, oppression or exclusion. There may be strong negative stereotypes on both sides, backed by mutual ignorance and misunderstanding. These elements are frequently present in relationships between authorities and minorities across Europe, but in the case of Roma they may be particularly strong and deep-rooted.

The basis for cooperation between Roma and public authorities therefore needs to be rebuilt in a manner that can overcome these types of obstacle. This cannot be achieved by educational and training programmes alone. New learning and the development of mutual trust and confidence need to be based on the experience of people on both sides working together in a sustained manner, so that they get to know and trust each other and achieve tangible outcomes that bring benefit to all.

The partnership approach is crucial to achieving this, for the following reasons:

- ❖ Formal partnerships provide a structured framework for building relationships.
- ❖ Relationships can be built up and strengthened over time.
- ❖ Personal contact and dialogue enable the growth of mutual understanding and respect.
- ❖ Mutual trust and confidence develop out of the experience of successful cooperation.
- ❖ Cooperation enables partners to achieve greater benefits (better quality as well as quantity)

- ❖ A secure overall framework allows specific setbacks or obstacles to be overcome.
- ❖ Negative stereotypes are replaced by positive images based on accurate knowledge and understanding.

6.3 What are the conditions for a successful partnership?

Building a successful partnership is never easy. Potential partners always have some differences in their goals and ways of operating, and may find it difficult to adjust these to the requirements of working closely with others. It is the more difficult when the parties do not have previous experience of working in this way or of focusing on minority issues, and where there has been a history of negative relations between them.

Experience from the RrAJE Programme, and from similar initiatives in the UK and across Europe to address minority issues through partnership work, indicates that the following are the key conditions for building successful partnerships:

- ❖ Sharing a common purpose.
- ❖ Agreeing the roles of each partner.
- ❖ Working together as equals.
- ❖ Recognising differences in style and method of work.
- ❖ Ensuring regular communication and sharing of information.
- ❖ Sharing responsibility.

Building effective partnerships: some key issues

1. Sharing a common purpose

Do we have a common purpose? What is it? Could there be misunderstandings about this? Could other purposes get in the way? How could these problems be prevented?

2. Agreeing the roles of each partner

Have we agreed the role of each partner? What is it? Could there be misunderstandings about each other's roles? How can we prevent this?

3. Working together as equals

Do we accept each other as equal partners? Do we actually have equal power and resources? If not, what problems might this cause, and how can we prevent them?

4. Recognising differences in style and method of work

Do we have differences in the way we work? What are they? Can we accept and respect these differences? Might they cause problems? How can we prevent this?

5. Ensuring regular communication and sharing of information

Do we communicate regularly and share information effectively? How do we do this? What could go wrong? How can we prevent this?

6. Sharing responsibility

Are we prepared to share responsibility for decision-making, and for successes and failures? How can we make sure we cooperate effectively? If we have disagreements, how will we resolve them?

When building partnerships between public authorities and Roma or other local community-based NGOs, the following particular issues should also be considered:

- ❖ The need for time to be allowed to build up good working relations.
- ❖ The importance of acknowledging any past problems, and of making a commitment to overcome any legacy of these.
- ❖ The need for a good understanding of the nature and dynamics of relations between majority and minority groups.
- ❖ The need for empowerment of minority/community groups to participate effectively.
- ❖ The working of the partnership should be open and transparent, with non-members and the press being able to attend formal meetings as observers.
- ❖ The value of obtaining external help in the form of specialist advice or training on Roma-related issues and partnership-building.
- ❖ The importance of leaders in both public authorities and the Roma community giving their clear and visible support to the partnership.

6.4 Who should be involved?

All organisations that are able to make a significant contribution to achieving the goals of the partnership should be members of the partnership. Representatives of those sections of the community that will be principally affected by the work of the partnership should also be involved.

In the context of partnerships designed to promote the integration of Roma at the municipal level, the membership should consist primarily of those public authorities and other bodies that are responsible for the various local functions

that affect the quality of life and opportunities of Roma, together with the key civil society associations that work on issues relating to Roma.

The following organisations and groups should therefore normally form the set of core partners:

- ❖ The municipal authority.
- ❖ The education authority.
- ❖ The housing authority.
- ❖ The social and child welfare authorities.
- ❖ The health authority.
- ❖ The police.
- ❖ The local employers or business organisations.
- ❖ The principal Roma NGOs (or representatives chosen by them).
- ❖ Other NGOs working on minority or human rights issues, or community integration.

Each authority should assign, as their representatives on the partnership board, staff who have the responsibility for policy and its implementation on issues relating to Roma within their organisation. The representative should be authorised by the chief officer of the organisation, and assured of full organisational support for their participation.

Where a prefecture or regional administration of the central government has authority for matters relevant to the situation of Roma at the local level, a representative of this authority should be invited to act as a member of the partnership or attend meetings as an observer. A regional or county-level authority may also wish to establish partnerships at its own level to address Roma issues.

Examples of membership of partnerships

Joint Commission for Roma, Botosani In Botosani, the public authorities represented on the Joint Commission for Roma are the municipal government, the school inspectorate, the welfare service, the police inspectorate, the health authority, and the child protection authority. The municipal authority is represented by both councillors and senior officials, and the vice-mayor acts as President of the Joint Commission. The two main Roma NGOs in Botosani are members, together with other NGOs which promote community development and community safety.

Advisory Audit Commission, Fakulteta For addressing educational issues in Fakulteta, the Advisory Audit Commission is composed of representatives of Sofia Municipality, the sub-district of Krasna Poliana, the Ministry of Education, members of the Human Rights Project and Romani Baht, and representatives of the local Roma community.

Lom Commission The Lom Commission has twelve members: five councillors from the municipality, three representatives from the Roma-Lom Foundation, and one from each of the four Roma neighbourhoods. Representation from the municipality consists of the Mayor, Deputy Mayor, and representatives of public service departments.

Equal Partnership Board, Brno The Equal Partnership Board in Brno-Centre District is composed of the following: the heads of housing, welfare and schooling departments for the District; representatives of Brno City Council; the Municipal Police; Roma NGOs; the Roma Community Forum; and the Immigrants and Refugees Civic Association. The Board is chaired by the Vice-Mayor of the Brno-Centre District.

6.5 What roles should the various partners have?

All partners share the responsibility to work together, within the agreed terms of reference, to achieve the agreed shared goal of the partnership. However, the capacity of individual partners to contribute to this goal will differ. Their roles in the partnership need to reflect these differences, and to enable each of them to bring their specific contributions to the partnership as effectively as possible.

- ❖ Public authorities have legal responsibilities which may determine (and constrain) how they can contribute, whereas NGOs may be able to be much more flexible about their roles.
- ❖ Public authorities may have higher levels of professional and other expertise than are available in the NGO sector, and public authorities need to make these skills available to the partnership.
- ❖ Public authorities also usually have much greater access than NGOs to the kinds of resources that are necessary for the ongoing work of the partnerships (e.g. office facilities, meeting rooms, stationery and other basic materials, and funds to meet minor expenses), and should make these available to the partnership where possible and appropriate.
- ❖ NGOs are unlikely to be able to provide resources, and may themselves require financial or direct support for them to be able to participate effectively in the work of the partnership.

- ❖ NGOs usually have greater knowledge about, and experience of working with, local Roma and other communities, and should also have the trust of those communities, and these are important contributions to a partnership working on Roma issues.
- ❖ NGOs should also be able to bring volunteers to assist with the work of the partnership, and to promote participation in its activities by civil society generally.
- ❖ All the partners need to understand and respect each other's different capabilities and roles, and find the most successful way of using them to achieve their shared purpose.

6.6 What is the process for building and sustaining partnerships?

The process of building and sustaining partnerships can be demanding and sometimes difficult, and requires commitment, understanding, flexibility and time.

Partnerships that have been established quickly and without firm foundations are liable to encounter problems as work progresses. Disagreements and conflicts can arise between partners if the necessary conditions for successful partnerships, set out above, have not been met. Recovering from such setbacks can be a further challenge, which takes yet more time and delays the implementation of partnership activities. One of the main lessons from successful partnerships is the importance of taking adequate time at the outset to build a firm foundation of mutual understanding and trust.

Building successful partnerships requires progression through the following stages:

- 1) Identify key potential partners and establish their willingness in principle to participate.
- 2) Working group of representatives of potential partners establishes terms of reference for the partnership, including shared goal, membership, management and administration, and method of operation.
- 3) Partner organisations formally approve participation in and terms of reference of the partnership, allocate necessary resources, and designate representatives to act as executive members of the partnership on their behalf.
- 4) Legal constitution of partnership, if appropriate.
- 5) Management board establishes conditions for successful partnership work, as set out above, and obtains specialist advice and training as required.
- 6) Management board develops and then implements a work programme for the partnership to achieve the agreed goal.

Sustaining the partnership effectively will depend on:

- ❖ The continued commitment and participation of all partners.
- ❖ Regular dialogue between partners.

- ❖ Openness and honesty of all partners.
- ❖ Willingness of partners to be flexible in their approach.
- ❖ Transparency of all proceedings.
- ❖ Early resolution of all problems and disagreements.
- ❖ Necessary resources continuing to be available.
- ❖ Efficient administrative support.
- ❖ Monitoring of implementation and outcomes of planned activities.
- ❖ Adjustment of plans in response to monitoring or changed circumstances.

Building the partnership in Botosani

The Municipal-wide Joint Commission on Roma in Botosani grew out of an earlier health-focused partnership established to implement a local 'health mediator' project. This previous partnership involved the municipality, the health inspectorate, and a local Roma NGO, with Romani CRISS (as coordinator for the national 'health mediator' programme) providing external specialist support. The success of the local project in Botosani, and especially the cooperation at partnership level, increased the confidence and willingness of the local partners to extend their cooperation to addressing the situation of Roma in Botosani more generally.

The local authority took the lead in establishing the wider partnership. The Mayor personally sponsored the initiative, and the Vice-Mayor (himself Roma) acted as Chair for the Commission. The Head of Administration provided administrative support, and arranged for meetings to be held in the Council Room at the Town Hall. Appropriate new partners were identified, and representatives of all groups invited to an initial meeting. Terms of reference were agreed, and their representatives returned to their organisations to secure full authorisation to participate in the partnership. The agreement of the Municipal Council was then secured, and the Commission was established as an independent legal entity. A leaflet was produced, which publicised the Commission's role and expressed the commitment of its various partners.

6.7 What skills and abilities are required?

In order to build and operate a successful partnership between public authorities and minority communities, a variety of skills and abilities are required by those individuals who operate the partnership. These include:

- ❖ Ability of authority representatives to understand and respect the minority experience and point of view.

- ❖ Ability of minority representatives to articulate their experience and point of view effectively in partnership meetings.
- ❖ Ability of authority representatives to understand and respect the roles and working methods of other authorities in the partnership.
- ❖ Ability of authority representatives to be self-aware and flexible in finding ways to adapt their normal working practices to allow effective cooperation with other organisations and groups.
- ❖ Skills of negotiation and problem-solving required for joint working with partners from different organisations.
- ❖ Skills for developing and implementing joint programmes of work involving a range of partners.

6.8 What formal partnership structures should be established at municipal level?

Partnership structures may take various forms, and should be designed to fit the purpose of the partnership and the local context and circumstances.

- a) *The partnership may be constituted as a committee of the municipal authority.*
 - ❖ This arrangement has the advantage that it can give the partnership leadership and support at the political level, and access to the resources of the municipal authority.
 - ❖ On the other hand, the arrangement provides the municipal authority with much greater influence than other partners over the working of the partnership.
 - ❖ Where there is strong political commitment to promote Roma integration, this arrangement should be an advantage rather than a liability.
- b) *Alternatively, the partnership may be constituted as an independent body, free from direct control by or dependence on any one of its partners.*
 - ❖ The obvious advantage lies in the fact of independence, which means the partners as a group control the initiative on a potentially equal basis, and allows them to focus exclusively on the partnership goals.
 - ❖ The disadvantages are that there is no clear line of political support, and the partnership may find it harder to draw on existing resources.
 - ❖ An independent partnership needs to be legally constituted, to be successful in securing funding for its operation, and will require its own independent secretariat.

- c) *An intermediate position may also be possible, in which the municipal authority constitutes the partnership as a legally autonomous body, but with accountability to the elected municipal authority.*
- ❖ This arrangement may be able to secure the advantages of both the models outlined above, while minimising their disadvantages.

Examples of formal partnership agreements

In **Brno**, the Equal Partnership Board was established as an independent consultative body by the sub-municipality of Brno Central. It brings together representatives of the Roma and other minority communities and of the municipal government and other public authorities. The Board operates as a forum for debate, and a consultative and advisory body on issues relating to Roma and other minorities, and on equality and social inclusion generally.

In **Botosani**, the municipality took the lead in establishing the Joint Commission for Roma. It brings together representatives of the Roma community and a wide range of public authorities. The Vice-Mayor acts as Chair, and the municipality provides administrative support. The Commission has been established as an independent legal entity, capable of taking decisions on matters within its terms of reference; holding funds; managing its own affairs; and undertaking projects.

In **Lom**, the Commission has been established as a full committee of the municipal council, with its own executive powers and responsibilities. It meets once a month, and brings together elected representatives of the municipality and representatives of the Roma NGOs and neighbourhoods. One per cent of the total budget of the municipality is allocated to the affairs of the Commission.

6.9 How can partnerships be established in specific fields of action?

Formal partnerships may also be established to work on Roma-related issues in specific fields of action. This allows energies to be tightly focused on specific areas of need, and a wider range of partners active in the sector to be directly involved in partnership work.

- ❖ Because of the inter-connections of factors contributing to the situation of Roma as an excluded minority, sector-specific partnerships should pay close attention to the relevance of other sectors. For example the situation of Roma children in school is influenced by a range of factors including health, welfare, housing conditions, and the economic circumstances of their families generally. Sector-specific partnership work should focus on a particular sector, rather than be confined to it.

- ❖ Where possible, sector-specific partnership work should be carried out within a broader multi-sectoral partnership framework – for the above reasons.
- ❖ Sector-specific partnership work may be a useful way to start building confidence and expertise in partnership work generally, and could be broadened to cover other sectors and areas of need subsequently.
- ❖ A broad municipal-level partnership may operate most effectively if it establishes a set of sector-specific sub-partnerships to implement its work in particular areas of need. Each sub-partnership needs to ensure that the necessary links with other sectors are formally established and built into partnership work.

The education-focused partnership in Fakulteta

At the start of the RrAJE Programme in the Fakulteta District of Sofia, the local Roma NGO partners identified education for Roma children being the priority area of need. There is only one school within the Fakulteta area, where an estimated 35,000 Roma are living in segregated unregistered housing, and in severe social and economic deprivation. The conditions in the school were extremely poor, and school attendance among Roma children in the area was low or non-existent. It was therefore decided to focus attention initially on the educational situation of Roma children in the Fakulteta District. Despite the urgency of other related needs such as employment, housing and health, the educational needs of children were seen as the long-term priority, and there were practical possibilities for making a significant short-term impact on the situation by renovating the local school. However, the main emphasis was placed on developing a long-term strategy for education in the area.

For this purpose, a formal partnership structure was developed, which functioned as an advisory body to the Sofia municipality. This body, known as the Advisory Audit Commission, undertook a series of assessments of the educational situation of Roma in the local area, and made proposals to the municipality for how this should be addressed. The members of the AAC included the Director of Education (for the sub-municipality covering the Fakulteta area) and the two Roma NGOs (Romany Baht and Human Rights Project) who were partners in the RrAJE Programme. It was envisaged from the outset that the initial focus on educational need within the partnership would be extended to address other areas of need subsequently.

The AKORD programme on policing in Brno

The AKORD Programme on policing in Brno was based on a UK model of cooperation between the police and NGOs which had been developed in the Greenwich area of London. The approach had originally been inspired by the Rotterdam Charter 'Policing for a Multi-Ethnic Society'. The AKORD Programme was implemented by means of a formal partnership agreement (the 'accord') between the Brno City Police and the Roma DROM Community Centre, in association with other local NGOs and the Mayor of the local sub-municipality. The aims were to improve relations between Roma and the police in the local area, and to improve Roma access to justice.

The initial activity was a training programme for police, to improve their understanding of and relations with the Roma community. The training was devised as a partnership project between the police and Roma NGOs, who delivered it jointly. A team of Roma 'community contributors' was formed and were given their own preliminary training on presentational skills and legal rights. This enabled them to operate more effectively as representatives of and advocates for the local community in the police training and in other subsequent forms of cooperation with the police. Subsequently an 'Ethnic Minority Unit' has been established inside the City Police, which will appoint a Roma Liaison Officer and ensure that crime prevention initiatives in Brno (e.g. on drug prevention) are extended effectively into the Roma community.

6.10 How can partnerships be established at the neighbourhood level?

Partnerships established at municipal level are essential for developing and implementing policy on Roma issues locally. They can involve and commit the local administrations of all the authorities that can contribute to tackling Roma disadvantage and promoting Roma integration.

The everyday reality of Roma deprivation and exclusion, however, takes place at the level of the home, the street and the neighbourhood. The conditions at this level determine the quality of life and opportunities of those who live there. Women in particular have to find ways to manage households and raise children at this level. Children's health, welfare and educational opportunities are determined by these immediate neighbourhood conditions, and by the quality of the local schools.

To address this situation, partnerships and other forms of cooperation need to be established in local neighbourhoods as well as at municipal level. The partnerships need to involve those staff of public authorities who are responsible for provision of services to that particular neighbourhood: the relevant housing official, welfare officer, local doctor, head-teacher from the school, and so on.

At the same time, local residents need to be able to come together to be able to represent their interests at this level, for example through formation of local tenants or residents associations, which can also engage in self-help activities. Partnerships composed of these various groups need to be established to promote and coordinate action at this neighbourhood level, and to ensure that municipal-level plans are translated effectively into concrete action at the level at which people live their everyday lives.

Planning for neighbourhood regeneration in Botosani

In Botosani, one of the areas in which many Roma people live consists of large housing blocks adjacent to a park, not far from the old centre of the town. Roma, together with non-Roma families, particularly occupy several blocks mainly in bad physical condition, and with barely any functioning amenities. The municipality had previously renovated the blocks, but they had deteriorated again quickly, having been abused by residents.

A British consultant, who specialises in promoting community participation in neighbourhood regeneration schemes, visited the locality and proposed a different approach. This was based on the principles that (a) residents should be empowered to take responsibility for their own circumstances, (b) the focus should cease to be on the run-down blocks but on the regeneration of the neighbourhood as a whole, (c) both Roma and non-Roma should be beneficiaries, and should work together for this purpose, and (d) a local partnership board should be established, with municipal support, consisting of all neighbourhood-level service providers and representatives of local community groups. Although there has been delay in implementing this proposal in Botosani, its approach has already influenced other local initiatives in Romania.

Developing and implementing local strategies



Developing and implementing local strategies

This chapter sets out the actions that need to be taken in order to develop and implement integrated local-level strategies in order to promote Roma integration. It provides answers to the following questions:

- ❖ What is meant by an 'integrated strategy'?
- ❖ Why is it important to adopt an integrated strategy?
- ❖ How should local strategy relate to national strategy?
- ❖ What are the main stages for the development of a local strategy?
- ❖ How should the 'vision' be formulated?
- ❖ How should information on the current situation of Roma be obtained?
- ❖ How should the action plan be drawn up?
- ❖ What resources will be needed and how can they be secured?
- ❖ When and how should community involvement take place?
- ❖ How should the implementation of the strategy be monitored and evaluated?

7.1 What is meant by an 'integrated strategy'?

An integrated strategy is a comprehensive and systematic plan to achieve a defined goal, through a series of inter-related actions that address different aspects of the situation in an appropriate sequence.

An integrated strategy to promote the inclusion of Roma at the local-level will have three key features:

- a) A clear vision of the goal to be achieved, i.e. a municipality in which Roma participate on a full and equal basis.
- b) A plan, with a sequence of stages of implementation, to achieve this goal through local-level action.
- c) Distinct but linked components within this plan to address the various aspects of Roma exclusion and disadvantage.

7.2 Why is it important to adopt an integrated strategy?

It is important to adopt an integrated, strategic approach because of the nature of the situation of Roma across most of Europe, and the challenge that arises from this situation.

Roma exclusion and disadvantage operate across a variety of sectors, including housing, employment, education, health, welfare and security. The underlying factors are also complex, and include anti-Roma racism and discrimination, accumulated disadvantage, enforced dependence, and the psychological effects of such experiences. This is a complex reality which in turns requires a complex response.

Although these patterns are not uniform across Europe, and may impact Roma differently at different times or in different places, they are sufficiently general and deep-rooted to require a long-term integrated strategy to be considered in any locality in which Roma are present.

Most previous initiatives to address this situation have focused on one particular aspect of the situation of Roma (such as education or housing), and have consisted of a short-term project (typically of one or two years) which was not sustained or multiplied subsequently. Some of these projects have been very appropriate for their target area and some have had a significant and visible impact in the short term. However, the potential of such projects to have a lasting impact has frequently been lost, due to the temporary nature of the funding and other support mechanisms for the project, and the failure to address related problems that can undermine what has been achieved. Moreover, by raising and then not fulfilling expectations in Roma communities, especially where Roma themselves have been actively involved, such outcomes can engender cynicism and resentment among Roma. There is also a danger of fostering a sense of hopelessness that becomes a further factor maintaining Roma social exclusion and disadvantage.

For all these reasons, therefore, it is important to develop longer-term strategies that include components addressing each of the various inter-connected aspects of causes of Roma exclusion and disadvantage. Individual projects or initiatives continue to form an essential part of such strategies, but mutually support each other so that they become sustainable steps towards achieving the overall goal.

Housing renovation in Botosani: a negative lesson

In Botosani, prior to the commencement of the RrAJE Programme, the commitment of the Mayor to address the living conditions of Roma in several run-down blocks led him to twice undertake a programme of physical improvement to the buildings. Each time, the condition of the buildings deteriorated again quickly. As he later acknowledged, this was partly because there was no parallel strategy to improve the income and

employment situation of residents, many of whom were in severe poverty and debt. There was also no plan to involve the residents in the renovation process, and to give them a stake in the results so that they could collectively feel 'ownership' and responsibility for the renovated building and its subsequent maintenance.

7.3 How should local strategy relate to national strategy?

As has been stated previously, national strategy on Roma issues needs to be implemented at local level if it is to be effective in achieving national-level goals. Conversely, strategies based on local-level commitment need to be able to draw support from national-level programmes for resources and other kinds of help for local-level implementation.

- ❖ Those seeking to develop local-level strategies should be able to draw on national policies to secure and maintain local-level commitment for such work.
- ❖ Those responsible for developing local strategies should be able to draw on national strategies as examples of good practice on which local strategies can be based.
- ❖ Those responsible for local strategies should be able to secure financial and other support from initiatives developed within national strategies, e.g. training programmes, guidance manuals and documented examples of good practice in other local areas.
- ❖ Municipalities and other local authorities, and Roma and pro-Roma NGOs, should encourage and put pressure on national governments to ensure that their national-level programmes include these kinds of support for local-level work.

Linking work in Botosani to Romania's national strategy

To assist with developing a municipal-level strategy in Botosani, Romani CRISS invited the local Joint Commission on Roma to review the approach adopted at national level and adapt it to the requirements of the municipality. Romani CRISS, a Roma NGO operating at the national level, and Roma partner for the RRAJE Programme in Romania, had played a leading role in the development of the national Roma strategy. Romani CRISS was therefore uniquely placed to bring the lessons of national-level experience down to the municipal level. This work was initiated in a two-day workshop, in which UK consultants also shared UK experience in this field. Subsequently, the Joint Commission in Botosani undertook further work to develop its ideas, and in due course produced its own local-level strategy, though still explicitly linked to the national strategy.

At the conclusion of the RRAJE Programme, the Botosani strategy was able to be presented to a national conference as an example of good practice in implementing the national strategy at the local level. The approach taken in Botosani was strongly supported by the NGOs present, and also by representatives of other local authorities. Also, the representative of the EU delegation undertook to explore what support could be given to promote the implementation of this type of approach across Romania generally.

7.4 What are the main stages for the development of a local strategy?

The main stages for the development and implementation of an integrated local strategy are in essence the main stages involved in the development of a strategy generally.

- ❖ Formulate vision or goal.
- ❖ Identify those responsible for achieving this goal.
- ❖ Undertake analysis of gap between goal and current reality.
- ❖ Formulate action plan to bridge this gap.
- ❖ Identify and provide the skills and resources required.
- ❖ Monitor and evaluate results, and review strategy.

7.5 How should the 'vision' be formulated?

The 'vision' needs to describe the desired state of affairs in the municipality with regard to the situation of Roma. This will be the goal which the strategy will be designed to achieve.

- ❖ The vision should be expressed concisely and clearly, so that it is accessible and intelligible to all sections of the population.
- ❖ The vision should include a statement of the fundamental values or principles on which it is based (e.g. equality, fairness, justice, respect, etc.)
- ❖ The vision may be formulated in more general terms of ethnic diversity or minorities, but if so it should explicitly state that it applies equally to Roma.
- ❖ Ideally, consultation about the possible content of the vision should be undertaken prior to its formulation by the representatives of the consultation.
- ❖ If, however, the partnership committee initially prepares a draft, then this should be subject to wide-ranging consultation and review among all stakeholder groups prior to its eventual adoption, so as to ensure universal support.

- ❖ This consultation should be carried out among the staff of all partner authorities, and among both Roma and non-Roma communities.
- ❖ The final agreed version of the vision should be formally approved by a decision of the municipal council, and then publicised widely.

Key issues for a strategic approach to Roma issues

Vision

What is the strategic goal relating to Roma? Has a clear 'vision' of this goal, e.g. of a municipality that is inclusive of Roma, been formulated and agreed?

Responsibility

Who is responsible for achieving this goal? Who are the key partners among the public authorities, Roma and other NGOs, and what are their roles?

Gap analysis

What is the present situation of Roma locally, and what is the 'gap' between this situation and the strategic goal? What methods will be used to investigate these questions?

Action plan

What actions will be required to bridge this gap between the goal and the actual situation of Roma? What is the sequence of steps required, and how can these be brought together in a 'strategic plan'? What are the targets or outcomes to be achieved?

Skills and resources

What skills and resources are required to implement the strategic plan on Roma issues? How will they be obtained?

Monitoring, evaluation, review

How can the implementation of the strategic plan on Roma issues be monitored? How can its impact on the situation of Roma be evaluated? Who will undertake these tasks, by what methods, and how will Roma be involved in this process? How will the results be used to review the overall strategy on Roma issues, and (if necessary) improve it?

Formulating the Botosani Declaration of Principle

The 'Declaration of Principle' in Botosani was drafted by the members of the Joint Commission for Roma. The initial draft was based on a proposal made by one of the local Roma NGOs. Following a period of consultation some revisions were made to the draft Declaration. After this, it was formally adopted by the Municipal Council, and printed as a leaflet for public distribution.

The Declaration expresses the commitment of the local partners to improve the situation of Roma in the municipality, within the framework of national government policy in Romania. The Declaration notes that Botosani has a long history as a multi-ethnic city in which relations between groups have been marked by tolerance. It sets out five key objectives based on the principles of freedom and equal rights, and commits the partners to a programme of action to achieve these.

The Lom Declaration for Equality and Fairness

"Lom has attracted people of a variety of national, religious and ethnic origins over the centuries. This is both because of Lom's gateway position on the River Danube, and also for its wealth, beauty, agriculture and hospitality. As a result of this history, Lom is now irreversibly a town with many traditions, languages and identities.

In Lom, we recognise this diversity as one of our strengths. We will take action to protect the rights of all of our citizens to lawfully practice their traditions and cultures, without fear of discrimination and violence. The Council will take active steps to ensure that, irrespective of gender, race, religion, national or ethnic origin, all citizens receive an equal opportunity.

Our policy will apply to all services, facilities, opportunities for jobs and promotion, and treatment at work. The Council will also actively use its influence, power and resources to achieve similar policies in the non-governmental and private sectors.

We recognise in particular the need to redress the problems faced by the Roma community. We will develop strategies in partnership with the Roma Lom Foundation and other citizen organisations, to increase the participation of Roma in decision-making, employment and education, and the improvement of the general conditions of life."

7.6 How should information on the current situation of Roma be obtained?

In order to identify the gap between the vision and the current reality, the local partnership needs to obtain data on the current situation of Roma. Some relevant data may already be in existence, but other information may have to be obtained directly. The following steps should be taken:

- ❖ Identify any existing data relating to Roma, e.g. information from the population census, any relevant data held by public authorities, and any previous studies of the situation of Roma or minorities locally.

- ❖ Establish what additional information is needed, e.g. regarding housing conditions, employment, education, etc.
- ❖ Identify the methods that can be used to collect this data, e.g. through interviews, surveys, meetings, etc.
- ❖ Implement these methods, using low-cost approaches such as recruiting Roma volunteers or school students to carry out the work.
- ❖ Write up a report summarising the results, which can then be used as the base-line for measuring future progress.

The initial research project in Pardubice

In Pardubice there was little reliable data regarding the relatively small and dispersed Roma population in the city. The first step towards improving inter-ethnic relations in the city was to undertake research on the existing situation of Roma. An experienced NGO which worked with young people across all ethnic groups, secured external funding for this purpose, and a researcher from Charles University in Prague was engaged to undertake the task. Her terms of reference were to identify the situation and problems of Roma in Pardubice, to describe the current responses of institutions; to undertake a SWOT analysis; and to make recommendations for the future. She conducted fifty interviews, organised several focus group discussions, and acted as a 'participant observer' in meetings and other activities. Her research documented a range of problems faced by Roma, including entry into the education system and conflicts with neighbours in housing. Most important, however, was the low level of awareness of Roma and other minorities among public officials, and their lack of skills for working in a multi-ethnic society. One of her main recommendations was for a training programme for public employees.

Establishing an evidence base in Fakulteta

The Advisory Audit Commission was established to develop a strategic approach to improving the education of Roma children in the Fakulteta District of Sofia. The first two stages of action were directed towards establishing the evidence base on which action plans could be formulated.

'Commission One' was a professionally executed survey of the number and needs of Roma children in pre-school age groups in the sub-municipality of Krasna Poliana, which covers the District. The results of the research provided unique information about the educational needs and aspirations of the Roma population in the area, from which the Commission was able to prepare specific recommendations to Sofia Municipality.

'Commission Two' continued the focus on young people and their educational needs. Research was carried out in a cross-section of schools: three all-Roma, three all non-Roma, and three mixed in composition. The results of this stage clearly show that Roma children attending the integrated schools perform much better than those in segregated schools. The municipality is now addressing the problem of Roma segregation in its schools; although meanwhile parents of some of the children in Fakulteta are drawing on the results of this survey to take a lawsuit against the education authorities on grounds of discrimination.

A preliminary survey in Botosani

At the outset of work in Botosani, no overview of the situation of Roma in the city or county was available. At this stage, a detailed survey was not considered justifiable, nor were resources available for this purpose. An NGO worker therefore compiled a short report, drawing together existing information on the Roma population in Botosani, including topics such as size, location, housing conditions, employment, education, health and welfare problems. This report was based on existing statistical and other data held by the municipality and other public authorities, and on interviews with officials and members of the local Roma community. As well as providing a general overview, it also demonstrated the absence of detailed and reliable data on which policies would need to be based. A preliminary survey of this kind involves minimal cost, and may be a useful initial stage of data collection which can justify and point directions for more thorough investigation and evidence-gathering subsequently.

7.7 How should the action plan be drawn up?

The action plan should set out a sequence of interconnected actions designed to bridge the gap between the vision and the current reality. The plan should be drawn up by the partners in a systematic manner.

The scope of the action plan should include all the relevant fields for developing an integrated solution. These should normally include:

- ❖ Education and vocational training.
- ❖ Employment opportunities.
- ❖ Small business development.
- ❖ Housing and environment.
- ❖ Health.

- ❖ Social welfare.
- ❖ Security and policing.
- ❖ Political and civic participation.
- ❖ Needs of particular groups: e.g. women, young people.

Working groups may need to be set up to identify appropriate action in particular fields. For each field:

- ❖ Sequences and timescales need to be specified, and responsibility for undertaking each action needs to be clearly identified.
- ❖ The resource requirements for undertaking each action should be identified.
- ❖ Plans for each particular sector should be linked to those for other sectors as appropriate.

Priorities need to be established for actions both within and between sectors. The main principle on which priorities should be established is that some actions are preconditions for the success of other actions. For example:

- ❖ Regularising the legal status of Roma housing should normally be a pre-requisite of housing renovation.
- ❖ Ensuring that Roma have valid ID cards will normally be a pre-requisite for ensuring that they can access health, welfare and other services.
- ❖ Providing 'catch-up' education for Roma who did not complete basic education, and providing some basic vocational training, will be a pre-requisite for enabling Roma to access employment opportunities effectively.
- ❖ Effective education of children is, from a long-term perspective, the underlying requirement of successful Roma integration generally.

Priority should also be given to ensuring some quick visible results. This is to demonstrate that an integrated strategic approach can produce tangible benefits in the short-term, and to build community confidence in the longer-term potential of the strategy. Examples of 'quick wins' could include:

- ❖ Actions to improve relations between Roma parents and schools.
- ❖ Allocation and furnishing of building space for meetings and indoor activities.
- ❖ Use of land to create play or sports areas.

- ❖ Increased outreach work by health workers in Roma residential areas.
- ❖ Promotion of and support for self-help initiatives by local people.

Developing an action plan in Botosani

In Botosani, the Joint Commission for Roma established a series of working groups for each main sector. The working groups identified the main areas of need in their sector, and the actions appropriate to address these needs. The result was the production of an 'Action Plan for 2002-2004'. Many of the actions identified could be undertaken by existing staff, in partnership with Roma NGOs, without requiring additional resources. The Joint Commission identified a small number of these actions as urgent priorities, and committed themselves to undertaking them during the first year of their work. For example, using a small amount of money from the RrAJE Programme, a three-month project was carried out jointly by municipal officials, the police and a Roma NGO to identify Roma who did not have ID cards, so that they could become registered and then have access to basic rights and services locally.

The strategy on Roma issues in Lom

In Lom, after initial partnership-building and extensive consultation, the local strategy was structured in terms of nine inter-related projects, each with its own detailed action plan:

- 1) Setting up a Municipal Committee dealing with Roma Issues.
- 2) Strengthening the quality, capacity and reputation of the main Roma NGO partner.
- 3) Exchanging experience between Lom and the city of Reading in the UK.
- 4) Enabling young Roma people to increase their level of education.
- 5) Provision of health centres and health mediators in Roma neighbourhoods.
- 6) Support for small business development among Roma.
- 7) Creating a model school for joint education of Roma and non Roma children.
- 8) Participation of Roma in the local democratic process.
- 9) Promoting community safety and cooperation between Roma and the police; and encouraging Roma to join the police.

7.8 What resources will be needed and how can they be secured?

Developing and implementing local-level strategies for Roma inclusion does not necessarily require a high level of resources. The planning, and many of the actions needed, may require little or no additional resources beyond the time and commitment of local people, and a modest level of support that may be obtained from existing budgets and facilities. For example:

- ❖ The resources required for managing the operation of a partnership body are minimal, and should be able to be provided by the municipality itself, maybe with some small help from other public authority partners.
- ❖ The expertise for developing a local integrated strategy on Roma issues should be available within the partnership itself: municipal staff should have experience of strategic planning, the various public authority partners can each contribute their sector-specific experience and expertise, and the Roma and other NGOs can contribute experience and expertise on Roma and civil society issues.
- ❖ NGO partners are likely to need a small amount of resources to enable them to participate effectively in this process, including basic expenses of individual participants, and (where appropriate) basic office costs.
- ❖ The costs of participants from public authorities should be able to be met from within their existing budgets: ensuring that agencies meet Roma needs should be seen as an integral part of normal work, and not an additional burden requiring additional funding.
- ❖ Actions and projects aimed at ensuring that the needs of Roma are met by the various agencies, e.g. through staff training and community consultation, should also involve little or no cost, and should be regarded as an integral part of normal staff and organisational development.

However, some projects addressing particular needs, e.g. for housing and infrastructural development in Roma residential areas, may require major funding, well beyond the capacity of existing municipal capability. Municipalities therefore need to seek access to such funding from national or international programmes, including international donors and (where appropriate) EU structural funds. Even in these cases, however, it is important to consider options that can reduce costs while still achieving the necessary goals, and to use existing 'mainstream' funding sources (e.g. for improvement of housing or schools) to ensure that Roma needs are met.

Examples from the RrAJE programme

In **Lom** the municipality allocated 1% of its budget to finance the work of the Commission.

In **Brno** the Mayor of Brno Central, Chair of the Equalities Partnership Board, provided office space for the Roma NGO IQ Servis, when it secured substantial funding from the national Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs (MOLSA) to fund the posts of the community development workers.

In **Fakulteta** the Sofia municipality provided the Advisory Audit Commission with an office and a project worker, and funding for its activities have been secured from several different external sources.

In **Pardubice** the municipality provided premises and a small amount of funding to support the development of the Roma NGO DARJAV to act as a partner for its work on Roma issues.

In **Botosani** the municipality provided administrative support for the Joint Commission and premises for the Roma NGO acting as its principal partner, and external financial support was obtained for specific activities within the Commission's Action Plan.

7.9 When and how should Roma community involvement take place?

Roma community involvement should take place, in appropriate ways, at all stages of the development and implementation of the strategy.

As partners in this process, Roma NGOs should take the lead in ensuring appropriate community involvement. Through these NGOs, the voice of Roma communities should be at the heart of decision-making at all stages. However, it is important that they do not confine involvement to their leaders or to a small number of persons only, but use their position as partners to promote wide-ranging Roma participation. For example:

- ❖ When formulating the 'vision' of an inclusive municipality, there should be an opportunity for people to contribute suggestions or be consulted on a draft version.
- ❖ When identifying the current situation of Roma locally, there should be extensive consultation with Roma people to establish their circumstances and needs, and their views about how they are treated by the municipal and other public authorities.
- ❖ Consultation will also be important at the stage of evaluation of the effectiveness of the strategy (or of particular projects within it), in order to ensure that the views and experiences of Roma people affected by the initiatives are heard and taken into account.
- ❖ Appropriate methods should be used for ensuring that people have the opportunity to express their views, including by undertaking questionnaire surveys, and by holding meetings in the neighbourhoods in which Roma people live.

- ❖ These methods should ensure that the voices of all groups within Roma communities are heard, including those of women and young people. Separate meetings should be organised to ensure participation of these groups if necessary.
- ❖ Roma people could themselves be involved in the process of collecting this information: e.g. a Roma women's group could organise consultations with women, and students could carry out small questionnaire surveys under supervision from their schools.

7.10 How should the implementation of the strategy be monitored and evaluated?

The implementation of the strategy should be monitored by the partnership committee.

- ❖ Progress should be regularly assessed in relation to the action plan and its time-scales.
- ❖ Monthly meetings and reports are likely to be most appropriate.
- ❖ Delays and obstacles need to be identified and addressed by the appropriate partners.
- ❖ Where necessary the action plan and its time-scales will need to be adjusted in the light of progress.

Evaluation needs to be conducted at the level of individual actions or projects, and at the level of the strategy as a whole.

- ❖ Intended outcomes need to be specified for each action or project: e.g. the number of people to be impacted, or the qualitative benefits that will result.
- ❖ Appropriate methods need to be used to measure whether these outcomes have been achieved (e.g. observations, statistical records, surveys, interviews).
- ❖ Further actions may need to be taken in the light of the evaluation, especially if the results fall significantly short of what was intended.
- ❖ For the strategy as a whole, it is important to develop some overall or aggregate measures of progress in bridging the gap between the initial situation of Roma and the 'vision' or overall goal.

Mainstreaming and institutional change



Mainstreaming and organisational change

This chapter sets out the actions that need to be taken in order to mainstream local-level policy on Roma integration and to promote the necessary organisational change. It provides answers to the following questions:

- ❖ What is meant by 'mainstreaming'?
- ❖ Why is mainstreaming of Roma issues important?
- ❖ How does mainstreaming contribute to combating discrimination?
- ❖ What actions are required to make the necessary organisational changes?
- ❖ How can a strategy to make such changes be developed?
- ❖ What obstacles may be encountered when introducing such changes?
- ❖ What is the role of leadership and management in this process?
- ❖ What is the role of staff training, and how should this be carried out?
- ❖ Why is recruitment of minority staff important, and how should this be done?
- ❖ What specialist roles and assistance are required to support these actions?
- ❖ What is the role of minority community involvement and NGOs?
- ❖ How can the effectiveness of these changes be evaluated?

8.1 What is meant by 'mainstreaming'?

Mainstreaming means integrating new and separate activities focusing on specific issues into the normal, routine operation of an organisation, so that they become a part of its core functions. In the context of Roma inclusion, this means ensuring that issues relating to Roma cease to be addressed as a separate 'extra' activity but are addressed effectively in the normal everyday work of all staff.

8.2 Why is mainstreaming of Roma issues important?

When an organisation faces new issues or challenges, it usually makes a specific response to those issues in order to establish a way of dealing with them. For example, it may appoint a particular officer to undertake this task, or establish a specific project for this purpose.

If these new challenges are enduring, and affect the operation of the organisation generally, then a more permanent response is required – a response that enables the challenge to be met by all relevant sections of the organisation, and as a normal aspect of the organisation's work.

When organisations come under pressure to address Roma issues, developing a specialist response is a normal and potentially positive initial development.

However, if mainstreaming of this response does not take place subsequently, then the new initiatives focusing on Roma issues will remain marginal to the core functioning of the organisation. They will not be 'owned' by the main sections or departments. They are likely to be ignored or given low priority, and to be vulnerable to loss of funding. Alternatively, such responses may be tolerated and allowed to continue, because they enable the organisation to 'manage the problem without any fundamental organisational change being required. In this way they become 'token' responses, which give the appearance of change, while in reality the rest of the organisation continues to operate as previously.

Mainstreaming is therefore essential for ensuring that specialist initiatives designed to address Roma issues are transformed into change processes that impact the operation of the organisation generally and are fully sustainable.

Mainstreaming a health initiative in Botosani

For example, in Botosani, access of Roma women to health care has been greatly improved by the introduction of 'Roma health mediators'. Health mediators provide health education to local Roma women, and facilitate their access to local health services. This initiative has been developed jointly by a Roma NGO and an officer of the local Health Inspectorate.

Mainstreaming the results of this initiative involves developments such as:

- ❖ Training all local health staff so that they are aware of and can respond to the needs of Roma women and will treat them equally and with respect.
- ❖ Ensuring that the location of health services are equally accessible to Roma families.
- ❖ Ensuring that Roma women are aware of these services and how they can benefit from them.
- ❖ Building confidence among Roma women to be able to access these services effectively without needing the support of a Roma health mediator.

8.3 How does mainstreaming contribute to combating discrimination?

Mainstreaming of Roma issues into the work of organisations is important in order to combat systemic institutional discrimination that maintains Roma exclusion and disadvantage.

'Systemic' or, 'institutional' discrimination means discrimination that results from the normal, routine mode of operation of an organisation. It may involve both 'direct' and 'indirect' forms of discrimination.

- ❖ Direct discrimination results from negative prejudices and stereotypes being normal among staff of the organisation (whether consciously or unconsciously), with the consequence that Roma people are liable to be treated by staff less favourably than members of other groups.
- ❖ Indirect discrimination results from established practices that may not be directly discriminatory but that nonetheless disadvantage Roma people, e.g. less accessible location of offices that provide services; lack of availability of information about services; unjustifiable requirements for eligibility for access to employment or services.

Across Europe, to a greater or lesser degree according to the situation, Roma people routinely experience systemic or institutional discrimination by public authorities, and this is the principal mechanism that maintains their disadvantage and exclusion as an ethnic group.

Most organisations are not well-equipped to address issues of cultural and ethnic diversity, and especially not issues relating to an excluded minority such as Roma. Their staff are drawn from the majority group (or groups), and their services tend to be oriented towards the majority group(s). Addressing Roma issues is therefore likely to be a new challenge for the organisation's staff, who may lack experience of such issues and may well have negative prejudices and stereotypes. Staff are often unaware of how such prejudices and stereotypes enter into everyday thinking and practice, because such thinking may be 'taken for granted' and regarded as 'normal'. Awareness may only come about if these attitudes and practices are challenged.

Mainstreaming is essential if these issues are to be addressed, and the necessary changes in attitudes and practices of organisations are to be implemented. If mainstreaming of Roma issues does not take place, then Roma will continue to be discriminated and disadvantaged by the core ways in which organisations operate, even if some marginal improvements result from specific short-term projects.

8.4 What actions are required to make the necessary organisational changes?

In order to mainstream policy on Roma issues effectively into the normal work of the organisation, a systematic approach is necessary. The first task is to make a systematic assessment of current policy and practice, and the second is to make the necessary changes in the light of the assessment.

To make a systematic assessment of policy and practice, the following actions need to be undertaken:

- ❖ All sections or departments of the organisation need to identify which of their functions impact on Roma.
- ❖ They then need to review this impact to ensure that Roma have access to services or opportunities, are treated equally and any special needs are addressed.
- ❖ This review should be based on factual evidence rather than impressions, and should involve consultation with Roma people.
- ❖ Wherever there is evidence – or reasonable concern without evidence to the contrary – that current practice excludes or disadvantages Roma, then current practice needs itself to be reviewed and changed, wherever appropriate.
- ❖ The review should cover both internal employment functions (including recruitment of Roma into employment), and also external service-provision or other functions (e.g. regulation and control, as in law enforcement).

The methods that can be used to achieve the necessary organisational change include:

- ❖ Revising formal practices and procedures wherever necessary, in order to ensure that Roma are treated equally and fairly.
- ❖ Modifying the way in which services (and employment opportunities) are made available, and information is provided about them, to ensure that Roma have equal access.
- ❖ Training staff to ensure that they will implement these changes, and that any negative stereotypes and attitudes towards Roma will not obstruct equal and fair treatment.
- ❖ Use of both positive and negative sanctions: negative sanctions against staff who discriminate against Roma or who in other ways do not comply with these changes, but also positive recognition for those who actively promote equality and demonstrate initiative.
- ❖ Leadership by managers to set high standards and ensure they are met (together with activities such as seminars or exchanges of experience to support such leadership).
- ❖ Use of specialist advisers to support mainstreaming of Roma issues, while taking care that such specialist posts do not result in marginalisation of Roma issues.

8.5 How can a strategy for organisational change be developed?

Each organisation should adopt a strategic approach to ensuring that the necessary organisational change is implemented. The approach should have the following sequence of actions:

- ❖ Formulation of a clear vision or set of principles/standards on which treatment of staff and customers will be based.
- ❖ Clear support for this vision/principles by the organisation's leadership.
- ❖ Audit of current practice to identify gap between vision and reality.
- ❖ Measures introduced to address this gap by changing normal organisational practice in a sustainable manner.
- ❖ Monitoring of subsequent organisational practice to ensure it complies with the vision.

The strategy should be developed by a small working group which should be authorised by and accountable to the chief officer.

- ❖ The group should include representation from front-line staff as well as management, and from minority or other groups of staff who may be vulnerable to discrimination.
- ❖ The working group should be chaired by a senior officer of the organisation.
- ❖ A particular officer should be appointed or recruited to provide specialist support to this working group.
- ❖ Expert assistance should be obtained from outside the organisation if necessary.

Strategies for organisational change should be an integral part of broader strategies to promote Roma/minority inclusion, or equality generally in the local area.

Pardubice develops an equal opportunity strategy

The city of Pardubice had already established links externally with the Roma community, through a Liaison Committee on which sat representatives of the city's Roma Council. Representatives of all political parties then agreed it was necessary to address the municipality's own attitudes and methods of operation, through developing and implementing a formal Equal Opportunities Policy. An experienced external consultant was engaged to assist with this process. A 'Statement of Intent and Commitment' was drawn up by the Municipal Council, and a three-year 'Strategic Plan for Equal Opportunities' formulated. A Strategic Planning Committee was established for this purpose, and the former Roma Liaison Officer was appointed as the city's Equal Opportunities Officer (and Chair of the Planning Committee). The first stage of the Plan's implementation consisted of a programme of 'awareness training' which was delivered to staff of the municipality and other public authorities. This was followed by the formulation of an 'Ethical Code of Practice' for the municipality, which included guidance on recruitment and staff management. The aim has been to 'mainstream' equal opportunities into the general functioning of local government in the city of Pardubice.

8.6 What obstacles may be encountered when introducing such changes, and how can they be overcome?

A variety of obstacles may be encountered when addressing Roma/minority or equality/diversity issues within organisations. These include:

- ❖ Lack of commitment by leaders to support addressing these issues within the organisation.
- ❖ Failure by middle managers within the organisation to support implementation of the policy.
- ❖ Resistance by majority staff generally to policies seen as benefiting minorities or unnecessarily changing established practices.

In order to overcome such obstacles, the following actions may be appropriate:

- ❖ NGOs may be able to influence leaders to take a more positive response to addressing Roma and equality issues in their organisations, including by reminding them of their obligations under the law and by taking legal action to support Roma who have been subject of discrimination or other inappropriate treatment.
- ❖ In the case of political leaders in local government who are subject to election, political campaigns and mobilisation of Roma and minority voters can also be effective way of ensuring that Roma issues remain on the agenda.

- ❖ Leaders themselves need to ensure that managers within the organisation implement its policies on Roma or minority issues, and to ensure that all staff are aware of these policies and the commitment of leadership to implement them.
- ❖ Staff training should ensure that all staff understand and accept these policies and their implications for their own roles.
- ❖ Managers should be firm in not tolerating breaches of these policies, and behaviour by staff which is discriminatory or in other ways negative towards Roma and other minorities.

8.7 What is the role of leadership and management in this process?

The role of leaders and managers within the organisation is crucial for the success of mainstreaming Roma issues and achieving the necessary organisational change.

- ❖ Leaders need to publicise – both internally and externally - their commitment to address Roma issues effectively in the work of their organisations.
- ❖ Political leaders need to mobilise support from all groups for addressing Roma issues.
- ❖ Leaders also need to ensure that managers and staff generally support the organisation's approach to Roma issues and implement it effectively.
- ❖ Leaders need to ensure that any resources required to support these activities are made available.
- ❖ Managers need to ensure that their own staff support and implement these policies and address Roma issues effectively in their everyday work.

Mayors give their support

Botosani, Romania

In Botosani the Mayor gave his clear support for addressing Roma issues from the outset of the RrAJE Programme. He supported the establishment of the Joint Commission for Roma, addressed key meetings of the Joint Commission, actively supported staff working on Roma issues; provided premises for the local Roma NGO; supported projects to improve housing in Roma neighbourhoods; expressed his commitment regularly in the local press and other media; and spoke about the work in Botosani at national and international conferences.

Fakulteta District, Bulgaria

Initially, political-level support was difficult to obtain for work in the Fakulteta District of Sofia, partly due to the difficult relation between the local Roma NGO and the sub-municipality. An approach at city-level then led to strong support being received from the Mayor of Sofia, who backed the project publicly and provided administrative support. He insisted that officials should attend training on equal opportunity issues and ensured the necessary cooperation from his central staff and at sub-municipal level.

Brno, Czech Republic

In Brno, the Mayor of the Brno Central sub-municipality proved a strong supporter of Roma-focused work, although his powers and resources were limited. He had excellent relations with the Roma community centre in the locality. He regularly attended meetings and training sessions, and supported initiatives such as training for the local police.

Presov Region, Slovakia

The Mayor of Sabinov took the lead in recruiting a group of local mayors to engage with issues affecting Roma, and to meet in training sessions and round-tables with representatives from local Roma settlements. He also helped to develop a Regional Forum of Mayors working on these issues, and to develop plans for accessing EU structural funds to address the infrastructural problems of Roma settlements.

Training for councillors in Lom

In Lom, a two-day equal opportunity training course was delivered to the leading Councillors in the Municipality. The course was one of a series of activities leading to the signing of the 'Declaration for Equality and Fairness' in Lom. The objectives were: (a) to increase the level of awareness of key decision-makers in Lom about their personal roles and that of the Council generally; (b) to provide them with an opportunity to analyse the current situation, and (c) to enable them to hear the experiences of Roma people and to explore prospects for working in partnership. The intention was to ensure that the signing of the Declaration would not simply be a 'paper exercise', but would express the genuine understanding and commitment of the municipal leadership.

8.8 What is the role of staff training, and how should this be carried out?

Training of staff on Roma, minority or equality/diversity issues generally is an essential method for mainstreaming Roma issues and achieving the necessary change in how the organisation operates. However, training alone cannot be sufficient to achieve this change: rather, training should be seen as a support mechanism for implementing the policies and standards of the organisation.

The aims of staff training on Roma/minority issues, or equality/diversity issues generally, should be:

- ❖ To ensure staff are aware of the organisation's policy and commitment relating to these issues.
- ❖ To ensure staff understand the nature of these issues and how they may affect both the way they as individuals, and the organisation generally, operate.
- ❖ To equip staff with the awareness and skills to act in a fair and non-discriminatory manner in carrying out their own roles, in accordance with defined occupational or professional standards.
- ❖ To encourage staff to be proactive in promoting a culture of equality and of respect for diversity within the organisation, and to challenge behaviour that violates these principles.

The methods for carrying out the training should be as follows:

- ❖ The training should be conducted by trainers who are skilled and experienced in working on these issues, and capable of dealing with resistance from participants who may hold strong anti-Roma prejudices.
- ❖ Participative methods should be used, including discussion and debate, case-studies of practical situations, and (where appropriate) role-play exercises.
- ❖ Representatives of Roma or other communities that are subject to discrimination should be involved in the training, to share their experience and discuss potential solutions with participants.
- ❖ Training should be designed to help people to move forward from where they are, rather than where they should be in the eyes of outsiders and policymakers.

Awareness training in Pardubice

The programme of 'awareness-training' for municipal staff in Pardubice was seen as an essential first step in the implementation of the municipality's equal opportunity policy. Its objective was to raise awareness among staff of equal opportunity issues and the situation of Roma, and to enable them to explore the implications for their work as professionals operating in a multi-ethnic society. External funding was secured, and the training was carried out by professional trainers who were experienced in delivering training on issues of ethnic relations and conflict resolution. Approximately five hundred people attended the basic half-day training session, including almost all employees of the municipality and the City Police, together with a large number of staff from schools. Around a quarter of the participants subsequently attended longer two-day workshops.

Training for health professionals in Botosani

A training programme for family doctors and officials from the Public Health Department was organised in Botosani. The training formed part of the health component of the Action Plan drawn up by the Joint Commission for Roma for implementing the local strategy for the integration of Roma. The aim of the training was to inform health practitioners about specific health needs of the Roma community, and to inform them about the role of Roma health mediators. The training was run jointly by senior health officials from Botosani, the president of the local Roma NGO Divano Romano (herself a former health mediator), and an experienced trainer (also health programme coordinator) from the national NGO Romani CRISS. The course addressed four main subjects: medical problems in the Roma community, communication with Roma patients, methods generally for working with the Roma minority, and the role of the Roma health mediator. Several of the local Roma health mediators also attended the course to share their experience. The aim of the training programme was to transfer the experience of the health mediators about working with the Roma community to the professional medical practitioners working in the area, and thus to mainstream effective methods for delivering health services to Roma into routine medical practice.

Police training in Brno

The Brno City Police had established good cooperation with the Roma DROM Community Centre. For example, police officers attended the Centre to run a crime prevention project for young children, and the Director of the Centre gave presentations to recruits on Roma issues at the local Police Academy. However, these activities did not involve the regular patrol teams who have contact with Roma and other local residents on a daily basis. At a planning meeting involving local police managers and representatives of the local Roma community, the need was identified for the local patrol officers to have more awareness and understanding of the situation of Roma in the local area, and to improve communication between police and Roma. A small training programme, with minimal cost, was therefore designed to meet these objectives. It was run jointly by a trainer from the local Police School and a local Roma community development worker. During the course of a day, groups of local police had a presentation and discussion with the Roma community worker on the background of the community and its concerns about policing, and then had the opportunity to meet local Roma residents, including young people. For the Roma participants, it was an opportunity to learn more about the role of the police and to meet local officers on a personal basis (rather than in law-enforcement contexts). The approach was subsequently incorporated into recruit training at the Brno Police School, and the Ministry of the Interior expressed interest in extending it across the Czech Republic.

8.9 Why is recruitment of minority staff important, and how should this be done?

Recruitment of staff from Roma and minority communities generally is important for the following reasons:

- ❖ Persons of all racial and ethnic backgrounds should have – and be seen to have – equal opportunities to access employment, in accordance with the law and human rights.
- ❖ The staff of organisations should reflect the composition of the local population, as this gives confidence to people that they will be treated fairly and equally when they seek the services of or employment in the organisation.
- ❖ The presence of people of all backgrounds among the staff will help to create an organisational culture that is inclusive and that respects and is comfortable with ethnic diversity.
- ❖ The organisation needs to secure the best available talent from all groups.

Action may be required to encourage persons from under-represented groups such as Roma and other minorities to come forward to seek employment. 'Access training' may also be required to assist members of such groups to reach the necessary educational standards, or to acquire other necessary skills, so that they qualify for entry into particular occupations.

Organisations also need to ensure that Roma and other minority staff have equal opportunities once they have become employees of the organisation. If such staff experience discrimination or harassment on account of their ethnic identity, then not only is this unlawful, but they will be unable to fulfil their potential and are likely to leave. Managers should therefore:

- ❖ Monitor the progress of Roma and other minority staff to ensure there is no evidence of direct or indirect discrimination.
- ❖ Ensure there is an effective mechanism for staff to make complaints, and deal effectively with any complaints of discrimination and harassment.
- ❖ Consult with Roma and other minority staff so that they can deal proactively with any concerns such staff may have about racism or discrimination before they become serious problems.

Some Roma and other minority staff may not wish to publicise their ethnic identity or be active in any way on minority-oriented issues. Others, however, may wish to contribute personally to initiatives that will help the organisation to ensure that staff and citizens of all ethnic backgrounds are treated fairly, equally and with respect.

- ❖ Managers should therefore also create opportunities for Roma and other minority staff to make a positive contribution to organisational development in this way if they so wish, e.g. by inviting them to assist as volunteers in initiatives on minority recruitment or staff training.
- ❖ Some Roma and other minority staff may also wish to take on specialist posts or responsibilities within the organisation on Roma/minority or equality/diversity issues.

Roma recruitment into the police

Tensions between Roma communities and police exist widely across Europe, and these were reflected in several of the RRAJE sites. In three sites incidents of conflict or alleged abuse had taken place, although there were also examples of positive police-Roma relations.

Recruitment of Roma into the police is often seen as a way to improve police-Roma relations. At present, though, it is rare to encounter Roma police officers. However, in **Lom**, following a training programme to promote a 'community policing approach', six young Roma men have been recruited, two of whom are preparing for promotion into a more senior rank. Also, two young Roma women worked as interns with the local Police. In **Brno**, the Police School with the help of local NGOs has developed a successful programme to recruit young Roma, twenty-six of whom have now become police officers. Trainees are not initially required to have the usual school-leaving qualification, but they must attend a catch-up course and achieve this within five months. In **Pardubice**, a young man who was the only Roma police officer in town was also working in a Roma NGO to actively improve police-Roma relations. The municipality provided funding support for this work, and for activities to encourage young Roma to join the police. These various examples indicate some of the possible ways forward.

In countries where local police organisations come under the control of the municipality, the local authorities may be able to directly influence the recruitment of Roma. The existence of Roma police officers can help to establish links between police and Roma communities, and to increase trust in the police among Roma. Such recruitment also provides employment opportunities for young Roma people. However, if Roma are recruited as police, they need to be given the same employment opportunities as other police officers, and not simply used in liaison roles – unless they were specifically appointed for that purpose. Also, the recruitment of Roma into the police will not by itself improve police-community relations: the police generally need to improve their communication with Roma communities and to ensure that Roma are always treated professionally and in accordance with human rights.

Roma staff in schools

Teachers provide crucial role models for children. Roma teachers also bring an understanding of the social and cultural background of Roma children, and are likely to have the trust of Roma parents. Recruitment of Roma to work as staff in schools is therefore a crucial component of any strategy to tackle exclusion and under-achievement of Roma children in education.

On the RrAJE sites, usually the only presence of Roma on the teaching staff of schools was as classroom assistants for the youngest age-groups. Also, at one of the schools in Botosani a young Roma man had been engaged as a teacher of Romani language, and had helped to establish good links between Roma parents and the school. These are important roles, but are far from sufficient. Serious and urgent efforts need to be made at the local level to bring Roma into mainstream teaching roles, and to increase Roma participation in the delivery of education.

Recruitment of Roma, however, needs to be complemented by training for local teachers generally on Roma-related issues, as had been undertaken as part of the integrated strategy in Botosani. It also needs to be complemented by more specific strategies to improve the quality of educational provision in Roma areas and to support Roma access to education, as had been developed in both Fakulteta and Lom.

8.10 What specialist roles and assistance are required to support these actions?

In order to support these actions, and to mainstream Roma issues into their normal operation, organisations may need to establish specialist roles and recruit individuals with specialist skills and experience.

A widespread practice has been to establish a post of 'Adviser on Roma Issues' internally within the organisation. When establishing such posts, the following considerations are important:

- ❖ The principal task of the Adviser on Roma Issues should be to advise mainstream staff on appropriate policy and practice on Roma issues, so that these issues can be addressed routinely and effectively in the core functioning of the organisation.
- ❖ The Adviser on Roma Issues should also be the main contact point for Roma leaders and organisations externally.

- ❖ However, the Adviser on Roma Issues' role should not be to solve the problems of Roma individuals and families. If the Adviser adopts this role, it will remove the responsibility of mainstream staff to deal with Roma, marginalise relations with the Roma community, and prevent the mainstreaming of Roma issues into the core functioning of the organisation.
- ❖ The key abilities required by Advisers on Roma Issues are to assist managers to develop policies and strategies to mainstream Roma issues, and to advise and train front-line staff on how to address Roma issues in their everyday activities.
- ❖ Advisers on Roma Issues also need a good understanding of Roma issues, and good connections with – and the confidence of – local Roma communities and their leaders.
- ❖ For the latter reasons, it is likely that most Advisers on Roma Issues will themselves be Roma. However, simply being Roma is far from a sufficient qualification for such a post: the key abilities identified above are required as well. Non-Roma who can meet all the criteria set out above may also be capable of being effective Advisers on Roma Issues.

An alternative option would be to obtain the services of an external specialist adviser or consultant. The advantages of establishing a post of Adviser on Roma Issues internally are that:

- ❖ Roma issues are 'owned' internally by the organisation.
- ❖ The Adviser on Roma Issues will become familiar with the working of the organisation and thus be more effective in influencing its operation.
- ❖ The Adviser on Roma Issues will be able to interact frequently and informally with other staff, and can thus be more influential at a personal level.

The possible dangers of establishing such a post are that:

- ❖ Having established such a post, the organisation may then relax its commitment to take Roma issues seriously, so that the post-holder is unable to be effective.
- ❖ If the post-holder feels marginalised and obstructed, they are likely to become demoralised and resign.
- ❖ Alternatively, the post-holder might become so assimilated into the organisation that their motivation to address Roma issues is weakened, and they become ineffective for this reason instead.

To overcome the above dangers, Advisers on Roma Issues will need to:

- ❖ Have strong support from, and direct access to, the chief officer of the organisation.
- ❖ Maintain close links with, and gain personal and political support from, the local Roma community.
- ❖ Have personal qualities and skills sufficient to endure and overcome the dangers mentioned above and other barriers to effectiveness.

How advisers on Roma issues can fail to impact

In one of the RrAJE sites, the city council initially appointed a well-known Roma journalist and activist as Adviser on Roma Issues. This initial post-holder had many ideas and was keen to take the opportunity to press for what he saw as long-needed changes. However, many staff felt he was too negative and critical, and did not understand the practical constraints of municipal administration. He in turn became frustrated with the lack of response from local officials, and at the lack of support from the political level, and in due course he resigned.

The second post-holder was a young Roma man who had only recently completed secondary education. He was viewed by his sponsors in the Roma community as having potential, and he combined the post with undertaking vocational training. However, he was located within the Welfare Department of the city council, and became almost exclusively involved with casework with Roma families that other welfare officers passed on to him. Partly for this reason he had a good rapport with his immediate colleagues, but he had neither the skills nor credibility to address policy issues or to operate at the political level. The result was that Roma issues remained marginal to the activities of local government, and were addressed in terms of Roma as 'problem families'.

Establishing a strong internal post in Pardubice

In Pardubice, when the city formally adopted an equal opportunity policy as a framework for addressing Roma and multicultural issues generally, the need was recognised to appoint someone to take responsibility for implementing this policy. The City's former Roma Liaison Officer was appointed to the post of Equal Opportunity Officer, and also acted as chair of the Strategy Planning Committee. This new post ensured that the focus of her work would be on promoting internal change within the public authorities in Pardubice, and not merely on external relations with minorities. She was already well known to and respected by politicians and senior officials as well as by NGOs in the city, and her position gave her the scope and seniority to drive forward and sustain the strategy across the whole range of municipal government.

8.11 What is the role of minority community involvement and NGOs?

Organisations which are wholly or largely staffed by members of the majority ethnic group(s) will not be able to carry out these changes effectively on their own. They will need external assistance, especially from members of Roma and other ethnic minority communities and from NGOs that work to promote minority integration, equality and human rights. Such persons and groups can:

- ❖ Contribute to reviews of organisational practice and to policy development, and help identify problems and needs.
- ❖ Assist with staff training on Roma/minority and equality/diversity issues.
- ❖ Assist with identifying potential recruits into employment from Roma and other minority communities, and provide advice and support to enable them to gain access to employment.
- ❖ Assist with monitoring and evaluating the effectiveness of measures taken to implement organisational change.

8.12 How can the effectiveness of these changes be evaluated?

In order to evaluate the effectiveness of these changes, intended outcomes need to be agreed, and methods identified which can measure whether or not these have been achieved.

The intended outcomes need to be measurable, and to serve as indicators of whether the strategy for mainstreaming and organisational change is achieving its goals. For example, they might include:

- ❖ Increased numbers of Roma or other minority employees.
- ❖ Increased use of services of the organisation by Roma and other minorities (e.g. health services, schools).
- ❖ More equal outcomes from the use of services by Roma and other minorities (e.g. health, educational attainment).
- ❖ Increased satisfaction with the way they are treated by staff of the organisation among Roma and other minorities.
- ❖ Increased confidence in the organisation generally among Roma and other minorities.
- ❖ Increased confidence among organisational staff in working effectively with Roma and other minorities when carrying out their normal roles.

The methods to be used for measuring whether these outcomes have been achieved should be appropriate for the purpose:

- ❖ The minimum requirement will be that the methods can measure changes before and after the intervention that has taken place.
- ❖ Opinion surveys could be undertaken among staff and among Roma communities.
- ❖ Regular monitoring of the ethnic identity of staff and service users could be undertaken.
- ❖ Any issues relating to the legality and general acceptability of ethnic identification would need to be resolved.

The results of the evaluation should be used as the basis for a review of current plans to achieve the goals of the strategy for mainstreaming and organisational change. If the evaluation shows that current actions are not having the intended outcomes, then the plans will need to be revised to make them more effective.

Acknowledgements

Chairman of the RrAJE Programme

Peter Mercer MBE, President of the East Anglian Gypsy Council and member of the Parliament of the International Romani Union.

Programme Manager

Ms Jeanette Buirski, European Dialogue.

Roma and NGO partners

The Romany Baht Foundation: Sofia, Bulgaria.
The Human Rights Project: Sofia, Bulgaria.
The Roma-Lom Foundation: Lom, NW Bulgaria.
Romani CRISS: Bucharest, Romania.
Divano-Romano: Botosani, Romania.
ZOR-Kezmarok: Presov region, Slovakia.
DROM Roma Centre: Brno, Czech Republic.
IQ Roma Servis: Brno, Czech Republic.
Darjav: Pardubice, Czech Republic.
Klub Hura Kamarad: Pardubice, Czech Republic.

Central and East European municipality partners

Brno Central, Czech Republic.
Pardubice regional government, Czech Republic.
Botosani municipality, NE Romania.
Forum of Mayors, Presov region, NE Slovakia.
Sofia and Krasna Poliana municipalities, Sofia, Bulgaria.
Lom municipality, Bulgaria.

UK and international consultants

Core team

Dr Robin Oakley: consultant to UK authorities and the Council of Europe on racial/minority issues.
Richard Crowson: former Race Equality Adviser, London Borough of Islington.
Arthur Ivatts: former Chief Inspector of Education for Gypsy/Traveller Children in UK.
Rajinder Sohpal: Director, Reading Council for Racial Equality.
Makhan Bajwa and William Ekinu: Greenwich Council for Racial Equality.
Mita Castle-Kanerova: Charles University, Prague.

Associate consultants

Michael Parkes: Town Planning and community consultation; Adrian Cave: community architect; Alex Park: Civil Engineer and infrastructure development expert; Harcourt Alleyne: London Borough of Greenwich; former Chief Inspectors Tony Cross and Chris Taylor of the Metropolitan Police; Alena Koskova: Equality Officer, Pardubice municipality; Alice Ondruchova: social policy researcher, Czech Republic; Mike Prescod: Wellingborough Afro-Caribbean Centre; Paul Crofts: Wellingborough Racial Equality Council.

Participating UK local governments

London Boroughs of Islington, Greenwich, Camden; municipal boroughs of Reading, Slough, Wellingborough and Peterborough.

Funders

British Department for International Development – with particular thanks for the support and advice of Simon Williams and Brian Penny, Europe and Central Asia Department.

OSI Local Government and Public Services Reform Initiative.

OSI Roma Participation Programme.

Barrow Cadbury Trust.

Andrew Wainwright Reform Trust.

Connect Youth International (British Council).



Roma Rights and Access to Justice in Europe Programme

Roma are the largest pan-European minority, with a significant presence in every major European state. However, across Europe, Roma continue to experience severe levels of poverty, disadvantage and social exclusion.

The aim of this manual is to provide practical guidance for public authorities and NGOs on methods for promoting integration of Roma at the local level in Europe, especially in countries of Central and Eastern Europe. The guidance is based on the experience of the Roma Rights and Access to Justice in Europe Programme (RrAJE).

The guidance relates to four key areas: minority empowerment, partnership-building, the development and implementation of integrated local strategies, and mainstreaming and institutional change.

European Dialogue
175 Goswell Road
London EC1V 7HJ
UK

Tel: +44 (0) 7253 3337

Fax: +44 (0) 7253 5790

info@europeandialogue.org

www.europeandialogue.org

Core funding provided by
British Department for International Development



ISBN 0-9549740-0-X