



EU NETWORK
OF INDEPENDENT
EXPERTS ON
SOCIAL INCLUSION

PROMOTING THE SOCIAL INCLUSION OF ROMA

HUGH FRAZER AND ERIC MARLIER

(NATIONAL UNIVERSITY OF IRELAND MAYNOOTH, CEPS/INSTEAD)

DECEMBER 2011

SYNTHESIS REPORT



On behalf of the
European Commission
DG Employment, Social Affairs
and Inclusion

*Disclaimer: This report reflects the views of its authors
and these are not necessarily those of either the
European Commission or the Member States.
The original language of the report is English.*



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Overview based on the national reports
prepared by the EU Network of Independent
Experts on Social Inclusion



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Preface

In a Communication issued in April 2011, the European Commission presented a European Union (EU) Framework for National Roma Integration Strategies up to 2020¹. This Framework seeks to ensure a more efficient monitoring of, and support to national and EU efforts with regard to Roma integration. This EU Framework should help guide national Roma policies and mobilise funds available at EU level to support Roma inclusion efforts. The Framework focuses on four pillars: access to education, jobs, healthcare and housing. Member States are expected to set individual national Roma integration goals in proportion to the Roma population on their territory and depending on their starting point. They have to submit national Roma strategies by the end of 2011 specifying how they will contribute to the achievement of these goals. These national strategies should pursue a targeted approach in line with the Common Basic Principles on Roma Inclusion².

In this context, the members of the EU Network of Independent Experts on Social Inclusion were asked, in their second 2011 country reports, to prepare country reports on the social inclusion of Roma. These reports are intended to contribute to the EU's work on economic and social inclusion of Roma, following up the 2011 Commission's Communication. Network experts from non-EU countries have also provided thematic reports on Roma (except Iceland). Experts for those Member States with very few Roma (i.e. LU, MT) did not prepare reports on Roma. Also the experts for Cyprus and Denmark, given the small numbers concerned, only produced short reports on Roma as part of wider reports on migrants and/or other ethnic minorities.

This Synthesis Report draws on the experts' reports covering 25 of the 27 EU Member States. It gives an overview of the situation of Roma in the EU, assesses existing policy and governance frameworks in Member States and identifies common themes among the key challenges that experts address to Member States in relation to their preparation of National Roma Integration Strategies. It also contains a series of suggestions for advancing future work at national and EU level on promoting the social inclusion of Roma.

We want to emphasise that in this Synthesis Report, where the experience in one or more individual Member States is highlighted, this is either because the independent experts from these countries have emphasised the particular point or because we think they represent a good illustration of the issue under discussion. Consequently, the fact that a particular country is mentioned does not necessarily mean that the point being made does not apply to other countries. In producing their reports, experts cite many different sources and reports in support of their analysis. References to these have not been included in this report. Readers wishing to follow up the original sources are invited to go to the individual experts' reports.

¹ European Commission, *An EU Framework for National Roma Integration Strategies up to 2020*, COM (2011) 173 final, Brussels. It is available at:

http://ec.europa.eu/justice/policies/discrimination/docs/com_2011_173_en.pdf.

See also the press release launching the Framework which contains more links to the EU's work on Roma:

<http://europa.eu/rapid/pressReleasesAction.do?reference=IP/11/400&format=HTML&aged=0&language=EN&guiLanguage=en>.

² The 10 Common Basic Principles on Roma Inclusion were presented at the first Roma Platform meeting on 24 April 2009. They comprise: 1) constructive, pragmatic and non-discriminatory policies; 2) explicit but not exclusive targeting; 3) intercultural approach; 4) aiming for the mainstream; 5) awareness of the gender dimension; 6) transfer of evidence-based policies; 7) use of EU instruments; 8) involvement of regional and local authorities; 9) involvement of civil society; and 10) active participation of Roma.

Summary, conclusions and suggestions

A. Summary

A.1 *Overview of the situation of the Roma in the European Union (EU)*³

At the outset, it should be stressed that giving a good picture of the situation of Roma in the EU is seriously compromised by the lack of data. Data either do not exist or are out of date or are partial and incomplete. Qualitative studies or local studies on particular issues are more common than comprehensive quantitative national reports. In some countries, information gaps have been exacerbated with the recent arrival of European Roma from other EU countries and from outside the EU.

The lack of data concerns a wide range of issues: lack of demographic data (population numbers, age, gender, geographical distribution, etc.); lack of data about income, wealth, poverty and social exclusion; lack of data about housing, health, education and employment outcomes; lack of administrative data (particularly in relation to access to services); lack of data about the extent to which Roma benefit from particular policies; lack of data about discrimination; etc. This lack of data has two very negative effects. First, it can serve to make the problems faced by Roma “invisible” and thus become an excuse for inaction. Secondly, it can undermine effective policy making and regular monitoring of the effectiveness of policies.

Roma population across the EU

There are no precise figures on the number of Roma in any Member State and national estimates vary widely. There is a very wide diversity across the EU ranging from those countries where the Roma make up between 5-8% of the total population to those where they are less than 0.5%. However, even in most of the countries where there are (relatively) small numbers of Roma, these numbers represent still a significant minority of people who very often experience high levels of poverty and social exclusion. Only in Cyprus, Luxembourg, Malta and, to some extent, Denmark and Lithuania, are the numbers so low as to be not very significant.

The age profile of Roma in all Member States is much younger than the national average, with a much higher proportion of young people and a relatively small older population.

The Roma in the EU are very heterogeneous and experts stress the diversity and complexity of Roma populations in their countries. There are “national” Roma who have been resident for many centuries but who may sub-divide into distinct groups. Then, there are immigrant Roma some of whom are very recent and some of whom have been in the country for several decades. There are also differences between immigrant Roma who are EU-citizens coming from other Member States and those who are 3rd country nationals. There are also significant differences based on socio-economic characteristics. In most countries, the majority of Roma have adopted settled lifestyles. However, in several countries (e.g. BE, IE, FR, NL) travelling remains important for part of the Roma population.

³ In the EU, the term “Roma” is used as an umbrella which includes groups of people who have more or less similar cultural characteristics, such as the Sinti, the Travellers, the Kalé, the “Gens du voyage”, etc. whether sedentary or not. So, the EU definition is very comprehensive and experts were asked to use this broad definition and thus to cover all these groups in their reports as appropriate.

Even though there is great diversity amongst Roma, there are many similar cultural characteristics shared by different groups of Roma. In particular, the extended family is the fundamental pillar both for care and support but also production in most Roma communities.

The geographical distribution of Roma varies greatly across countries - particularly the extent to which Roma are concentrated in disadvantaged (micro-)regions or segregated neighbourhoods. There are also significant variations in the extent to which Roma are concentrated in rural or urban settings. In many countries, there are regional concentrations of Roma and also a concentration of Roma in disadvantaged areas. Significant numbers of Roma live in segregated settlements though the nature of these varies widely.

Poverty and social exclusion

Overall, Roma experience more severe poverty and social exclusion than almost all other groups in the countries where they live. To a significant extent, this situation is the result of a complex mix of factors which also impact on other disadvantaged groups. However, Roma experience of poverty and social exclusion is compounded and intensified by deep-seated prejudice, racism and discrimination. While in many countries other minority groups are victims of such discrimination, it is often (even) more intense and severe for Roma. However, there are significant variations in the extent and depth of poverty and social exclusion experienced by Roma both within and between countries. In general, the Roma experience much higher levels of income poverty and deprivation than the rest of the population and have high levels of indebtedness.

Educational disadvantage is widespread among Roma and Roma children tend to attend school less frequently, to leave school much earlier and to achieve lower educational qualifications than the population as a whole. One of the consequences of low levels of education is that illiteracy is quite common among adult Roma. In several countries, segregation of Roma children remains a key issue and contributes significantly to negative educational outcomes.

In most countries, Roma experience serious disadvantage in the labour market. Low levels of employment, low quality employment and high unemployment are all common. The main factors that cause the high level of Roma exclusion from the labour market are a combination of low levels of education/skills and discrimination and prejudice. Also significant is the erosion of traditional economic activities in recent years. Regional factors can also be very important in explaining the high level of unemployment experienced by Roma. When Roma are in employment they generally experience poor quality and low paid employment. Roma women are generally less likely than men to have employment and to work in worse jobs. The current economic crisis is having a particularly severe effect on Roma's employment prospects.

In virtually all Member States, Roma have a significantly worse health status than the population as a whole. Life expectancy is shorter, infant mortality is higher, children are born smaller and chronic diseases are more common than for the population as a whole. However, in some Member States national health care systems have a much more positive mitigating impact on poor health than in others. Key factors explaining the poor health status of Roma include: poor housing and environmental conditions; high levels of poverty; poor access to clean drinking water; a tendency to only resort to health services in acute or emergency

situations; barriers to accessing health services; low levels of education and unhealthy lifestyle choices; and poor access to preventive health measures.

Many Roma live in very poor housing conditions and in an unsafe physical environment. There is often a high level of overcrowding; extensive leaks and damp problems; lack of adequate heating and insulation; lack of basic facilities such as clean running water, WC, shower, wired electricity, phone lines; lack of key utilities such as sewerage, public transport, rubbish collection, paved roads, pedestrian pavements and electric lighting; and lack of home/land ownership or legal tenure. A key factor is the extent to which many Roma live in isolated and segregated settlements and camps where such problems are intense.

These different aspects of poverty and social exclusion experienced by Roma are, as is also the case with other disadvantaged groups, mutually reinforcing. For instance: low levels of employment lead to low income which contributes to living in inadequate housing which is a factor in poor health and so on. The cumulative nature of disadvantages also contributes to the intergenerational transmission of poverty and social exclusion thus to the very disadvantaged situation of many Roma children. This complex and multi-dimensional cycle of poverty means that there is not one single solution but rather a need for integrated, cross-sectoral and multi-faceted responses

Discrimination

In all countries, Roma experience widespread and deep-seated discrimination and racism. Discrimination occurs both in society generally and in relation to key institutional areas such as employment, education, health and housing. Most Roma believe that they, more than any other ethnic group, are victims of discrimination. Negative stereotyping by the majority population remains a key issue and the media often play a key role in promoting and sustaining negative stereotypes. The economic crisis has led to an increase in discrimination and has fed racist discourse in the media on the expulsion of Roma from certain EU countries. This has also been compounded by the behaviour of extreme nationalist and racist political parties in several countries. The influx of new Roma groups into some Member States in recent years has also been a factor in public debate becoming increasingly intolerant.

Roma women and girls experience a high degree of gender inequality. This is often a combination of gender inequalities in society generally, gender inequalities resulting from poverty and social exclusion, and gender inequalities within Roma communities.

A.2 Assessment of existing policy and governance frameworks and identification of key policy priorities to be addressed in national Roma integration strategies

Important efforts have been made in recent years to develop strategic and fairly comprehensive frameworks to promote the integration of Roma in many Member States (e.g. BG, CZ, EL, ES, FI, HU, PL, RO, SI, SK). However, although progress has been made in some respects and while there have been many individual initiatives that have made a significant difference, overall the impact has been disappointing. In most countries, most Roma still lag far behind the rest of the population and continue to experience widespread poverty, social exclusion and discrimination. In other words, while overall policy frameworks have been improved and while much more is known about what needs to be done too often this has not been translated into reality on the ground. The political commitment and the commitment of resources have not

been sufficient to make a decisive impact and frequently this has been compounded by weaknesses in governance which have undermined effective implementation of strategies.

In contrast to those countries where there have been efforts to at least develop a reasonably comprehensive and strategic framework for the integration of Roma, there are many Member States which have not developed comprehensive strategies to promote the integration of Roma and where policies are either absent or else too piecemeal. However, in some countries while a comprehensive approach has not been developed Roma have been the focus of considerable policy activity over time and there has been some, but not sufficient, progress.

Overall approach

Drawing on lessons about what has worked and what has not worked, one can identify a number of key elements which should inform the development of National Roma Integration Strategies. These include:

- adopting a mainstreaming approach which recognises and strengthens the Roma community's place in society and national life;
- combining inclusive general policies (health, education, social protection, pensions, social services, social housing) with specific or targeted programmes for positive discrimination in favour of Roma in ways that contribute to integrating and not further separating and isolating them. This must involve ensuring that universal services take account of and are sensitive to the specificities of the Roma situation;
- developing a multidimensional, comprehensive, and coordinated approach at both national and local levels which integrates actions across a broad range of policy areas so that they are mutually reinforcing. An integration strategy should not be limited just to the four EU Roma integration goals relating to access to education, employment, healthcare and housing and environment but should also address income support as well as areas like transport and sport, recreation and cultural activities;
- ensuring that the integration and social inclusion of Roma is not viewed in isolation but is set in the broader context of both an overall social inclusion strategy and a comprehensive set of policies to promote the integration of all minority groups;
- developing territorial targeting of micro regions experiencing multiple disadvantage;
- adopting and enforcing strong anti-discrimination and equal opportunities legislation which ensures the protection of ethnic minority rights, including those of the Roma;
- developing proactive policies at national and sub-national levels to promote the integration of Roma and other EU citizens coming from other Member States including facilitating residence registration, access to employment and social services and to social protection;
- ensuring that the heterogeneity of Roma populations and the diverse situations affecting them are fully taken into account;
- giving attention to ensuring strong and continuous political leadership and to building the capacity, commitment and coordination of institutional structures in order to address existing political and organisational weaknesses that limit the effective design and implementation of Roma integration strategies; and
- ensuring that Roma are fully involved in the preparation, monitoring and implementation of the strategies aimed at promoting their social inclusion.

Increasing access to education

Experience shows that a broad range of actions are necessary to promote access to education among Roma children and to overcome educational disadvantage. These include:

- developing comprehensive policies to end the segregation of Roma children both in special schools (and separate institutions) and in special classes in ordinary schools, and promoting their full integration within the education system;
- increasing the participation rates of Roma children in education including ensuring that all children, including Roma children, within a country, can access compulsory education and thus removing any residence conditions for school registration;
- reducing early school leaving and promoting increased participation in tertiary education;
- addressing poverty and economic barriers and providing incentives to school participation;
- ensuring the involvement of all Roma children in pre-primary education as this is vital to ensuring their subsequent success in education;
- promoting integration in schools through recognising and valuing Roma culture and language and ensuring that all those involved in Roma education receive the training and capacity building necessary to develop inclusive schools;
- increasing the use of teaching assistants in schools where there are Roma pupils;
- promoting parental and community awareness of the value of education and their involvement in their children's education and strengthening home-school-community links;
- developing an inter-disciplinary approach that links education services, health services, social services and community and youth services;
- addressing gender inequality;
- addressing illiteracy and encouraging adult education; and
- addressing language barriers to participating in education and in society more widely.

Employment

A wide variety of actions need to be included in national Roma integration strategies in the area of employment. These range from measures to improve the employability of Roma, through measures to increase access to decent jobs, and to actions to enhance self-employment and reduce involvement in informal employment. As with education, a comprehensive and multidimensional approach is essential. Actions needed include:

- expanding Roma access to active labour market policies and to measures to increase their employability;
- addressing the lack of relevant skills and building on and recognise existing and traditional skills;
- supporting the development of self-employment opportunities for Roma and facilitating moving from employment in the informal economy to working in the "white" economy;
- tackling discrimination in the work place;
- involving and incentivising employers to employ Roma;
- promoting Roma quotas and positive discrimination;
- reducing labour market segregation and improving working conditions as Roma are over-represented in informal work, occasional work and low paid jobs (e.g. traditional crafts);
- developing integrated social protection, social services and employment policies;
- improving monitoring and evaluation of employment programmes; and
- avoiding regulatory barriers to Roma participation in particular occupations.

Healthcare and social services

A broad mix of policies is necessary to reverse the very poor health outcomes and the incidence of chronic illnesses experienced by many Roma. They range from increasing prevention through raising awareness and to improving access to health services. At the same time, health outcomes cannot be addressed solely by improved health provision. Healthcare needs to be part of a global plan to improve living conditions and, in particular, improve housing and environmental conditions. Actions needed include:

- strengthening preventive measures and promoting health education;
- extending health insurance coverage;
- expanding the use of health care mediators and other intermediaries;
- developing outreach services especially for children and families living in isolated settlements;
- improving access to primary health care by addressing the uneven/poor coverage of medical services among Roma communities;
- developing training for health professionals to sensitise them to Roma needs;
- involving Roma in the development of health services;
- improving data and research on health issues affecting Roma;
- increasing social work support for Roma communities; and
- developing day-care and community services.

Housing and environment

Given the often appalling housing and environmental conditions affecting the Roma, a comprehensive range of actions is necessary to change the situation. These include:

- improving data, mapping and monitoring of the housing situation as a prerequisite for effective policies;
- eradicating slums as well as insecure and improvised living conditions;
- investing in improving the quality and availability of housing, especially social housing and related services;
- increasing the number and quality of travellers' sites and related issues;
- developing a range of solutions reflecting the diversity of Roma situations;
- addressing ownership and tenancy problems and removing administrative barriers to residence registration;
- supporting housing and utilities' costs and reducing evictions;
- regulating the private rented sector;
- preventing outplacement of Roma to poor quality housing (by municipalities or other bodies) and avoiding their concentration in substandard housing areas; and
- encouraging cooperation between stakeholders and the participation of Roma in planning processes.

Income support

Income support systems play a key role in reducing the depth of poverty experienced by Roma in many countries but in some countries regressive (or flat-rate) tax and inadequate welfare systems are a major factor in Roma poverty and exclusion. Key areas that need to be addressed include:

- improving the adequacy and coverage of social protection schemes;
- linking income support schemes more closely with active inclusion measures and support services; and
- tackling problems of indebtedness.

Other policy areas

A number of other policy areas also are important to include in an overall strategy. These include:

- increasing access to public transport, particularly for isolate and segregated communities;
- increasing access to recreational and sporting facilities and activities; and
- supporting and promoting Roma cultural activities as well as enhancing Roma access to cultural activities.

Anti-discrimination and equality

It is of the utmost importance to strengthen efforts to counter discrimination and racism against Roma. This is vital as policy initiatives in other areas will not be successful if they are not backed up by strong anti-discrimination policies and programmes. In particular, a dual approach is needed which covers:

- strengthening and resourcing the infrastructure to implement and enforce anti-discrimination and equality legislation; and
- raising awareness, challenging stereotypes and promoting dialogue.

A number of other actions should also be developed. These include:

- monitoring the coverage of Roma in the media so as to counter discrimination;
- expanding conflict resolution and mediation services;
- improving legal safeguards for and enforcing rights of migrant Roma; and
- strengthening gender equality polices and systematically incorporating the gender dimension into any policy, measure or strategy addressing Roma communities.

Strengthening data collection, monitoring and evaluation

There is an urgent need to improve data collection and strengthen monitoring and evaluation of policies and programmes as a prerequisite for developing and implementing effective national Roma integration strategies. Overall, there is a need for more evidence-based policy making. Key ways to improve monitoring and evaluation include: improving indicators, improving data collection and research on all aspects of the socio-economic situation of Roma (e.g. developing more specialised and targeted surveys, developing and making better use of administrative records, mapping and surveying micro-regions experiencing multiple disadvantage),

introducing much stricter monitoring of the implementation of strategies and policies, and increasing participation of stakeholders in monitoring, and investing in capacity building.

Strengthening cooperation and dialogue

In most countries, in recent years, civil society organisations have played a key role in promoting the integration of Roma and in supporting the emergence of Roma Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs). Also in many Member States, particularly those with large Roma minorities, international organisations such as the Council of Europe, the European Commission, the EU Fundamental Rights Agency, the International Labour Organisation (ILO), the International Organisation for Migration, the Open Society Foundations, the Roma Education Fund, the United National Development Programme (UNDP), United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) and the World Bank have played a very important and supportive role.

A major lesson that emerges from this experience is that developing, implementing and monitoring strategies, policies and programmes to promote the integration of Roma without the full involvement of the Roma themselves will not work. Thus, strengthening cooperation and continuous dialogue between Roma and other actors such as national, regional and local authorities, international organisations and other NGOs and empowering Roma to have a voice in the decisions that affect them is essential. Key actions that are needed in this area include:

- developing partnerships and cross-sectoral committees at international, national, regional and local levels;
- investing in community development projects and capacity building initiatives that will empower and develop leadership in Roma communities;
- enabling greater Roma participation in public life and decision making; and
- emphasising long-term sustainability of initiatives.

Enhancing the use of EU Structural Funds

In many countries, the EU Structural Funds have been a very important resource supporting a wide range of initiatives aimed at promoting the social inclusion of Roma. However, many experts underline that overall they have been underutilised and their impact has been limited in most countries. They put forward a number of reasons for this including: limited availability of matching resources; limited administrative capacity to prepare projects for funding both at local authority level and amongst Roma NGOs; lack of coherent and coordinated planning linking national policies and funds with Structural Funds; lack of information about who are the beneficiaries of programmes; and limited assessment of the impact of programmes. Key actions needed to further strengthen the contribution of Structural Funds to Roma inclusion include:

- increasing the availability of national funds and using Structural Funds in a complementary manner;
- promoting greater use of Structural Funds for Roma projects;
- ensuring longer term funding and sustainability of programmes;
- ensuring better and more participative monitoring of the use made of funds;
- increasing the capacity of local authorities and Roma NGOs to make submissions, especially those in more isolated/poorer areas;

- using Structural Funds to develop integrated projects supporting the integration of Roma and other migrants from other EU Member States;
- expanding further the role of Structural Funds in helping the renovation of residential buildings and increasing the territorial targeting of Roma and other disadvantaged groups.

Integrating the Roma into the Europe 2020 Strategy

In spite of many Roma being a significant component of the Europe 2020 targets (in the fields of poverty and social exclusion, employment and also educational disadvantage), they do not feature in most Member States' national targets and they only feature in a small number of Member States' National Reform Programmes (NRPs). Thus, in most countries much needs to be done to better reflect Roma in the NRPs and in national poverty and social exclusion targets. There is an urgent need to establish a clear link between national Roma integration strategies and future iterations of the NRPs.

Amongst the actions that might be taken are for Member States:

- to explain how, in achieving their national Europe 2020 targets in the areas of poverty and social exclusion, employment and education they will reduce the gap between the Roma and the population as a whole. In this regard, they might consider setting specific sub-targets for reducing poverty and social exclusion, early school leaving and unemployment amongst Roma;
- to better reflect Roma in their NRPs and to make specific links between national Roma integration strategies and their NRPs;
- to identify specific measures in their NRPs which will contribute to the integration of Roma (and other disadvantaged groups), and to monitor the implementation of measures in NRPs for their impact on Roma.

B. Conclusions and suggestions

The Roma in the EU in all their rich diversity face shocking and unacceptable levels of poverty and social exclusion and are the victims of extensive discrimination, prejudice and racism. While the scale of the challenge varies widely across the EU, this appalling pattern of exclusion is repeated to a greater or lesser extent across the whole EU. At the same time, it cannot be divorced from the wider problem of poverty, social exclusion and discrimination that affects many other groups in society. Also, as with other groups, the situation of many Roma is deteriorating as a consequence of the current economic crisis and the introduction of austerity measures which hit hardest on the most vulnerable in society. Furthermore, it is clear that the problem will not go away. The Roma age profile is very young and poverty and exclusion is being passed on from one generation to another. That cycle of poverty and exclusion must be broken.

At the same time, it must be acknowledged that there have been many positive initiatives in recent years to support the integration of Roma and there have been many significant successes. There is thus a great wealth of learning on which to build. This report has documented much of what needs to happen if the gap between Roma and the wider population is to be bridged. The national Strategies for Roma Integration to be submitted by all Member States at the end of 2011 provide an important opportunity to break the cycle and to make a decisive leap forward. Experience has shown that they will not do so unless they are backed

by real political commitment and leadership, unless Roma are involved in their preparation, implementation and monitoring, unless they contain very specific and concrete measures (not just general aspirations), unless they are properly and substantially funded by national, EU and international sources, and unless real attention is given to their actual implementation on the ground.

This report already contains a detailed list of suggestions on the range of actions that need to be incorporated into the national Strategies for Roma Integration. These are not repeated in detail here. However, we would emphasise a number of overarching suggestions for advancing work to promote the social inclusion of Roma.

1. EU and national political leaders must give more continuous and visible leadership to efforts to tackle the poverty and social exclusion experienced by Roma and to oppose the discrimination and racism that they and other minority groups experience.
2. Efforts to tackle the poverty and social exclusion experienced by Roma should be set within the wider context of the overall Europe 2020 Strategy and, in particular, within its social inclusion objective. They should, therefore, be linked with:
 - a. the setting of national Europe 2020 targets in the fields of employment, education and poverty and social exclusion;
 - b. the preparation and implementation of NRPs;
 - c. the work of the “reinvigorated” Social Open Method of Coordination (OMC) and, in particular, the annual reporting on social protection and social inclusion issues recently agreed (2010) in this context;
 - d. the work of the European Platform Against Poverty and Social Exclusion (EPAP).
3. The contribution and proportion of the Structural Funds that can be used to support the implementation of national Roma integration Strategies should be strengthened. In this regard, consideration could usefully be given to:
 - a. ring-fencing a significant proportion of Structural Funds going to Member States to support the implementation of comprehensive and multi-dimensional national Roma integration strategies;
 - b. making on-going funding for relevant projects conditional on evidence of the extent to which Roma are benefiting and participating;
 - c. investing more in building administrative, statistical and analytical capacity in micro-regions of high disadvantage and among Roma organisations to avail of EU funding.
4. The European Commission (including the EU Statistical Office [Eurostat]) and the Social Protection Committee (through its Indicators Sub-Group) could consider developing guidelines and providing advice to Member States on how to overcome data gaps and analytical gaps in relation to the income and living conditions of Roma as filling these gaps may represent important methodological (and sometimes also legal) challenges.

5. In the context of the monitoring of the economic and financial crisis, of the on-going monitoring of progress of Member States towards the Europe 2020 targets (in the fields of education, employment and social inclusion) and of the annual reporting on social protection and social inclusion as part of the reinvigorated Social OMC, the European Commission, the Social Protection Committee and the EU “Employment, Social Policy, Health and Consumer Affairs” (EPSCO) Council of Ministers could give particular attention to the monitoring of the social inclusion of Roma.
6. In view of the EPAP role in promoting integration across policy areas, a specific strand of its activities should focus on how to increase synergies between work on poverty and social exclusion, gender equality, anti-discrimination, employment, education, health and fundamental rights.
7. In the context of the Lisbon Treaty’s “Horizontal Social Clause”⁴ and the related EU and Member States’ commitment to mainstream social objectives across all policy areas through the use of Social Impact Assessments, particular attention should be given to assessing the impact of policies on the social situation of Roma.
8. In the context of the Social OMC and the EPAP, the European Commission and Member States should consider giving a high priority to:
 - a. documenting successful initiatives to promote the social inclusion of Roma.
 - b. “clustering” existing research projects in order to draw out strongly evidence-based results highlighting effective policies.
 - c. stimulating the exchange of learning and good practice.
9. The Social Protection Committee and the European Commission in their on-going work on key thematic issues should reflect on how to best take into account Roma inclusion in their work. In particular:
 - a. the high level of poverty and exclusion experienced by Roma children should be given attention in the on-going work on this issue and, especially, in the development of a Commission Recommendation in 2012 and its subsequent follow up;
 - b. work on the promotion and monitoring of active inclusion should give particular attention to how active inclusion programmes are reaching out to Roma and other disadvantaged minorities;
 - c. work on the issue of housing exclusion and homelessness should give a high priority to addressing the appalling housing conditions experienced by many Roma.
10. The European Commission should monitor closely the situation of Roma EU citizens and other groups moving to and setting up in other EU Member States. In particular, it should report regularly on the progress being made by Member States, at both national

⁴ The so-called *Horizontal Social Clause* (Article 9 of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union (TFEU)) states that: “In defining and implementing its policies and activities, the Union shall take into account requirements linked to the promotion of a high level of employment, the guarantee of adequate social protection, the fight against social exclusion, and a high level of education, training and protection of human health.” It is important to highlight that “the Union” refers here to both the EU as a whole and its individual Member States.

and sub-national levels, to ensure that the fundamental right to free movement and residence is respected and supported. It should assess the extent to which difficulties or barriers to registration of residence are being removed, access to essential services (e.g. health, education, housing, social protection) is being ensured and labour market integration is being supported.

11. When working to raise public and political awareness of the nature and extent of poverty and social exclusion and of the measures necessary to address it, the European Commission and the Social Protection Committee should make particular efforts to counter negative stereotyping and blaming of Roma and other groups living in poverty in the media.
12. When assessing the national Roma Integration Strategies from a social inclusion perspective, the Commission and the Social Protection Committee could consider the extent to which these strategies:
 - a. are evidence based;
 - b. are comprehensive and multi-dimensional (thus covering income support and anti-discrimination as well as education, employment, health and housing policies);
 - c. contain specific quantified targets linked to the achievement of the overall Europe 2020 targets;
 - d. contain specific budgets (coming from both national and EU Structural Funds) linked to specific actions;
 - e. include clear governance arrangements which are necessary for effective implementation, and will ensure:
 - i. on-going political leadership and coordination;
 - ii. effective horizontal coordination and integration across all relevant policy areas at both national and sub-national levels;
 - iii. strong linkages to other strategic initiatives such as NRPs, National action plans on social inclusion, national anti-racism and equality strategies etc.;
 - iv. effective vertical coordination between national and regional/local authorities;
 - v. effective monitoring and reporting on implementation;
 - vi. the involvement and empowerment of Roma in the design, implementation and monitoring of policies and programmes aimed at promoting the social inclusion of Roma.

1. Overview of the Situation of the Roma in the EU

1.1 Roma population across the EU⁵

This is a brief description of some of the main characteristics of the Roma population across the EU.

Population size

There are no precise figures on the number of Roma in any Member State and most experts report widely varying estimates in their countries. There are a number of reasons for this. First, census figures, when they do contain ethnic information, are often unreliable because many Roma choose not to identify themselves as Roma. Secondly, many countries do not collect ethnic data either in their census or in the context of other data collections. Thirdly, the scale of recent influxes of Roma into some Member States is largely undocumented. However, it is useful to identify those countries where Roma are a very large minority group and those where the numbers are relatively small. Even in most of the countries where there are only a relatively small number of Roma, they are still a significant minority and, as will be highlighted later, they very often experience very high level of poverty and social exclusion. Only in Cyprus, Luxembourg, Malta and, to some extent, Denmark and Lithuania, are the numbers so low as to be not very significant. As can be seen from Box 1.1 there is a great diversity in the size of the Roma population across the EU.

Box 1.1 – Roma population in the EU

Roma as % of total population	Numbers of Roma			
	400,000-2,000,000	100,000-400,000	30,000-100,000	< 30,000
5-8%	BG, HU, RO, SK			
1-5%	ES, FR	CZ, EL		
0.5-1.0%	UK		AT, IE, PT, SE	
< 0.5%		DE, IT	BE, NL	CY, DK, EE, FI, LT, LU, LV, MT, PL, SI

This table is only indicative. In most cases, in placing countries in different boxes a population figure somewhere in the middle of the range reported by experts has been selected. For more detail about the size of the Roma population readers should look at the individual country reports.

Age

The age profile of Roma in all Member States is much younger than the national average, with a much higher proportion of young people and a relatively small older population. For example:

- in Hungary, birth rates are far higher among the Roma population, but so is mortality, which means that the share of under-15-year-olds among the Roma population is more than

⁵ As mentioned above, in the EU the term "Roma" is used as an umbrella which includes groups of people who have more or less similar cultural characteristics, whether sedentary or not. So, the EU definition is very comprehensive and experts were asked to use this broad definition in their reports as appropriate.

double the national average: 16.8% of Hungary's total population vs. 37% of Roma, while the ratio of people aged over 60 is five times higher than among the Roma population: 20.2% vs. 3.9%;

- in the Czech Republic, the age structure is much "younger" when compared to overall population: 30% of Roma are below 15 years, whereas only 5% are over 60;
- in Ireland, in the last Census, 42% of Travellers were under 14 years of age and only 2.7% were aged 65 years or over (compared with 20% and 11% respectively of the total population). The Traveller population is more characteristic of a pyramid of a developing country, marked by high fertility and premature mortality. Travellers are more likely to marry at a younger age. For example, almost a quarter of Travellers aged between 15 and 24 years are married compared to 2% for the population as a whole. The demography can be traced to a combination of high family formation and birth rates, high infant mortality, low life expectancy and high morbidity;
- in Italy, the percentage of Roma aged less than 16 years (45%) is three times the national average for the same age group (15%), while the percentage of Roma aged over 60 (0.3%) is about one tenth of national average for the same age group (25%);
- in Romania, there are more young (under 15) Roma than old (60+) whereas this is reversed for the main population;
- in Slovakia, the share of children under 14 years of age is about 25.5% in the total population and about 43.6% in the Roma population. Only 3.6% of Roma are older than 60 years (14.5% in the total population);
- in Spain, between 34 and 40% of the Roma are under 16, whereas only 4% are over 65. Those aged between 16 and 44 years make up between 44 and 47% of the total. However, the Roma population is beginning to age as there are increasing numbers of over 65s and the birth rate is falling.

Heterogeneity

A very strong theme in the experts' report is the heterogeneous, diverse and complex nature of the Roma communities in their countries. There are "national" Roma who have been resident for many centuries but who may sub-divide in distinct groups. Then, there are immigrant Roma some of whom are very recent and some of whom have been in the country for several decades. There are also differences between immigrant Roma who are EU-citizens coming from other Member States and those who are 3rd country nationals. The following are some examples of the diversity of Roma in different Member States:

- in Austria, some Roma have been present for a very long time whereas others have arrived more recently. Some of the latter who came within earlier waves of migration are often Austrian citizens today or have a permanent legal residence status, whereas people who came later (especially if they do not come from EU Member States) often lack a persistent residence permit, but live here as asylum seekers or eventually without any official status at all. There are also travelling Sinti and Roma from Western Europe who occasionally come to Austria during the summer months and, in recent years, some Roma from Eastern European countries coming to Austrian cities mostly on a short- and sometimes medium-term basis and begging on streets and places;
- in Belgium, there are two groups. The first group is made up by the so-called "Travellers", who have lived in Belgium or neighbouring countries for centuries. The second group consists of the Roma themselves, who are mainly recent migrants from Eastern and Central Europe, coming either from new EU Member States or from third countries.

Although both groups are confronted with stigmatisation and discrimination, they are distinct in terms of history, legal status and lifestyles. They also face different problems in terms of integration;

- in Bulgaria, the majority of Roma are either “Bulgarian Roma” or “Turkish Roma” but there are also the smaller groups, “Wallach Roma” (“rudari”) and the “kardarashi”. The Bulgarian experts report on a study showing that only two thirds of Roma actually say they are Roma. Turkish speaking Roma who identify themselves as Turks are one fifth. Every 10th among the Roma identify themselves as Bulgarians; they are the most integrated and have the best education. Those who identify themselves as Wallach are less than 10%;
- in France, there have been Romani travellers since the 15th century but more Romani sub-groups arrived in the 20th century from Bosnia and the Ottoman empire from 1914 onwards and then from ex-Yugoslavia from 1960 onwards. Their numbers increased after 1990 with a first surge after the fall of the Iron Curtain and a second surge between 2000 and 2010 from Romania, Bulgaria and Hungary (15,000 to 20,000 Roma travellers recently arrived from Romania, Bulgaria and Hungary). The French refer to them by a number of names (Tsiganes, Gitans, Manouches, Yéniches and Roms). They are highly diverse but have common characteristics relating to their way of life, the economy and the importance of the family group;
- in Germany, the Roma are a rather heterogeneous population group: Firstly, there are a considerable number of Roma people who have lived for generations in Germany and have the legal status of Germans. Secondly, there are Roma people from other EU Member States who live temporarily or permanently in Germany. Thirdly, there is a group of Roma people who immigrated from countries outside the EU. Many of them have come as refugees from Kosovo and live as “tolerated refugees” in Germany. As such, “they normally get an assigned dormitory where they have to stay and live”, and they live under the threat of being forced to move back to their former country where they are under great risk of being discriminated against;
- in Hungary, the Roma population is divided into at least 3 main distinct linguistic groups: “a) Hungarian Roma [magyar cigányok], who speak Hungarian, identify themselves as Hungarian or Musician Roma, and are sometimes called Romungro (70% of the Roma population); b) Vlach Roma [oláh cigányok], who speak two languages, Hungarian and Romani (Lovari and Kalderash dialects), and who identify themselves as Roma or Rom (20%); and c) Beás people [beások], who speak two languages, Hungarian and Beás (dialects based on an archaic form of Romanian), and who identify themselves as Beás (10%)”; but some identify at least 6 groups. Approximately 87% speak Hungarian as their mother tongue, but this group is further divided according to their (past) occupation or livelihood (musician, basket weavers, adobe makers etc.). Language groups are further divided by kinship, craft, income and locality. Attitudes to majority norms and integration vary by subgroup. There is a hierarchy and there are conflicts between the various groups;
- in Italy, nearly half of Roma have Italian citizenship, 20-25% are from other EU Member States (chiefly Romania) and the rest are either from non-EU States or they are stateless (mostly from the former Yugoslavia countries). Thus, many are considered as illegal immigrants or do not have Italian citizenship although they may be born in Italy or have lived in Italy for generations. Roma form a “galaxy” of different populations that has resulted from several migratory waves (from the 14th century). There are three macro linguistic communities, namely Sinti, Roma and *Camminanti* (Travellers). Sinti and Roma have several dialects in common that constitute the Indo-European Romani language (*romanés*), while *Camminanti* speak a local language;

- in the Netherlands, the Roma, Sinti and Travellers are not homogeneous communities. There are clear indications that they differ on the basis of their migration history, gender and generation;
- in Poland, Roma belong to four ethnic groups (Polska Roma, Bergitka Roma, Kelderari and Lovari). Bergitka Roma differ from the other groups in terms of customs, codes (less restrictive) and standard of living (very low for most of the group), which makes their acceptance by the others difficult;
- in Slovakia, there are four main Roma subgroups: Slovak Rumungros, Hungarian Rumungros, Vlachika and Sinti. Rumungros constitute the largest subgroup (90%). According to experts, Rumungros tend to identify themselves with “average or typical Roma”. It is not the case for the Vlachika or Sinti who stress their group identity as they consider themselves to have higher social status than “average Roma”;
- within the United Kingdom (UK), the term “Roma” refers to Romani people migrating predominantly since the mid-1990s and is used to differentiate them from related but separate groupings including Gypsies, Romanies, Scottish Gypsies, Irish Travellers, Travellers and New Travellers.

Another aspect of the heterogeneity of Roma that is highlighted by some experts is differences based on socio-economic characteristics. For instance, the Spanish expert points out that there are three main groups of Roma: first, a small group of those in stable professions and with high levels of income and education; secondly, a significant group who are living very precariously in segregated settlements; and, thirdly, the majority, those who live in large urban nuclei; they work in mobile trading but are slowly accessing to the labour market as salaried employees, accessing universal public services and attempting to gain training and integrate into education institutions.

Several experts emphasise the distinction between Roma who are citizens or at least long-term residents in a country and those who are recent immigrants. Significant groups of recent immigrant Roma are more evident in many of the older Member States (e.g. EL, ES, IT, UK). For instance, in Greece the expert reports that “informal estimates of the number of immigrant Roma in Greece put the figure at tens of thousands, probably close to or possibly even more than 100,000. Most of them come from Albania, but others come from Bulgaria, Kosovo, the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia and Romania. Some of them are temporary migrants, performing in particular seasonal agricultural work in Greece, and then returning home.” The UK expert notes the big influx of Roma from eastern European countries and comments that they “can be seen to occupy a position somewhere in the grey area between ‘forced’ and ‘voluntary’ migration embodied in popular constructions of economic migrants and asylum seekers”.

Settled vs. nomadic

In most countries, the majority of Roma have adopted settled lifestyles. As the Italian expert points out, the largest share of Roma (nearly 80%) abandoned the nomadic life to become sedentary. Likewise, the Greek expert notes that the Roma tend to become “sedentarised” and the Spanish expert reports that nomadic lifestyles have practically disappeared. The Portuguese expert comments that “the vast majority are sedentary rather than nomadic, contrary to what is often voiced by the general population”. However, in several countries (e.g. BE, FR, IE, NL) travelling remains important for part of the Roma population. Thus, the French

expert comments that “travelling has become a fundamental aspect of their culture even though it is only a way in which one part of the population has adapted”.

Family

Even though there is great diversity amongst Roma, most experts highlight that there are many similar cultural characteristics shared by different groups of Roma. In particular, many experts stress that the extended family is the fundamental pillar both for care and support but also production in Roma communities. For instance, the Greek expert comments that “a still prevalent foundational feature of their social organisation is the *extended patriarchal family*, with all that this entails in terms of power relations within the family life cycle”. However, several experts (e.g. ES, FR) note that change is happening as there is a progressive move from extended to nuclear family and from high to lower birth rate. The combination of the extended family and high birth rates also means that a common feature of Roma households is that they are larger than the national average. For example, in 2001, in Hungary the average number of persons per Roma household was significantly higher (4.64) than the national average (2.57).

1.2 Geographical variations within countries

The geographical distribution of Roma varies greatly across countries - particularly the extent to which Roma are concentrated in disadvantaged (micro-)regions or segregated neighbourhoods. There are also significant variations in the extent to which Roma are concentrated in rural or urban settings. Thus, in some countries (e.g. CZ, EL, ES, IT) Roma are concentrated in large and medium size cities whereas in other countries (e.g. BG, DE, RO) they are spread across the country with both urban and rural concentrations. For instance:

- in Bulgaria, Roma are spread across all regions but there are much greater concentrations in some municipalities;
- in the Czech Republic, the expert reports about his country that “we do not find totally segregated Roma villages in countryside like in Slovakia – rather Roma live in cities and they are mostly settled in a part of the city/village”;
- in Germany, Roma, contrary to the other minority groups, are not living in a particular area, but in the metropolitan areas, mainly in the Western states of Germany;
- in Greece, the Roma community settlements are scattered all over the country with greater density in certain regions, including the greater Athens area. Yet, in most cases, they live in isolated settlements, separate from the rest of population and do not mix with non-Roma;
- in Hungary, there is significant and increasing regional concentration of the Roma (in the NE and SW parts of the country). Lots of Roma live in the most disadvantaged small rural settlements, often in segregated housing;
- in Romania, the rural areas register a higher concentration of Roma, where they make up 3.2% of the total population, as compared to 1.8% in urban areas (2002 census).

In many countries, there are regional concentrations of Roma and also a concentration of Roma in disadvantaged areas. For instance:

- in France, the Romani population can be divided into three sub-populations based on the route by which they arrived in France: a) the Roma from Eastern Europe who settled in eastern France, particularly in the Vosges and Alsace; b) the Manouches and Sinti from Italy, the Balkans and Germany, who settled in eastern France and the area round Lyon;

- and c) the Gitanos and Kales from northern Africa, Portugal and Spain, who settled in southern France and often set up permanent homes. Recently, Roma coming from Eastern Europe have set up shanty towns in the Lyon region, and to the north and east of Paris;
- in Hungary, there is significant and increasing regional concentration of the Roma and an overlap between the high share of Roma population and the most disadvantaged micro-regions of the country;
 - in Italy, seven out of the twenty Italian regions might account for 80% of the total “Roma” population;
 - in Slovakia, at least two thirds of Slovak Roma live in the Central and Eastern part of the country. Districts with higher proportion of Roma have above-average unemployment, lack vacancies, have less developed transport infrastructure and other public services;
 - in the UK, a series of small-scale studies suggest that the UK Roma are concentrated within relatively few areas, particularly the North (e.g. Doncaster), North and East London and parts of the South East, and the East Midlands, within England, with some groupings in and around Glasgow (Scotland), Cardiff (Wales) and Belfast (Northern Ireland). The country of origin of these concentrations varies from one area to another although it appears that there is a form of chain migration taking place whereby many Roma come to specific sites of settlement from particular areas within their countries of origin.

Significant numbers of Roma live in segregated settlements though the nature of these varies widely. For instance:

- in Bulgaria, ghetto-like Roma neighbourhoods are widespread in both urban and rural areas;
- in the Czech Republic, there are about 330 socially excluded Roma communities in the country (most of them in areas of high unemployment) where about 60-80,000 Roma are living and where unemployment is estimated between 90-100%. About one fourth of these communities are spatially segregated;
 - in Hungary, the proportion of Roma living in segregated housing is approximately one fifth to one quarter of the estimated number of Roma people in Hungary. Segregation is getting stronger: in 1993 over 60%; in 2003 over 70% of the Roma lived in Roma neighbourhood;
- in Italy, Roma people live prevalently in segregated and shanty neighbourhoods, mainly in big cities and many have been progressively leaving rural areas to reach urban suburbs since the 1960s. Nearly 30% live in camps characterised by socio-environmental degradation. For them, Italy is a land of segregated ghettos without the minimum requisites for human health, dignity and physical integrity;
- in Portugal, in spite of the geographical dispersion of the gypsy communities all over the territory, there has been a concentration of many gypsy families in specific urban neighbourhoods, namely as a consequence of rehousing programmes which were intensified in the late 1990s, beginning of 2000. This concentration has in the vast majority of cases also meant spatial segregation of these and other disadvantaged groups of population;
- in Romania, generally, the Roma live in relatively detached Roma communities;
- in Slovakia, two third of Roma “live integrated and dispersed among the majority (though often in specific streets or blocks of flats)”. The remaining third “live in separated or segregated settlements (*rómske osady*)”. Roma settlements are divided into the following types: urban or rural concentrations (three or more houses inhabited prevalently by Roma) located within the main boundaries of town or village; larger concentrations located on the

margins of village or a town; and settlements located at some distance from town or village, often separated by natural or artificial barrier. The greater the distance of a settlement from a town or village the worse are the living conditions of its inhabitants.”

1.3 Poverty and social exclusion of Roma

Overall, Roma experience more severe poverty and social exclusion than almost all other groups in the countries where they live. To a significant extent, this situation is the result of a complex mix of factors which also impact on other disadvantaged groups. However, their experience of poverty and social exclusion is compounded and intensified by deep-seated prejudice, racism and discrimination. While in many countries other minority groups are victims of such discrimination, it is often (even) more intense and severe for Roma.

The complex interaction of poverty and discrimination is well expressed by the Belgian experts who conclude that “whereas the patterns of poverty and social exclusion of the Roma are to some extent the same as those observed for other population groups, they are considerably exacerbated by the strong racial discrimination they have to face”. This is also echoed by the Romanian expert when she writes that “exclusion among the Roma population has been related to a broad range of contributing factors, including: widespread social inequality and discrimination, poor living standards, lack of identity documents, reduced access to public goods and services, lack of education and reduced access to employment and poor housing conditions (overcrowding, poor infrastructure) as well as some unique aspects of the social organisation of Roma society. However, in Romania, many of the issues that affect deprived Roma communities also affect deprived non-Roma communities and underdevelopment and poverty are not just limited to the Roma minority.” Likewise, the Portuguese expert stresses that “the complexity of the social inclusion challenges facing the Portuguese gypsy communities in areas such as housing, education, income, employment, health and social protection has to be understood as a result of the interaction between major exclusion mechanisms affecting the overall population and some cultural and social features that characterise the diverse living realities of gypsy communities in Portugal”. This multi-dimensional nature of poverty and social exclusion is also emphasised by the Greek expert who reports that “it is commonly accepted that the Greek Roma community faces persistent inequalities in all aspects of life, including access to education of Roma children, the right to housing and to other basic social goods, let alone the excessive exercise of police violence”. The multiple nature of poverty and social exclusion and its link with discrimination which is experienced by Roma is well summed up by the Swedish expert when he writes that “there is a strong, almost unbreakable pattern of social, economic and political exclusion and marginalisation. 80% of adult Roma are estimated to be unemployed. A majority of Roma children do not complete primary school, very few continue to secondary school and even fewer reach university level. Functional illiteracy is not uncommon among adult Roma. Health problems start earlier, there are life style related health problems, and life expectancy is clearly below average. Living standards are lower than average. Children do not have full access to education in their mother tongue as stipulated in law. Roma cultural institutions and media are few and Roma are virtually absent from politics, their civil society organisations are weakly developed and they have no official representation as a minority, nor their own national organisation.” This is a picture that is repeated time and again across the EU.

Many experts (e.g. AT, FR, IT) also stress that the extent of poverty and social exclusion varies significantly between Roma. For instance, the Austrian experts note that a “substantial

variation in living conditions is present between as well as within different groups of the Roma population. However, common features are a rather low educational attainment and – in case of dependent employment – a rather low occupational status.” The Italian expert comments that “recently immigrated ‘Roma’ communities face more difficult and precarious living conditions than those already settled (e.g. in Napoli and Milano). For instance, comparisons between current living conditions and those recorded twenty years ago demonstrate a clear improvement for the older immigrant generations but not for the recent Romanian Roma and those coming from Macedonia or Kosovo, who constitute half of the current ‘Roma’ population living in Milano. Improvement in household income and housing conditions characterises the older generations: no more tents and shacks but containers, camper vans, caravans, and small-prefabricated houses. A kind of social stratification among the poorest can be discovered in Milano.”

1.3.1 Income poverty and deprivation

Most experts stress that there is a lack of data to enable accurate comparisons between the poverty situations of Roma and the population as a whole. In spite of this, all are clear that Roma experience high and sometimes very high levels of income poverty and deprivation. As the Slovak expert comments “Roma are underrepresented in the important statistics so we can only guess that the risk of poverty and severe deprivation hits much greater shares of the population than the Slovakia average”. Certainly, the limited data that are available reinforce the view that generally Roma experience much higher levels of relative income poverty. For instance:

- in Bulgaria, the most recent relative income poverty figure (using 60% of the equivalised median income as the poverty line) shows that the poverty among Roma is more than 4 times as high as that among the Bulgarian population. Only one in three Roma is above the poverty line. The poverty gap is also much greater. Data show also that poverty is more prevalent among the urban Roma and that there are greater variations in the depth of poverty among the Roma;
- in Hungary, the latest income data indicate that 70% of the Roma are poor, though it should be noted that due to the small sample size these data cannot be considered as representative;
- in Italy, the expert estimates that the largest majority of Roma are poor and represent approximately 1.5% and 1.1% of the total population at risk of poverty or social exclusion, respectively. Roma would represent roughly 8% of the Italian target to reduce overall poverty according to the Europe 2020 Strategy;
- in Romania, the poverty risk among the Roma was 58% in 2006 which was 4 times higher than for the majority population;
- in Slovakia, a proxy for the level of Roma poverty is that of households with low work intensity and households with three and more children. The risk of poverty in households with three or more children is almost three times higher than in the general population and in jobless households it is even five times higher. 67.7% of people living in households with 6 or more children had income lower than 60% of median income in EU-SILC 2009;
- in Spain, the 60% median poverty rate for the Roma community is 4.5 times that of the non-Roma Spanish population (nearly 8 in 10 homes) and, more worryingly, the 30% median poverty (“severe” poverty) is multiplied by 11 (one in every 3 households).

The same is true of deprivation:

- in Hungary, households affected most by material deprivation are those where the head of household is Roma (95%), inactive or unemployed (80%), those where the work intensity is between 0 and 0.5 (64%), those with many children (65%), or those who live in villages (61%);
- in Romania, 53% of the Roma households had a fridge in 2007 as compared to 92% of the non-Roma households in the neighbourhood, 8% of the Roma households owned a computer as compared to 24% of the non-Roma neighbours in the same locality. Likewise, only 14% of the Roma own a washing machine, 68% own a coloured TV set, 12% have a car, 10% have a phone line and 43% have mobile phones;
- in Spain, one third of the Roma community suffers from at least 5 out of the 12 indicators of deprivation, compared to 5.7% of the general population.

The picture is also borne out by subjective measures. For instance, in the Czech Republic subjective poverty is three times higher within the Roma community in comparison with the majority population. In Romania, subjective self-assessment data record that two-thirds of the Roma think they lack even the bare living necessities compared to 31% of the population as a whole.

While many experts point out the key role of social benefits in reducing the intensity of poverty among Roma, others also highlight that restriction in entitlement to benefits is a significant factor contributing to high levels of income poverty. For instance, the Romanian expert points out that the high prevalence of Roma in informal sector employment limits their access to insurance based benefits, including health care, unemployment insurance and pension rights. The UK expert highlights that Roma arriving in recent years are excluded from aspects of social assistance benefits and that this “impacts more profoundly on those unable or less able to establish themselves in even the marginal parts of the labour market: women, children, older people and those with disabilities of various kinds”. Another key fact is the low levels of salaries earned by Roma. For instance, in Romania in the 2003-2005 period 11% of the working poor in Romania were Roma.

One of the consequences of low incomes is often high levels of indebtedness. For instance, the Slovak expert reports that “problems of Roma households with arrears of various kinds and indebtedness were suggested by several surveys and are repeatedly reported by NGOs working with Roma communities. It is estimated that the life of a considerable number of Roma families is subordinated to the will of local usurers or loan companies.” The Czech expert highlights that while only 20% of the employed Roma are in debt “among the unemployed debts are being declared by more than half. The situation in this respect is especially striking in the excluded Roma communities where indebtedness is associated with the payments of rents and supplies, and leads directly to uncertainty concerning housing and poor quality housing.”

1.3.2 Educational disadvantage

All experts report widespread educational disadvantage among Roma. Roma children tend to attend school less frequently, to leave school much earlier and to achieve lower educational qualifications than the population as whole. For instance:

- in Belgium, there are very low participation rates and high school drop-out rates with one study showing that nearly one in two Roma children does not attend school at all;

- in Bulgaria, it has been estimated that about 20% of Roma children never go to school;
- in the Czech Republic, 74% of Roma have at most primary education while in the overall population it is 20%;
- in France, figures from the National Education Ministry showed that in 2001 only 15% to 20% of traveller children of secondary school age attended secondary school. The French expert comments that schools often refuse to accept traveller children for various reasons: length of stay too short at the schools, no room in the classes, no vaccination certificates, parents not having the required papers, etc. These children were often the victims of racial discrimination by other children. Consequently, school attendance for children of travelling families is generally very low despite strong demand from the parents;
- in Germany, a recent study showed that only a small group of the interviewed Roma has a professional degree (19%). Around 44% left school without an educational certificate. Almost 11% - a considerably higher percentage than among pupils of the majority population - attended a special school (Förderschule) for pupils with severe learning and behavioural problems. 13% attended no school at all. The proportion of Roma youngsters who have attended secondary schools (12%) or high schools (2%) was considerably lower than that of youngsters of the majority population. 46% of those interviewed did not get any support from their families for school homework. The main reason was that the large majority of their parents had no school education;
- in Greece, one study in 2008 showed that 54.7% Roma did not attend school at all, 33.4% only finished certain grades of primary school, 7% finished primary school, 3.4% attended certain junior secondary school classes, 0.5% graduated from junior secondary school, and approximately 1% attended certain secondary school classes. From the sample, 54% of the parents stated that they have children that have never gone to school;
- in Hungary, 80% of Roma adults only have primary education compared to 33% of the total population. Only 42% of Roma children go to nursery school. Only 0.3 per cent of the Gypsy population holds a university or college degree. The education system magnifies the disadvantage of uneducated parents;
- in the Netherlands, education levels among Roma, Sinti and Travellers are low and illiteracy is high compared to the total Dutch population. However, the Dutch experts point out that there has been a major improvement in the participation in education during the last decennia and at the end of the 1990s: almost all Roma, Sinti and Traveller children have been enrolled in primary education and about 90% in secondary education. Currently, the major issue is not school enrolment but absenteeism, a lack of "start qualifications" and the over-representation in education of children with special needs;
- in Ireland, the 2006 Census revealed that 63.2% of Traveller children under the age of 15 had left school, compared to 13.3% of children nationally. Over 77% of Travellers have an educational achievement of primary school or less, compared to 19% of the general population. Participation of Travellers in higher education is 0.8%. This compares to 30.2% of the national population. However, there are changes to note here - Travellers are staying longer in school, for example, and the transfer rate from primary to post-primary education is now almost 100%;
- in Poland, there is a huge education gap between the Roma minority and the total population – so, the 2002 census showed that as much as 51% of Roma aged 13 years or more did not complete primary education or did not have any education at all;
- in Romania, 9% of Roma young adults (18-30 years) are high-school graduates and 2% of the Roma youth aged between 19 and 22 years participate in the tertiary education system (college or university) as compared to 41% and 27% respectively of the youth of other

ethnic origin. As regards pre-school education, about 31% of the Roma children attend kindergarten education as compared to 70% of the children belonging to other ethnic groups;

- in Slovakia, according to a 2010 UNDP survey 23% of inhabitants of Roma settlements had not finished primary education and 59% have only finished primary education. Among inhabitants of segregated settlements only 14% had obtained a vocational certificate;
- in Spain, illiteracy is 2.6% at national level as opposed to 14.5% among the Roma;
- in the UK, Gypsy, Roma and Traveller children remain the lowest achieving ethnic groups in England; they are more likely to be identified as having special educational needs and are four times more likely than any other group to be excluded from school as a result of their behaviour. These children tend to be concentrated in schools with below average results. There are low levels of provision of specialist services, but high levels of needs and significant difficulties for Roma in accessing education because of a combination of poverty, lack of understanding of the system, poor grasp of English, racism, bullying and cultural conflicts.

The situation is often worse for girls than boys. For instance, in Romania the stronger gender differences among the Roma make the risk of leaving school earlier higher for Roma girls as 10% of them have their first child at the age of 12-15 years and 48% at 16-18 years; most of the Roma girls are underage at their first pregnancy as compared to 14% girls from other ethnic groups. The Portuguese expert highlights research showing that “the gender dimension plays in this – as in other – respect a crucial role, since gypsy girls are the ones who leave the education system sooner”.

Lower participation in pre-school provision is seen by most experts as contributing to a pattern of educational disadvantage. For instance, the Finnish expert highlights that only about 2% of Roma children go to preschool in Finland and stresses that “the role of preschool is important for Roma children as it softens the cultural shock of school and equips them with better linguistic tools for fully participating in school work”. The Slovak expert points out that “Roma children have substantially lower enrolment rates than non-Roma children. We can infer this from the general statistical data showing that there are significantly less 3–5 years enrolment in kindergartens in the districts with higher share of Roma population and higher birth rates.”

In some countries, language is seen as a key barrier to educational progress. For instance, in Slovakia the expert reports that “the root of difficulties, which many Roma children experience, particularly when entering the formal education system, is often attributed to the language barrier”.

One of the consequences of low levels of education is that illiteracy is quite common among adult Roma. For instance, the Belgian experts point out that “beyond the education of children, the poor literacy, and often illiteracy (women), of Roma adults is also a specific challenge in terms of social exclusion and integration”.

In several countries (e.g. CZ, SK), segregation of Roma children remains a key issue and contributes significantly to negative outcomes. For instance, the Slovak expert reports that “the disproportionately high enrolment of Roma children in so-called ‘special schools’ has become a widely and sometimes heatedly debated issue. According to experts’ estimates, about 10,200 Roma children are placed in special schools (and 9,200 non-Roma children). Almost every 8th Roma child is assessed as ‘mentally disabled’ when entering compulsory education.” She

further highlights that “schooling prospects of Roma children are also affected by other peculiar features of Slovak education system. The enrolment in so-called ‘zero’ grade of primary school that is designated for pupils classified as not ready for school can lead to subsequent continuation of study in the same class. In this case, almost exclusively Roma classes are formed.” The Czech expert points out that one of the problems facing the Roma is persisting segregation of Roma children in special schools and recently in “practical” schools. In Estonia, a report by the European Network Against Racism highlighted that the Roma community has reported that Roma children are very often sent to schools for children with mental difficulties.

1.3.3 *Employment disadvantage*

While detailed data are again rare it is clear that in most countries Roma experience serious disadvantage in the labour market. Low levels of employment, low quality employment and high unemployment are all common. For instance:

- in Estonia, the 2000 census showed that 54.4% of Roma (aged 18 and older, excluding persons of unknown age) were inactive, 30.2% were unemployed and only 15.1% of the Roma population were employed. The Estonian expert comments that the high rate of unemployment and inactivity among the Roma may, for one thing, be due to their residence in the periphery or in regions with high rate of unemployment;
- in Hungary, only 40% of adult Roma men are employed and 10% out of these live on temporary work (casual jobs or public works), often illegal, and the employment situation is even significantly worse for Roma women;
- in the Czech Republic, 40% of Roma in the productive age are unemployed against less than 7% of the overall population; unemployment is particularly high among young Roma under 25 who make up 40% of the unemployed (this is twice more than their share in the adult Roma population);
- in Greece, one study has shown that the Roma unemployment rate, among those interviewed who were economically active was 44.3%, while half of them had remained unemployed for more than 2 years. The vast majority of Roma (77.3%) were recorded as being employed on an occasional or seasonal basis only. Only 22.7% of the active Roma population participates, relatively permanently in the labour market;
- in Ireland, in the 2006 Census only 14.4% of Travellers aged between 15 and 64 years were recorded as being at work compared with 65.2% of the population as a whole. Some 43% of Travellers of working age were reported as being unemployed compared with 6% for the working age population as a whole. About 22% were engaged in home duties (compared with 10% of the population as a whole). The proportion of Travellers reported as unable to work due to illness or disability is double that of the average population (8% versus 4%);
- in Latvia, the number of the Roma involved in long-term employment relations did not exceed 5% of the Roma population capable of working;
- in Poland, the expert reports on recent data which show that the unemployment rate of Roma in *voivodhips* (Polish administrative units) ranges between 50% and 100%. She suggests that this results primarily from their very low level of education, their lack of skills and sometimes their specific attitudes and prejudice;
- in the UK, the expert notes that “the low level of education, transferable skills and literacy amongst the Roma means that their access to decent work at decent wages is very limited”. He reports on one study which “points to the difficulties of accessing the Worker Registration Scheme (WRS) for those coming without a job (as was the case for most

Slovak Roma) and that this and other barriers to registration resulted in Roma losing legal rights to in-work benefits and health care". Additionally, "Roma migrants cannot access Job Centre Plus or other state services and schemes (such as the New Deal) due to the complex regulations limiting their usage, thus narrowing their employment opportunities". This makes Roma vulnerable to being employed by exploitative gang-masters and labour suppliers and their vulnerability is enhanced due to their limited grasp of English or understanding of their rights.

The factors that experts most frequently highlight as causing the high level of Roma exclusion from the labour market are low levels of education/skills and discrimination and prejudice. For instance, the Romanian expert summarises the key factors as "low level of formal education not matching the labour market requirements; common lack of skills especially in new professions and declining traditional crafts; still existing stigma/ prejudice and discriminatory practices against Roma among employers. The poor access and integration of the Roma into the labour market results in high numbers of Roma working in the informal economy or in their migration to other European countries . . . Many of the Roma population are excluded from employment or training as legal provisions require at least 8 years of elementary education. Ensuring a basic education and increasing literacy levels is a national priority; still, many Roma find it difficult to overcome barriers such as pecuniary fears and discriminatory attitudes." As the Belgian experts explain "Roma are penalised twice, by their lack of employability as well as by discrimination of employers".

Many experts also stress the negative impact of the erosion of traditional employment opportunities in recent years. For instance, the Austrian experts report that "within self-employment, which for a long time played a major role for most groups of Roma, traditional market segments are dwindling". Likewise, the Portuguese expert highlights the changes which have affected Roma's traditional economic activities over the last decades and points out that although the main economic activity of many gypsy families continues to be the vending business this has been facing increasing difficulties over the years. Vending activities – passed over from one generation to another – are increasingly becoming a difficult and insecure economic activity which no longer ensures the level of income which allowed gypsy families to live upon. She concludes that "the loss of these traditional economic and labour activities was not compensated by alternative activities neither by the development of new skills necessary for entering 'mainstream' labour market opportunities. As a result, the gradual loss of economic autonomy led to an increasing impoverishment and to the need to resort to the available social protection measures."

Regional factors can also be very important in explaining the high level of unemployment experienced by Roma. For instance, in Slovakia the expert reports that "low economic activity is mainly a regional problem: Many of the Slovak districts with an above average concentration of Roma population are former agricultural and mining areas that have not recovered from the economic depression in the beginning of the 1990s. These districts have significantly higher registered unemployment rate and lower prospects for economic development. According to the district labour offices' statistics, half of the registered jobseekers has no education or elementary (lower secondary) education as a maximum; 60% of jobseekers have been jobless for more than one year and 44% for more than two years. The unemployment rate of Roma, according to UNDP 2010 (Labour Force Survey methodology), is approximately 73%." She also reports that segregation is a factor as the employment level of Roma decreases with increased segregation of their place of living.

When Roma are in employment they generally experience poor quality and low paid employment. For instance:

- in Bulgaria, the experts report that according to the data of the Bulgarian Confederation of Trade-Unions 74% of the Roma fall in the 3 lowest income groups; “and this is an overview just of the people who are in the labour force”. The same data show that the employment of the Roma is concentrated in agriculture and construction;
- in the Czech Republic, only 20% of employed Roma held a skilled-worker position and only half of them had job tenure for more than 12 months. About 30% of them worked without formal contract (illegally); on average, their wages were just 40% of the average in the country;
- in Greece, one study found that three activities accounted for three-quarters of all Roma employment: trading (20.8%), scrap dealing (30.4%) and agricultural labouring (23.4%);
- in Hungary, the low level of employment of Roma consists primarily of unstable, short term jobs with a high turnover on the periphery of the labour market;
- in Italy, since their traditional occupations were lost, the “Roma” have become largely unskilled workers, on the fringe of local labour markets, involved in black economy and employed in undeclared work, living in in-work poverty conditions much worse than Italian workers. Currently, most Roma people are self-employed mainly collecting and selling scrap-metal, but this occupation places them on the fringe of both the market and society. For a few of them who are fortunate to be legally employed, living conditions have improved significantly;
- in Portugal, when gypsies are involved in paid work it is usually carried out in unqualified activities and sectors, badly paid, performed under precarious conditions and often with a seasonal nature. Therefore, most gypsy individuals simultaneously complement this paid work with other traditional activities, namely vending in order to increase the family income. Access to stable and more qualified work is difficult given the low school qualifications of the gypsy population and the very low levels of participation in training schemes and measures, which often demand minimum levels of schooling;
- in Romania, about 53% of the Roma men and 23% of the Roma women are doing paid work but only 36% of the Roma doing paid work are salaried workers as against 77% of the non-Roma men (and respectively, 52% Roma women are salaried workers as compared to 87% of non-Roma women). Roma work mainly in the agriculture, constructions and industry sectors. 40% of the Roma have never worked while 33% have worked without a contract on the grey labour market;
- in Spain, the characteristics of Roma employment are: a lower level of salaried work (51.4% of the employed Roma population compared to 82% of the general population), a greater level of temporary work (70% vs. 30%), higher self-employment rates and, above all, a higher proportion of family workers (linked to mobile trading). “Mobile trading is the most relevant occupation among the Roma community”;
- in the UK, one local study found “that some Roma are working in conditions approximating forced labour: for example, workers who face illegal deductions from the wages, low wages, threats or the reality of violence and a failure on the part of agencies or employers to properly register the workers, thus rendering them (unknowingly) illegal”.

Roma women are generally less likely than men to have employment. When they do work they are more likely to work in worse jobs. For instance, in Romania women are even less likely than men to have an occupational status including professional training. Those Roma women who are employed work mainly in agriculture and processing industries; family work and self-

employment is common. Roma housewives that have never been employed represent 48.1% of the Roma, most of them with a low educational attainment and aged below 34 years. In Slovakia the employment level among Roma women is significantly lower than among Roma men: 11% to 20%.

Many experts stress that the economic crisis is hitting many Roma particularly hard. For instance, the Latvian expert comments that “the official unemployment of the Roma is very low and possibilities of finding employment in Latvia have even further diminished as a result of the economic crisis, which generates an increased risk that the Roma able of work are forced to engage in various illegal activities to earn their income - for example, illegal employment or even marginal activities such as drug trafficking or other criminal activities”.

1.3.4 *Poor health*

In virtually all Member States, Roma have a significantly worse health status than the population as a whole. Life expectancy is shorter, infant mortality is higher, children are born smaller and chronic diseases are more common than for the population as a whole. For instance:

- in Bulgaria, a study from 2002 found that life expectancy among the Roma was 10 years lower than among Bulgarians and that the situation was deteriorating. Among the causes for ill health and early death mentioned were poverty, malnutrition, unhealthy environment as well as early and frequent childbirth;
- in France, studies show that there is less antenatal care and that babies are shorter and with lower birth weights. A survey carried out by “Romeurope” reported higher neonatal and infant mortality rates;
- in Greece, although infant mortality of Roma people seems to have decreased by 5.4% between 2000 and 2008, the current percentage of 11.6 is considered extremely high;
- in Ireland, infant mortality rates continue to remain disproportionately high for the Traveller community. Traveller infant mortality is around 14 per 1,000 live births, which is more than three times that of the general population. Suicide rates among Traveller men are seven times higher. Life expectancy for male Travellers stands at 61.7 years, which is around 15 years less than men in the general population;
- in Italy, Roma people have an average life expectancy twenty years less than the national average;
- in Portugal, the average life expectancy of Roma is around 15 years lower than that of the remaining population, child mortality is five times higher than the European average and the mother’s average age at the birth of the first child is 17 years old;
- in Romania, life expectancy for Roma is significantly lower than that of the majority population, while child mortality and fertility rates are higher. For each member of a Roma household aged between 30 and 59 years there is 0.2 older members as compared to 0.5 for the non-Roma families;
- in Slovakia, life expectancy is by 15 years lower than the life expectancy of the general population: 55 for men and 59 for women. Roma living in separated and segregated settlements suffer an above-average rate because of diseases that are typically related to unhealthy living conditions, bad and insufficient diet, etc. Worsened access to health services (territorial and financial barriers) also contributed to their poor health.

Several experts stress the positive mitigating impact of national health care systems on poor health. For instance, in Estonia the expert refers to research on Roma women which “shows that most have a family doctor based on state health insurance and they have no major problems with health insurance accessibility. Some women had received the health insurance card while being on parental leave, pension or disability. However, the research identified that although Roma have many various health problems, they do not often go to a doctor, they are often short of money for buying medicines and some have experienced direct discrimination in health care (e.g. an ambulance refused to come after hearing that it is a Roma patient).” In Spain “access for the Roma community to the national healthcare system is a factor for the improvement of living conditions”. In Slovakia, the expert reports that “visiting a doctor in the case of a health problem is a common thing for Roma. . . . Contrary to expectations, in 2010, Roma living in segregation did not consult a doctor less often than Roma living together with the majority population.” On the other hand, in other countries (e.g. BG, RO) access remains a major problem. For instance, in Romania “access to medical services remains difficult for the Roma due to a combination of their geographical isolation and difficulty in travelling to a health service provider, lack of identity documents and health insurance, and/or discriminatory practices by health providers”.

Experts highlight a range of causes to explain the higher level of poor health experienced by Roma. These include: poor housing and environmental conditions; high levels of poverty; poor access to clean drinking water; a tendency to only resort to health services in acute or emergency situations; barriers to accessing health services; low levels of education and unhealthy lifestyle choices; poor access to preventive health measures. For instance:

- in Spain, unhealthy lifestyle choices (smoking, obesity, consumption of alcohol and nutritional deficiencies) and low levels of prevention (above all among women) all lead to a poorer health status than the general population, which results into a lower life expectancy and higher infant mortality rates, and also a higher incidence of chronic illnesses and cardiovascular disease;
- in Spain again, less prevention (e.g. accessing gynaecological or dental services) but greater use of health services which indirectly reflects the poor state of health of the Roma women, the elderly and those who suffer poor living conditions;
- in Romania, one out of two Roma minors (45.7%) did not entirely benefit of the vaccination included in the National Immunisation Program; 44.3% of Roma have never been to a dentist’s office; one out of five Roma who needed medical care but was unable to get it invoked financial reasons; 89.4% of Roma women over 15 never had a mammography; and 84.2% of Roma women over 18 never did a screening for cervical cancer;
- in the UK, one local study has highlighted how the Roma’s lack of fluency in the English language brings difficulties with accessing health services. The lack of interpreters and the complexity of letters from health professionals, as well as a lack of familiarity with the structure of the health service, are cited by Roma as reasons why they had not accessed health provision. As a result barely half had registered with a GP.

Where Roma live is a significant factor in explaining variations in their health status. As the Spanish expert explains, “the health status of the Roma population living in rundown neighbourhoods, sub-standard housing or shanty towns and of those with less access to health-care and social services is even worse than that of the rest of the Roma population”.

1.3.5 *Inadequate housing and environment*

A fairly consistent picture emerges across the EU of many Roma living in very poor housing conditions and in an unsafe physical environment. Very many experts stress the high level of overcrowding; extensive leaks and damp problems; lack of basic facilities (running water, WC, shower, wired electricity, phone lines); lack of certain urban facilities (such as: sewerage, public transport, rubbish collection, paved roads, pedestrian pavements and electric lighting); and lack of home/land ownership or legal tenure.

A key factor is the extent to which Roma live in settlements and camps with very poor facilities. For instance:

- in the Czech Republic, many Roma are moved to poor quality housing. In about 45% of these localities warm water is not at disposal, in 10% there is no running water at all, in 55% of the localities heating is working only to a limited extent and, similarly, electricity supply is available in 20% of them to a limited extent;
- in Greece, the European Roma Rights Centre (ERRC) reports that a large proportion of the approximately 265,000 Roma live in 52 improvised and dangerous tent encampments while most others reside in poorly constructed dwellings lacking access to basic services such as electricity and water and they are also often under the threat of eviction;
- in Hungary, over 70% of the Roma population live in spatially segregated housing with only or mostly Roma neighbours and up to 26% live in segregated Roma settlements with basic or no infrastructure. The lack of sewage and gas mains, garbage deposits, waterlogged soil and lack of water mains are the most frequent environmental problems in the segregated housing. The proportion of Roma living in segregated housing is approximately one-fifth to one-quarter of the estimated number of Roma people in Hungary;
- in Italy, Roma live in authorised permanent camps, authorised temporary camps and unauthorised temporary camps in peripheral and isolated areas, often far away from the city centres and their services, poorly connected to the towns, lacking essential services (such as water, hygienic utilities, electricity and heating) or having only access to precarious and inadequate services, without public transport (buses, underground, etc.), under bridges (e.g. Tevere river in Rome), often close to motorways, railways, canals, waterways, landfills or former waste dump sites, cemeteries and abandoned industrial areas;
- in Lithuania, Roma have significantly fewer amenities than the rest of the population. So, according to 2001 figures, only 65.6% were living in conventional dwellings equipped with gas or electric cooking facilities, compared to 95.3% of the total population. Only 41.3% of Roma dwellings had piped water (national average: 79.9%), 37.2% were connected to a sewer system (vs. 77.3%), 33.7% had a flushing toilet (vs. 68.6%), and 26.5% had piped hot water (vs. 67.8%);
- in Portugal, although the rehousing programmes allowed for an actual improvement of the overall living conditions of many gypsy families, many of these rehoused neighbourhoods were located in marginalised and under-qualified areas of the urban tissue, spatially segregated from the “centres”. Thus, significant numbers still lack the most basic housing conditions, amenities and infrastructures or are located in degraded and polluted areas in the margins of urban centres;
- in Romania, the expert points to settlements on the outskirts of localities with precarious surroundings and with health and safety risks;
- in Slovakia, the expert points to overcrowded and poorly maintained flats, simple shanties assembled from various scrap materials as the most accurate evidence of neglected and

short-sighted housing policy after the 1989. It is estimated that over 120,000 Roma currently reside in under-developed rural settlements and segregated urban slums in Slovakia, or are otherwise housed in substandard housing conditions. The housing situation of Roma who lives dispersed among general population is also significantly worse compared to the general population;

- in Spain, the expert highlights “the ‘enclaved’ nature of a residential slum nucleus”;
- in the UK, studies highlight the very exploited housing conditions under which many Roma have existed since arriving in the UK. So, in one study, Roma were found to be living in “rat infested squats in the middle of industrial estates” with consequent impacts on, *inter alia*, health conditions.

In several countries (e.g. BE, IE, FR, NL) where many travellers are mobile, the lack of sufficient and good quality traveller sites is an issue. For instance:

- in Belgium, Travellers face the specific problem of the persistent lack of encampment areas compatible with their particular lifestyle. Moreover, Wallonia and the Brussels-Capital Region do not recognise caravans as legal settlements;
- in France, in 1990, the Besson law required communes with a population of over 5,000 to set up traveller sites. As this legislation was not enforced, many travellers continued to camp on wasteland and alongside motorways and railways as the few sites that existed were overloaded by new applicants and long-term occupants. All departments in mainland France have now adopted a departmental policy for setting up traveller sites and these are currently being assessed and reviewed.

There is some evidence of a growing risk of homelessness. For instance, in Romania there is a risk of growing homelessness among the Roma due to a multitude of economic and political causes: restitution of nationalised buildings to their former owners, little or no social housing provided for evicted tenants, inability to pay housing costs during the economic crises or fraud (particularly in the early years of transition).

A few experts (e.g. AT, DE, ES, IE) report progress in improving living conditions. For example, the Austrian experts comment that “housing conditions of most Roma in Austria are rather favourable from an international comparative point of view, as segregated and marginalised Roma settlements (with one minor exception, where the situation improved as well to a large degree during the last decade) do not exist”. In Spain, “between 1978 and today, social housing protection policies have been decisive for the improvement of living conditions of the Roma community, although serious problems do remain, such as housing quality, overcrowding and slums. In general, it can be said that, based on the results of the 2007 Roma Community Housing Map (FSG), important progress has been made in the last two decades in terms of residential integration, although social exclusion problems do persist.” In Germany, “the housing situation of German Roma families has considerably improved over the last decades. After the end of the Second World War, the Roma population could only live under extremely deprived housing conditions. Since the 1980s, the municipalities have started to offer normal housing opportunities to help the Roma to find their place and integrate in city life. Since then, a process of differentiation in the housing and living conditions of the Roma population has been under way.” In Ireland, “the trend over time has been for more and more Traveller families to reside in standard social accommodation (some 45% of all Traveller families were in this type of accommodation in 2008). However, it should also be noted that in relative terms there has been little change in the number of families living in unauthorised roadside encampments since the 1960s. As of 2008, some 10% of Traveller families were

living on unauthorised sites or shared housing. Travellers are also more likely than the general population to be living in overcrowded conditions. Taken as a whole, over time, the impetus is for more and more Traveller families to come within the aegis of public housing.”

1.3.6 *Limited access to sport, recreation and culture*

Sport and recreation

There is very little information available on access to sport and recreation facilities. What is available suggests that access is often quite limited. For instance, the Bulgarian experts highlight well the problem when they conclude that “Roma neighbourhoods and settlements in general do not offer any opportunities for sport and recreation. Public space itself is a public good barely accessible and usable in most of the places inhabited by Roma. Firstly, because of the lack of any investments in this type of infrastructure and secondly, because of the prevalence of illegal construction, which encroaches even on the scarce available public space.” The Czech expert highlights a report showing that “most of the Roma (70%) took part in no sport activities and spent leisure time with ‘sitting activities’ or were completely passive. Even 40% of the youth lack enough activities.” However, he points out that “the Roma themselves – with the aid of NGOs and also with support of the government schemes and European Social Fund (ESF) projects – organise many activities like sport events (young teams tournaments in football), Roma folklore and music groups. Several journals are published (the most known *Romano hangos*) and cultural activities supported (most known Roma festival Khamoro). Roma also have their Community centres in many cities and Museum of Roma culture in Brno (the second city in the country). Nevertheless, all these initiatives do not provide enough opportunities for Roma to access valuable leisure time activities.” The Slovak expert notes that “as a rule, Roma households lack resources for pursuing sport and recreation activities. Roma children are, however, mostly excluded from sport and leisure activities, also because of their commuting to school and bad public transport connection.”

Culture and language

The picture in relation to access to culture is more mixed. In some countries, Roma culture has been going through a period of transition as greater integration into society and the labour market occurs. For instance, in Spain, “internal social transformations in the Roma community – its process of urbanisation, growing integration in ordinary labour market and secularisation in terms of the family organisation and the role of women, opened a wide scope of cultural identities that, whilst never losing its roots, is adopting new forms of adaptation. Together with the affirmation of its own identity, pragmatic forms of adaptation are occurring (such as the integration of Roma culture teaching in universities, new forms of hybrid culture in the form of social bridges that favour multiculturalism and the cultural enrichment of the Spanish community as a whole, to which institutions such as the Roma Cultural Institute and the Roma community State Council contribute.”

In general, there is not sufficient information in the experts’ reports to give an overall assessment of the extent to which Member States develop cultural policies which ensure the maintenance and development of Roma culture.⁶ However, several experts report significant

⁶ In this regard, it is worth noting that the Council of Europe *Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities* (H(1995)010), which most Member States have ratified, has a strong focus on culture. In Article 5, it states that “The Parties undertake to promote the conditions necessary for persons belonging to

efforts, primarily by Roma themselves, but in several instances supported by government, to promote and celebrate the diversity of Roma culture and facilitate participation in cultural activities. For instance, the Hungarian expert comments that “in Hungary, despite the traditional and stereotypical views on Roma music and dancing, it should be emphasised that different Roma groups have different traditions, cultural values and life-style attributes, so we cannot speak about a homogenous Roma culture at all. There have been efforts to spread knowledge about the Roma and their culture both to the Roma themselves and also to the majority society. A nice example of this is an interactive multimedia CD ROM available via the internet, the Virtual House of Roma Culture.” In France, the expert comments that while sport does not play an important role in Roma and gypsy events in France, with the exception of those that are closely related to circus performances, “literature is an integral part of their culture with a large number of poetry collections and novels. The best known events are based on music and dance, in particular in the Gitanos and flamenco world in the south of France, and on jazz among the Manouches. This type of jazz is very popular in France with Manouche artists such as Angelo Delbarre and Biléli Lagrène and famous festivals such as the Django Reinhardt festival held each year in June, the Gypsy Swing Festival in Angers and Swing41 festival held each year in Salbris.”

Several experts stress the important role played by Roma language(s) in promoting Roma identity and culture. The Spanish expert points out that the Roma language, while it is not particularly protected or promoted, has had relevance in two aspects: institutional recognition via reference to the Roma people in the Statutes of a number of Autonomous Communities and in resolutions of certain Autonomous Parliaments (such as that of Catalonia), as well as via governance and participation mechanisms (Catalan and Basque Roma state councils). In Romania, approximately half of the Roma families use the Romani language (mostly among those identifying themselves as Roma rather than the assimilated ones). In Slovakia, two UNDP surveys (in 2006 and 2010) documented that Romany language is the mother tongue for the majority of Roma. The 2010 survey found that in 53% of Roma households, members speak Romany daily. Daily communication in Romany rises with the level of segregation: while Romany is the daily communication language for 28% of those who live mixed with the majority population, it is the main communication tool for 56% living in separated settlements and for more than 71% of those living in segregated settlements. These shares are almost 6% higher than in the 2006 survey. In Italy, the expert notes that “several factors still hamper social and cultural participation of the ‘Roma’ communities in Italian society, especially for recent migratory waves. These can be summarised as follows: on the one hand, the difficulty to acquire Italian citizenship; and on the other hand, a process that presents the conflict between the loss of community identity and social alienation.”

1.4 Widespread discrimination and racism

Virtually all experts point to widespread and deep-seated discrimination against the Roma even though many also point to an underreporting of the number of incidents of discrimination and race hate. Discrimination occurs both in society generally and in relation to key institutional areas such as employment, education, health and housing. As the Romanian expert points out, discrimination can take two forms: “direct or indirect discrimination (because of the stigma connected to the Roma identity) and living on the margins of society especially

national minorities to maintain and develop their culture, and to preserve the essential elements of their identity, namely their religion, language, traditions and cultural heritage”.

when talking about participation in social structures (a large segment of the Roma population remains on the border of these structures, be it school or economic systems, from childhood to the young age or during the adult life as a pupil, student or worker).”

Most Roma believe that they, more than any other ethnic group, are victims of discrimination. For instance, in Bulgaria discrimination is widespread and in 2010 over 45% of the Roma felt that they have been discriminated in one way or another during the preceding year. In June 2011, 55% of the Roma reported that they felt more discriminated now than 10 years ago. In the Czech Republic, 83% of Roma think that discrimination based on ethnic or immigrant origin is widespread with 64% having experienced discrimination in the last 12 months. In Hungary, a survey carried out in 2008 found that 62% of Roma respondents experienced discrimination during the previous year: 41% in private services, 32% in work-related settings, 18% by health care or social services, 17% by school personnel, and 16% related to housing. 90% of Hungarian Roma respondents feel that ethnic discrimination is widespread in the country.

Negative stereotyping by the majority population remains a key issue. For instance, negative stereotyping is evident in Hungary where a survey in 2005 found that almost two-thirds of Hungarians agree to some extent with the statement that “criminality is genetically coded in Gypsies” and 80% think that “problems of the Roma would be solved if they finally started to work”. Likewise, in Romania the majority perception of the Roma minority continues to give attention to law infringements, violence, lack of interest for schooling etc. 72% consider that the Roma break the law and 20% consider the access to certain shops or pubs should be forbidden for the Roma. In Slovakia, the expert notes that “stereotypes function as self-fulfilling prophecy: Roma are easily marginalised (from participation in the life of society) and discouraged for instance to look for jobs as they do not believe that the chain of rejection can be broken and they would be accepted for a job. Negative stereotypes contribute to low ambitions and early resignation of Roma in many areas as they have very little reason to believe that they would be accepted.” The German expert highlights a recently published study on the education situation of Sinti and Roma which shows that around 81% have had personal experience with discrimination: 56% had these experiences occasionally, 8% regularly, 12% often and 5% very often. 54% feel intimidated, badly treated or discriminated against by the public authorities. 40% describe their experiences with public institutions/ administrations as highly problematic. In Italy, the expert notes that “although Roma constitute a small percentage of the total population, they are subject to social alarm and hostility. Stereotypes abound and feed xenophobia and racism against Roma. Right wing political parties use the ‘Roma question’ to divert people’s attention away from key economic, environmental and social problems. The ‘Roma question’ has created a vicious circle with increasing income poverty, material deprivation and social exclusion. In general, Italian authorities consider the ‘Roma question’ to be a security issue to be faced through ‘emergency’ rules aimed at fighting delinquency. This attitude has resulted in a series of discriminatory practices that limit Roma rights.” It is also noteworthy that in some countries such as Spain improvements in terms of material and social conditions of the existence of the Roma community have not always translated into a parallel reduction in social stereotypes. As the Spanish expert notes, the persistence (except for some slow advances in the reduction of discrimination) of negative social stereotypes (e.g. the automatic association of Roma with laziness, excessive use of social benefits, consumption and sale of drugs) is a factor which halts the process of integration sought by the Roma community as a whole.

The role of the media in promoting and sustaining negative stereotypes is highlighted by many experts. For instance, the UK expert comments that “this hostility is exacerbated at times of

economic recession, competition for jobs and for even the least desirable housing, and is often accentuated by very hostile and ill-informed media coverage. Lurid reporting on the Roma in Britain has often created a set of stereotypes and misconceptions in a manner identical to that which has beset Gypsy and Irish Traveller populations for generations, leading some Roma to fear that serious racist attacks, common in Eastern Europe, might be replicated within the UK.” Likewise, in Lithuania, the expert reports that “a qualitative analysis of media content in the texts regarding racial/ethnic minority issues and interracial/ethnic relations brings to light various forms of intolerance, such as hate speech; harassment; prejudice and stereotypes; ‘the discourse of silence’. All forms of intolerance have consistently been expressed against the Roma. The overview of public opinion polls carried out by the Institute for Ethnic Studies (former Centre for Ethnic Studies) revealed that it is the Roma population that is the most stigmatised among minority groups.” Similarly, in Ireland the expert concludes that “negative perceptions of Travellers are widely held and deeply embedded in Irish society. They are not helped by media reporting of anti-social behaviour among Travellers and especially of feuds among Traveller families which receive widespread press coverage. All the indications are that discrimination against Travellers is quite widespread. Up to a half of all Travellers report feeling discriminated against. Such discrimination is reported across all aspects of life.” In Estonia, the expert highlights a report from the European Network Against Racism which reports the Roma experience that “the media can be considered as a source of stereotypes towards their community. They often associate them with various crimes, support their exclusion, etc. One of the main mistakes of the media is that they completely fail to present the views of the Roma community and to inform the public about their lives, traditions and problems.” As rightly highlighted by the Portuguese expert, discrimination and mutual distrust are perpetuated by the lack of mutual knowledge between gypsies and non-gypsies.

Employment emerges as a key area of discrimination. For instance, in Hungary empirical studies regarding Hungarian enterprises show that 80% of employers not only do not employ Roma but are also unwilling to do so, even in the case where their educational level is satisfactory. In spite of anti-discrimination legislation, Roma are excluded from employment already at the point of entry into the labour market, i.e. during hiring procedures. As indicated by several studies, Roma are discriminated against not only by employers but also, indirectly, by employment agents and public employment centres that take employers’ preferences with respect to ethnic membership into account. The Latvian expert comments that “one of the most serious discrimination risks encountered by the Roma in Latvia is discrimination in the labour market. If access to employment for other minorities is, to a considerable degree, affected by lack of state language proficiency, then for the Roma access to the labour market is much more obstructed, even though the majority of the Roma have a good command of the Latvian language.”

Some experts (e.g. ES, RO) while still stressing the high level of discrimination do also note that there have been some improvements over time. For instance, in Romania in 1993, over 70% of the Romanians refused to have a Roma neighbour; in 2006, this figure was “only” 36%. According to the Romanian expert, two main reasons explain the decrease: the improved economic condition and an increased understanding of the democratic rules including tolerance and inter-ethnic respect. In addition, the institutional development, an improved legislation and the implementation of programmes to stimulate Roma social inclusion contributed to more positive attitudes towards the Roma.

However, many experts also stress that the economic crisis has led to an increase in discrimination and, as the Spanish expert highlights, it “has fed racist discourse in the media on

the expulsion of Roma from certain EU countries, a discourse that despite being isolated does not cease to be symptomatic of latent discrimination in public opinion". The UK expert comments that "the recent financial crisis and recession have impacted disproportionately on migrants who in some quarters are being publically blamed (often accentuated by populist media and political parties) for 'taking our jobs away'. What is clear from the available data (reflecting historical patterns) is that minorities tend to suffer disproportionately during times of economic recession and high unemployment and this makes it likely that the Roma have suffered more than most." This has also been compounded by the behaviour of extreme nationalist and racist political parties in countries such as Hungary and the Czech Republic. For instance, the Czech expert reports on the parades by the right-wing nationalistic radical party (Worker's Party) against Roma in localities populated by Roma and the many attacks of extreme right activists on Roma families.

Another factor highlighted by several experts as contributing to increased discrimination and intolerance has been the influx of new Roma groups into some Member States in recent years. For instance, the Finnish expert points out that "public debate has in recent times become increasingly intolerant, which may also have an impact on the position of Roma population. While the national minority groups are well organised, the arrival of new Roma groups has stirred the public debate in a way that is likely to be reflected in an increasing intolerance and prejudice against national minority groups." The French expert comments that Romani travellers "are probably most notable for having been the victims of recurrent rejection and ostracism throughout their long history. The statements made in 2010 by the French President, Nicolas Sarkozy, about them and the Roma who had recently arrived in France from Romania and Bulgaria, were just one more example of this discrimination which has resulted in their being called 'foreigners within'. This discrimination is formalised by the obligation for travellers to have papers so that their activities and movements can be monitored and by the limitations on their civil rights (voting, residence and national identity card)."

1.5 Gender discrimination

Many experts highlight the high degree of gender inequality experienced by Roma women and girls. This is often a combination of gender inequalities in society generally, which result from poverty and social exclusion, and gender inequalities that are specific to the Roma communities. For instance:

- the Belgian experts emphasise that "one particular cross-cutting concern is the social exclusion of Roma women and girls . . . In addition to the discrimination they experience on the basis of their ethnicity, many Roma women also face sex discrimination *both* within and outside their community";
- the Greek expert reports the concluding observations of the *Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women* on the sixth periodical report on Greece which speak of "a system of multiple discrimination regarding access to education, medical treatment, and employment in the case of Roma women";
- the Romanian expert points out that Roma women still experience multiple discrimination both by the majority population and by the male members of their ethnic group especially in terms of education, health, employment or participation in the public/ political life;
- the Spanish expert notes that "a Roma woman suffers from double discrimination: that arising from her condition as a woman, and that of being a Roma woman. Many Roma women suffer from multiple types of discrimination that are founded in culture itself and,

above all, social stereotypes. This social reality is reflected in a wide variety of phenomena such as the following: severe difficulties in accessing gender violence assistance services; over-representation of Roma women in the Spanish penitentiary system; greater employment discrimination; lower life expectancy compared with that of Roma men, and lesser social and political participation.”

1.6 Extensive data gaps

Most experts stress the serious lack of data in relation to the Roma. Data either do not exist or are out of date or are partial and incomplete. Qualitative studies or local studies on particular issues are more common than comprehensive quantitative national reports. Some experts (e.g. ES, UK) note that information gaps have been exacerbated with the recent arrival of European Roma from other EU countries and from outside the EU.

The lack of data concerns a wide range of issues: lack of demographic data (population numbers, age, gender, geographical distribution, etc.); lack of data about income, wealth; lack of data about poverty and social exclusion; lack of data about housing (access to social housing, rent affordability...); lack of data on health and education outcomes; lack of labour market data (national formal/ informal/ full-time/ part-time employment and unemployment figures); lack of administrative data particularly in relation to access to services; lack of data about the extent to which Roma benefit from particular policies; lack of data about discrimination; lack of data on cultural and social participation (including sport and recreation); etc. Experts stress that the lack of data has two very negative effects. First, it can serve to make the problems faced by Roma invisible and thus become an excuse for inaction. Secondly, it can undermine effective policy making and regular monitoring of the effectiveness of policies.

The following are some examples of the lack of data:

- the Czech expert points out that “it is clear that public administration bodies of various type often misuse the lack of reliable data on Roma and lack of duty to collect such data as a means of avoiding social problems in Roma communities and of excusing their ineffectiveness in this respect by arguing that conditions are given as equal by legislation to all citizens regardless of their ethnicity”. However, he goes on to acknowledge that there have been several recent initiatives to bridge some of these data gaps. For instance, “in May 2011, the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs announced the launch of a research project on mapping the situation of Roma in a selection of 12 socially excluded Roma communities; and in the context of the 2011 Census, the government initiated a campaign targeted at the Roma by cooperating with Roma advisors during the census in order to improve the collection of information on the situation of the Roma”;
- The UK expert highlights the “process of ‘invisibilising’ the Roma from official accounts”;
- the Irish expert highlights that “the almost complete lack of data makes monitoring of the situation of Travellers virtually impossible and significantly impacts on the ability to equality proof any policies or programmes which affect these communities. Better information on Travellers’ income and employment situation is badly needed. So, also is information needed on their use of services and their ‘service literacy’”.

However, it is important to acknowledge that in several countries (e.g. BG, ES, RO), while there are still significant data gaps, there have been important advances in data about the living conditions of Roma in recent years. In Bulgaria, for instance, the experts note that while the official statistics and administrative databases do not collect and contain ethnic data “there is a relatively large number of independent sources of information on the Roma, which are relatively rich compared to the situation in other Central and East European countries. These sources of information include expert assessments, surveys carried out by think tanks, sociological agencies and international organisations. The most trustworthy and reliable source of information among these are the World Bank household surveys organised primarily with the purpose of monitoring poverty in Bulgaria.”

A number of key issues in relation to data recur:

- the strict regulation of the gathering of ethnic identity during research and data protection laws have resulted in a lack of reliable statistical data in many countries (e.g. BE, CZ, DE, EL, FI, FR, HU, PT, SE, SI, SK). For instance:
 - in Belgium, there is a lack of quantitative data due to the fact that Belgium does not collect data by ethnic group (though data collected on the basis of nationality/country of birth make some assessments possible). Most of the data pertaining to Roma and Traveller populations are collected at local level by local authorities or civil society organisations. This has led to a very fragmented and incomplete picture of the national situation;
 - in the Czech Republic, the key difficulty is that according to the Czech Act on the Protection of Personal Data it is impossible for any body/subject to collect data on ethnic affiliation;
 - in Germany, statistical data about the Roma population – as well as the other national minorities - are hard to acquire. The reason is that this population group is not distinguished from the majority population by nationality, migration status or other specific demographic or socio-economic features. It is, therefore, hardly possible to get accurate and differentiated information about this group;
 - in Sweden, ethnic groups are not registered and ethnic belongingness is based on self identification which makes it impossible to give a statistical overview of the number of Roma or about the conditions under which Roma live;
 - in Slovakia, the underreporting of the number of Roma due to their unwillingness to declare themselves as Roma complicates and devalues comparisons and conclusions made on the basis of all public registers collecting data on ethnicity.
- the lack of coverage of Roma in general household surveys:
 - the Slovak expert comments on the unintended but systematic exclusion of Roma communities living in segregated rural areas and destitute urban concentrations from surveys such as the Labour force Survey and the Community Statistics on Income and Living Conditions (EU-SILC);
 - the Irish expert stresses that the small number of Roma in her country means that general household surveys will never provide a basis for an accurate picture of such a small and hard to capture group. Thus, alternative approaches are needed such as to track the Roma population through administrative procedures. In this context, the expert points to the annual count undertaken by the local authorities of Traveller families in their area for the “Department of the Environment, Heritage and Local Government” as a good practice example.

- the lack of gender disaggregated data, highlighted for example by the Romanian expert.
- the lack of registration of Roma in civil registers and the lack of a permanent address limits data collection, mentioned by the Greek and Italian experts.

2. Assessment of existing policy and governance frameworks

Significant efforts have been made in recent years to improve policies and develop strategic approaches to promote the integration of Roma in many Member States (e.g. BG, CZ, EL, ES, FI, HU, IE, PL, RO, SI, SK). However, although important progress has been made in some respects and while there have been many individual initiatives that have made a significant difference, overall the impact has been disappointing. In most countries, most Roma still lag far behind the rest of the population and continue to experience widespread poverty and social exclusion. In other words, while overall policy frameworks have been improved and while much more is known about what needs to be done too often this has not been translated into reality on the ground. The political commitment and the commitment of resources have not been sufficient to make a decisive impact and frequently this has been compounded by weaknesses in governance which have undermined effective implementation of strategies.

The gap between policy and delivery is highlighted by many experts. For instance, the Romanian expert illustrates this well when she writes: “Considerable efforts and resources have already been directed towards improving the situation of the Roma population. The National Strategy for Improving the Situation of Roma (2001) and its related Action Plan, the Joint Inclusion Memorandum (2005), the National Strategy Reports on Social Protection and Social Inclusion, the Roma Decade (2005-2015), the National Action Plan to Fight Discrimination, and the National Strategy for Equal Opportunities between Men and Women together with other associated strategies and actions (the Strategy for Fighting Domestic Violence, the National Strategy against Human Trafficking, etc.) mark important commitments of the Romanian government to reduce inequities in the society and promote the social inclusion of Roma.” However, she concludes that in spite of a number of successful initiatives “a widespread improvement in the situation is not very noticeable. Sustained, far-reaching, multi-sector efforts are still needed to fully address issues in the fields of legalisation of property, poor health, low education levels and high unemployment among the Roma.” Rather similarly, the Bulgarian experts point out that “the Bulgarian Government has been very good at producing strategic documents . . . and even at involving Roma representatives in the formulation of objectives and priorities”, but “(it) has been much weaker at making these strategies operational though some examples of good and successful programmes can be found in practically all areas of intervention. What was missing most were true financial commitments and allocation of adequate resources. There are cases where financial commitments were made based on detailed analysis and budgeting but then the resources were not included in the national budget.” Likewise, in the Czech Republic the expert concludes that “although several programme documents have been accepted and governance arrangements as well, they only contribute to a limited extent to the comprehensive approach to the issue of poverty and social exclusion of Roma. The main weakness is the overall governance framework: the issue of social exclusion in general is not well mainstreamed and coordinated either at the national or local level. The deficits are apparent in governance and implementation of the measures in many respects: unspecified targets, unsystematic monitoring, weak control and enforcement of the measures, inadequate capacities.” The same is the case in Greece where the expert considers that the adoption of an Integrated Action Plan for the social inclusion of Greek Roma “was an initiative in the right direction” but its implementation “did not live up to expectations, not only because it was short of meeting its stated objectives, but also because it failed to ensure an integrated approach on the ground”. Thus, he writes that “today, almost ten years after the launching of the Integrated Programme, the state of affairs as regards the Roma people in Greece, the causes of their social exclusion, the multiple problems which they are faced with, the adherence to discrimination, etc. remain,

more or less, the same. Their living conditions continue to be inhuman and degrading, while they remain deprived of a wide range of their fundamental rights.” The Lithuanian expert reports that the adoption of the Programme for the Integration of Roma into Lithuanian Society 2008-2010 in 2008 was thought to be a very positive step forward by many. However, due to significant lack of funding the programme remained a paper-based declaration and its actual results were never evaluated.

2.1 Overall policy frameworks

In several Member States (e.g. ES, FI, HU, PL, RO, SI, SK) where there has been an increased focus in recent years on the situation of the Roma, this has often involved a gradual move from a fragmented to a more comprehensive approach to supporting the integration of Roma and a combination of general policies to promote social inclusion with specific targeted initiatives aimed at Roma. For instance:

- in the Czech Republic, *the Principles of Long-term Roma Integration until 2025* were accepted in 2005 and the *Programme for the Decade of Roma Inclusion 2005-2015*, the *Action Plan of Roma Integration for 2006-2009* followed. Lastly, in December 2009, the government accepted the *Concept of Roma integration for 2010-2013* and *The Action Plan of Roma Integration*. Lastly, the most comprehensive document so far, *The Strategy to Combat Social Exclusion for 2011-2015*, has been adopted – it was elaborated by the *Agency for the Social Inclusion in Roma Localities*;
- in Finland, an active policy for Roma has gradually emerged and this has led to the preparation of Finland’s first National Policy on Roma, the *National Policy for Roma People*, which was established in a broad partnership and after intense public debate. The overall objective of the programme is the promotion of equality and inclusion, and ensuring that the life of the Roma in the different areas is one of equality and non-discrimination;
- In Poland, the government has adopted a long-term and comprehensive approach with the adoption of “Programme for the Roma Community in Poland”, which covers eight areas: education, labour, living conditions, health, civil society, security and ethnic crimes, culture and identity and knowledge of the Roma community. As the Polish expert comments, this “allows for better planning, for undertaking more complex tasks and/or renewing them if necessary. And all this gives participants a sense of stability and certainty”;
- in Romania, there is a combination of policies aimed at facilitating socio-economic integration, the eradication of discriminatory practices, while ensuring the preservation of cultural specificity. These policies, which are concentrated under the umbrella of the National Strategy for Improving the Condition of Roma, adopted in April 2001, are applied by all governmental ministries and structures, under the coordination of the specialised body - the National Agency for Roma - and implemented at the local level by a large network composed of regional offices, local Roma experts, health mediators and school mediators;
- in Slovakia, since the new millennium the government approved several high quality strategic documents that recognise the multiple disadvantages of Roma and define policy objectives and measures for their social inclusion and integration. “The freshest Revised national action plan of the Decade of the Inclusion of Roma population 2005-2015 for the years 2011-2015 includes a detailed list of goals, indicators of their fulfilment, related activities, responsible bodies and deadlines”;
- in Slovenia, the 2007 Roma Community Act systematically regulates the responsibility of state- and local community bodies regarding the exercising of special rights of the Roma

community, and provides for the organisation of the Roma community at the national and local levels as well as for financing. The Act is aimed at improving the situation of Roma in the education system, integrating them into the labour market, preserving and developing the Roma language, supporting cultural activities, as well as resolving spatial planning issues concerning Roma settlements and provision of a better housing. Concrete measures are part of the National Programme of Measures for Roma for the Period 2010-2015;

- in Spain, over the past decade “the existence of fragmented social policies and a disorientated community has transformed into all-encompassing policies and a community with growing leadership. Additionally, the Roma community has benefitted from the expansion of the Welfare State and from gender equality and anti-discrimination policies for vulnerable groups; living conditions have improved for some of the Roma collectives, and cultural identity has been strengthened.” This led to the National Roma Development Plan 2010-2012 built “on the back of experience of the Roma Development Programme and the influence of the National Action Plans for social inclusion (NAPs/inclusion) and Joint Reports that have progressively consolidated social policies to integrate the Roma community and new, participative governance forms”.

In some others, there is already a process underway to develop a strategic approach to the integration of Roma. For instance, the Greek expert mentions that “over the last year or so, a preparatory process is underway by the competent administrative departments for designing the new policy framework and strategy for the Roma inclusion in Greece. According to the Greek 2011-2014 NRP, ‘as far as the social inclusion of Roma is concerned, a medium- and long-term strategy is being processed entailing a threefold framework for their social inclusion: i) horizontal actions of mainstreaming in policies, ii) targeted measures at the national level, and iii) targeted territorial actions. Currently, special programmes providing access to education for Roma children are implemented, while 33 centres will provide social care services to Roma population ranging from legal support to promotion into the labour market’.”

In contrast, there are a number of Member States (e.g. AT, BE, DE, FR, IE, IT, PT, NL, UK) which have not developed comprehensive strategies to promote the integration of Roma and where experts consider that policies are either absent or else too piecemeal. For instance:

- the Belgian experts emphasise that there is no specific policy dealing with the social inclusion of Roma in Belgium. They are rather addressed in the broader framework of integration policies dedicated to migrants;
- the Danish expert points to the low numbers of Roma in Denmark and indicates that there are no policies or special programmes directed towards Roma as Roma at risk of social exclusion are included in general strategies of integration and social inclusion;
- the French expert points out that “No policies have been implemented in France concerning the Roma and gypsies apart from measures to expel illegal immigrants and to manage travellers’ sites for people on the move. Government policy has focused on managing mobility: this is primarily to respond to a problem of public order, namely that of parking caravans without permission on public land. The question of nomadism is reduced to managing camping.”
- the German expert comments that “according to the federal structure of the German state, the political responsibility for the integration of Roma is split up between the Departments

of the Interior at national as well as state level. Because most of the programmes to promote the situation of the Roma population are the responsibility of the states and the local authorities, it is almost impossible to get a clear picture of the volume, content and effects of these programmes”;

- the Italian expert notes that “at national level, there is a lack of effective and unitary policies to improve the present situation, while approaches remain ambiguous at regional level, though there are a range of positive initiatives on which to build”. In particular, he highlights the extent to which “the policy framework concerning ‘Roma’ population is influenced by the security and emergency rules embedded into recent national acts that introduced limits to immigrants and homeless rights. These acts have amplified the risk for Roma of being stigmatised and discriminated against, as well as subject to vigilantism. Furthermore, these acts have influenced public opinion into becoming resigned to xenophobia and racism, in a certain sense legitimising discriminatory behaviour”;
- the Dutch experts point out that there are no specific national policies for Roma integration. The government position is that solutions for the problems of and with Roma, Sinti and Travellers communities should be found on the local level, by making full use of the possibilities of general policies and programmes. Because of the small size of the group and the lack of target group policies, the government is reluctant to establish a national Roma integration strategy;
- the Portuguese expert, while acknowledging that the presence in the NAPs/inclusion of specific measures was an important improvement at the level of policy arrangements, stresses that there is no overall policy framework for addressing Portuguese gypsies’ poverty and social exclusion;
- the UK expert reports that there is “no coherent policy framework on Roma either at the national or local level, and there is a need for a National Action Plan for Gypsies, Roma and Travellers, recognising both the commonalities of their experiences but also the significant differences between the groupings in terms of history, lifestyle, needs and experiences. In this policy vacuum, local agencies have tended to make up policy as they go along, sometimes shaped by a general stance towards ethnic minorities, sometimes drawing on their experience of working with Gypsy and Traveller populations.”

However, in some countries while a comprehensive approach has not been developed Roma have been the focus of considerable policy activity over time and there has been some, but not sufficient, progress. For instance, in Ireland “in the three areas which have been the main policy focus (housing, education and health) the gaps between the Travellers community and the average population have narrowed. But in these as well as other areas – such as employment and income adequacy – a robust policy has been missing or it has consistently failed to meet targets. For example, despite major policy and legislative initiatives as well as reforms and improvement of governance procedures, policy has failed to reduce the numbers of Travellers living in unofficial encampments.” Three important weaknesses are highlighted by the Irish expert to explain the limited progress: first, Ireland has followed a sectoral rather than a holistic approach; secondly, the lack of recognition of or ambivalence about the distinct needs of Travellers has been a long-standing feature of policy making; thirdly, the need for consultation with Travellers has been rather slow to penetrate the system and mind-sets of policy makers.

One barrier to establishing a coherent and comprehensive approach to Roma is a lack of clarity about overall aims and objectives. This is well highlighted by the Irish expert when writing about the Traveller community. She explains that “the guiding policy approach was of assimilation. This has remained the over-arching approach, although over time it has been flanked by a greater recognition of the diversity and value of Traveller culture and the specificity of their way of life. Multi-culturalism and inter-culturalism – which imply not just a recognition of the existence of alternatives but the active celebration and fostering of difference – are both only weakly endorsed in Irish public policy. Different actors pursue alternative approaches, though, and the field overall is marked by contradiction and the absence of agreement on the appropriate philosophy and approach.”

From the experts’ analysis one can deduce many of the key elements that should be incorporated into an overall national strategy. These include:

- a multidimensional and comprehensive approach. For example:
 - the Slovak expert comments that “the document *Comprehensive Development Programme for Roma Settlements* (2003) is of fundamental importance. It recognises that poverty and social exclusion are multidimensional phenomena and that they can be tackled only by parallel changes and improvements in several aspects of the situation of marginalised communities. The basic idea is to combine several resources and activities to get the synergetic effect. This document has become the base for the horizontal priority of Roma marginalised community in the 2007–2013 programming period”;
- combining inclusive general policies (health, education, pensions, social services, social housing) with specific or targeted programmes for positive discrimination in favour of Roma. For example:
 - the Spanish expert comments that “the joint convergence of general or universal social policies with targeted policies for addressing specific inequalities and forms of governance based on the application of the Social OMC (institutional coordination and participation in the Roma community via its own organisations) makes up what can be called the ‘Spanish model’ of Roma integration”;
 - the Finish expert explains that the starting point in the Policy on Roma is that the present legislation and service system should create a good basis for promoting the equal treatment of the Roma population. Special measures are, however, needed at all levels of authorities to reach the goal of inclusion and de facto equal treatment of the Roma. A principle in the policy is also to reinforce the Roma population’s active involvement and functional capacity by making use of their own strengths;
- a strong anti-discrimination and equal opportunities legislation which ensures the protection of ethnic minority rights, including those of Roma;
- ensuring that universal services are sensitive to and take account of the specificities of the Roma situation. For example:
 - the Romanian expert highlights the need to ensure that universal policies in key areas (justice, education, health, employment, social assistance, social services, etc.) give particular attention to reducing disparities and social exclusion of minorities, especially Roma;

- the Portuguese expert notes that “universal policies in the areas of social protection, employment, housing, education and training or health have generally been ‘blind’ to some crucial features that characterise the social and economic situation of many gypsy communities in Portugal (e.g. the inadequacy of the available training programmes which are foreseen for the beneficiaries of the Social Insertion Income (RSI) regarding the minimum required qualification levels which in practice prevent gypsy men and women to engage in such activities; discrimination attitudes and practices in access to housing and employment; total disregard for the existing professional skills of gypsy men and women in designing new training and employment opportunities; precarious jobs offered to trainees at the end of their training period)”. However, she acknowledges that “some of the universal policies (e.g. public rehousing programme and social insertion income) which have been implemented in the last decades have had some positive impacts on fighting poverty and social exclusion among gypsy communities”;
- the importance of strong and continuous political leadership. For example:
 - in Hungary, “the issue of Roma integration is on the agenda of the government and was a priority of the Hungarian EU presidency during the first half of 2011. The new FIDESZ government (which took office in 2010) has established a new ministerial unit with considerable resources for promoting the integration of disadvantaged people (among them Roma)”;
- ensuring that the policies are developed “with” and not only “for” Roma. For example:
 - in the Netherlands, the Dutch experts point out that “up until now, projects to improve the social position of Roma were primarily constructed for the communities but not with the communities. It is crucial that self-organisations, key figures and mediators from within the communities are getting actively involved in these projects. Besides, the emphasis is above all on the problems municipalities experience with these groups (criminality, welfare dependence, unemployment) and not on the problems that Roma, Sinti and Travellers are facing (e.g. lack of halting sites, discrimination, statelessness).”

2.2 Targets

In most countries, strategies and programming documents addressing the Roma issues do not include specific quantified targets and there is a lack of sub-targets for the Roma in other strategies such as the Europe 2020 Strategy. In so far as targets are set, they are often rather vague and unquantified. As the Czech expert comments, “the targets are formulated at the very general level and lack any quantitative specifications: this hampers both the monitoring of their achievement and/or specifications of the capacities needed for their achievements”. However, he points out that the new Strategy 2011-2015 represents a positive change in this respect. A key issue raised by some experts is also the need to break down any targets set for Roma by gender. However, the Bulgarian experts point out that although there are no special targets focused on the poverty and social exclusion among the Roma the Europe 2020 targets on social inclusion and early school-leaving cannot be achieved if Roma integration policies fail.

Hungary does provide an example of a country setting specific national Roma targets in its NRP. These include *inter alia*: involve 100,000 currently out-of-job Roma in employment and support 10,000 Roma enterprises (from which at least 3,000 start-ups); ensure that 80,000 Roma adults take part in programmes which provide basic skills (writing, reading, arithmetic, informatics); provide 150,000 Roma with health screening and permanent counselling necessary for a healthy lifestyle.

2.3 National Reform Programmes (NRPs) and the Roma

Roma do not feature in most NRPs. However, there are several NRPs (e.g. CZ, EL, HU, RO, SK) which recognise the Roma as a vulnerable group and highlight existing programmes to address their inclusion or briefly indicate the intention to develop new strategies. Some NRPs give particular recognition to the particular difficulties of the Roma community in terms of employment, education, housing and the fight against poverty, and refer to Roma in relation to specific programmes targeted at disadvantaged groups. For instance:

- the Hungarian NRP has a strong focus on Roma. Reducing regional disparities and improving the situation of the Roma are declared to be horizontal principles of the NRP. The Roma population is a specific and highlighted target group for several measures, and specific targeted indicators are identified for them (see above, Section 2.2). The threat of enhancing further segregation, and the necessity to involve Roma professionals are mentioned. The monitoring and evaluation of the measures targeting the Roma is also highlighted, but without particular detail. The need for the European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development to support Roma integration in a greater extent is emphasised;
- on the one hand, the Slovak expert notes that the NRP includes new approaches to social exclusion of marginalised Roma communities such as the preparation of a legislative proposal on socially excluded communities, the reform of minimum income scheme, the reform of active employment policy, etc. Education, and especially regional education system (compulsory education) has received much more adequate attention in the present NRP than in the past. On the other hand, she assesses that the NRP “does not have well balanced social and economic dimensions” and highlights that budgetary constraints are limiting what can be achieved. She also notes that “important aspects of the disadvantaged situation of Slovak Roma are not dealt with in the NRP. The NRP does not pay sufficient attention to social economy and there is also no attention given to housing and public housing construction. The NRP does not reflect the need to invest in pre-school education and regional schools that are fundamental for the integration of Roma children.”

The Bulgarian experts warn that the NRP can actually be counterproductive. They comment that “unfortunately, the NRP in its current version has little relevance to the policies for the integration of the Roma. It actually provides more reasons of concern for the future of integration policies than grounds for hope.” They express particular concern that health care and education will not receive any additional public funding due to the need for fiscal consolidation and note that labour market activation measures have been reduced and will not receive extra funding.

It is striking that experts in several countries with significant Roma minorities stress that the NRPs do not identify Roma. For instance:

- the French expert points out that the NRP does not cover the issue of the Romani population unlike the NAPs/inclusion which cover this subject by providing grants to the organisations that handle vulnerable populations and providing travellers' sites;
- the German expert notes that the NRP does not cover the situation of national minorities in general, and that of the Roma in particular. No specific objectives and programmes with regard to the Roma population are mentioned. No target-setting for specific groups or aspects of economic and social life of the Roma population are included;
- the Italian expert comments that one of the main weaknesses of the current NRP is that it does not mention any policy aimed at tackling the poverty and social exclusion experienced by Roma people and goes on to warn that "the reductions in financial resources, the lack of harmonised rights and the still existing regional inequality in services will further affect Roma people in the coming years";
- the Portuguese expert comments that the NRP has not even managed to give continuity to the process initiated in the 2008-2010 NAP/inclusion; it does not include any reference to the gypsy communities.

However, in some instances, experts point out that some of the measures in the NRPs, particularly in relation to employment and education, could benefit Roma. For instance, the Austrian experts conclude that "overall, it seems that the Austrian NRP correctly addresses a number of challenges that are especially relevant for social inclusion of different groups from a more general point of view, which are of special importance for the Roma population as well (given their often low educational attainment, problems with labour market integration or problems of early school leaving of the younger generation)." On the other hand, they also point out that "at the same time, the Austrian NRP does not (or only rudimentarily) address a number of challenges and policy areas which would evidently be of special importance when it comes to social inclusion of Roma (but as well of other groups)".

2.4 Main strengths and weaknesses of policies

Overall, the impression is that in many countries there have been a lot of initiatives and many positive developments over the last decade to improve the position of Roma. However, in reality there has been a problem with implementation and improvements have too often been patchy and unsustainable. For instance:

- in Greece, the implementation of the Integrated Action Plan 2002-2008 suffered from a lack of information, transparency and coordination. The large number of authorities involved, coupled with a lack of communication, led to bureaucracy and inflexibility, and had little or no impact on reducing Roma poverty. Most Roma were only vaguely aware of the Programme's existence and were not involved in its implementation;
- in Hungary, "generally one can say that the proposed (and existing) policies and programmes, IF IMPLEMENTED, could substantially improve the present situation of the poor and also the Roma as their problem analysis is scientifically grounded and their approach is complex. However, during the past years we could witness how programmes well planned and appropriate on paper could turn out not to be really effective in practice. . . . if professional content is good, then there are, or in the near future there could easily be problems at least with sustainability. The fact that project financing do not permit the

realisation of long-term and often complex programmes are serious obstacles in way of efficiency”;

- in Romania, “ten years after the launch of the Strategy to Improve the Condition of Roma and five years after the start of the Decade of Roma inclusion the results following the implementation of these policies do not reflect in noteworthy improvements in the condition of the Roma and the outcomes of programmes targeting the Roma communities have not produced a major impact in terms of Roma community development. Individual successful work is held back by overlapping responsibilities, insufficient financial and human resources, insufficient administrative support and short-term projects. Regular and effective monitoring and self-/independent evaluation does not seem to be a common practice.”

2.4.1 *Income (tax and welfare policies)*

Several experts highlight the important role played by income support systems in reducing extreme poverty experienced by Roma. For instance:

- the Spanish expert emphasises the importance for the Roma of access to various social benefit programmes (non-contributory pensions, insertion minimum income and unemployment benefit);
- the French expert, while stressing that there are no policies or programmes aimed at reducing the monetary poverty of the Romani population, points out that they are eligible for benefits under the same conditions as the whole of the French population;
- the Portuguese expert highlights the role of the Social Insertion Income (RSI) in reducing deprivation and stresses that it has been an important survival resort for many gypsies. The insertion contracts established between RSI beneficiaries and the services establishing respective rights and obligations have also produced important changes to “traditional” family patterns. Such is the case of the training and schooling-related measures present in many RSI contracts, namely regarding the involvement of gypsy women and children;
- the Slovak expert emphasises that universal programmes such as child allowances, birth contribution and parental allowance are important strengths of the Slovak social protection system. Despite its modesty, parental contribution and birth contribution improve living conditions of families with smallest children. The strength of the minimum income scheme (MIS) that seems to cover considerable part of the Roma population in Slovakia is that benefit taking is not time-limited. However, it does not provide sufficient protection against destitution.

Conversely, some experts highlight that regressive (or flat rate) tax and inadequate welfare systems are a major factor in Roma exclusion. For instance:

- the Bulgarian experts comment that tax and welfare policies in the last five years have caused more damage to the integration of the Roma than any other single cause including discrimination. They highlight that “despite the wide spread prejudice that many Roma are getting large social benefits the reality is much different. Very few of the Roma get social benefits – about 15% in Bulgaria”;
- the Hungarian expert comments that “the recent modification of the tax system introducing flat rate taxation negatively affects poor people without higher than average work-related income. The amount of cash benefits has not been indexed since 2008, and the compulsory public work is now often expected in 4, instead of 8 hours and for more limited

periods, resulting in a significant decrease of incomes of the very poor, among them the Roma.”

In addition to a general concern about the adequacy of benefits, experts highlight a number of specific weaknesses in income support. These include:

- poor access due to lack of registration. A good practice to address this problem is mentioned by the Romanian expert:
 - in order to increase access of the Roma to social benefits and services the Ministry of Administration and Internal Affairs, the General Police Inspectorate, the Directorate for Child and Family (within the Ministry of Labour, Family and Social Protection) and Roma NGOs (that provide counselling and guidance to help the Roma population to obtain identity papers) cooperate to ensure that all members of the Roma population are able to obtain personal identification papers. In addition, the Ministry of Interior and the Ministry of Labour, jointly with an NGO working on Roma issues, carry out a programme to encourage the Roma to come forward for registration;
- poor access due to lack of information. Here again, the Romanian expert provides a good practice:
 - projects funded by the EU included the distribution of informative brochures about local services; training in the field of human rights, anti-discrimination and child protection issues; the creation of information and counselling offices;
- increased poverty as a result of restrictions in social benefits, which seems to be the case for instance:
 - in Bulgaria, where the experts highlight poor access to benefits due to over-restrictive means tests and stigma which prevents Roma from seeking benefits;
 - in the Czech Republic, where recent restrictions in access to social assistance negatively affect the living standard of the poor, especially when they are long-term unemployed. In the view of the Czech expert, “it might be possible that the negative impacts of the restrictions outweigh the positive impact of increased incentives to take up employment, particularly in the context of the crisis and due to the considerable extent of shadow economy”;
- lack of linkages between income support and labour and social services. For example:
 - the Spanish expert points to the dependency on social benefits in homes due to the failure to connect income programmes with labour and social inclusion ones;
- lack of public support. For example:
 - in Slovakia, “the weakness of the welfare system is its insufficient grounding in human rights awareness, its insufficient linking to Constitution right to dignity and insufficient public support. It is subject to persistent attacks and attempts to reduce the level of protection.”

2.4.2 Education

Education is probably the policy area that has received the greatest attention in recent years and significant efforts have been made in many Member States (e.g. CZ, ES, HU, IE, NL, PL, PT, RO) to improve the educational participation and outcomes of Roma and to address issues such as high levels of school dropout and segregation of the Roma pupils in some schools. For instance:

- the Czech expert points out that “education is the most prioritised area of the strategy of social inclusion of Roma. *The Decade for Roma Inclusion 2005-2015* defined as a strategic goal to create a complex system of pre-school education for socially disadvantaged groups. Subsequently, the government adopted *The strategy of early care of children from socially disadvantaged environment* and then an action plan for implementing it. This plan should lead among other things to more intensive field work with the families of Roma children and their increased enrolment in pre-school facilities, including ‘preparatory classes’. Another key document is *The National Action Plan of Inclusive Education* elaborated in 2009 and announced in March 2010”;
- in Hungary, since 2002 EU funded integration projects have been launched. These have reached one fourth of the schools and resulted in significant improvement of the school performance of disadvantaged (including Roma) children. Also, “the government plans to significantly extend early childhood facilities (now available only for 10.5% of the children) and decrease the regional inequalities in this regard which affect Roma to a higher extent due to the regional distribution of the population. In the case of the Roma, this could not only contribute to female employability but also to promoting equality regarding children from a disadvantaged family background and significantly increase further educational success. Connected to this, some elements of the model programme to fight child poverty are to be spread, e.g. the Sure Start programme”;
- in Portugal, “between 2000 and 2004, it was possible to identify a very positive evolution in the rate of school enrolment in all levels of schooling, particularly in the 2nd and 3rd cycles of basic education where there was an increase of 39% and 34% respectively (from 617 to 857 students in the 2nd cycle and from 162 students to 217 in the 3rd cycle). Even in secondary education, where the figures remain very small, there was a significant increase from 7 students enrolled in 2000/2001 to a total of 29 students in 2003/2004. However, in spite of this gypsy children present the highest levels of school failure for the three cycles of compulsory education, even when compared with other school populations which also present school achievement problems, namely African-origin children. That situation is strongly connected to the unusual high levels of absenteeism registered among gypsy children and youngsters”.

The measures most commonly highlighted as making a positive contribution to tackling the educational disadvantage of Roma children include:

- increasing access to infant and primary education. For example:
 - increases in the numbers of preparatory classes in the Czech Republic;
 - “universalisation” of infant and primary education among Roma children in Spain;
 - increased access to quality pre-school education for Roma children and intensive pre-school programmes for children who did not attend nursery schools in Romania;

- promoting comprehensive desegregation and the full participation of Roma children in public education systems. For example:
 - in Slovakia, growing understanding of the importance of individual integration of pupils with health disabilities into the standard school, and improvement of psychological tests for diagnosing learning capacity problems of pupils before possibly sending them to special schools;
- using teaching assistants to support classes with Roma pupils. For example:
 - teachers' assistants are involved in work at educational institutions in inclusive groups where the Roma children study together with children of other ethnicities in Latvia;
 - a strength of social inclusion policy in education in Slovakia is the existing programmes of teachers' assistants that are available for kindergarten too;
- taking account of poverty as a barrier to participation. For example:
 - all Roma children attending school in Romania benefit from the "milk and croissant" governmental programme which has encouraged an increased number of Roma children to attend school;
 - school meals and school supplies programmes have been put in place in Slovakia for pupils from families with income lower than the subsistence minimum;
- promoting greater parental involvement. For example:
 - activities to facilitate parents' involvement in school activities in Romania;
 - involvement of adults and families in Italy;
- recognising Roma language and culture in schools. For example:
 - use of the Roma language in some schools and presence of Roma inspectors in the school inspectorates in Romania;
- increasing third level participation. For example:
 - allocation of a certain number of special places for Roma students in schools and universities in Slovakia;
- helping integration into the education system. For example:
 - the "Centres pour la scolarisation des nouveaux arrivants et des enfants du voyage" (Centres for the education of new arrivals and travellers' children) help with the integration of pupils newly arrived in France and travellers' children, at and through school;
 - the role played by cultural mediators and efforts to reduce stereotypes and prejudices, as well as a better environment for mutual understanding and communication between Roma and other pupils in Italy;
- providing distance learning opportunities. For example:
 - in France, some travellers' children follow courses organised by the "Centre National d'Enseignement à Distance" (CNED – National Distance Learning Centre) so that they can benefit from teaching continuity (same method, same books);

- promoting coordination and cooperation between different services and actors. For example:
 - networking between local authorities, NGOs, social and educational workers; involvement of relevant NGOs in Italy;
- developing second chance programmes. For example:
 - in Romania, the Second Chance is aimed at preventing the social and professional exclusion of young people from very poor families who have dropped out of compulsory education without achieving the minimum competencies for getting a job. The programme provides the opportunity for young Roma (aged 14–24 years) to complete basic primary and secondary school, together with additional vocational training;
- organising training programmes for non-Roma teachers. For example:
 - the “Multi-annual National Training Programme for Non-Roma Teachers Working with Roma Children and Students” in Romania.

The most common weaknesses highlighted by experts are often the converse of the positive examples. These include:

- lack of resources. For example:
 - in the Czech Republic, most of the programmes remain rather modest in their scope considering the urgency of the needs and are largely dependent on ESF financing and their sustainability is not certain;
 - in Slovakia, “the lack of resources is reflected in the lack of education facilities, in the low remuneration of teachers, the modest funding of social inclusion programmes for pupils, etc. Large classes hamper individual approaches and force to frontal teaching that is not sensitive to different abilities of pupils and does not promote cooperation among them. Budgetary constraints limit the needed expansion of pre-school provisions”;
- lack of parental awareness and involvement and insufficient attention to parental education. For example:
 - in Bulgaria, the experts comment on “the failure to address the huge gap between the education level of Bulgarian and Roma mothers through proactivity and activation measures by schools”;
 - in Portugal, the expert underlines that “it is important to promote the awareness of gypsy mothers and fathers – most of whom never attended school – regarding the need and the benefits of schooling for their sons and daughters. It is also important to define a motivation strategy that promotes the actual attendance of school by gypsy children”;
- ineffective desegregation policies. For example:
 - in Bulgaria, “‘desegregation’ projects have suffered from many drawbacks, the main one being that they never included all Roma children in a specific school but only targeted parts of the social and economic elite of the Roma community. Those who did not move to mixed schools and stayed in the sub-standard settings of the segregated school could arguably have even suffered from the desegregation projects and school dropout has increased”;

- insufficient attention to **cultural differences**. For example:
 - lack of intercultural training and limited professional skills of teachers in Italy;
 - limited number of cultural mediators available in France;
 - in Portugal, “the education system has experienced significant difficulties to adapt to the heterogeneous and diverse nature of its ‘clients’, to value the potential of multi-cultural diversity, to face the ethnocentric nature of a curriculum which has been developed for a ‘Portuguese, white middle class, urban child’ and to engage in an adequate training of the different education professionals regarding the need to deal with children (and families) from diverse cultural and social backgrounds and to adopt adequate pedagogical and relational practices”;
- lack of a **coordinated approach**. For example:
 - scarce integration of education with other social services in Italy;
- lack of **data**. For example:
 - in Greece, the absence of disaggregated data on the situation of Roma pupils makes an in-depth assessment of their situation hardly possible. This, in turn, impedes the determination of educational priorities and, thus, the design and implementation of special interventions tailored to the needs of Roma children;
- neglect of **small rural schools**. For example:
 - in Bulgaria, “municipalities tend to redistribute the money in ways that favour elitist schools located in the municipal centre and not towards small rural schools, which is just the opposite of what municipal autonomy is expected to do. Roma in rural areas tend to live in small villages and in many cases are enrolled in separate schools, which are among the most neglected and underfunded”;
 - in Romania, “the decentralisation process may cause the closing of some schools in the poor rural communities in favour of those in urban areas thus reducing the access to education for the Roma children living in these localities”;
- lack of policies to counter **early school-leaving**. For example:
 - in Spain, there are high levels of secondary school early leaving and a marginal presence in middle and upper levels of the education system.

2.4.3 *Employment*

The experts report on a wide range of initiatives to increase the employment of Roma. However, most also stress that the extent of policies is not sufficient to address the problems of very high unemployment, low quality employment and the decline in traditional occupations.

Some of the strengths of existing policies which are identified by the experts include:

- **training and employment programmes targeting the Roma aimed at increasing their access to salaried employment**. For example:
 - in Romania, the National Employment Agency focuses on reducing the unemployment among the Roma and there is an emphasis on vocational training, aimed at training

- Roma for professions that are demanded on the labour market as a means of raising Roma employment;
 - the Hungarian expert stresses that Public Employment Services have a very important role and their services should be, as planned, significantly improved;
 - in Spain, training and employment programmes, such as the Access Programme managed by the Roma Secretariat Foundation are more necessary today in a context of crisis in order to prevent the widening of the labour gap that exists between the Roma and the general population;
- promoting an **integrated approach** by linking income support with activation measures. For example:
 - the Slovak expert reports that “Roma have been engaged much more in activation employment programmes (so called *activation works*) than the geographically close non-Roma population. (46.6% of Roma participated at one time in the activation in comparison to 5.1% of geographically close general population.) Participation in activation work is connected with the minimum income scheme and presents the ‘merit part of the benefit’”;
 - the provision of **incentives** to employers to employ Roma. For example:
 - in Romania, tax reduction for companies that employ Roma and for Roma entrepreneurs;
 - initiatives to combat any form of discrimination against Roma on the labour market.

Experts highlight many weaknesses in existing employment policies and frequently stress that the outcomes are often disappointing with training often not leading to employment or employment only being of short duration. As the Romanian expert puts it, “the policy initiatives are good but the implementation is less successful”. Amongst key weaknesses frequently highlighted are:

- the lack of **adequate training and support**. For example:
 - the Bulgarian experts note the concentration of Roma in low paid and low unionised employment, particularly in agriculture and construction, and consider that this is reinforced by the fact that “Roma have 4-5 times less chances for training and professional development than Bulgarians”;
 - the Czech expert notes that “the scope of labour market policies is rather limited and targeting of vulnerable groups like unskilled, low skilled or long-term unemployed often insufficient. The special programmes aimed at Roma do not exist in national Active Labour Market Policies (ALMP) nor do the Employment Offices possess information on the unemployment of Roma and their participation in ALMP”;
 - the Hungarian expert notes that “training programmes with often questionable effectiveness frequently exclude those with low levels of education, although the employment figures of workers without secondary education are the lowest in the EU - they do not reach 30% and are even lower for the Roma . . . The overview of the Roma employment policies point out that the past years’ programmes aimed at Roma employment were not able to successfully influence the level of Roma employment. The problems of the system can be linked to the definition of the target population, the goals and priorities, the indicators, the procedures for grant applications, and the lack of monitoring and impact analysis”;

- the Italian expert highlights inadequate training and support systems for the Roma, especially “the lack of placement competence in employment services as far as ‘Roma’ professional profiles are concerned (e.g. data on labour supply)” and the inadequate integration of employment and social policies;
- training opportunities are too often not tailored to needs of Roma and not seen as relevant. For example:
 - the Czech expert concludes that “the Public Employment Services are not using the tools which are needed for the application of the individualised, tailored and complex measures like profiling, intensive individual counselling, new public management tools (such as performance based contracts, quantified targets), empowerment of clients etc.”;
- failure to address legal barriers to right to work. For example:
 - the Italian expert highlights the restrictive norms on immigration and citizenship rights;
- insufficient incentives for companies to employ “Roma” workers, for example in Italy;
- too much dependence on charitable organisations. For example:
 - in France, “apart from help in finding jobs provided by charitable associations on certain travellers’ sites, there are no specific government policies for employment for the Romani population”.

2.4.4 Health

Considerable efforts are being made in several countries to improve Roma access to health services. Amongst the positive policies highlighted are:

- promoting universal access to the healthcare system. For example:
 - the Austrian experts emphasise that “the Austrian health system provides rather equal access to health services. The latter appears to be true irrespective of a rather high share of private co-payments, as people with low income are exempted from them in a number of cases and as the system offers a wide range of standard high quality services available without co-payments (for most parts of the insured population). However, an important weakness of the Austrian health system is its strong focus on curative treatment, whereas health prevention is underdeveloped”;
 - the French expert highlights that in spite of the lack of specific policies to address the health problems of Roma, the introduction of the “Couverture Maladie Universelle” (CMU - Universal health insurance) has been a major step forward for ensuring the health of travellers;
 - the Romanian expert highlights the inclusion of the Roma population in the national health insurance system;
 - in Spain, universal access to the healthcare system has entailed progress in the welfare of the Roma community;

- ensuring that health services reach out to all Roma communities. For example:
 - in Greece, the Socio-medical Centres for Roma provide prevention, basic first-level health, first-level social care and social inclusion services and, in order to cover the needs of Gypsies living in semi-nomad, nomad or remote communities, the programme 'Safeguarding promotion of health and psychosocial support of Greek Gypsies' has been implemented since 2004. Mobile units visit the Gypsy settlements in order to conduct clinical examinations and vaccinations, to provide consultation and psychosocial support, to tackle social problems and also to record living conditions at the local level;
 - in Romania, health mediators are now active throughout the country running activities that include: identifying health problems and associated social problems, preparing registration with family doctors, preparing vaccination campaigns, disseminating information regarding the health system, hygiene, contraception and family planning. On-going training is provided to health mediators so that they can work in rural communities and help to improve access to health services;
 - in Slovakia, the expert refers to "a recent report (which) suggests that regular health mediator work in segregated communities – providing hundreds of health insurance cards, consultations, public education, vaccination and simple health care services -- has improved access of their inhabitants to health care". However, she adds, "the programme is underfinanced and there are only 30 mediators";
- promoting health education. For example:
 - in France, charitable associations often undertake health prevention and education actions in association with the Mother and Child Protection services.

The weaknesses in health policies highlighted by the experts are often the converse of the positive policies. They include:

- lack of health insurance. For example:
 - 37% of the population living in segregated Roma communities in Bulgaria were without health insurance and among those Roma who had worked abroad every second was without health insurance;
- poor access to health services. For example:
 - in Bulgaria, every 6th person aged 15+ was not registered with a general practitioner and some 5% never had visited one in their lives;
 - in Romania, disparities between urban and rural areas remain a problem both in terms of coverage and quality of services, and the lack of transport/ infrastructure (especially in the poor Roma communities) results in difficult access to public health services;
- insufficient emphasis on prevention, health education and health promotion programmes. For example:
 - in Spain, the chronic nature of certain illnesses, unhealthy lifestyles and low levels of prevention are indicators of social inequality and exclusion;
 - specific public health interventions, including health education and health promotion programmes, are needed in Hungary;
 - in Italy, there are few public information campaigns and limited awareness of health rights on the part of Roma;

- high level of patient cost-sharing. For example:
 - in Bulgaria, the experts highlight that “‘out-of-pocket’ expenditures by individual patients are relatively high, with negative consequences for health service provision for vulnerable low income groups such as the Roma”;
 - in the Czech Republic, “with the increasing user fees in health services, the inclination of the poor Roma households to underuse health services will increase which can have deteriorating impacts on their health status. The social assistance scheme does not cover any health care costs except some contributions to the specific needs of the disabled”;
- discriminatory practices of health providers. For example:
 - in Hungary, “Roma are regularly subjected to discrimination at healthcare institutions. This is partly due to the lack of preparation at medical schools, thus it would be necessary to include cross-cultural training in the educational programmes of medical schools, as at present there are such initiatives only on an ad hoc basis”.

2.4.5 *Housing and environment*

Many experts comment that housing policy is one of the most neglected areas of public policy both in terms of resources and the capacity to ensure basic rights. Efforts to address issues of sub-standard housing and environment as well as segregation and “ghettoisation” are often quite inadequate. Three issues that occur regularly are the lack of investment in social housing, problems over land ownership and lack of adequate travellers’ sites. These are elaborated below:

- lack of investment in social housing. For example:
 - in Bulgaria, “the National Programme for the Improvement of the Living Conditions of the Roma, which envisaged investments to the amount of 1.5 billion leva in social housing and public infrastructure practically never started. The funds dedicated to the programme were negligible compared to the plans even before the start of the economic crisis”;
 - in the Czech Republic, investment in social housing has been frozen (except for the use of European Structural Funds);
 - in Hungary, improving the housing conditions of the Roma has long been on the agenda and it is mentioned in several National Strategy Reports – still, significant improvements have not been achieved yet;
 - the Slovak expert comments that “short-sighted privatisation of municipal housing, limited housing construction and the deplorable practice of concentration of troublesome tenants on one place are the greatest shortcomings that still persist. . . . Lack of public housing construction and affordable housing contributes to overcrowding of households (both those of the general population and those of Roma) and to a growing number of undocumented substandard houses”;
- problems over land ownership. For example:
 - in Romania, housing policies include measures for addressing land ownership issues and the building/rehabilitation of houses, but very little concrete results of these measures can be seen at the local level and few funds have been allocated for such activities;

- in Slovakia, property rights settlement of land on which Roma settlements are located is perceived as the crucial problem and barrier for improvement of housing standards in these communities;
- insufficient, badly located and often too small travellers' sites. For example:
 - in France, "when communes have met the requirements of the departmental plans to provide travellers' sites, there should be 41,589 pitches throughout mainland France. However, the organisations representing travellers have cast considerable doubt on this target, stating that it is far from being achieved and that, in practice, travellers have continued to encounter obstacles hindering their itinerant way of life. At the end of 2009, only 19,936 pitches were available, 48% of the number planned";
 - in Ireland, "Traveller accommodation remains beset by problems and there is considerable divergence between what local authorities are required or recommended to do and what they actually do in terms of implementation thus the provision of transient sites is not given the priority envisaged in legislation. Implementation by local authorities has been hampered by: opposition of local politicians; poor practices of local authority staff; negative public opinion; and gaps and restrictions in planning legislation and procedures";
 - in the Netherlands, responsibility for halting sites was decentralised but this has not solved the shortage of halting sites because first of all, the budget for providing or maintaining halting sites is not earmarked and part of the general budget of municipalities and secondly, there is enormous aversion against new halting sites among the general public.

The following are among the more positive policy developments highlighted by experts:

- in Greece, the main positive action targeting Roma was the loan programme, providing 9,000 loans up to the amount of 60,000 euros each. However, a weakness was the fact that the individuals who cannot provide evidence of their municipal status and "permanent residence" in a municipality are blocked from accessing the government housing programme of state guaranteed loans or no interest loans;
- in Spain, the experience of slum eradication, and the turn away from segregated re-accommodation to the normalisation or dissemination of the Roma community in various urban settings, are examples of good practices for residential insertion, together with the general improvement of areas and neighbourhoods;
- in Romania, according to the 2010 state budget law the Ministry of Regional Development and Tourism initiated a pilot programme of social housing for the Roma with funding amounting to 6.5 million.

2.4.6 *Personal social services*

Several experts point out the key role played by personal social services. For instance:

- in Spain, the Roma community finds its point of contact with the Welfare State via municipal social services centres. They also make great use of social entity centres such as Caritas, Roma Secretariat Foundation and the Red Cross.

2.4.7 Sport, recreation, culture

While several experts suggest that the promotion of the cultural legacy of the Roma community is often underdeveloped others highlight a number of important initiatives in this regard. These include the following:

- in Hungary, there has been an emphasis on preserving the identity, cultural values and language of the Gypsy population. “For instance, a promising initiative is “Ózd – ‘Cseppben a tenger’ Alkotásközpontú Integrációs model” (Ocean in the drop – creativity-focused integration model)⁷. It started in 2007 and targeted the integration of the Roma living in Hétes telep near Ózd (80 families, 400 people) through getting into contact with various forms of art, at the beginning in the form of summer camps. The idea was to provide a positive experience which builds the local community, strengthens a positive self-image and Roma identity, self-representation skills, individual abilities and autonomy, self-sufficiency and promotes cooperation between Roma and non-Roma”;
- in Italy, the project “Sportrom” was launched by the Province of Napoli, the Ministry of Interior and a social association in 2009, in order to promote sports among Roma children and to promote social and cultural integration through sports. Key features of this project are: a) collaboration between different institutions, levels of government and civil society organisations; b) integrated approach combining education, culture and sport activities; and c) cultural mediation;
- in Slovakia, in the area of cultural activities, “there are NGOs, voluntary organisations and even institutions such as Roma theatre in Prešov, Roma conservatory in Košice, regular Roma broadcasting on the Slovak Radio and Slovak Television, etc. However, support for Roma culture is limited by the general condition that the amount of funds made available for minority culture depends on the number of people who have declared in the last Census that they belong to the given ethnicity. Funds for Roma cultures are significantly lower than, for instance, funds for Hungarian minority culture as only a smaller part of Roma declare their Roma ethnicity in the Census”;
- in Slovenia, “the Exercising of the Public Interest in Culture Act (2002) stipulates in Article 65 that the State shall finance cultural programmes or projects aimed at the Roma community. The Cultural Heritage Protection Act (covering also the Roma community) and the National Cultural Programme 2008–2011 (including the promotion of the cultural development of the Roma community among cultural priorities) were adopted in 2008. According to the Librarianship Act (2001), in the local communities where the Roma live the librarian activity for the Roma is obligatory, including communication in Romani. The National Library has to take care of the librarian material of the Roma Community”;
- in Spain, “the Roma Culture Institute was created in 2005 to promote an unknown cultural richness and the integration of Roma culture into Spanish universities' teaching curriculum in June 2011”.

In most countries, promoting increased access to sporting and recreation facilities is not a priority in public policy in relation to the Roma. For instance, in Slovakia the present system of housing construction support does not consider construction of playgrounds, community centres or clubs as a legitimate target for funding. However, a positive development is that the national programme of Multifunctional Community Centres (under preparation) is to support establishment of community centres in socially excluded communities that do not have such

⁷ <http://kkt.tutorialapitvany.hu/projekt/ozd-cseppben-a-tenger-alkotaskozpontu-integracios-modell>.

facilities. This programme thus can improve the access of Roma communities to meaningful leisure time activities and culture.

2.4.8 *Anti-discrimination*

Most experts highlight the importance of legislation on equal treatment and non-discrimination and the effective coordination of measures as being critical to counter discrimination. However, legislation on its own is not enough. Active implementation, enforcement and monitoring are seen as being key to beginning to change negative social stereotypes that underpin much discrimination and there is often a gap between legislation and reality. However, some experts comment that in spite of efforts little improvement is made. For instance:

- in Hungary, while anti-discrimination legislation and administrative procedures to fight ethnic discrimination are in place their enforcement is weak and, in spite of the efforts of various organisations (e.g. the Roma Civil Rights Foundation, the Legal Defence Bureau for National and Ethnic Minorities, the Equal Treatment Authority, the Jászág Roma Civil Rights Foundation) “discrimination against the Roma is not decreasing at all”;
- the Slovak expert notes that “systematic monitoring of Roma discrimination is missing” though there is important work done “mainly by NGOs such as Amnesty International (with focus on unrightfully placement of Roma children into special schools), Advisory Centre for Human and Civic Rights (issue of sterilisation of Roma women), Milan Šimečka Foundation (housing rights)⁸, People against Racism (various subjects) and the Slovak Anti-Poverty Network (social rights). There are also the public or governmental institutions such as the Slovak National Centre for Human Rights (SNCHR), the Government Plenipotentiary for Roma Communities and (occasionally) the Public Defender of Rights who document cases of discrimination, advocate their victims and try to publicise issues in relation to discrimination against Roma”;
- in France, “the importance of actively supporting Roma access to their rights is recognised by the Directorate General of Social Cohesion which contributes funds under the Prevention of the Exclusion and Insertion of Vulnerable Persons Programme to the head offices of the networks of associations who provide legal support, promote access to rights and campaign against discrimination”;
- in Italy, a *National Office against Racial Discrimination* (UNAR) was created within the Presidency of the Council of Ministers in 2003; it plays a key role in close collaboration with Roma NGOs, regional and local authorities. It has declared that “there are no significant and coherent policies to support effectively the social inclusion of ‘Roma’ people at national and sub-national levels”;
- in Ireland, a National Action Plan against Racism (NAPR) was introduced in 2005. According to the Irish expert, “not just inspiring for its holistic approach, the Plan was an important general plank of Ireland’s strategy for improving the treatment of Travellers. The Plan rested on a thorough and generally well-worked out framework and set out an ‘intercultural framework’ for the development of ‘a more inclusive, intercultural society in Ireland . . . based on policies that promote interaction, equality of opportunity,

⁸ Discrimination of Roma in the domain of housing (mainly evictions of tenants) and advocacy of Roma housing rights has been the mission of the Institute of Roma public policy that is the daughter NGO of the Milan Šimečka Foundation.

understanding and respect'. The Plan ran its course in 2008 however – after a very short, three-year operational period – and no known follow-up measures are planned.”

Another key issue highlighted by several experts is the recognition and use of Roma language. For instance

- in Romania, in April 2001, a public administration law was passed allowing for the use of minority languages in areas where minorities represent at least 20% of the population. The use of non-Romanian languages in criminal and civil procedures is constitutionally guaranteed. The education law also contains provisions for education in the national minorities' language including the Romani language.

A number of experts stress positive efforts which provide information about and promote greater awareness of Roma culture and which challenge negative stereotypes. For instance:

- the UK expert points to an initiative by the Roma Support Group which, in response “to the need for an appreciation of Roma history and culture and to the intense marginalisation and victimisation which they have faced, has produced such an educational pack which is aimed at primary schools. It includes a well-illustrated booklet with hand-outs and a DVD”;
- the Slovenian expert highlights a range of measures to promote Roma culture and to raise awareness of both majority and minority populations of the existence of discrimination and how to fight it, in particular of public servants who come into contact with members of the Roma community in their work.

Among the key areas requiring more attention which are highlighted by experts (e.g. ES, RO, SK, UK) are:

- involving the media in the fight against discrimination so as to change emphasis from promoting negative aspects relating to the Roma (uneducated, delinquents, etc.) to positive models to be followed;
- more effective enforcement of existing anti-discrimination legislation (e.g. RO, SK) and better resourcing of organisations to face increasing xenophobia and racist policy orientation. For example:
 - the Irish expert highlights that the closing down of the National Consultative Committee on Racism and Inter-culturalism (in December 2008) suggests at a minimum a diminution in the resources being devoted to anti-racism work. The scaling back of the resources of the Equality Authority (which contributed some very important work on the situation of Travellers vis-à-vis the equality legislation and a range of policy provisions) and the Irish Commission for Human Rights also spells a diminution of the resources being devoted to the issues;
- more education and awareness raising programmes. For example:
 - the Romanian expert calls for more perception programmes both for the Roma and the majority population to change attitudes and overcome mutual distrust;
 - the Slovak expert highlights the need for human rights education as a key instrument of the fight against discrimination;
- more initiatives to prevent discrimination in public policies. For instance:
 - the Slovak expert stresses the need to address discrimination resulting from insufficient and not well-thought public policies (for instance, unsuitable testing used to

diagnose school maturity and cognitive skills, non-compulsory school catchment areas and early streaming of pupils, insufficient funding of public services, or severely set thresholds for entitlements for benefits, etc.).

2.4.9 Gender equality

A number of experts highlight positive efforts to counter gender discrimination experienced by Roma women. For instance, in Spain policies to promote the Roma woman have picked up speed in recent years, led by both the State and Roma women's associations. The fight against educational, employment and cultural discrimination is the key objective, due to women facing this double discrimination because of their Roma identity. However, as the Romanian expert comments "even with the ambitious goals of the Roma strategy and actions to improve the condition of Roma there are still many Roma women who have to cope with multiple disadvantages: inequalities related to the low educational level, unemployment and discrimination within their family and the larger society".

2.5 Use of EU Structural Funds

Many experts (e.g. BG, CZ, ES, FI, HU, PL, RO, SI, SK) highlight the important role played by EU Structural Funds in supporting Roma integration, though many also consider that more needs to be done to maximise their use. For instance:

- in Bulgaria, the significance of financing provided by the EU structural funds for projects in support of the policy for Roma integration has been growing with some positive results having been achieved in the implementation of projects connected with Roma integration under operative programmes Human Resource Development and Regional Development, as well as in the Programme for development of rural regions 2007-2013 in the first half of the programme period 2007-2013;
- in the Czech Republic, several tens of projects supported by EU Structural Funds are employing disadvantaged groups including Roma in areas such as field social work, environment and infrastructure in excluded Roma communities, education of Roma children. However, the expert concludes that "their impact is, nevertheless, rather small-scale considering the scope of the problems";
- in Finland, the Structural Funds have been an important instrument of development for the enhancement of inclusion, education and employment. ESF projects were especially aimed at the Roma population during the second implementation round (2004–2007) of the EQUAL Community Initiative Programme carried out in the previous programming period. However, "during the current programming period, enhancing the status of the Roma and their social inclusion has not received special emphasis and so far no projects aimed at the Roma population in particular have been initiated";
- in Hungary, ESF funding comprises a very significant part of funding. Other government funds (e.g. the National Employment Fund (NEF)) and usually foreign NGOs (Soros, OSI) or NGOs having foreign sources (Maltese Charity Fund), with the exception of the privately founded Polgár Foundation, also finance Roma programmes; but precise estimates regarding the amounts cannot be provided;
- in Poland, the Programme for the Roma Community is supplemented by the so-called "Roma component" of the Human Capital Operational Programme [Programme Operacyjny

Kapitał Ludzki, POKL] which has been established in 2007 in order to use ESF funding over the period 2007–2013;

- in Slovenia, the tasks that have been defined in the Strategy for Education of Roma are being implemented within the framework of the new financial perspective of the ESF;
- in Spain, the ESF actively participates in the development of labour inclusion for the Roma community, the Access Programme, which forms part of the Multi-Regional Operational Programme “Fight Against Discrimination”;
- In Romania, full participation of Roma in society is supported through EU's financial tools, such as the ESF and the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF), the European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development, as well as the specific Community programmes funding opportunities with the view to support national policies in achieving the overall objective relating to the inclusion of Roma into mainstream education, mainstream labour market, mainstream housing and mainstream society in general.

The Romanian expert, amongst others, highlights an Open Society Institute initiative, the Making the Most of EU Funds for Roma, which seeks to connect achievement of Roma inclusion objectives to EU development resources (see Box 2.1). Working within the conceptual and geographical frame of the Decade of Roma Inclusion, Making the Most is an instrument to tailor Government political commitments to the needs of Roma communities and foster an inclusive process of delivering local development. Through several interlinked interventions, it addresses Roma inclusion as a social goal on its own, as well as a part of broader areas such as good governance, human rights, and social justice that are conducive to wider societal development.

Box 2.1

The Project Generating Facility (PGF) is one intervention of the Making the Most of EU Funds for Roma initiatives which is supported by the Open Society Institute. It is aimed at building capacity of stakeholders at the local level to articulate Roma concerns as part of the local development agenda and to access EU funding in order to address these concerns. In early 2010, the PGF for EU Member States participating in the Decade of Roma Inclusion was launched in Romania (and the Czech Republic) after completing a year cycle of operation in Bulgaria, Hungary and Slovakia. In these countries, PGF facilitates local consensus-building around initiatives to eliminate segregation and exclusion of Roma, and it provides technical assistance to institutions and organisations to obtain funding from national and EU Structural Funds resources for the implementation of such initiatives.

The impact of the PGF is realised through the combined effect of several outcomes: financial resources for Roma inclusion reaching communities; enhanced competence of local stakeholders to identify solutions to Roma issues; and technical skills for preparing projects for the Structural Funds.

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There are several Member States (e.g. DE, EL, FR, IT, LV) with significant Roma minorities that have only made limited use of Structural Funds. For instance:

- in France, “only about 1 out of 1,000 social inclusion projects supported by the Structural Funds have targeted Roma and these have been mainly in the area of training and employment programmes. However, the expert suggests that the situation could change after the publication on 16 March 2011 of a circular from the ‘Délégation Interministérielle à

l'Aménagement et à l'Attractivité des Territoires' applying the change in the ERDF regulations and extending the scope of these funds to accommodation for marginalised communities. The note attached to the circular states explicitly in the examples of action covered: 'with respect to accommodation for travellers: communal facilities and toilets in the travellers' sites, appropriate surroundings, social housing estates and rented family sites'';

- in Italy, there is no specific programme targeted at Roma, Sinti and Travellers, who are generically included in the category of immigrants and ethnic minorities. The Italian expert emphasises that it is not easy to calculate the amount of the EU Structural Funds devoted to the social inclusion of Roma communities. Within the ESF, the *National Office against Racial Discrimination* (UNAR) manages a national project concerning the Roma, Sinti and Travellers in five Southern regions. However, he concludes that "EU Structural Funds, are insufficiently used to tackle Roma poverty and social exclusion challenges";
- the German expert comments that "even if there is a broad political consensus to use ESF-programmes to promote the situation of the Roma, it seems that this policy has not been very successful up to now. The potential of the ESF funding programmes has not yet been exhausted. At the same time, many projects address groups and aspects which can include the Roma population. In particular, the programme for tolerated persons and refugees promotes projects which address, among other groups, Roma from Kosovo and other regions of the former republic of Yugoslavia";
- the Greek expert reports that to date EU Structural Funds resources have not been utilised to a great extent, though they have supported educational programmes for Roma children (ESF), the promotion of entrepreneurship for Roma people (ERDF) and the operation of the Socio-medical Centres for Roma (ESF);
- the Latvian expert highlights that "no specific measures targeted towards the Roma have been planned within the Operational Programme 'Human Resources and Employment' for the 2007-2013 planning period though there are activities co-financed by the ESF where the Roma are included as one of the target groups and activities where the target group is defined in general terms but for which the Roma could be recipients of support (for example, pupils at educational institutions, employees, students)".

A number of barriers to maximising the use of Structural Funds are identified. These include:

- limited availability of matching resources. For example:
 - in Bulgaria, "the financial recourses aimed at improving Roma integration are only partially available because co-funding from the national budget has become very problematic and some pivotal programmes like the programme for improving the living conditions of the Roma have practically stopped";
 - in Romania, a recent study shows that the local councils with consistent incomes submit 2.5 more applications compared to the "poorest" ones;
- limited administrative capacity. For example:
 - in Bulgaria, most of the registered Roma organisations in Bulgaria have limited capacity in project design and management of EU projects and the demand for basic training is quite high. Many Roma NGOs also need further development of their capacity in implementation, monitoring and reporting. The same applies also to experts on Roma issues from the public administration, as well as generally to other experts working on the implementation of social inclusion policies;

- in Romania, two thirds of the projects approved for European funding come from local councils employing specialised staff;
- limited access to/ availability of information on European funding opportunities, stressed for instance by the Bulgarian and Romanian experts;
- lack of coherent planning. For example:
 - in Bulgaria, coherent programming, which takes into account both national sources and the EU Structural Funds is needed. One very counterproductive message is that the integration of the Roma could be done by using the Structural Funds alone;
- lack of information about who are programmes beneficiaries. For example:
 - in Hungary, due to the problems with the definition of the target group, in most cases, ministries and organisations managing programmes have no idea of the proportion of the budget of their programmes that has been invested in helping the Roma;
- limited assessment of the impact of programmes highlighted *inter alia* by the Hungarian expert;
- unsatisfactory coordination of structural funds, stressed for example by the Slovak expert.

2.6 Role of civil society organisations and international organisations

In most countries, experts stress that civil society organisations have played a key role in promoting the integration of Roma. For instance:

- in Austria, an increasing number of associations of Roma and Sinti have been established during the last two decades. Amongst other things, they try to lobby for an improvement of the social situation of Roma and Sinti, they offer advice to Roma and Sinti people, inform the majority population about the history and current situation of Roma and Sinti living in Austria and try to organise and to get public funding for specific programmes and projects likely to improve the social situation of their groups;
- in Bulgaria, civil society organisations and Roma organisations in particular are an important component of the Roma integration. Roma NGOs representatives are involved as observers in the Monitoring Committees of the Operational Programmes and Roma representatives are also present in the Council for Public Consultations, which was organised at the Committee on European Affairs and Oversight of the European Funds at the Parliament;
- in the Czech Republic, civil society and international organisations play a crucial role with respect to social inclusion of Roma - mainly in raising awareness of the problems, fighting for Roma human rights and providing direct support to Roma;
- in Estonia, civil society organisations contribute to increasing the awareness of the public about the Roma and the problems they face, and also to solving these problems;
- in France, after the 2nd World War many organisations were created to support Romani people and progressively took action with respect to housing, help with education and social issues. The “Fédération nationale des associations solidaires d’action avec les Tsiganes et les gens du voyage” (FNASAT – National federation of associations supporting the gypsies and travellers) now includes 80 such associations mainly in France covering

fields such as defence of rights, social and professional insertion, domiciliation, health, surroundings and residence, training, education and local development. More recently the “Union Française des Associations Tsiganes” (UFAT – French Union of Gypsy Associations) was set up, bringing together some thirty regional associations mainly of gypsies, Roma and representatives of other groups. In March 2008, a national organisation of travellers was created, bringing together more than 20 gypsy associations;

- in Hungary, civil society organisations play a key role in promoting the integration of the Roma (e.g. the Open Society Institute, Autonómia Alapítvány, Polgár Alapítvány and Matese Charity Found). However, the expert comments that “despite having a number of devoted and credible activists, unfortunately the Roma political, economic and cultural elite is narrow, highly fragmented and does not act as a unified advocacy group”;
- in Ireland, the expert comments that to all intents and purposes Travellers are now self-organised and have become quite adept in representing themselves. The Irish Traveller Movement, for example, has been very focused on both public opinion and policy reform, as well as generating a sense of identity among the community and enhancing capacity. However, representative organisations should be enabled to play a more explicit role in terms of service delivery to Travellers in fields such as education, training, employment or childcare as well as conflict resolution;
- in Italy, the role played by civil society organisations has increased as a result of many years of activism promoting the civil, cultural and social rights of Roma people, as well as national/ local initiatives and projects. Many Roma organisations are connected with international organisations (e.g. the European Network on Social Inclusion and Roma), also through the support of EU programmes and Structural Funds;
- in Poland, “over the last decade, the number of Roma organisations has increased significantly, as well as their role and visibility. This may be the result of programmes for the Roma community (government and ESF-funded programmes) which supported the development of civil society of Roma. This may also be the effect of policies and activities promoting tolerance and fighting ethnic discrimination. Often, these activities were initiated by international organisations (United Nations, EU) but also by private agencies (Batory foundation, for instance)”;
- in Portugal, the High Commissioner for Immigration and Intercultural Dialogue (ACIDI) and, in particular, the specific unit for the support of gypsy communities (GACI) has played an important role in mobilising and empowering gypsy communities. Several NGO’s have also played a relevant role as regards the promotion of the visibility of the Portuguese gypsy communities’ issues and the development of specific intervention projects;
- in Romania, “Roma NGOs play an important role in identifying specific problems of the community. They are a resource of solutions for intervention and they help in mobilising the community as they have people's trust. Beyond the general importance that they have in the functioning of a democratic society, the role of Roma NGOs is vital in the implementation of projects for the Roma, because they act as an interface in relations with the community and because most central and local authorities in various areas of intervention (labour, justice, education, health, police) have formal partnership agreements with Roma NGOs. Consultation of Roma representatives have become common practice, most public institutions employ Roma experts and their active involvement in all stages of policy making (identification of needs, policy design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation) proves to have a positive influence on increasing programme effectiveness. However, concentration of NGOs (including Roma organisations) in urban areas results in uneven coverage with services and many isolated/ remote Roma communities most in need of assistance do not benefit from this type of support”;

- in Slovakia, the expert highlights that “civil society organisations and international organisations play an important role both as service providers to Roma communities and as Roma human rights defenders. It can be said with certainty that Roma interests have been much more supported by NGOs than by political parties. One reason is that NGOs are less dependent on general public opinion in which negative attitudes to Roma prevail”;
- in Spain, “the participation of the Roma community's most representative organisations in the State Roma Council has ensured that the voice of this community is heard during the design and evaluation of policies that directly affect them. Conversely, the State Council of Social Action NGOs, the ‘European Anti-Poverty Network’-Spain, the Volunteer's Platform, SOS Racism, all undertake the majority of campaigning for the Roma community and, jointly, they form part of a collective effort due to constituting a civil dialogue in Spain that may have a parallel presence together with Social Dialogue in important social policy decisions. Also, the development of regional development plans for the Roma community constitute a channel to strengthen political and civil dialogue, and bring it to the local sphere where specific policies are really applied, and voice institutional and social tensions in social insertion programmes and measures. The Spanish model has included civil society institutions (often as an extension of the Catholic Church or private individuals or institutions) which have worked with Roma and have often begin in the associative Roma movements. From today's point of view, this experience is seen to be a positive strategy: promoting the solidarity of civil society and the undertaking of the Roma cause by other civil institutions, to avoid the isolation of the Roma community and create ethnic leadership profiles.”

The Bulgarian experts give an important warning when they acknowledge the significant role played by NGOs but go on to say that “they cannot be the only component. The large bulk of investment that needs to be done has to take the shape of national programmes. NGOs have a certain role to play in this process as mediators and monitors of the implementation but they cannot be the main implementation agent.”

However, some experts point to the fact that Roma organisations are not very extensive and this limits the possibilities for their voices to be heard. For instance:

- in the Netherlands, “Roma, Sinti and Travellers organisations are weakly organised. Because of the decentralisation and the tendency to prefer general policies over target group policies, the national organisation for Roma and Sinti (LSRO) and other Roma and Sinti self-organisations have lost their subsidies. There are, however, still some national organisations active that aim to improve the social position of Roma, Sinti and Travellers”;
- In Latvia, “the number of Roma NGOs has been adversely affected by the economic crisis. Firstly, because state financial support for NGOs was reduced; secondly, because the institutional apparatus dealing with social integration issues and antidiscrimination policy was reduced; and, thirdly, because active representatives of the Roma community left Latvia in search of employment in other EU Member States. Thus, by the end of 2010 the number of Roma NGOs registered in Latvia declined to 5 from 12 in 2008”;
- In the UK, there are many more NGOs for the longer established gypsy and traveller communities than there are for the newly arrived Roma. One UK study quoted by the expert shows that “in more than 90% of the local authorities surveyed there was no Roma community organisation to negotiate with, and that less than half of the authorities had engaged in any consultation with the Roma”.

The UK expert sums up well the reasons why a strong NGO sector is so important for addressing the poverty, social exclusion and discrimination experienced by Roma: “Experience shows that policies for the Roma rarely become effective unless the Roma themselves become involved and participate actively in both developing and implementing them, particularly at the local level - that is, social inclusion is meaningless without the active participation of those at whom inclusion policies are aimed. There are very few organisations within the UK able and willing to promote this participation. This is an urgent need at local level where Roma communities are greatest in number. In addition, the role of civil society is critical – as it has been for other disadvantaged groups within the UK population – in identifying and responding to new or familiar needs amongst new groups so that mainstream NGOs, including, for example, mainstream children’s organisations, should be involved in the development of new initiatives. Civil society organisations, whether Roma-led or Roma-targeted, can also play a key role in bridging Roma populations to statutory services.”

Many experts, particularly in those newer Member States with large Roma minorities, stress the very important role played by international organisations in recent years such as the Council of Europe, the European Commission, the EU Fundamental Rights Agency, the ILO, the International Organisation for Migration, the Open Society Foundations, the Roma Education Fund, the UNDP, UNICEF and the World Bank. The Czech expert explains the importance of this role when he writes that “international organisations also play an important role in several respects. First, they do so by helping to monitor the situation of Roma in the country and by collecting evidence on it; many research projects were initiated by these organisations and helped to provide key knowledge on the problems of the Roma community. It would be impossible for the domestic actors to fulfil such a role due to lack of commitment to address these problems. Second, these organisations are supportive of the Czech civil organisations in defending the fundamental civil rights of Roma (and playing a role of watch-dog with respect to the position of Roma issues in the domestic scene). Third, they provide important know-how, support and sometimes also financial resources to the activities of the Czech civil organisations and NGOs dealing with Roma (for example, the practice in inclusive education was inspired by their initiatives in other countries). Their multidimensional role is quite substantial since the support provided by the domestic actors (government and public administration) is rather modest and lack long-term emphasis on Roma human rights, anti-discrimination and on effective policies leading to their social inclusion.” The Estonian expert stresses that “many international organisations such as the European Commission against Racism and Intolerance (ECRI), the European Network against Racism (ENAR), the Human Rights Council and various EU organisations have paid attention to the Roma problems in Estonia and pressured Estonian government to tackle social and economic problems, especially educational ones of Roma population”.

3. Key policy priorities for Member States

3.1 Key elements to include in Roma integration strategies

In this chapter, we identify the main elements that experts consider Member States should include in their national Roma integration strategies if they are to bridge the gap between the Roma and the general population. As we have seen in the previous chapter, a number of Member States (e.g. BG, CZ, ES, FI, PL, RO, SI, SK) already have fairly extensive and comprehensive strategies on which to build. For many of these, the key challenge is to adequately resource and implement their strategies. However, many other Member States have, until now, lacked a comprehensive approach to Roma integration and while some countries have introduced a range of positive initiatives in particular policy areas these are often quite fragmented and piecemeal. In other countries, the issue of Roma integration has featured little in the policy debate and they start from a very low base.

Several experts stress that what is needed is less new policies and programmes but rather the adequate funding and effective implementation and monitoring of existing programmes and building on experience to date. This is well expressed by the Hungarian expert who considers that “the present situation is well described, scientifically grounded, although regular focused studies should be carried out to gain information on smaller population segments and local problems (e.g. very poor Roma women will not be represented well enough in a national sample). The emphasis should be put on the successful implementation of proposed measures. As the problem is very complex, coherent and complex intervention and long-term political commitment are required to handle it. As several studies have pointed out, there is no sense to launch policies to combat discrimination and mitigate its effects without collecting data concerning the programmes, and planning and carrying out impact assessments.” Similarly, the Spanish expert stresses that the “Roma integration strategy can be outlined based on the central idea of improving accumulated experience from the last twenty years, focusing the majority of inclusive growth policy on employment and education, without abandoning the development of equality policies for healthcare and housing, with an explicit but not exclusive focus on the Roma community, as is currently, centred towards the most excluded groups and Roma women, guaranteeing a spotlight on mainstreaming in all policy areas.”

Related to this is an emphasis on building on existing examples of good practice that have been developed on a pilot basis, often by NGOs with funding from foundations. For instance, the Hungarian expert recommends that “NGO innovations in the key areas of employment, education, housing and health should be mainstreamed and supported in the long run, with stable and possibly increasing financing”. Likewise, the Greek expert stresses the need to build on and extend good initiatives and comments that for this to happen it is essential that “continuous and stable funding should be ensured for the whole period of implementation, although, under the current budgetary constraints due to the serious fiscal crisis, this is rather questionable. Nevertheless, the funding should combine national and EU resources, while municipal funding (from their own budgets) is considered also necessary”. The Portuguese expert also stresses “the importance of clear allocation of resources within the Strategy regarding the measures proposed and the respective funding responsibilities”.

However, many other experts (e.g. AT, BE, EL, FR, IE, IT, PT, UK) stress that there is still a need to develop an overall strategy to promote the inclusion of Roma. Thus, the French expert stresses that “a national plan devoted to active social inclusion of ‘Roma’ communities and individuals should be prepared”. The Greek expert argues that “it is of utmost importance

that the new National Policy Framework for the Roma in Greece is underpinned by an integrated approach which should be given coherence by elaborating a new long-term Integrated Action Plan for Roma Inclusion". However, he also stresses that for an integrated strategy to be effective it is indispensable to put in place the necessary instruments for ensuring effective implementation of an Integrated Approach such as an Inter-Ministerial Committee for Roma, an Advisory Board consisting of experts on Roma people and Roma representatives, Regional Committees for Roma affairs. The Irish expert says that the overriding need is for a national integration strategy for Travellers in Ireland as "at the present time, there are a number of sectoral and cross-sectoral strategies but the country could not be said to have an overall strategy". Several experts see the requirement on Member States to prepare a national Roma Integration Strategy as an important opportunity to an overall strategy. For instance, the Portuguese expert notes that "the national Roma integration strategy may represent an important opportunity to move forward in a coherent and strategic way regarding the effectiveness of Portuguese gypsies' citizenship rights and the promotion of social inclusion".

3.1.1 Overall elements

Drawing on the experts reports one can identify a number of overarching elements that are key to ensuring effective national strategies for Roma integration that will make a major contribution to reducing poverty and social exclusion.

Several experts stress the importance of a mainstreaming approach. For instance, the French expert emphasises that France should "develop policies in which minorities can find their place through mainstreaming". However, he warns that "the policies implemented and discrimination must not lead to the perpetuation of the conditions that make the Romani people 'eternal strangers within'". Rather similarly, the Italian expert emphasises the need for measures that would strengthen the Roma community's place in society. In particular, he recommends: the recognition of the *romanés* language (and its dialects) as "historical linguistic minority" according to the current national legislation; a change of the current legislation towards a "jus soli" orientation (e.g. birth-right citizenship); and efforts to eradicate any discriminatory restrictions (against Roma people and immigrants) from existing laws.

Closely linked to the emphasis on mainstreaming Roma's place in society is the need to combine specialised/targeted services and universal services. Most experts stress that the first priority is to ensure that services addressing particular needs contribute to integrating and not further separating and isolating them. Thus, in the first instance it is important to increase the access of Roma to mainline services and supports and then to complement these mainline services with specific targeted services to address particular needs. For instance, the UK expert proposes "investment in specific services targeted on Roma families, including housing, health, education, income maintenance and the labour market to help them become fully integrated into UK society. This would require both specialist services and the effective extension of mainstream services so that the Roma do not become, as a result of targeting, isolated from the mainstream, together with multi-agency working where appropriate, in each case with the involvement of Roma personnel."

A related point that is made by several experts is that the integration and social inclusion of Roma must not be viewed in isolation but needs to be set in the broader context of an overall social inclusion strategy. For instance, the Czech expert stresses that "specific measures for

social integration/ inclusion of Roma cannot be effective if the broader frame of social inclusion strategy is not adequately developed. The targeted/ tailored measures for the Roma community need to be underpinned with a well-designed general strategy of social inclusion.” In particular, he highlights the need to: expand the scope of labour market policies and their ability to target groups furthest from the labour market; ensure the adequacy of income support; expand social housing; address the underfinancing in educational sector and services for pupils with specific educational needs; and enhance the capacity to enforce anti-discrimination legislation. Similarly, the Austrian experts warn that while targeted measures specifically addressing Roma can be suitable in a number of cases, “a sole concentration on specific programmes and measures may at the same time also convey adverse attributions, by signalling that Roma are in need of ‘special treatment’. For this reason, we think that it should also be examined if and to what degree special needs of Roma people could be better incorporated into existing general strategies and measures (e.g. in measures of active labour market policies and in the school system).”

Most experts stress the importance of a comprehensive, integrated and coordinated approach. For instance, the Romanian expert emphasises the importance of “promoting coherent/ integrated services at local level and giving such projects priority for funding”. The UK expert argues for “the identification of a specific government department to lead on Roma issues . . . which could develop cross-departmental strategies for social inclusion and the operationalisation of social, economic and political rights for Roma. This would need to be mirrored at local level (with a single local authority department also given lead responsibility for working with Roma communities.)” Likewise, the Slovenian expert stresses that “the best results could be achieved through an integrated approach to the issue of Roma social inclusion, with active and co-current action of educational institutions, Centres for Social Work, Employment Offices, health care institutions, cultural institutions, NGOs and the police, as suggested in the introduction to the 2011 Strategy for Education of Roma”. Similarly, the Irish expert stresses that “there is a need for a fully-functioning interagency approach and integrated strategic plans for service delivery to be put in place for all cities and counties with Traveller populations . . . the strategies should cover the following areas: health, education/training, income/employment/economy, accommodation, culture, law and order.”

Closely linked to the emphasis on a comprehensive approach is the need for a strong poverty and social inclusion perspective to be part of an overall strategy for the integration of Roma. Thus, most experts stress that an integration strategy should not be limited to the four EU Roma integration goals relating to access to education, employment, healthcare and housing and environment but should also address income support as well as areas like transport and sport, recreation and cultural activities. For instance, the Irish expert stresses that “while there are a lot of sectoral initiatives for Travellers – which are very important and to be welcomed – these tend to focus on service provision and they are not consistently informed by a social in/exclusion perspective which emphasises structural factors and the role of systemic inequalities. I suggest, therefore, that these need to be framed from a social in/exclusion perspective which would also mean that they have to be augmented with an income dimension.”

Another recurring theme is the importance of geographic targeting. For instance, the Greek expert advocates the development of territorial integrated pacts for Roma inclusion mainly in areas with high concentration of Roma population. The Hungarian expert suggests that “geographic targeting for the improvement and enhanced accessibility of employment, social and health services would be necessary with additional financing”. However, a key to effective

targeting is being able to identify who are the beneficiaries of programmes. As the Hungarian expert points out, “the problem of identifying the target group (Who is Roma?) should be solved so as to be able to monitor the impact of the projects”.

It is strongly emphasised that national Roma integration strategies should take account of the heterogeneity of Roma populations and the diverse situations affecting them. In particular, while different Roma communities share many problems in common, there are often significant differences between the situation of long established Roma populations and more recent Roma immigrants. There are also significant differences between sedentary and mobile Roma. Thus, for instance, the Belgian experts stress “the diversity of the groups gathered under the label ‘Roma’, mixing new immigrants from EU or third countries with long established groups such as the Travellers or groups with different lifestyles (itinerant, semi-itinerant, sedentary). This diversity calls for a specific consideration of the proper characteristics and integration challenges of each of these groups. In the Belgian context, it is important to make at least a distinction between Travellers and other Roma groups, as beyond common challenges they face also different problems, particularly concerning housing.”

More generally, experts stress the need for integration strategies to give attention to building the capacity, commitment and coordination of institutional structures as at present political and organisational weaknesses limit the effective design and implementation of measures. For instance, the Czech expert stresses that “one of the crucial aspects of this strategy should be a clear division of the tasks (and also financial resources) between national and local government (public administration) on the one hand and NGOs on the other hand (NGOs cannot replace governments in their responsibilities)”. The Greek expert emphasises the need for strong political will which should “put in place the necessary instruments of coordination, monitoring and evaluation, ensuring at the same time the financing and the effective means for the implementation of action. In other words, it necessitates inter-ministerial cooperation, which is often difficult to put into effect, together with well organised and clearly defined administrative structures in planning and implementing effective integrated Roma programmes.”

The importance of involving Roma in the preparation, monitoring and implementation of the strategies aimed at promoting their social inclusion is emphasised repeatedly. For instance, the Czech expert stresses that Roma should intensively participate in designing a national strategy. The Slovenian expert reports that “too often, the Roma community is an object of policies and measures rather than an active partner in formulating the measures and the one who takes responsibility for its own future. It is not enough to change behaviour and attitudes of the majority population; the Roma community itself has to adapt too.” She also agrees with the view of the National Programme of Measures for Roma for the Period 2010-2015, that “experience in working with the Roma population indicates that efforts of national authorities and municipalities do not produce good results if Roma are not actively included in these activities”.

3.1.2 Access to education

The experts highlight a broad range of actions that are necessary to promote access to education among Roma children and to overcome educational disadvantage. Above all it is clear that there is no one solution and that a comprehensive and multi-faceted approach is necessary for success. The experts also emphasise that there are now many examples of

good practice. What is needed is to spread knowledge of what works and has made a difference, and to scale it up so that all Roma children can benefit.

The most common recommendations in relation to education focus on:

- reducing the segregation of Roma children both in separate schools and in special classes in ordinary schools and promoting their integration within the education system. For instance:
 - the Slovak expert recommends “improving substantially the integration of pupils during compulsory education by repeating testing procedures for diagnosis of retardation, limiting early streaming of pupils, supporting team work (group teaching) instead of frontal teaching, making leisure and free time activities free of charge for all children, monitoring participation of pupils and providing free school meals for all pupils to avoid stigmatisation”;
 - the French expert argues for promoting the acceptance of children in schools without problems, whether these children are Romani, foreign, EU or non-EU, regardless of whether the families have the papers required by the administration;
 - the Polish expert suggests evaluating and possibly revising the procedures for referring Roma to schools for handicapped children as the current ones lead to unexpectedly high number of Roma pupils in these special schools;
- increasing the participation rates of Roma children in education, reducing early school leaving and promoting increased participation in tertiary education. For instance:
 - the Czech expert highlights the need to increase and enlarge support for Roma pupils’ participation in secondary and tertiary education;
 - the Estonian expert emphasises the need to ensure that all children obtain at least basic education. To achieve this, the school attendance of Roma children should be decisively improved with the help of improving the case management, education policy measures and activities (e.g. individual teaching, development of home teaching in pre-vocational education, etc.);
 - the Spanish expert recommends the achievement of a 100% completion rate of compulsory education (ESO) among Roma children or at least to approximate to general figures of general population;
 - the French expert argues for making it easier for children to attend schools, drawing on the experience with mobile school units and also for promoting distance learning in addition to – not as a substitute for - school education;
 - the Romanian expert urges continued efforts to prevent school dropout among Roma children;
- addressing poverty barriers and providing incentives to school participation. For instance:
 - the Belgian experts recommend providing material support for expenses such as transportation, meals, materials and extra-curricular activities as this is essential, not just to help overcome financial obstacles but also to strengthen the relationship of trust with parents;
 - the Czech expert suggests considering putting in place a national programme of school free meals;
 - the Greek expert supports the extension of incentives to Greek parents in order to facilitate school attendance - e.g., provide a financial benefit (targeted to all vulnerable

- groups, including Roma people) for every child registered in school to be paid on completion of the school year;
- the Polish expert recommends strengthening existing material support (stipends, financing textbooks, commuting etc.) which encourage Roma to attend secondary and higher level schools and considering additional incentives (in the form of participation in camps, cultural events, awards) designed in particular for females;
- increasing involvement in pre-primary education as this is vital to ensuring Roma children's subsequent success in education. For instance:
- the Austrian experts stress the need to address deficits in pre-school education provision;
 - the Czech expert proposes that the accessibility of pre-school facilities in excluded Roma communities should be assessed and improved where necessary. There should be a guarantee of participation in pre-school preparatory classes given to all Roma children that are available in their neighbourhood;
 - the Polish expert recommends that more attention should be paid to pre-school education, specifically to the enrolment and training in public kindergartens;
 - the Slovak expert recommends a substantial improvement in participation of 3–6 years old children from socially disadvantaged environment in pre-primary education;
- promoting integration in schools through recognising and valuing Roma culture and language. For instance:
- the Austrian experts recommend improving the knowledge of the history and the current situation of Roma both among teachers and pupils (also in the majority population) so as to reduce discrimination and stigmatisation;
 - the Belgian experts suggest that greater emphasis should be placed in initial and in-service teacher training on the need to combat racism and racial discrimination, on the one hand, and on the ways in which diversity enriches Belgian society, on the other hand;
 - the Bulgarian experts recommend investing in the development of programmes for intercultural education and in new more student-oriented and diversified teaching practices;
 - the Greek expert argues for improving the training of teachers to better understand Roma culture and background;
 - the Italian expert suggests developing an inter-cultural approach open to the understanding of the plurality of human identity involving Roma people, local communities and other ethnic groups;
 - the Lithuanian expert emphasises the need to train and support teachers who are working with Roma and to motivate public schools to cooperate and learn from the experience of NGOs working with Roma children;
 - the Polish expert highlights the need to pay more attention to increasing tolerance and openness of Polish students and pupils towards Roma (and other ethnic minorities), especially in schools attended by Roma. For that, special classes, curricula, extracurricular activities should be developed;
 - the Portuguese expert recommends to discuss and implement educational models that take into account the cultural diversity of the gypsy communities, giving particular

- attention to gender related challenges and develop inter-cultural training programmes addressed at education professionals;
- the Slovak expert emphasises the need to improve access to right for Roma children to be educated in their mother tongue in the case of Romany language;
- increasing the use of teaching assistants in schools where there are Roma pupils. For instance:
- the Austrian experts recommend expanding “school assistance” and in doing so ensuring that those engaged as teachers/school assistants are of Roma descent and/or at least speak Romani;
 - the Czech expert proposes that pedagogical/teaching assistants should become a norm in all schools with Roma pupils;
 - the Slovenian expert suggests employing more Roma assistants in elementary schools and offer more additional help with learning to Roma children (by teachers, other pupils, NGOs, etc.);
- promoting parental and community awareness of the value of education and their involvement in their children’s education and strengthening home-school-community links. For instance:
- the Belgian experts suggest developing links between the school institution and the family in order to help in breaking the vicious circle of mutual distrust and discrimination and in order to invest in home-school liaison and intercultural mediation services;
 - the Romanian expert proposes the development of support and mediation between the family and school and the introduction of incentives for adults’ participation in School after school/ Second chance type programmes;
 - the Greek expert suggests strengthening the institution of mediators between Roma communities and schools;
 - the Portuguese expert emphasises the need to strengthen awareness raising initiatives among gypsy communities regarding the importance of school achievement in the inclusion trajectories of gypsy children and young people;
- developing an inter-disciplinary approach that links education services, health services, social services, and community and youth services. For instance
- the Italian expert proposes increasing the number of well-trained teachers, cultural mediators and other social workers in order to carry out projects aimed at reducing the rates of early school leavers and at increasing educational attainments;
 - the Slovenian expert recommends the development of a comprehensive approach to dealing with a variety of factors that act as obstacles to regular attendance at elementary education. She stresses the need to put much more stress on help with learning, particularly in the afternoons, both at schools and Roma settlements (also as a mobile service);
- addressing gender inequality. For instance:
- the Polish expert highlights the necessity to enhance school enrolment of Roma girls;
 - the Romanian expert stresses the need to address the vulnerability of Roma women and especially those with many children through support to access education/care services (kindergarten, after school programmes);

- the Slovenian expert recommends paying particular attention to girls and women;
- addressing illiteracy and encouraging adult education. For instance:
 - the Austrian experts recommend developing special opportunities of adult learning for Roma, probably especially targeted at parents of school children, older illiterate persons and persons who want to make up for missing school graduation;
 - the Belgian experts recommend improving adult education and training as an important prerequisite to encourage the school participation of Roma children and strengthen existing structures to tackle key educational problems such as illiteracy or poor literacy;
 - the Latvian expert stresses that “national policy should pay much more attention to the elimination of illiteracy and to issues of lifelong learning for the Roma in view of their low educational level that does not allow part of them even to participate in training and retraining activities provided to the unemployed by the State Employment Agency”;
 - the Slovenian expert suggests giving more attention to the education of adults, especially due to its importance for the labour market participation;
- addressing language barriers to participating in education and in society more widely. For instance:
 - the UK expert highlights that “there is clearly a need for targeted translation, interpretation and English language tuition programmes; the government has recently substantially cut funding to the latter. Lack of English language competency is a huge barrier for Roma seeking to access work and services”;
 - the Lithuanian expert stresses that special attention should be paid to assist primary school children with a poor competence in the language used for teaching;
 - the Polish expert comments on the need to increase the competence of Roma children in using the Polish language as improving language skills may help them get better grades and integrate within the school community;
 - the Slovenian expert recommends organising courses in the Slovenian language for Roma children at least one year before the start of compulsory education, that is, at the age of 5 years at the latest. These courses should be organised by local communities (in Roma settlements or elsewhere, so as to include as many children as possible) and financed from the state budget.

3.1.3 *Employment*

The experts identify a wide variety of actions that need to be included in national Roma integration strategies in the area of employment. These range from measures to improve the employability of Roma, through measures to increase access to decent jobs, and to actions to enhance self-employment. As with education, a comprehensive and multidimensional approach is essential.

The most common recommendations in relation to improving access to employment cover:

- expanding active labour market policies and increasing employability. For example:
 - the Austrian experts suggest an expansion of ALMP, increased efforts to make sure that life-long learning measures are more successful in reaching persons with low formal qualifications, and measures allowing people of lower social strata to make up for missed formal qualification;

- the Belgian experts highlight the need to encourage structures and projects aimed at improving the employability of the Roma (and other disadvantaged migrants). In this respect, the “integration paths” aimed at learning the language and civic values of the Belgian society can play a key role, as long as they are not used as a discrimination tool;
 - the Czech expert proposes the development of special programmes for Roma which should be tailored/ individualised and complex at the same time (e.g. employment programmes and services complemented with other wrap around services like social work, help with housing, caring, education of children);
 - the Greek expert recommends designing specific training/employment programmes for Roma people that take into consideration their educational and cultural particularities and which should be combined with other supporting actions, based on the principles of the active inclusion approach. Special attention and support should be given to facilitating and promoting access of Roma women to such programmes;
 - the Lithuanian expert proposes promoting labour market integration by the creation of specialised social services to support Roma: “search for jobs, consultancy, mediation in employment, and support at the start of employment are the social services worth developing in order to stimulate the Roma integration into the labour market”;
 - the Polish expert suggests increasing labour inclusion measures such as subsidised jobs, assistance for work and activation centres. Also frequent and relevant training for staff of labour offices located in selected municipalities should be organised;
 - the Portuguese expert recommends developing “specific vocational training programmes for gypsy men and women involved in the Social Insertion scheme, comprising the inclusion of a gypsy mediator, paid apprenticeships, specific incentives for the hiring of the trainees following the successful completion of their apprenticeship, and dissemination of successful cases”;
 - the Slovenian expert proposes the employment of a Roma coordinator at the Employment Centres in regions where Roma live;
 - the Spanish expert proposes the development of personalised labour insertion channels into salaried employment of the active Roma population;
- addressing the lack of relevant skills and building on and recognising existing and traditional skills. For example:
- the Czech expert recommends giving a high priority and financial support to subsidised employment programmes combined with vocational training for Roma;
 - the French expert proposes allocating grants or loans for vocational training for self-employed persons who have not been employees or job seekers, identifying the trades preferred by the Romani population and making training in these trades available close to the housing areas (tinsmiths, recycling, landscape services, etc.);
 - likewise, the Greek expert proposes the development of subsidised employment programmes for gaining experience targeted at young Roma people in certain professions or vocations that are traditionally practised by the vast majority of Roma, such as recycling etc.;
 - the Italian expert recommends valorising informal labour competences and respecting the work culture, artisan skills and traditional occupations;
 - the Romanian expert recommends expanding vocational training and also giving recognition to professional qualifications based on previous work experience especially for traditional crafts through developing apprenticeship programmes;

- supporting the development of self-employment opportunities for Roma. For example:
 - the Austrian experts recommend introducing specific measures to guide and help Roma to set up businesses, including in domains outside their traditional areas of business, and to partly liberalise the strict regulation regarding mobile and semi-mobile;
 - the Belgian experts recommend providing more support to the Roma that are self-employed in the formal sector to improve their business capacities and opportunities, through services such as administrative support, linguistic support, training etc. Roma workers in the informal sector should be given opportunities to join the formal sector. “In this respect, measures such as the existing service vouchers should be pursued, as they have a proven efficiency to help illegal workers, particularly women, to access legal employment. In parallel, the fight against informal employers should be strengthened too”;
 - the Bulgarian experts recommend increasing support for small scale agriculture, “especially the efforts for ‘marketisation’ of small family farms producing mainly for own consumption, through increased use of the Rural development Operational Programme”;
 - the Portuguese expert proposes discussing and implementing measures for the revitalisation of vending activities; improving and updating management and organisational skills among gypsy people in order to help them cope with the increasing demands of developing own economic activities; and removing obstacles in access to credit for individuals lacking a fixed income source in order to allow gypsy individuals to develop self-employment initiatives;
 - the Romanian expert suggests promoting an enterprise and entrepreneurial spirit leading to job creation;
 - the Slovenian expert wants encouragement for the development of Roma cooperatives and Roma social entrepreneurship;

- tackling discrimination in the work place. For example:
 - the Austrian experts recommend developing information campaigns and campaigns for awareness-raising to prevent discrimination. “Such measures could not only address employers, but also trade-unions, which up to now appear to have been rather reluctant to deal with problems of Roma more explicitly”;
 - the Belgian experts suggest that the authorities should pursue their efforts to combat direct and indirect racial discrimination in employment and to promote cultural diversity within companies in cooperation with the key players in this area - in particular, trade-unions, employers’ organisations and temporary employment agencies;
 - the Latvian expert recommends paying “more attention to the education and information of employers and employees to reduce stereotypes and prejudices prevailing in the society against representatives of the Roma community thus reducing their discrimination in the labour market. Likewise, the State Labour Inspectorate and the Ombudsman’s Office should be more active in monitoring and controlling compliance with antidiscrimination norms prescribed by labour legislation”;

- involving and incentivising employers to employ Roma. For example:
 - the Belgian experts suggest including Roma as an ethnic category to be considered in the framework already used by Belgian public authorities to favour diversity within their services;
 - the Irish expert proposes stepping up Traveller recruitment and internships in the public sector;
 - the Portuguese expert recommends “introducing specific incentives for the employment of gypsy men and women; promoting awareness raising initiatives targeting employers and the labour market in order to improve the employability of gypsies; and disseminating existing success cases of professional insertion of gypsies in order to encourage employers to hire gypsy workers, to break existing stereotypes on the ‘employability problems’ of gypsy workers and to foster trust among gypsy communities that professional insertion is possible”;
 - the Slovenian expert suggest to subsidise employers giving jobs to Roma;
 - the UK expert recommends making use of positive action which is encouraged under the Equality Act (2010), whereby employers can encourage and train people from under-represented racial and ethnic groups in order to help them overcome disadvantages in competing with other applicants;
- promoting Roma quotas and positive discrimination. For example:
 - the Slovak expert recommends introducing positive discrimination and quotas for employees declaring Roma ethnicity (e.g. in state-commissioned constructing works). She also suggests making communication in Romany language a precondition of employment as teacher assistant, field social worker and in related professions of public administration;
 - the Slovenian expert proposes promoting employment “of Roma for Roma” jobs in Roma settlements (e.g. in construction and childcare);
- reducing labour market segregation and improving working conditions as Roma are over-represented in informal work, occasional work and low paid jobs (e.g. traditional crafts). For example:
 - the Bulgarian experts recommend investing in the improvement of the working conditions in the construction sector and some sub-sectors of manufacturing, which are the main sources of employment for the Roma on the primary labour market. They also propose putting in place measures to overcome the segregation of the Roma on the labour market and to reduce the size of the grey economy;
 - the Czech expert suggests that “the government should more thoroughly control and sanction illegal work (with a focus on the demand, i.e. the employers) and, similarly, usury should be alleviated”;
 - the Romanian expert proposes increasing awareness among the Roma of the benefits of social insurance/ protection;
- developing integrated social protection, social services and employment policies. For example:
 - the Slovak expert suggests facilitating transition to work by allowing concurrent benefit taking and income from job;

- improving monitoring and evaluation of employment programmes. For example:
 - the Czech expert recommends subjecting national employment programmes and ESF projects for Roma to the transparent monitoring and evaluation of their contents, targeting, value added and effects; duplication or overlaps of the programmes should also be avoided;
 - the Romanian expert recommends improving monitoring and evaluation systems including disseminating the successful practices and encouraging their replication so as to address the low efficiency of existing employment measures;
- avoiding regulatory barriers to Roma participation in particular occupations. For example:
 - the French expert recommends that care should be taken at national and EU level to avoid creating regulations or barriers to markets which de facto exclude Roma and gypsies from certain types of employment. Where such barriers exist, whether in the musical world or itinerant trade, care should be taken to ensure that the qualification procedures are accessible to Romani populations.

3.1.4 Healthcare

Experts identify a broad mix of policies which should be included in national Roma integration strategies if the very poor health outcomes and the incidence of chronic illnesses experienced by many Roma are to be reversed. They range from increasing prevention through raising awareness and to improving access to health services. There is also a strong recognition that health outcomes cannot be addressed solely by improved health provision. Healthcare needs to be part of a global plan to improve living conditions. In particular, improving housing and environmental conditions are crucial to improving health outcomes.

The most common recommendations in relation to health cover:

- strengthening preventive measures and promoting health education. For example:
 - the Belgian experts recommend informing Roma about their rights, including healthcare and informing them, especially Roma women, about specific health issues, particularly sexual health and family planning;
 - the Italian expert suggests increasing preventive actions, information and sensitisation;
 - the Portuguese expert emphasises the importance of promoting awareness raising initiatives addressed at gypsy communities regarding prevention behaviours, taking into consideration the high level of illiteracy when choosing the most adequate dissemination tools;
 - the Romanian expert suggests addressing the lack of health education among the Roma through information campaigns promoting preventive actions (vaccination, hygiene) involving health mediators;
 - the Spanish expert highlights the need to improve preventative practices and healthy lifestyles;
- extending health insurance coverage. For example:
 - in Bulgaria, there have been some successful programmes funded from the Structural Funds, including screening and medical checks mainly through the use of mobile units. "Some of these programmes had a quite good coverage and sometimes an appropriate follow up with relevant medical treatment. They are a very good

supplement to the mainstream access to healthcare improving the outreach to the most vulnerable (Roma included) but they cannot be a replacement for a dysfunctional health insurance system”;

- expanding the use of **health care mediators** and other intermediaries. For example:
 - in Bulgaria, health care mediators are a good model when they are integrated in a broader policy framework for improved access to health care and are put under the umbrella of some sustainable institution like the health and social centres, which have been established in some Roma neighbourhoods;
 - in the Czech Republic, the large scale programme of health assistants should be implemented in excluded Roma communities in close coordination with the programme of community field social work;
 - in Portugal, the role of gypsy mediators in health care units (health care centres and hospitals) should be fostered in order to facilitate communication between users and health professionals;
 - in Slovakia, there is a need to continuously support and scale up the project of health assistants/ mediators in districts with high share of socially excluded population;
 - in France, use should be made of the existing, specialist organisations which act as an interface between the local authorities, social services and health services on the one hand and the travellers on the other. Also contact persons (community nurses, social workers, caretakers, etc.) should be identified and supported;

- developing outreach services. For example:
 - the Greek expert recommends extending socio-medical centres for Roma (including to Roma settlements) and expanding their services to include, among other things, legal support, employment promotion, etc.;
 - the French expert stresses the need to take action as close as possible to the travellers, improving access to health services in the same way as for ordinary citizens;
 - the Portuguese expert recommends promoting initiatives that bring health care services closer to gypsy families and communities, thus enhancing better mutual knowledge and trust relationships;
 - the Lithuanian expert suggests that, “due to the high level of illiteracy among the Roma, the provision of regular verbal instruction is needed on disease treatment, proper medication usage and how to seek medical examinations from general practitioners and specialists in both polyclinics and other healthcare institutions (e.g.: the names of healthcare institutions and their operating hours)”;

- improving access to **primary health care** by addressing the uneven/poor coverage of medical services among Roma communities. For example:
 - the Bulgarian experts recommend tackling the issue of regional disparities in the provision of health care services;
 - the Romanian expert suggests increasing the number of Roma registered with a general practitioner and identifying incentive mechanisms for health professionals to register Roma;

- developing training for health professionals to sensitise them to Roma needs. For example:
 - the Belgian experts recommend that staff of healthcare services should be trained to deal with the specific cultural features of the Roma, and allowed to access specialised Roma interpreters and mediators if needed;
 - the French expert proposes to organise “co-training” bringing together travellers and health professionals;
 - the Polish expert recommends “the development of education projects aimed at changing both ethnic prejudice and discriminative behaviour of medical personnel (often noticed) and Roma adverse attitudes towards medical treatment (resulting from customs, lack of knowledge etc.)”;
 - the Portuguese expert advocates implementing “intercultural training programmes addressed at health professionals in order to promote a better understanding of the cultural and social mechanisms that lie behind some of the resistances shown by gypsy individuals in adopting a ‘normalised’ behaviour when resorting to health care services”;
- involving Roma in the development of health services. For example:
 - the French expert suggests that the conditions for handling travellers in hospital could be improved by discussions between hospital personnel and travellers’ representatives on topics such as parking area, information booklet and charter;
 -
- improving data and research on health issues affecting Roma. For example:
 - the Estonian expert proposes getting a picture of the health condition of the Roma population and access to health care and then working out measures to improve it, including how to improve health behaviour of Roma;
 - the Latvian expert recommends improving data collection and undertaking special research studies to analyse the situation and use of healthcare (the collection of information and data should be an objective foundation for planning and implementing targeted policy measures in the health care sector).

3.1.5 *Social and day-care services*

Social services and day-care services are often a key first point of contact between public services and Roma. They also can play a key role in the better coordination and integration of public services on the ground. Thus, developing their role should be a major feature of Roma integration strategies. The most common recommendations made by the experts in this area include:

- increasing social work support for Roma communities. For example:
 - the Czech expert stresses that field social work should get more support and that the number of social workers in Roma communities should be increased substantially;
- developing day-care and community services. For example:
 - the Hungarian expert recommends that targeting parents via their children is an efficient tool, so the combination of day-care and community services, as in the child poverty program, could be extended;

- the Czech expert recommends increasing financial support to NGOs working with Roma and increasing the number of the community centres and low threshold centres for children and youth .

3.1.6 *Housing and environment*

Given the often appalling housing and environmental conditions affecting the Roma, the experts identify a broad range of actions that are necessary to change the situation. These include eradicating slums and ghettos, increasing the amount of housing (especially social housing) available, improving the quality of housing, providing more and better serviced travellers' sites, addressing issues of legal tenure, and addressing issues of indebtedness.

The main recommendations in relation to housing and environment include:

- improving data, mapping and monitoring of the housing situation as a prerequisite for effective policies. For example:
 - the Greek expert suggests that a comprehensive study of the housing situation should be carried out prior to the development of the new Integrated Action Plan for Roma;
 - the Portuguese expert recommends “the clear identification of gypsy communities that are still living in extremely poor housing conditions at the level of basic housing infrastructures and access to basic needs (e.g. water, sewage, electricity); priority should be given to ending these persisting inhuman living conditions”. She also stresses the need to adequately and rigorously monitor the implementation of existing public housing programmes addressed at the most vulnerable populations (i.e. including the gypsy population) in order to assess their actual impact on the improvement of the living conditions of Roma;
- eradicating slums as well as insecure and improvised living conditions. For example:
 - the Belgian experts advocate the development of urban policies aimed at desegregating poor neighbourhoods and improving the social mix in cities and at upgrading the living conditions of the Roma in this framework;
 - the Czech expert suggests that “the government should adopt legislation to stop discriminative practices (either explicit or hidden) in the allocation of municipal housing to families in need of housing” and that “municipalities should have the obligation to abandon the strategy of the outplacement of Roma to poor quality housing and to avoid their concentration in substandard housing areas, often combined with neglect of preventing indebtedness of the Roma in paying rents. In order to achieve these goals, the legislation should specify the body responsible for housing policy at the central level, with competences towards municipalities”;
 - the Romanian expert comments that the poor living conditions of the Roma should be addressed through facilitating access to housing for those living in insecure/improvised places;
 - the French expert recommends putting an end to impoverished, insalubrious housing conditions for migrant Roma (i.e. the return of shanty towns);

- investing in improving the quality and availability of housing, especially social housing and related services. For example:
 - the Belgian experts recommend adequately monitoring and implementing existing regulations and measures concerning the (minimum) quality of housing, particularly for renting;
 - the Bulgarian experts argue that “the National Programme for the Improvement of the Living Conditions of the Roma should be re-launched as it was never fully implemented and was practically stopped in 2008 just before the global economic crisis started to be felt in Bulgaria”;
 - the Czech expert recommends providing the means and incentives to push and support municipalities in enlarging the possibilities of housing for families in need. He stresses that legislative instruments should probably be used for this (acts specifying the responsibilities of municipalities);
 - the Greek expert proposes the development of sustainable social housing policy adapted to the needs and particularities of the Roma population and, to this end, the development of a specific statutory-legal framework;
 - the Italian expert advocates the development of social housing instead of camps, also through monetary support for house rental;
 - the Latvian expert proposes to increase state support and attract financial support from the European Structural Funds for the development of social housing policy;
 - the Portuguese expert recommends removing political obstacles at national level to adequately profiting from existing EU funding (e.g. activating the European Regional Development Fund) which are available for supporting the implementation of housing related solutions for vulnerable communities;
 - the Slovak expert suggests that “the government should: increase substantially public support for public housing construction; increase support for standard housing construction in blocks of flats on 80% of construction costs provided that tenants will be from different socio-economic and ethnic groups; and redefine public housing as being part of social economy”;
 - the Slovenian expert stresses that “ensuring water provision is a priority as without it, it is difficult for Roma to be clean and to wash their clothes, which is an important obstacle for their inclusion into the society”;
 - the Spanish expert recommends making use of the investment in housing for Roma and other excluded groups provided for by Article 7 of the EU ERDF Programme Regulations which is a relevant source of support for housing access and improvement policies;

- increasing the number and quality of travellers’ sites and related issues. For example:
 - the Belgian experts recommend the provision of sufficient and decent camping accommodation and the implementation of the commitment of the Regions to install a sufficient number of encampment sites;
 - the French expert recommends that “the number of travellers’ sites should be extended significantly, the types of accommodation available (family sites, medium and long-term travellers’ sites, social housing) should be diversified and the legal recognition of caravan sites in town planning documents should be ensured; a caravan should be recognised as an address providing eligibility for housing allowance and soft loans, and the possibility of applying for housing loans to purchase a caravan should be ensured”;

- developing a range of solutions reflecting the diversity of Roma situations. For example:
 - the French expert recommends the development of plans which allow continuity between itinerant and sedentary lifestyles;
 - the Portuguese expert suggests a rethink of public housing policies addressed at the different needs of the gypsy communities and the different obstacles they encounter, by creating a range of diversified solutions (e.g. social housing, direct support to families, facilitation mechanisms regarding access to private rental market, pre and post rehousing support);

- addressing ownership and tenancy problems. For example:
 - the Polish expert highlights the need to address the many problems that arise from the unclear legal status of Roma houses, as well as from inadequate knowledge of rights and legal rules;
 - the Roma expert advocates ensuring support for the Roma in solving the property issues related to housing/ land (ownership/ tenancy documents);
 - the Slovenian expert recommends accelerating the process of regularisation of Roma settlements, which is the basis for an improvement in the currently extremely poor housing conditions in most of these settlements;

- supporting housing and utilities' costs and reducing evictions. For example:
 - the Czech expert suggests local governments should adopt measures to prevent indebtedness and evictions: social work in excluded Roma communities should be intensified, measuring instruments of energy supply should be installed in each flat, possibilities to work-out the debts should be given;
 - the Romanian expert advocates support mechanisms for covering the housing/ utility costs;

- regulating the rented sector. For example:
 - the Belgian experts recommend intensifying the fight against the slumlords who frequently target and exploit the most vulnerable persons (including the Roma), and applying and strengthening legal protections against discrimination in access to renting markets;

- encouraging cooperation between stakeholders and the participation of Roma in planning processes. For example:
 - the Italian expert recommends promoting participatory planning, involving the concerned communities;
 - the Portuguese expert advocates reinforcing the cooperation between statutory entities with responsibilities in the field of the design of relevant national policies and between these and local relevant key stakeholders (e.g. municipalities, municipal housing companies, gypsy associations and NGO's).

3.1.7 *Income support*

Most experts stress the key role played by income support systems in reducing the degree of poverty experienced by Roma. Their recommendations cover improving the adequacy and coverage of income support systems, linking income support more closely with employment and social services, and addressing indebtedness.

The most common recommendations cover:

- improving adequacy and coverage of social protection schemes. For example:
 - in Bulgaria, increase the coverage and value of social transfers including child benefit;
 - in Spain, increase the coverage and adequacy of income support;
 - in Hungary, “address fears expressed concerning the planned modifications of the system of social provisions, the enhanced conditionality of benefits and their insufficient amount to facilitate a decent life for their recipients, the implementation of the planned public work schemes”;
 - in France, “ensure that the conditions for allocating means tested benefits and social services are not based on criteria and periods of residence that are difficult for the Romani population to fulfil and introduce national rules in favour of minimum income schemes to be adopted at regional level in connection with local welfare policies and services”;
 - in Portugal, “improve knowledge regarding eligibility rights to social protection measures among the gypsy population and especially among the most vulnerable gypsy communities (e.g. isolated or non-sedentary communities), and identify discriminatory practices that often curtail access to the Social Insertion Income (RSI) measure, thus endangering one of the few ‘survival’ resources accessible to gypsy families”;
- linking income support schemes more closely with active inclusion measures and support. For example:
 - in Italy, increase financial resources devoted to local welfare systems and managed by local authorities in order to ensure a better combination between monetary transfers and the provision of quality services;
 - in Portugal, reinforce the link between the income component of the RSI and the insertion potential of the Programme by removing existing obstacles related to access to specific services (e.g. training and employment opportunities);
- tackling problems of indebtedness. For example:
 - in the Czech Republic, field social work should tackle intensively the problems of indebtedness (prevention and cure).

3.1.8 *Transport*

A few experts have highlighted the importance of improving access to transport for Roma, particularly given their often remote and isolated settlements. For instance:

- the Slovak expert suggests “making regional and local public transport part of the social economy and its funding”;
- the French expert recommends ensuring that travellers’ sites and encampments are served by public transport and also that caravans are recognised as a means of transport and living accommodation.

3.1.9 *Sport/recreation/cultural activities*

A few experts stress the importance of increasing access to sporting, recreational and cultural activities. For instance:

- the Austrian experts highlight the importance of public support for cultural activities which clearly contribute to a (positive) public visibility of the Roma and Sinti populations and by this contribute to their social integration;
- the Bulgarian experts recommend the restoration of funding for extra-curricular activities at school;
- the French expert stresses the need to ensure regulations for entertainment (including EU regulations) that do not de facto exclude Romani people from these activities. He also recommends promoting the artistic heritage of Romani people (music, dance, singing, plastic arts, etc.);
- the Italian expert recommends integrating sport and recreation activities aimed at improving mutual respect and communication between different cultural identities.

3.1.10 *Anti-discrimination*

Most experts stress the utmost importance of strengthening efforts to address discrimination and racism against the Roma. They emphasise the need both to implement and enforce and strong anti-discrimination legislation and to invest in awareness raising and education programmes. This dual approach is vital as policy initiatives in other areas will not be successful if they are not backed up by strong anti-discrimination policies and programmes. As the Belgian experts explain, strong non-discrimination policies are the essential complement of integration policies to tackle social exclusion of the Roma.

The two areas where experts make the most recommendations in relation to anti-discrimination are:

- strengthening implementation and enforcement infrastructure. For example:
 - the Bulgarian experts recommend supporting the work of the Commission for Protection Against Discrimination which has recently been under political attacks and pressure by nationalists to downscale its work. Moreover, they recommend extending the Commission’s mandate to address also structural discrimination and not just individual cases;
 - the Czech expert highlights the need for legislation and jurisdiction concerning the violation of human rights and oppression of Roma in order to enable much stricter sanctioning of racist groups;

- the French expert recommends ensuring the satisfactory operation of the commissions set up, such as the national travellers' consultative commission and the departmental commissions, and also providing support to the bodies that defend the rights of Romani;
 - the Greek expert advocates ensuring that existing measures are enforced on the ground in all aspects of life;
 - the Irish expert calls for a follow-up of the cross-sectional approach of the national action plan against racism (which finished in 2008);
 - the Italian expert recommends an increase in financial resources devoted to anti-discrimination in line with international declarations on human rights and the EU Charter of Fundamental Rights;
 - the Latvian expert suggests "the government should show political commitment to the formulation and development of antidiscrimination policy by allocating financial resources required for its implementation";
 - the Polish expert highlights the need to ensure that discrimination, security and crime issues are addressed more strongly;
 - the Spanish expert suggests improving coordination of the efforts of institutions and civic society in the fight against discrimination;
- raising awareness, challenging stereotypes and promoting dialogue. For example:
- the Austrian experts advocate expanding initiatives raising awareness of different forms of discriminating practices and making the overall population (and political decision makers alike) more familiar with the history and current situation of Roma and Sinti in Austria and in Europe;
 - the Belgian experts propose establishing a mutual dialogue to overcome the considerable gap that exists between certain Roma groups and the general population (in terms of lifestyles and anthropological/ cultural values and beliefs) and that generates a process of mutual exclusion. On the one side, this would allow Belgian policy stakeholders to take into account the specificities of Roma when shaping policy solutions. On the other side, it would also allow Roma to understand, accept and integrate the common ground of values and norms of the societies they live in. According to them, "this is fundamental in the achievement of a full citizenship";
 - the Romanian expert advocates promoting antidiscrimination policies through awareness campaigns, promoting Roma success stories and inter-cultural events;
 - the Slovak expert suggests "supporting electronic media and film projects for fighting against ethnic stereotypes and for 'normalising' Roma as a part of 'Our' community";
 - the French expert recommends remembering Romani victims of Nazism at official ceremonies and memorials, providing information about Romani people in school curricula and supporting research and studies on Romani people;
 - the Portuguese expert advocates promoting initiatives that actively contribute to combating existing discriminatory perceptions and practices across all societal levels, and mainstreaming intercultural dialogue and knowledge across all public services;
 - the Slovenian expert suggests including Romani culture in the obligatory curriculum (and textbooks) at all levels of education in the regions where the Roma live, and requiring teachers to acquire relevant knowledge, be adequately trained and dispose of adequate professional literature as well;

- the Slovak expert recommends supporting the presence of Roma in all kinds of public presentation;
- the UK expert suggests that effective information leaflets and advice are required, provided where appropriate in Roma language(s) (but backed up with oral advice), to ensure Roma are aware of their rights. He also recommends that, “as with generic race equality training, specific training should be provided for staff working in this area to counter the current failure of many frontline staff in both national and local government departments – for example, in Job Centres, police departments and in the health services - to understand Roma experience and culture (for example, awareness of the need for strongly gendered responses to the needs of Roma women) and thus respond appropriately”.

A number of other important areas were also covered by the experts. For instance:

- monitoring the coverage of Roma in the media so as to counter discrimination. For example:
 - the Slovak expert suggests “a regular monitoring of press and electronic media and the publication of ‘white books of media stereotypes’”;
- ensuring that Roma are treated in the same way as all citizens. For instance:
 - the French expert suggests that “the requirement to have a *carnet de circulation* (i.e. a “record of movement”) that is subject to regular controls should be eliminated, as should the 3% limit on the number of travellers that may be resident in a particular commune (law of 3 January 1969) and also the provision for a three year period after registration in a home commune before being eligible for the electoral roles”;
- increasing conflict resolution and mediation services. For instance:
 - the Irish expert suggests developing a centre of action for dialogue and action around conflict prevention and resolution which would initiate and support conflict resolution activity and which would provide a forum for dialogue between Travellers and their “significant others”;
- improving legal safeguards for and enforcing rights of migrant Roma. For instance:
 - the French expert recommends ensuring that: “there is no expulsion without prior legal proceedings; there is freedom of travel for persons from non-EU countries; there is an end to the confusion between asylum and immigration; and there should be the right to asylum for all Romani refugees who can prove that they would have been in danger in their previous country”. He also emphasises that freedom of travel for migrant Roma from EU countries should be ensured and that there should be an end to “humanitarian repatriation”;
 - the German expert stresses that “the stabilisation of the legal, economic and social situation of Roma refugees should have high priority”;
 - the Spanish expert stresses that a significant challenge for the coming years shall be the integration of the Roma population originating from Eastern Europe.

3.1.11 Gender equality

Several experts (e.g. BE, ES, IT, PT) stress the importance of strengthening gender equality policies with particular attention being given to areas such as education and employment. For instance, the Belgian experts stress that “in view of the more severe social exclusion of Roma women compared to men, due to the existence of persistent gender stereotypes in certain Roma groups concerning the relation with society, it is important to have a strong gender mainstreaming approach when designing policy responses to Roma social exclusion. Tackling social exclusion of Roma women requires tackling gender stereotypes of both Roma and ‘Gadjé’ societies.” The Italian expert recommends integrating gender equality with mainstream policies and initiatives to address discrimination against Roma women and children, and to fight against domestic and societal violence and exploitation. The Portuguese expert recommends “the systematic incorporation of the gender dimension into any policy, measure or strategy addressing gypsy communities, in order to adequately tackle the issues and needs of gypsy women”.

3.2 Strengthening data collection, monitoring and evaluation

Many experts stress the need to improve data collection and strengthen monitoring and evaluation of policies and programmes as a prerequisite for developing and implementing effective national Roma integration strategies. Overall, there is a need for more evidence-based policy making. For instance, the Austrian experts emphasise that “proper information about the actual living conditions and respective challenges of/for different groups of Roma living in Austria is a precondition for developing effective policies”. Similarly, the Irish expert stresses that “even though officially needs assessment with Travellers is supposed to be the policy norm, in practice it does not happen universally. I recommend therefore that policy should be driven in Ireland by in depth assessment of Traveller needs . . . Ireland has to work hard not just to improve the evidence base but to make identified needs (including Travellers’ self-identified needs) much more a priority as a driver of policy.”

The main ways suggested for improving monitoring and evaluation include:

- improving indicators. For example:
 - the Polish expert stresses the need to set quantitative targets and select proper monitoring indicators;
 - the Slovak expert proposes improving and widening the use of indicators;
 - the Spanish expert suggests creating common indicators and criteria in the public sectors, that they are operative and comparable and that they include the opinion of Roma community representatives;
- improving data collection and research on Roma. For example:
 - the Austrian experts suggest developing a more in depth analysis about the current overall social situation of Roma and Sinti in Austria through conducting a larger number of qualitative or semi-structured interviews with members of different Roma and Sinti groups. This should be repeated regularly in order to assess the impact and outcomes of specific measures and also the possible changes in the challenges faced by Roma;
 - the Czech expert highlights that legislation enabling public administration institutions to collect data on ethnicity (provided that specific conditions are respected) is needed in

order to improve knowledge of the problems of Roma and to adopt measures to address them;

- the Estonian expert suggests that, within the framework of local government structures and in cooperation with the Roma community, data should be collected on the Roma population (education, employment, healthcare, housing and environment) and submitted annually to the Ministry of Culture for analysis;
- the German expert recommends giving primary priority to implementing a monitoring and review system and to implementing a national survey aimed at gathering data on the economic, social and cultural situation of the Roma population in Germany;
- the Greek expert recommends that there should be a nation-wide census survey in order to be able to plan and implement interventions that would take into account the real needs of the people and which should result in a comprehensive mapping of all Roma settlements in Greece;
- the Irish expert recommends putting in place “a Traveller Data Collection Strategy whose purpose would be to identify priority information gaps (at national and subnational levels) and how these can be filled. . . . Relevant government departments should work together with the Central Statistics Office and the Office for Social Inclusion and the work on Travellers should be carried out in the context of providing an underpinning data strategy for the National Anti-poverty Strategy”;
- the Latvian expert recommends ensuring that updated information is provided on a regular basis to be able to objectively plan policy measures and to adjust them if required, avoiding the use of outdated and incomplete information or assumptions in policy planning;
- the Polish expert highlights the need to provide good-quality statistical information on the Roma community on a regular basis and solve the many information gaps regarding these statistics and the methodological problems of collecting them;
- the Portuguese expert highlights the need to seriously address the data gap on gypsy communities living in Portugal, which leads to an invisibility of the phenomenon at the level of policy making structures and to problems of adequacy between existing policies and the living realities of these populations. She suggests producing a systematic review of available data sources and potential data improvements which are essential for the monitoring of the impacts of the national strategy;
- the Romanian expert advocates reviewing the methodology to collect statistical data (including gender disaggregated data) concerning the Roma in order to provide tools that allow for adjustment of public policies and funding orientation towards more challenging sectors;
- the Slovenian expert comments that “in the situation where collected data do not necessarily include ethnicity, there is a need to opt for focused (systematic or project-based) data collections on certain dimensions of the social inclusion of Roma without which it is not possible to monitor the effects of policies in place to increase the social inclusion of Roma and to adapt these policies in order to be more effective. The data should be disaggregated at least by gender, age and attained education”;
- the Spanish expert recommends that “the current data collection improvement process and analysis of Roma population’s living conditions must continue, and that statistical production must be normalised”;
- the UK expert recommends putting in place effective data collection (“territorial mapping”) and reviewing it at both national and local levels: “this would involve confirming Roma as a distinct category in mainstream data collection including the

census at national level (it is hoped that the 2011 census will provide a very useful demonstration tool) and school census exercises at local level, comprehensive mapping of the Roma population through a series of research studies, and good monitoring procedures to measure significant changes in key indicators”;

- stricter monitoring of implementation of strategies and policies. For example:
 - the Bulgarian experts recommend that in order to guarantee that policies will not halt on the phases of budgeting and implementation the process has to be monitored all the way and be as transparent as possible;
 - the Romanian expert suggests focussing on the main aspects related to the implementation success factors and shortfalls;
 - the French expert wants the EU to act as a driving force by requesting Member States to produce an annual report on the progress of policies, particularly in relation to travellers' sites and discriminatory legislation;
 - the Polish expert proposes the development of more comprehensive monitoring reports which should include information not only on inputs but also on outcomes revealed in indicators and which should say something about beneficiaries (providing also their characteristics, such as age and gender) and not only about the tasks performed;
- increasing participation of stakeholders in monitoring. For example:
 - the Irish expert suggests that Travellers themselves should be given a key role in monitoring, together with the Interagency committees;
 - the Italian expert recommends to involve, train and employ representatives (delegates) of Roma communities in a systematic survey of their cultures, plural identities, needs and numbers and to involve “delegates” from these communities in focus groups for the preparation of a national strategy for social integration;
 - the Slovak expert highlights the need to improve participative evaluation methods through the involvement of civil society organisations, particularly Roma organisations;
- investing in capacity building. For example:
 - the Romanian expert suggests that to improve monitoring there is a need to strengthen the institutional capacity of those involved in the policy making and implementation process.

3.3 Strengthening cooperation and dialogue

A recurrent theme in the experts' reports is that developing, implementing and monitoring strategies, policies and programmes to promote the integration of Roma without their full involvement will not work. Thus, strengthening cooperation and dialogue between Roma and other actors and empowering Roma to have a voice in the decisions that affect them is seen as essential.

The experts suggest a range of ways in which cooperation and continuous dialogue with Roma civil society, regional and local authorities and other relevant bodies could be strengthened. These include:

- developing partnerships and cross-sectoral committees at national, regional and local levels. For example:
 - the Austrian experts emphasise that “political will by a large number of different actors and decision makers (at different layers of decision making and implementation, in different ministries, etc.) to cooperate and to deal with respective problems in a proactive way (including willingness to invest additional funds etc.) is a precondition for an effective strategy”;
- the Belgian experts suggest building on the work of the specific bodies that have already been created at Community and Regional levels, with the aim of improving coordination between stakeholders in the field of equal opportunities and non-discrimination. They also recommend building on the Federal Minister of Employment and Equal Opportunities’ announcement of the creation of an organisation which would act as a legitimate interface between Roma/Traveller populations and relevant public actors (National Council of Roma and Travellers);
- the German expert recommends that “a national steering committee for the national Roma integration strategy could be established within a short period of time. Germany already has the National Commissioner of the Federal Government for German Immigrants and National Minorities, located within the Federal Department for the Interior since the year 2006. The national steering committee could, and should, be conducted by this Commissioner in close cooperation with the National Commissioner for Migration, Refugees and Integration. The composition of the committee should include representatives of the following policy levels and policy actors: the federal state, the states and local authorities, the social partners, welfare associations and Roma organisations”;
- the Spanish expert advocates further cooperation between the different levels of government, and integrating policy design with Roma organisations and general social action organisations;
- the Italian expert recommends creating consultation and advisory bodies aimed at debating policies (national, regional and local levels) and involving Roma representatives in the decision making process concerning social inclusion policies in close cooperation with regional and local authorities through coordination mechanisms as those in place in the Social OMC;
- the Latvian expert states that “support should be directed towards strengthening cooperation skills with local politicians and national legislators as well as towards strengthening cooperation skills among Roma organisations themselves and other NGOs representing Roma interests in order to stimulate the development of a cooperation network at the national as well as international level. This would allow further developing possibilities of NGOs to participate in decision-making at the regional and national levels”;
- the Portuguese expert advocates strengthening the role and responsibilities of local level structures (e.g. municipalities and local social networks) in promoting the social inclusion of gypsies, and increasing strategic cooperation between the different public stakeholders - both horizontally (e.g. institutes, ministries) and vertically (e.g. national institute for employment and vocational training and respective regional or local services);

- the Romanian expert proposes the development of public-private partnerships and strengthening these partnerships as a solution for community problems. She also suggests increasing the involvement of civil society and of the county and local experts on Roma issues, and setting up networks/working groups to identify opportunities in various areas (employment, education, health, housing, community infrastructure, transport, etc.);
- investing in community development projects and capacity building initiatives that will empower and develop leadership in Roma communities. For example:
 - the Latvian expert recommends that support should be provided to strengthening the capacity of Roma NGOs and other NGOs that represent interests of the Roma community;
 - the Portuguese expert proposes reinforcing the operating capacity of gypsy associations regarding the improvement of their skills for developing social intervention programmes and activities and for an efficient use of available resources;
 - the Slovenian expert suggests ensuring that the Roma community becomes the subject of its own development and thus empowering Roma not by implementing projects for Roma but by enabling them to manage and implement key integration projects by themselves;
 - the UK expert advocates investing in capacity-building so that Roma communities can develop autonomous and accountable groups controlled by the Roma which can provide a mechanism for ensuring that these communities have a “voice”;
- enabling greater Roma participation in public life and decision making. For example:
 - the Belgian experts suggest supporting the creation and funding of NGOs representing the diverse groups of Roma in the policy debate about their integration. They suggest that Roma people should be able to express their viewpoints through such NGOs, but also through mediators allowing a dialogue at local level on concrete issues;
 - the Irish expert recommends that consideration be given to adopting affirmative action programmes to improve the political representation of Travellers and adopting measures aimed at encouraging Travellers to participate more in the conduct of public affairs;
 - the Portuguese expert advocates actively promoting the participation of gypsy representatives in the policymaking process, ensuring the conditions for a sustainable participation and a “voice” in decision-making processes and not restricting that participation to “hearing or consulting” stages or to specific “talking and sharing events”. She thinks that particular attention should be given to the participation of gypsy women’s associations or other forms of gypsy women’s representation in policy making processes;
 - the Slovenian expert recommends making full use of the Slovenian legislation which provides Roma with statutory rights to take part in the management of local communities where they live, and which guarantees a continuous dialogue with the representatives of the Roma Community at the state and local levels;
- emphasise long-term sustainability of initiatives. For example:
 - the Romanian expert highlights the need to increase awareness of project coordinators and partners of the importance of ensuring project sustainability through medium and

long term strategies and through establishing clear priorities in terms of both Roma social inclusion and Roma community development.

3.4 Enhancing use of EU Structural Funds

The experts' reports highlight that the EU Structural Funds have been a very important resource supporting a wide range of initiatives aimed at promoting the social inclusion of Roma. However, overall they have been underutilised and their impact has been limited in most countries. The main recommendations for further strengthening their potential contributions include:

- increasing the availability of national funds and using EU Structural Funds in a complementary manner. For instance:
 - the Bulgarian experts recommend that “the government should use outlays from the national budget to provide better conditions for beneficiaries in terms of advance payments; timely transfers after payments are authorised because the policy of transferring all financial and technical risks to beneficiaries is a tool for decreasing EU Funds absorption”;
 - the Czech expert suggests that “the government should outline a *Core Package* of the Strategy of Social Inclusion that would be independent of EU Structural Funds. This package should entail quantified targets and resources”;
 - the Slovak expert emphasises the importance of national funds and stresses that EU Structural Funds should not be the only source for funding programmes or for lowering regional disparities;
- promoting greater use of EU Structural Funds for Roma projects. For instance:
 - the French expert recommends encouraging the use of Structural Funds to improve the living conditions of Roma by improving the physical conditions on travellers' sites, by providing assistance in organising mass gatherings, and/or by supporting increased vocational training for young people as well as adults;
 - the Italian expert suggests identifying a share of financial resources devoted to active social inclusion policies of Roma communities in the national and regional operational programmes, and that this be done on the basis according to targets based on the analysis of needs and regional distribution;
 - the Portuguese expert recommends fully assessing the potential of existing EU Funds available to tackle poverty and social exclusion among gypsy communities and removing any national level barriers to the full use of those resources;
 - the Romanian expert advocates allocating funding for integrated projects covering the main areas for Roma inclusion (jobs, education, health, housing) and including a key area dedicated to the Roma in each Operational Programme which supports activities related to their integration;
- ensuring longer term funding and sustainability of programmes. For instance:
 - the Hungarian expert suggests that “due to the complexity of the problems, only very complex programmes can contribute to the solution. These programmes have to meet objectives in different spheres of life and can run for longer periods of time, continuously. In the present framework, only short (1-2 year long) programmes can be realised, and then, due to lack of local resources from the state, or NGOs or other

donors, even successful and professionally undoubtedly viable programmes often cease to exist, which may even do more harm than good. For instance, Roma community houses established thanks to EU funds close down as there is no further stable financing. At present, sustainability of even the best programmes cannot be provided, and especially not just after the programmes have been set up, as they are not mainstreamed and local resources either from state or private sources are insufficient”;

- ensuring better and more participative monitoring of the use made of EU Structural Funds. For instance:
 - the Portuguese expert suggests improving transparency in the assessment of the use of EU Funds regarding their actual impact in promoting the social inclusion of gypsies, given their enclosure in overall “disadvantaged groups” funding lines;
 - the Dutch experts suggest that “the EU Funds will be more effective if the active involvement of the target group is ensured, if the projects are (more) tailor-made and if the goals are not only ambitious but also (more) realistic”;
 - the Slovak expert recommends that the use of EU Funds should be better monitored by civil society organisations;
- Finally, the Bulgarian and Romanian experts recommend increasing the capacity of local authorities and Roma NGOs to make submissions, especially those in more isolated/poorer areas.

3.5 Integrating Roma into Europe 2020

3.5.1 *Integrating Roma into Europe 2020 targets*

In spite of many Roma being a significant component of the Europe 2020 targets (in the fields of poverty and social exclusion, employment and also educational disadvantage), they do not feature as such in most Member States’ national targets. A number of experts suggest ways in which Roma could be (more directly) integrated into the Europe 2020 targets. For instance:

- in France, the expert proposes that “the first target should be to repeal the articles of the law of 1969 which limit the citizenship of the Roma and gypsies and the second target should be to implement the Besson law on travellers’ sites to ensure that all communes with a population of over 5,000 have a travellers’ site”;
- in Ireland, the expert argues that “one of the targeted initiatives planned under the National Reform Programme should focus on Travellers and that reducing the key gaps in poverty rates between Travellers and the population at large should be one of Ireland’s Europe 2020 goals. This targeted initiative would fit very well with the EU Roma and Europe 2020 frameworks. So also would the setting of specific targets and goals in relation to Travellers contribute to Ireland’s contribution and commitment to the Europe 2020 poverty target”;
- in Italy, the expert suggests identifying targets, measures and actions concerning a national action plan for the active social inclusion of Roma communities and individuals, integrating these targets with those concerning the use of the EU Structural Funds, and translating the Roma targets into the overall targets for poverty reduction by 2020;
- in Latvia, the expert suggests that the state could identify certain target groups such as the Roma who are exposed to the risk of social exclusion and describe how they will be

- involved in specific measures in the NRP; it could then assess the impact of these measures on the Roma integration into Latvian society;
- in Slovakia, the expert recommends that social inclusion of the most disadvantaged groups (including the Roma) should be promoted among Slovakia's Europe 2020 national targets.

3.5.2 *Integrating Roma into NRPs*

In only very few cases, is the integration of Roma well reflected in the NRPs. For instance, the Hungarian expert stresses that "the integration of Roma is properly reflected in Hungary's Europe 2020 national targets and National Reform Programme; however, the implementation of the proposed measures should be thoroughly monitored and assessed, and necessary steps should be taken to realise the proposed targets". In most cases, much needs to be done to better reflect Roma in the NRPs. From this, it is obvious that there is an urgent need to establish a clear link between national Roma integration strategies and future iterations of the NRPs.

Experts make a range of suggestions as to how NRPs can better take account of Roma integration. These include:

- in Bulgaria: recognising that the national targets for the NRP cannot be achieved without the integration of the Roma in education and the development of policies accordingly;
- in Romania: reviewing the Romanian Strategy on Improving the Condition of the Roma by taking into account the European initiatives launched by the Europe 2020 Strategy (Youth on the Move, Agenda for New Skills and Jobs, the EPAP) and elaborating an action plan related to the Strategy on Improving the Condition of the Roma by focusing on the measurable objectives launched by the Europe 2020 Strategy including: decreasing school dropout among Roma children, improving the labour market integration of the Roma and reducing the number of Roma at risk of poverty;
- in Slovakia: mentioning in the NRP that "securing equal access to education (pre-school education and compulsory education) should be recognised as being of paramount priority of Slovak society";
- in Spain: building on the clear identification of the Roma community as being subject to risk in the NRP by ensuring that the next NAP/inclusion takes into account the results of the current Roma Development Action Plan 2010-2012.



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Promoting the social inclusion of Roma

Roma in the EU face unacceptable levels of poverty and social exclusion and are victims of extensive discrimination. At the same time, this cannot be divorced from the wider problem of poverty, social exclusion and discrimination that affects many other groups. Also, the current economic crisis and austerity measures which hit the most vulnerable hardest are worsening the situation. There is an urgent need to break this cycle of poverty, social exclusion and discrimination. The European Commission's 2011 Communication, *An EU Framework for National Roma Integration Strategies up to 2020*, has launched a process to achieve this and this Synthesis Report is intended to assist this process. It is based on individual country reports prepared by members of the EU Network of Independent Experts on Social Inclusion which examine the situation of Roma.

The report assesses the strengths and weaknesses of existing policies and programmes and then outlines the key elements that should inform National Roma Integration Strategies if they are to be effective. It also contains a series of suggestions for advancing future work at national and EU level on promoting the social inclusion of Roma.