

Welcome

Dear Reader,

You are reading the first newsletter of Roma-Net URBACT II project. Roma-Net is a partnership of nine European cities (Budapest-HU, Almería, Torrent-ES, Bologna, Udine-IT, Glasgow –UK, Heraklion –GR, Karvina – CZ, Kosice –SK) with an associated partner, Bobigny from France.

The ROMA-Net partners are united by a common goal and a collective aim to share experiences, build expertise and spread good practices, that will improve local policies and support social inclusion and stronger community cohesion, within Roma communities and more widely between Roma and their neighbouring communities across the whole city. At local level ROMA-Net will inform and support its City partners to develop local action plans that facilitate better services, through improved access and an integrated approach, to support young Roma adults in their transition into socially included, active adult citizens.

We want to demonstrate that commitment at local level can make a real difference to the lives of the Roma people.

The exchange and learning activities of the project have been designed to increase the knowledge and professional capacity of the partners to tackle Roma exclusion through integrated, co-operative and co-ordinated approaches, the activities have been divided into three overarching themes:

- Active community engagement/ empowerment - including effective participatory activities and tools; anti-discrimination awareness; social marketing.
- Integrated area based approach to tackling exclusion and segregation including an integrated approach to service provision; tackling segregation using housing improvement; and inclusive approaches to area based regeneration.
- Building a transitional labour market creating and using an intermediate labour market; maximising the role of the social economy, social firms and social accounting.

The project started on 19th July 2010 and our first newsletter gives you a brief picture of the developments so far.

Lead Partner, Lead Expert and Roma-Net partners

Heraklion

How do you eat an elephant?

Roma-Net was officially set off on 16-17 September 2010 and a huge elephant (metaphorically speaking) was served up to the participants. Participants felt like ants having to eat a huge and still growing elephant without fork and knife but, we were not discouraged as we cut off a much more manageable piece and started our planning!



With all partners present, the first steps were discussed, expectations expressed and the three learning cluster groups began to phase their activities. The discussions embraced past and present efforts at European, national, regional level, the significant steps achieved and the lack of general improvement in the situation of Roma communities.

Although it is possible to track change and to see growing evidence of high level commitment to Roma inclusion – on the ground there is not the same evidence of change in attitudes. So we believe that it is time to step down from the platform, to change the environment for Roma, to move to a new position of working with Roma instead of for Roma.. We will only begin to see real change when local authorities take an active and leading role in the development process. What can we actually change?

- better services through improved access and an integrated approach
- a step- by- step inclusive approach
- Young Roma adults as partners to
 - motivate positive acceptable change
 - provide insight into the barriers and challenges caused by exclusion and discrimination.

So the first bites have been taken and we believe that many ants when joined together can achieve their goal - even if it is to eat the elephant.

First event of learning cluster 1 – Udine

The arrival of Eastern European Roma in Glasgow brings new challenges, but joining the ROMA-Net trans-national partnership is offering new insight and understanding on how best to tackle the issues of Roma social and economic exclusion.



Glasgow has been involved in many transnational projects over the past decade, co-operating with many European cities on issues as diverse as the environment and employability. The Roma Net project is a slightly new venture for Glasgow as the Roma Community is a relatively new phenomenon however the numbers migrating to Glasgow have been steadily increasing over the past few years.

We are very pleased to take part in the Roma Net project and are looking forward to the challenges, discussions and co-operation it will bring following on from the very successful cluster meeting held in Udine in November. It was the first opportunity we had to fully participate in a meeting with all partners and hearing their views and experiences on community engagement was extremely interesting and much more useful than we had anticipated.

In Glasgow, we have worked on community engagement for many years. We often think we know how things work and use tried and tested methods, but a project like Roma Net has given us a new perspective and we quickly realised that we are looking at a very vulnerable client group that many of the other Cities have been working with for significantly longer than Glasgow.

One of the key messages we took away from this event is the idea of “inclusion” not “integration” and that we can use social marketing to challenge stigma and discrimination. Changing the way we deliver services and taking a more integrated approach can help us engage with the Roma community but essentially we work with the Roma community, maintaining the philosophy of “nothing about us without us”.

Within Glasgow, the Roma Net project is being led by the Development and Regeneration Department within Glasgow City Council. This is the department with the overall responsibility for regeneration, inclusion and urban sustainable development. The Local Support Group has now been formed and contains representatives from the local housing association, charities, health partnership and the police. The Local Support Group has made good progress in mapping local provision and is setting its sights on providing a local plan to tackle the issues and challenges for the Roma population in Glasgow.

Udine were excellent hosts and developed a programme of work that was intensive yet very constructive and engaged the group very well. Our meetings took place in a breath taking venue, the ancient Palace which is normally set out as a formal museum, but we used the space very creatively and each city built up an ideas market place where we presented our ideas and plans for stronger community engagement and better use of social marketing techniques in the future.

The effort made by Udine reaffirmed for us the commitment individuals and organisations are making to this project and we hope the success of the first cluster meeting is a sign of future success for Roma Net.

Marie Wright
Project Co-ordinator
Glasgow

Using social marketing to support community engagement and Roma inclusion

Author – Dr Andy McArthur, The Social Marketing Gateway

Developing effective ways of engaging local communities in decision-making has been a feature of urban regeneration and social inclusion for many years. That we are still talking about how best to do it is testimony to the fact that in certain situations, and for some social groups (such as the Roma community), policy makers and practitioners do not have all the answers.

Participatory community engagement promises problems will be better understood and solutions will be more focussed on the needs of the citizen or customer. But it also calls for participants – officials, elected representatives and citizen customers alike – to behave differently and embrace new ways of working shoulder to shoulder with people that they are not used to sitting down at the same table with.

Behaviour change

Because 'behaviour change' is an important – and possibly a frequently forgotten – component of community participation and engagement, it is important to consider what social marketing might offer. Social marketing (the use of marketing for social good) is widely recognised as a valuable approach to encouraging behaviour change. It draws on commercial marketing thinking, the importance of being customer-focussed and ensuring that the products and services offered to people are things that they will value. Just as this thinking can be extended to how we design our public services, so it can be applied to engagement and participation.

Social marketing

We may assume that engagement and participation is a good thing, but each individual or group involved also needs to see a tangible and relatively immediate value to them in what is being offered – in this case the 'offer' is the opportunity to be involved in a participatory decision-making process. This is the essence of social marketing; i.e. people's behaviour is driven by weighing up the perceived costs and benefits from their own, immediate perspective. The question is then 'how can the opportunity to participate be made attractive to the many stakeholders who need to be involved?'

The challenge

When we start to think of engagement and participation in these terms, then the road to constructive community engagement with Roma is unlikely to be easy or smooth. With a history of exclusion from decision making, facing many barriers in accessing services and confronting discrimination and racism on a daily basis, can we really expect the participation 'offer' will be an attractive one?

The question should also be asked of other stakeholders – the professionals and experts who are unused to engaging directly with Roma, who may carry their own views and prejudices, and who work within organisations where institutional discrimination towards Roma can be embedded. We should certainly not underestimate the behavioural challenges associated with presenting an attractive participation 'offer' to the people expected to engage with the Roma.

Moving forward

Social marketing thinking can help build strong foundations for Roma engagement and participation by posing and working through potentially difficult questions as part of the planning process. An initial dialogue around the following questions would help:

- How do Roma representatives and other stakeholders currently perceive the whole issue of engagement and participation?
- What does each group see as the main barriers and opportunities surrounding participation?
- What practical things could be done to increase the attractions and rewards associated with participation for each group?
- And what practical things could be done to remove barriers to participation and/or make it difficult to continue with current practices that fail to engage with the Roma?



Engaging with the Roma community in Wales- Celebrating Roma culture and using it as a platform for active community participation.

In this way those responsible for planning and orchestrating the engagement and participation process will be in a stronger position. By posing these questions, they should be able to identify how they might incentivise the involvement of Roma and other stakeholders, and disincentivise the continuation of practices that mitigate against constructive participation.

Enhancing the engagement and participation process

Social marketing thinking, by starting out with how our intended customer or participant thinks and what they value, can help us plan and bring about the kind of engagement and participation we aspire to.

The costs of failing to lay the proper foundations are high. Without the direct involvement of Roma people in every step of the subsequent regeneration process - from gathering insight, through the design and delivery of programmes and projects, to evaluating outcomes - regeneration and social inclusion programmes designed with the Roma community in mind will be weakened.

Without genuine engagement, policies and programmes run the risk of lacking credibility with the people they are designed to help. Their voice is required not only to ensure that programmes will meet local need, but that they will be designed in ways that will be perceived as attractive and of value in the eyes of their intended citizen customers.

The Social Marketing Gateway is a collaborative network of behaviour change and social marketing practitioners. For more information about the Gateway:

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Interview with Antonella Nonino/Udine

What is your role/position in the City - how is it linked to the Roma-Net project?

I am the Deputy of the Mayor for the relationship with the Roma/Sinti community in Udine and, in close contact with the Mayor, I deal with every issue relating to its members, for instance education and tools to facilitate the access to school, housing problems, labour inclusion. I listen to the requests of the members of the community and provide for contacts and mediation with the institutional services (social services, public housing agency, schools) in order to try and solve conflicts and problems. I usually also answer to any question asked by the Minority with the Municipal Council and explain to the City proposals and ideas of the Administration about the relationship with the Roma/Sinti community.

It is the first time that Udine has a specific Deputy dedicated to Roma and this emphasises the importance of this issue for our Mayor's political and administrative mandate. "Roma-Net" is one of the most meaningful instruments for the City to realize ideas and enhance policies for Roma people, as well as to promote - on the one hand - a better understanding of their condition and - on the other - a weaker level of social conflict.

We hope that his project will promote the strategic sharing of knowledge and exchange of experiences, methodologies and good practice from other local initiatives, regarding the social inclusion of the Roma community.

What are the main challenges related to the Roma population in Udine?

It is crucial for Udine to promote compulsory education for Roma children and teen-agers, access to the labour market mainly for Roma youngsters, access to health and social services for their families and find a solution to housing problems and illegal settlements, where often safety is not assured.

What actions does the city have or plan to meet these challenges?

The city is trying to find a reasonable solution to illegal housing, negotiating both with other institutions and with the Roma families, in a participatory perspective. Another key action will deal with education, mainly in primary school, in order to avoid that Roma children of the camp will be excluded. Moreover, a longer path will regard the issue of labour inclusion, where more often Roma people suffer discrimination.

Based on the Udine learning cluster event what will be the next steps of the ULSG in Udine?

An LSG meeting was organised in December, in order to share views about the learning cluster, which was appreciated by all the participants, and in order to plan the actions of the next year. The next steps will concretely regard children and families, so that parents - and particularly mothers - participate to the education of their pupils, in co-operation with schools, social services and voluntary associations.

What are your first ideas on the Local Action Plan ?

They deal with concrete instruments to promote education for children, through intervention within the Roma camp.

Presentation of an Udine ULSG Member – Prevention Department



AUTONOMOUS REGION FRIULI VENEZIA GIULIA
HEALTH SERVICE n. 4 – Prevention Department of Udine

The Prevention Department is, within the Local Health Services, the structure taking care of collective health, with the purpose of promoting health and prevent diseases and disabilities through actions which aim at spotting and removing the environmental, human or animal causes of harm and disease.

The mission of the Prevention Department is to preserve population from infectious disease, which can be prevented by vaccine, in order to reach a high protection. Vaccination is a universally recognized tool to prevent from infectious diseases and it is necessary to preserve individual as well as collective health condition.

As for Roma population, particularly children, the Prevention Department organized vaccination campaigns within the Roma camps in Udine, in order to preserve individual and community health.

Since the invitation to vaccination usually is communicated by ordinary mail, the Prevention Department noticed that the answer of Roma families usually was not sufficient to assure a full protection to children: therefore, a “home” intervention was deemed necessary.

“Home” vaccination proved to be effective, since a trustworthy relationship was built between Roma population – especially mothers – and sanitary operators, who were allowed to enter daily life of the camp.

The vaccination campaign began in 1994. After a first contact with the Social Assistant, the health services visited the camp and informed the families, then assessed the vaccination situation of the children in the camp and, after obtaining the agreement of the families, organized the first campaign, implemented on a van set up as a consulting room.

The first vaccination campaign reduced the distance between health operators and Roma population in daily life; moreover, it raised awareness about health prevention activities against infectious diseases and allowed organizing new vaccination campaigns (almost twice a year).

The campaign is still going on, with vaccine interventions as well as with health education and promotion within the Roma camp; the latest vaccination intervention took place on 8 June 2010, in the same camp. The health operators realized that new generation are more sensitive to health problems and therefore they have voluntarily access to vaccination.

Fabbro Anna
Miceli Stefano
Prevention Department Udine

Interview with Mr. Makai

Minority municipal elections, and the Roma Municipal Government of Budapest

The Hungarian national and municipal minority elections were held in January, 2011. History of minority self-governance dates back to 1993, when a law was passed by the Hungarian Parliament on the issue. The first minority elections were held in 1994. This law, modified several times, receives criticism from minority experts and minority governments alike. This criticism is based on two main points: legitimacy concerns (there are electors chosen from among the minorities through the minority elections held about half a year earlier than national and municipal elections), and anomalies in the financing of the minority governments. A frequently appearing question regarding the Roma minority, is just how compatible is the Hungarian minority system that supports cultural autonomy, with the dominant interests of the Roma population.

Despite these problems, the minority municipal governments of Budapest achieved outstanding results in the last decade. They have created well functioning connections with their native countries, they organize a wide range of activities to preserve their cultural heritage, they organize conferences on their native languages, they maintain cultural heritage groups, they collect, document and teach their cultural values.

After the last elections, as usual, 11 minority municipal governments were set up in Budapest: Bulgarian, Romanian, Greek, Croatian, Polish, German, Armenian, Rusyn, Serbian, Slovakian and Roma.

Among the various organizations representing the Roma, the Roma Polgári Tömörülés received the majority vote. As a result, presidency of the Roma municipal government went to Mr. Istvan Makai, who was re-elected to this position after his first victory in 2006. The elections provide good feedback for the representatives on just how satisfied are the voters with their work, and their political heading.

In 2006, when Mr. Makai won the elections for the first time without any significant previous political activity, he had to quickly assess the tasks awaiting him; he had to lay down the goals he wished to achieve and had to begin building the external connections of the Roma Municipal Government of the Capital. From this perspective, I can attest to the excellent work done by Mr. Makai. Presently, the Roma municipal government of Budapest runs a number of services. These include legal aid and an advisory service on debts. The Roma municipal government's participation in education is characterized by its conference series on Roma adult education, and the municipal government also tries to lessen the prejudice against Roma in different fields, with the ultimate goal of creating a tolerant and accepting city atmosphere, which accepts and treats cultural differences appropriately.

The annually organized Roma-Hungarian blood donor day is already becoming somewhat of a tradition. Bearing the title "In Each Others' Eyes" the Roma municipal government designed and implemented a program with the participation of 20 primary schools, which aimed at emphasizing the importance of learning, and lessening the manifestation of all forms of aggression and discrimination among the children, their parents and their teachers. The municipal government also set up an employment service called "Új Híd", which signed co-operation agreements with both the Budapest Transport Ltd. and the Budapest Police Headquarters. And last but not least, the Roma Municipal Government of Budapest is part of the local support group set up under the aegis of the Roma-Net project, itself a part of the URBACT II. program.

Just after the last minority elections, we are asking Mr. Makai about his future plans, and the possibilities of connecting his work done in the municipal government with that under the Roma-Net project.

Mr. President, please evaluate the results of the elections from the perspective of the Roma Municipal Government of Budapest!

At the recent municipal minority elections, there was a 30% increase in the number of registered voters as compared to 2006. This increase in the number of voters indicates to me, that the Roma community wishes to participate more actively in minority politics, and as such, in public affairs.

The Roma Municipal Government of Budapest deems this to be a success, since this shows that the majority of the capital's Roma population moved in the right direction, and became an active participant of public affairs. This positive movement can be measured in numbers. The Roma Municipal Government of the Capital views the elections as a success, and wishes to build upon determined cooperation.

What do you think about the future of the Budapest minority municipal government, what are your main initiatives, and what will be your most important tasks?

We are committed to the implementation of all the projects we promised in our campaign. These include the MunkaTárs (Fellow Worker) Mentoring Programme, the New Bridge Employment Services Non-profit Ltd and the "In Each Others' Eyes" school anti-discrimination project. We'd also like to renew and widen our already implemented, finished projects.

Our ultimate goal is no less, than to achieve the true social integration of the Roma population

We strongly support close cooperation with the city's municipal government, the district municipal governments, the minority municipal governments, NGO-s, and everyone interested in public affairs.

Our goals and activities are based on three tiers:

- **Education**
- **Employment**
- **Showcasing cultural values**

The Roma Municipal Government was one of the first organizations which indicated its interest to be involved in the local support group of the Roma-Net project. What future possibilities do you see in an international partnership like Roma-Net?

Our main thought is that "Our past will be common in the future". Without us, no successful strategy or programs for the Roma minority can be designed and implemented.

We are aiming to be cooperating partners, and be able to accomplish our responsibilities as representatives of the Roma minority to the best of our abilities. We support the mutual familiarization between partners, discussions and conferences on our mutual issues, and resolving these issues via conferences, and the implementation of each others' proven practices. We believe it is very important for us to be able to present the local conditions on a national and international level.

The priority of Roma-Net is to achieve a positive, general effect on the Roma communities through reaching out to and involvement of Roma youngsters. What do you think about the current situation of young Roma citizens in Budapest?

I believe young Roma are committed to development and cooperation. We find it very important for these youngsters to be able to present achievements in cooperation with governmental and municipal organizations, of which we can be proud. The intelligentsia and responsible people must take part in the resolving of issues which pertain to the entire society. The abovementioned institutions provide fertile soil for the betterment of society.

There are two approaches to the situation of Roma youth. On the one hand, there is the support offered by municipal governments and minority municipal governments. On the other hand, NGO-s have a major role in this field. These organizations have to build upon the already started cooperation, and continue on the road of development together.

If there would be one thing that could change in Budapest because of the Roma-Net project, what do you wish it would be?

I'd like a change in society's image of the Roma minority. I'd also like society to be more accepting, and to recognize the value of Roma culture.

Roma-Net at the URBACT Annual Conference

Mr. Zoltan Laszlo, member of the Budapest ULSG spoke movingly about the challenges facing the Roma community and young Roma at workshop 4: Joining up services for active inclusion of specific groups. Zoltan emphasised the importance of the young people and this generation in breaking some of the bad practices of the clan system which were too often dependent on a single male figure to represent the community. The new approach has succeeded in bringing forward talented young men and women to participate in the Budapest LSG. Through personal stories of these young people, the audience got a very clear picture of the everyday struggles of the Roma communities and young Roma inside these communities.

To know more about the project please visit us at
www.urbact.eu/roma-net

