



Report on the

Meeting with representatives of the civil society, international organisations and academics' networks

Prepared by the Network Secretary

Meeting organised by the European Commission, DG Justice
Unit D.4: Non discrimination policies and Roma coordination

Place: European Commission, Rue Luxembourg 46, 1000 Brussels, Meeting room
Falcone Borsellino (ground floor)

Time: 11 February 2014 (9:30 – 12:00 AM)

Participants: Ms Lina Papamichalopoulou (DG Justice), Ms Axelle Cheney (DG Justice), Ms Miranda Vuolasranta (DG Justice), Mr Dominique Bé (DG Employment, Social Affairs and Inclusion), Mr Frank Pierobon (DG Education and Culture), Mr Alexandros Tsolakis (DG Regional Policy), invited representatives of the NGOs, international organisations, Roma Policy Coalitions and the Academic Network (about 30 persons).

Summary

The main purpose of the meeting has been to update and inform the representatives of the NGOs, international organisations and professional networks invited about the recent developments and results of projects funded by the European Commission in the domain of social inclusion of the Roma, and also to present the participants with the new priorities and planned major events by the EC.

- 1) The **priority for 2014 is: Going Local**. The most important priority of the EC for the forthcoming period is the more effective involvement of the Local Authorities in all Roma related projects (including the National Strategies for Roma Inclusion).
- 2) Two **exemplary projects** has been presented and discussed: **ROMED2** – (Joint Project between EC, DG Education and Culture and the Council of Europe) and **ROMACT** (Joint Project between the EC, DG Employment, Social Affairs and Inclusion, the Council of Europe with the support of the Alliance of Cities and Regions for Roma Inclusion) more information on these projects are forthcoming.
- 3) **Regular meetings continued:** officials from different General Directorates of the EC are working together and has created the Task Force for Roma Inclusion. This information meeting was the first from a series which will be organised regularly by this Task Force in the future (**approx. in every two months**) to inform and update the civil society, international organisations and professional networks on the main developments.

- 4) The most important forthcoming event is the **Roma Summit** (held in Brussels on **4 April 2014**), a very high profile event (attended by heads of states, prime ministers, and National Roma Contact Points). A limited number of representatives from NGOs, international organisations and professional networks will also be invited.

Detailed report

The first item on the agenda of the meeting has been **the forthcoming progress report on the National Strategies** by DG Justice. There have been delays in the submission of the individual reports of progress from the Member States but the draft has been prepared in time. Now the draft is being submitted to inter-service meetings (meetings between different DGs) and last revisions will be made.

The final form of the Report will be launched during the forthcoming Roma Summit in Brussels on 4 April 2014. DG Justice acknowledges and is grateful for the contributions sent to them by NGOs and other independent evaluators. The report for the progress in 2013 contains a general overview and individual two-paged country evaluations. This is the first year Croatia has been included and there is also a chapter on the EU enlargement countries.

The main **priority of the EC in 2014 for the Roma inclusion is: Going Local**. In order to facilitate this the following initiatives have been taken:

- Dissemination of information on funding for local and regional authorities. A website will be launched which will contain all the **information and links to the European Commission call for applications** which are targeting local authorities. This will facilitate access to funding for projects supporting social integration of Roma at the local level.
- DG Justice launched an **evaluation of needs from local and regional authorities** in 8 Member States (Romania, Belgium, Bulgaria, Czech Republic, Hungary, Slovakia, France, and Italy). This evaluation aims to assess the needs of the local authorities for a more effective implementation of a programme by DG Justice in order to combat prejudices, stereotypes and discrimination at the local level (the approximate budget for this project is €2 million).
- Two projects have been presented which aim to improve the local level policies in the domain of social inclusion with particular focus on the Roma population. The **ROMED project** has entered the second phase and it focuses on ten countries: Belgium, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Greece, Hungary, Italy, Portugal, Romania, Slovakia, and the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia. In each of these countries six municipalities have been selected for implementation. More information will be available soon on the www.coe-romed.org website. The other project is **ROMACT** implemented also by the Council of Europe with the support of the European Alliance of Cities and Regions for Roma Inclusion. This project is implemented in five countries (Bulgaria, Hungary, Italy, Romania and Slovakia) and will be extended to other countries. It aims to advise and work directly with local authorities for boosting Roma inclusion efforts at local level. More information will be available soon on the www.coe-romact.org website.

- The information session on the **Roma MATRIX project** funded by DG Justice (Fundamental Rights and Citizenship) has been postponed for a next meeting due to the fact the person in charge could not attend the meeting.
- There has been an information session on the on the forthcoming **Roma Summit**. The Summit will be held in Brussels on **4 April 2014**, will be a very high profile event (attended by heads of states, prime ministers, and the National Roma Contact Points). In line with the **Going Local** slogan each National Roma Contact Points has been requested to come jointly with representatives from a local NGO and a local authority. The number of the invited participants are limited due to the limited space of the meeting room. The main purpose of the Summit is to ensure that the Roma related issues will remain priorities on the Agenda of the incoming Cabinet of the European Commission and during the forthcoming Italian presidency of the EU.

A new European Parliament pilot project has been announced (the approximate budget for this project is €1 million). This pilot project will be operational after a nine month period of administrative preparations. This project will also aim to assist local authorities and to foster capacity building at local level to improve Roma inclusion. More information will be available later.

The 4th meeting of the National Roma Contact Points is organised on 14-15 February 2014. (see details: [http://europa.eu/rapid/press-release MEMO-14-107 en.htm](http://europa.eu/rapid/press-release_MEMO-14-107_en.htm)) To this meeting the NCPs of the 28 Member States are invited. The main message to be conveyed and followed up during this meeting is that the first ever EU-level legal instrument for Roma inclusion has been adopted in December 2013. With the adoption of this Recommendation the representatives of Member States committed themselves to taking targeted action to bridge the gaps between the Roma and the rest of the population (see: [http://europa.eu/rapid/press-release IP-13-1226 en.htm](http://europa.eu/rapid/press-release_IP-13-1226_en.htm)).