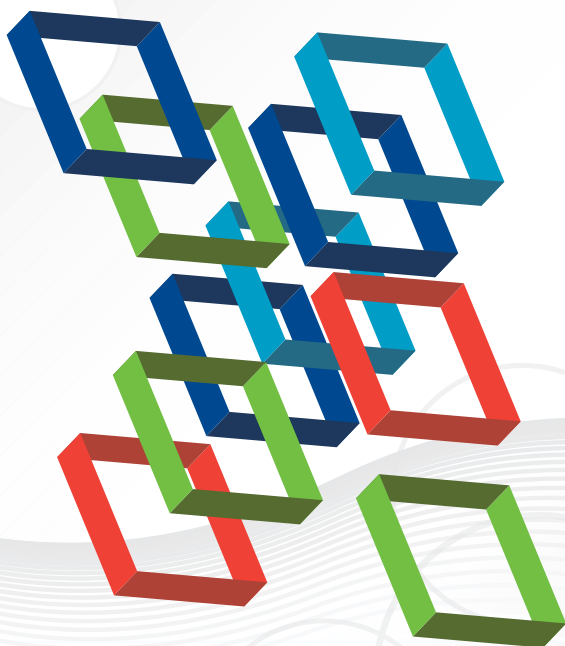


ROMACT

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ROMA INCLUSION AT LOCAL LEVEL THE **ROMACT** APPROACH

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A European challenge: the need to act at local level

The marginalization and poverty of a significant proportion of Roma is visible throughout Europe. Concrete and adequate action is required to tackle the social and economic issues Roma face, and this cannot be achieved without **strong political will**, commitment, and **resources** by state authorities, or without the **active involvement of Roma**.

However, many local authorities are facing **limitations and constraints** in terms of **adequate human and financial resources**, as well as various **political circumstances and structural blockages** that interfere with the effective implementation of policies at local level.

Moreover, a lack of expertise and resources that is necessary to develop integrated actions for tackling the multi-faceted problems of marginalized communities, as well as the lack of mutual trust between local administrations and Roma communities create a significant barrier that hinders the progress of social inclusion for Roma.

ROMACT toolkit is available on ROMACT website for mayors, local institutions and active citizens wanting to improve the living conditions of disadvantaged communities, including the Roma.

The ROMACT Programme

Since 2013, **the Council of Europe and the European Commission** have been implementing a Joint Programme – ROMACT – “Building up political will and understanding of Roma inclusion at local and regional level”, **set on the existing European and national policy frameworks for Roma inclusion**, which acknowledges the fact that measures at local and regional level are decisive for generating improvement in the Roma communities, across key areas such as education, housing, employment and health.

The objective of the ROMACT Programme is **building the capacity of local authorities to develop and implement plans and projects for Roma inclusion**, based on the **concrete needs and priorities of marginalised local Roma communities**.

Considering the fact that policy change and capacity building are long-term processes, ROMACT provides **expertise** to local stakeholders, employing an integrated approach and striving for **local solutions by local people for local needs**. It also **builds on previous achievements** in the field and **lessons learned** from national and European experiences.

From 2013 to 2017, the Programme was implemented in the following 6 countries (Bulgaria, Czech Republic, Hungary, Italy, Romania, Slovak Republic). Since 2018, ROMACT has focused exclusively on **Bulgaria and Romania**.

A 4 steps-methodology

The Programme helps local authorities to **improve the lives of all citizens**, including the Roma, by jointly assessing needs, planning actions together with all those concerned and facilitating the translation of these plans into concrete measures.

The ROMACT Methodology consists of **4 steps**, implemented over a period of 18 to 22 months at each municipal level:

- 1) Raising awareness and **building the commitment** of local authorities towards Roma inclusion;
- 2) **Agreeing on what needs to be done** to improve the living conditions of the Roma community;
- 3) Translating the local development action plans into **concrete measures and projects**;
- 4) **Funding, implementing and monitoring** measures and projects.

ROMACT functioning

An important element of the ROMACT methodology is the **Community / Citizens' Action Group (CAG)**, an informal group which is established at the beginning of the process, and which is expected to become a partner of the municipality in facilitating the participation of Roma citizens in the local development process.

One other important element of the ROMACT process is represented by the working group at the level of the local administration – **the Task Force**

for Roma Inclusion, which includes representatives of concerned municipal services and other local institutions (schools, health care institutions, cultural and religious institutions, etc.), relevant local NGOs, representatives of the community / citizens (CAG) and a **Coordinator** from the side of the municipality (person designated by the mayor to be in charge of the process).

The **work of these two groups interlinks** and provides the necessary input for assessment, development and implementation of measures that have the aim to improve the living conditions and status of marginalized communities, including the Roma.

At operational level, the ROMACT Programme works through a team of **field coordinators, community facilitators and experts** in each municipality, guiding the processes to achieve concrete results through the implementation of short, medium and long-term activities and plans. The **facilitators mobilize the groups of citizens / CAGs**, support the empowerment of citizens to participate in the local development process and make the links with the work at the level of the local administration. Based on assessed needs, **experts** are punctually engaged to **provide training and coaching** to the representatives of local administration and other relevant stakeholders, **supporting them in strategic planning**, identifying sources of funding (EU, national etc.) and **developing projects** based on the measures included in the **Joint Action Plans / Local Development Strategies**, responding therefore to the needs of the local communities.

The **capacity building activities** provided by the ROMACT experts are delivered **based on the needs** and requests expressed at local level; and have as target groups the local citizens, the elected officials, the municipal staff (public servants / employees of different departments), and different other local stakeholders (representatives of health facilities, schools, decentralized offices of regional and national institutions, NGOs etc.).

In addition, since the ROMACT experts and facilitators are directly exposed to the implementation of various policies and regulations in the field, working directly with employees of the local administrations, the Programme also brings **evidence from the ground** on a number of **issues encountered in the field**. Based on recurrent issues encountered in the field, the Programme has designated experts to work on briefings, guidelines and reports on the barriers encountered in the **implementation of certain rules and regulations in practice**, as well as on the existent issues related to the disbursement and use of EU funds.

Bringing change

The ROMACT approach works and brings **concrete results** in the municipalities where there is **political will and commitment** from the side of the local authorities to implement the process in a **participatory manner**, by involving the Roma and other people from marginalized communities, according to the steps described in the Programme's methodology.

Investments have better chances to be **sustainable** when **beneficiaries are involved** and have a sense of ownership over them. Marginalization is multifaceted and improving the living conditions of the marginalized communities represents a strong base for the development of specific measures for the social inclusion of children and youth. Working with disenfranchised communities might be challenging, especially in contexts in which there is a general lack of culture of participation in local governance.

However, a positive **change is possible** if efforts and sectors are joint over time; and the interventions in the field are **adapted to the real needs of the people**.

ROMACT management

The ROMACT central team is based in the Council of Europe, in Strasbourg, and is responsible for the overall management of the Programme.

In each country, ROMACT is implemented by a National Support Team composed of National Project Officers, National Facilitator Coordinators, National Experts Coordinators, Facilitators and Experts.

Selected support organisations are mandated to ensure the logistical needs for the implementation of the process at local level by the ROMACT National Support Teams.

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