

THIRD STEP: TRANSLATING THE LOCAL DEVELOPMENT ACTION PLAN INTO CONCRETE MEASURES AND PROJECTS

The ROMACT team assists local authorities in translating the Local Development Action Plan into concrete measures and projects which are inclusive of all, including Roma. Where necessary, the ROMACT team provides expertise and working tools in policy and project design. In addition, a specific programme of training sessions and other capacity building services, including coaching and mentoring, can be organised. The ROMACT team also helps local authorities identify available resources and capacities.

FOURTH STEP: FUNDING, IMPLEMENTING AND MONITORING MEASURES AND PROJECTS FOR MAKING OPERATIONAL THE JOINT DEVELOPMENT ACTION PLAN

The ROMACT team assists local authorities in identifying available resources at local level and, where appropriate, in applying for and obtaining national and EU co-funding. Once measures and projects are funded and launched, the ROMACT team can provide management expertise to local authorities. The team also helps them to monitor the implementation of the measures and projects and to assess the impact thereof.

The provision of training sessions and other capacity building services is a modular process. For instance, it is not necessary to provide training to all stakeholders on all topics: capacity building is thus adapted to the local needs.

Throughout the ROMACT programme local authorities are part of a comprehensive process which helps them to assess needs, to develop and implement targeted policies, plans and projects as well as mainstream within local policies the priorities of Roma communities. The CAG is fully involved throughout the process.

The ROMACT management

The ROMACT programme is a joint programme of the European Commission and the Council of Europe, implemented by the latter.

A central team based in Strasbourg is responsible for the overall management of the programme, which includes the methodological development, the provision of implementation guidelines to National Support Teams, monitoring as well as administrative and financial management.

In each country, ROMACT is implemented by a National Support Team composed of two national project officers and several facilitators who intervene at local level in the municipalities participating in the ROMACT programme.

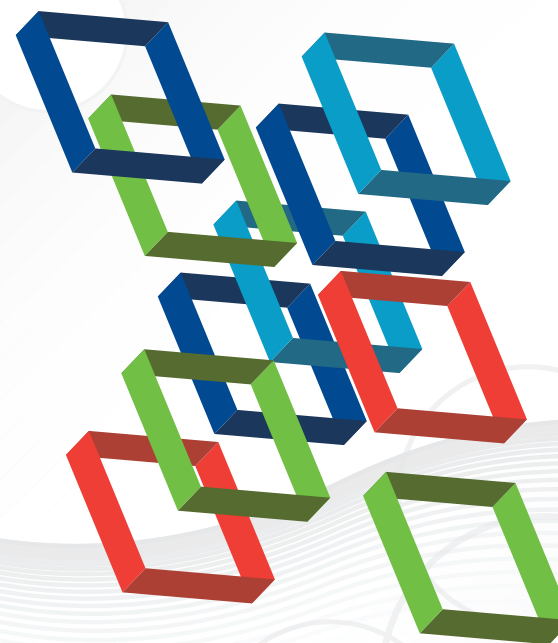
NATIONAL PROJECT OFFICERS:

- liaise with national level stakeholders, particularly national authorities and national associations of local authorities;
- mediate, in each participating municipality, between the local authorities, the Roma Community Action Group and the local ROMACT facilitator;
- coordinate the activities of facilitators.

FACILITATORS HELP TO:

- promote the dialogue between local authorities and the Roma Community Action Group;
- assess the needs of the local Roma community;
- integrate these needs in the Local Development Action Plan;
- design local policies, measures and projects implementing the Local Development Action Plan.

ROMACT
www.coe-romact.org



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

A European challenge: the need to act at local level

Many of Europe's 10-12 million Roma continue to face discrimination, exclusion and the denial of their rights. Concerted action is needed at all levels to address the multiple causes of Roma exclusion.

The social integration of Roma communities is a joint responsibility of Member States and the European Union. If the integration of Roma is to be successful, not only will Roma fully benefit from their rights as citizens, but they will also contribute to the social and economic development of the society. The EU has an important role in coordinating action by Member States and in supporting efforts being carried out by other partner organisations such as the Council of Europe.

In 2011, the European Commission put forward an EU Framework for National Roma Integration Strategies focusing on four key areas: access to education, jobs, healthcare and housing. This Framework is a solid process for coordinating action on Roma inclusion. It aims to guide national Roma policies and to mobilise funds available at EU level, in particular the European Social Fund, in order to support integration efforts. All Member States have now adopted Roma integration strategies and policies and the Commission monitors progress made in their implementation.

Nevertheless, achieving the integration of Roma communities requires action at local level. The implementation of national strategies and action plans eventually translates into measures involving local authorities and Roma communities.

The role of local authorities in integrating Roma communities living within their territory is thus crucial. Actively working towards the integration of Roma communities however requires political courage and commitment, adequate administrative capacity, consistent and lasting efforts and a strategic approach that goes beyond electoral cycles.

Furthermore, many local authorities are prevented from fulfilling their role because they are severely limited by human and financial resource constraints, political circumstances and language barriers, among others.

The ROMACT programme

This is what prompted the European Commission and the Council of Europe to launch the ROMACT programme in 2013, a joint initiative seeking to assist Mayors and municipal authorities in working together with local Roma communities to develop policies and public services that are inclusive of all, including Roma.

ROMACT aims to improve the responsiveness and accountability of local authorities, particularly elected officials and senior civil servants, towards marginalised Roma communities. It focuses on generating long-term sustained political commitment which will impel sustainable plans and measures for Roma inclusion.

ROMACT supports good governance mechanisms and processes, in line with the principles of good governance at local level of the Council of Europe. It thereby promotes cooperation and partnership between local authorities and Roma communities on the basis of jointly agreed working strategies and a shared ownership of the process and of outcomes. ROMACT also relies on a shared commitment to open dialogue between the majority and the minority.

ROMACT provides local administrations with working methods and tools to effectively reach out to and assess the needs of the communities where the most vulnerable citizens live. A primary emphasis of the programme is to provide facilitation for the strengthening of the capacity of local authorities to design and implement plans and projects for Roma inclusion. It also assists them in submitting quality applications for support from EU and national funds. It eventually leads to inclusive public services at local level.

Currently, ROMACT is implemented in some 40 municipalities in Bulgaria, Hungary, Italy, Romania and the Slovak Republic in synergy with the ROMED programme. ROMED, also a joint programme of the European Commission and the Council of Europe, aims to improve local governance, including school governance through mediation processes at the local level, in order to meet the needs and expectations of all, including Roma.

The ROMACT principles and methodology

The ROMACT programme aims to build the capacity of local authorities to develop and implement policies and public services that are inclusive of all, including Roma.

Policy change and capacity building are long-term processes which require a variety of interconnected instruments and interventions.

Considering the Common Basic Principles on Roma Inclusion, ROMACT is guided by the need to ensure:

- the promotion of a human rights approach, including equality and anti-discrimination principles;
- explicit but not exclusive targeting;
- an integrated approach, to avoid fragmentation;
- tackling local needs through local solutions with local people;
- mainstreaming the specific needs of disadvantaged Roma in all public policies;
- good governance and transparent decision-making processes, citizens' participation and accountability;
- evidence-based approach and transfer of good practices;
- promotion of gender equality and mainstreaming gender issues;
- better use of EU funds;
- performance evaluation.

A ROMACT toolkit will be made available to local authorities willing to implement the ROMACT methodology to integrate marginalised Roma communities living in their municipalities.

The ROMACT methodology consists of four steps:

FIRST STEP: RAISING AWARENESS AND BUILDING THE COMMITMENT OF LOCAL AUTHORITIES TO ROMA INCLUSION

The ROMACT team starts by raising awareness among local authorities of the necessity to integrate the Roma population as well of the opportunities, particularly economic, offered by Roma inclusion.

Local authorities (Mayors and local officials) participate in national workshops focusing on the key principles of good governance, the potential contribution of Roma to local development and the need for policy measures which take into account the needs of all.

This leads to the signature by the Mayor, of a commitment letter and agreement to allocation of municipality resources to the ROMACT process.

Once local authorities are convinced of the need to include Roma as full-fledged citizens within the municipality and are committed to work for that aim, the ROMACT team helps them cooperate with the local Roma community, represented by the Roma Community Action Group (CAG).

The CAG is made up of local Roma citizens who are committed to dealing with the challenges facing their community and are willing to enter into dialogue with local authorities.

The CAG becomes the interlocutor of the local authorities. In each municipality the ROMACT team facilitates regular contacts and meetings between local authorities and the Roma Community Action Group.

SECOND STEP: AGREEING ON WHAT NEEDS TO BE DONE TO IMPROVE THE LIVING CONDITIONS OF THE ROMA COMMUNITY

The ROMACT team helps local authorities identify the root-causes of the marginalisation of the local Roma community and what needs to be done. This process, which is carried out in partnership with the Community Action Group, contributes to mainstreaming Roma issues within the Local Development Action Plan of the municipality.