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EVALUATION OF THE COUNCIL OF EUROPE AND EUROPEAN UNION JOINT PROGRAMME 'ROMED'



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ROMED
Médiation pour les Roms
Mediation for Roma

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Abbreviations

Abbreviation	Definition
ACIDI	High Commissioner for Immigration and Intercultural Dialogue (Portugal)
CAG	Community Action Group
CAHROM	Council of Europe Ad hoc Committee of Expert on ROMA and Traveller Issues
CoE	Council of Europe
DGEAC	European Commission Directorate General for Education and Culture
EC	European Commission
DG EMPL	European Commission Directorate General for Employment, Social Affairs & Inclusion
EU	European Union
FYROM	Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia
MtM	OSF programme 'Making the Most of the European Funds'
NFP	National Focal Point
NGO	Non-Governmental Organisations
NPO	National Project Officer
NRIS	National Roma Integration Strategies
OSF	Open Society Foundation
PAGODA	Pillar Assessed Grant or Delegation Agreement
PHARE	A pre-accession instrument of the European Union ¹
UNPD	United Nations Development Programme

¹ Originally established in 1989 as 'Poland and Hungary: Assistance for Restructuring their Economies'.

Executive Summary

This report provides the results of the external evaluation of the ROMED1 and ROMED2 Joint Programmes of the Council of Europe (CoE) and European Commission Directorate General for Education and Culture (DG EAC). The objectives of the evaluation were to (1) assess the effectiveness of the two programmes in contributing to improvements in the situation of the target groups, (2) analyse their impact on policies at local, national and European levels, and (3) identify lessons from their implementation and provide recommendations for the future.

The evaluation covered seven focus countries – Bulgaria, the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Hungary, Portugal, Romania, Slovakia and Ukraine. The methodology comprised:

- Desk research;
- Semi-structured interviews with international, national and local stakeholders;
- A written survey and 10 focus groups with mediators trained by ROMED1;
- 15 case studies in municipalities covered by ROMED2 including interviews with local authorities and with the established Community Action Group (CAG).

The evaluation was implemented between 15 February and 30 June 2016 by an international team consisting of six country-based experts, and a regional senior evaluation team. In total 363 stakeholders were consulted through interviews and focus groups, the majority of whom (348) were national stakeholders in the focus countries. Over 55% of them (194) were representatives of Roma communities – mediators or members of the ROMED2 CAGs. In addition, 138 mediators responded to the survey.

ROMED1 'European Training Programme on intercultural mediation for Roma Communities'

ROMED1 emerged from the earlier extensive work of the CoE to promote intercultural mediation, highlighted in the Strasbourg Declaration, signed by the representatives of the member states in October 2010. It established ROMED1 as a *European Training Programme*, implemented in co-operation with national and local authorities with the aim of enhancing the quality of the work of Roma mediators in order to improve Roma access to local services.

ROMED1 was implemented in 22 European countries from July 2011 to March 2013. It was financed through two CoE-European Union (EU) joint programme agreements amounting to €2,000,000, of which 50% was provided by DG EAC and 50% by the CoE. ROMED1 continued in some countries from 2014 to 2016 in response to demand from national institutions to train or provide refresher training to specific groups of Mediators.

ROMED1 developed and spread a new vision for the role of Roma mediators at European, national and local levels. It was initiated as a complex capacity building effort aimed at systemic change. The methodology was systematised in the ROMED1 Trainer's Handbook² which was continuously improved on the basis of feedback from trainers and participants. From 2011 to 2016 ROMED1 trained 1,479 mediators from 500 municipalities in 22 countries. Approximately 90% of the trained mediators are Roma, and more than 50% are women. Over 700 representatives of local institutions took part in training sessions which increased their understanding of the role of mediators. Representatives of

² Handbook available for download in English: <http://coe-romed.org/sites/default/files/documentation/ROMED1%20Trainers%20Handbook.pdf>

national institutions with relevant responsibilities in Roma inclusion were also present at some training sessions.

The ROMED1 training programme was considered by local stakeholders to be highly relevant to the needs of local Roma inclusion processes. In particular, mediators valued it for its human rights based approach and empowerment orientation, and for its focus on the clarity of the role of mediators and the practical aspects of their work.

The programme's main impact was to increase the functional capacities of participating mediators. However, it had little impact on the employment status of mediators, especially in countries where the mediator's profession is not recognised. The programme had variable impact across the evaluation focus countries on national policies relating to mediators.

The overall effectiveness of ROMED1 was constrained by the rapid expansion of the programme to 22 countries in response to a political pressure to quickly demonstrate success.

ROMED2 'Democratic Governance and Community Participation through Mediation'

ROMED2 emerged from the learning of ROMED1. It invested in local processes aimed at enhancing the participation of Roma in local decision making. It stimulated the self-organisation of Roma communities into community action groups (CAGs). Through a structured process of dialogue and cooperation with local authorities, the CAGs identified community priorities and suggested initiatives for addressing them.

ROMED2 was financed through three joint programme grant agreements amounting to €3,100,000. Again, 50% of the funding was provided by DG EAC, and 50% by the CoE. Implementation commenced in April 2013 and is presently expected to end in February 2017. It has been active in 54 municipalities in 11 countries: Bosnia and Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Italy, Portugal, Romania, the Slovak Republic, The former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia (FYRoM), and Ukraine.

ROMED2 led to the establishment of 54 CAGs (each with between six and 27 members) in the 11 countries. It also led to the establishment of local authority working groups to work together with the CAGs. National facilitators supported both the CAGs and the local authorities in their interaction and with the participatory development of local plans.

Evidence from the 15 case studies in ROMED2 municipalities indicates that the programme is considered very relevant, as it revolves around Roma community empowerment. The CAGs are viewed as practical schools for active citizenship that have increased the participatory skills and the self-esteem of their members so that they are now able to influence local policies. The ROMED2 process is highly acknowledged by local authorities as it has enabled them to learn directly from Roma communities about their needs, and they value the CAGs as new partners for solving urgent problems.

The main impact of ROMED2 has been the empowerment of Roma communities through the CAGs, and the opening of local authorities to cooperation with them. This has resulted in the incorporation of CAG suggestions into municipal plans in many locations. Although very recent, the plans have led to the resolution of urgent problems in Roma communities, and they have led to new initiatives in the areas of infrastructure, education, employment and services.

The main challenges related to the need of more time to build trust and empower marginalised communities. Unstable political support from local councils was also sometimes problematic. There were insufficient resources to support the CAGs, and support to local processes was interrupted by slow negotiations between the CoE and the European Commission in 2015. The most affected by this

were the four countries transferred to ROMACT in 2015, as the CoE contribution was only 20% and could not bridge the gap created by the missing European Commission resources. There was a lack of clarity regarding the strategic synergies expected between ROMED2 and ROMACT and this caused confusion and limited effectiveness in the four countries.

Recommendations

It is recommended that support to the ROMED programme be continued, but with a clear focus on sustainability and national and local ownership.

Future ROMED mediator training should focus on sustainability by developing in-country systems for formal recognition of mediation as profession, and continuing professional development. More concretely, the ROMED1 programme should:

- Ensure alignment with existing national programmes and require clear commitment from national authorities that mediators will continue their employment or will be formally employed, and that financial resources are allocated to support their training and continuing professional development.
- Focus support on developing the capacities of established mediator networks as new actors promoting intercultural mediation.
- Allocate resources to assist national advocacy efforts for: recognition of the profession of mediator; allocation of government support for mediator training programmes; official certification of training for mediators and incentives for their professional development.
- Support more systemic monitoring of the implementation of the Strasbourg Declaration signed by national governments. Civil society and networks of mediators can contribute by developing annual shadow reports on the situation of mediators in each country.

For ROMED2 it is recommended to

- Foster the focus on education as an engine for (1) the empowerment of communities and (2) the development of long term municipal vision for sustained impact on Roma inclusion.
- Develop strategic partnerships with actors with specific expertise in different approaches to improved Roma access to formal education, such as the Roma Education Fund (REF).
- Maintain the combination of non-formal education (active citizenship and empowerment) and formal education (access to quality education, reduced drop out, pre-school education), etc.
- Ensure that CAGs include members with a genuine interest in education. Alternatively develop a set of interest groups (parents, mothers, youth, women etc.) around education that work together with the CAGs on concrete educational initiatives.
- Facilitate consultations and meetings with diverse local stakeholders to ensure broad support for educational initiatives in municipalities.

Chapter 1. Introduction

1.1. The context: why ROMED?

With the enlargement of the European Union in 2004 and 2007 the exclusion of Roma (the largest minority in Europe) is increasingly becoming a pan-European issue. Roma communities, especially in Central and Eastern Europe remained outside the mainstream development and increasingly fell in the 'vicious circle' of social exclusion. The available data show that Roma are facing multiple deprivations in virtually all areas of life compared both to the national averages as well as to the non-Roma living in close proximity – long term unemployment, growing dependency on the welfare state system; deteriorating living conditions; reduced access to basic healthcare; and increasing school dropout rates (at the start, or later in the school system) which in turn reproduce poverty and marginalisation on the long-term. The level of social exclusion differs, not only among the countries, but among regions/municipalities and communities and inside each of them.

The main challenges faced by the Roma population are pointed out in the 2011 Roma Pilot Survey conducted by the Agency for Fundamental Rights³ and in the 2012 UNPD report 'The situation of Roma in 11 EU Member States'⁴ and the Euro Barometer Study (2015) shows there is a rise of anti Roma sentiments and perceptions, and that the negative attitudes towards the Roma vary significantly across Member States.

Recent research have outlined the syndrome of social exclusion of Roma as a complex outcome of the interaction of individual exclusion risks (like low level of education, qualification, poor health and living conditions) augmented by exclusion drivers (ethnic prejudice, structural discrimination) and the specifics of the local context in which Roma live (concentration of the Roma population in economically deprived areas, poor infrastructure in Roma settlements, as well as territorial segregation and isolation in some of the countries).⁵

The alarming situation of Roma and its further deterioration has put forward the urgent need of integrated long-term policies for Roma inclusion:

- The need to develop adequate measures and practices addressing the equal access of Roma to quality education, employment, social services, health care, and decent living conditions;
- The need to face the alarming growth of discrimination against Roma – institutional, individual, and public
- The need to build the capacities of all actors – Roma communities, local and central governments – to be able to develop and implement meaningful inclusive policies increasing the chance for accessible services and equal opportunity for development.

The Roma inclusion priority has been increasingly present on the policy agenda of the European Union. There is a growing direct involvement of the European Commission (EC) on the issues of Roma inclusion, also in response to increased intolerance and xenophobia in Europe. The established European Platform for Roma Inclusion has a growing role in shaping up policies for Roma

³ <http://fra.europa.eu/DVS/DVT/roma.php>

⁴ http://fra.europa.eu/sites/default/files/fra_uploads/2099-FRA-2012-Roma-at-a-glance_EN.pdf

⁵ Beyond Transition – Towards Inclusive Societies. Regional human development report (Bratislava: UNDP 2011), <http://europeandcis.undp.org/home/show/BCD10F8F-F203-1EE9-BB28DEE6D70B52E1>

inclusion at the European Union (EU) level. The EC adopted the Ten Common Basic Principles of Roma Inclusion⁶ in 2009.

The 2011 EC Communication on an 'EU Framework for National Roma Integration Strategies up to 2020'⁷ shows the EC's commitment to Roma inclusion in four key areas - access to education, healthcare, essential services (e.g. housing) and employment, in order to reduce the employment gap between Roma and the rest of the population⁸. Through this document, the EC also emphasises making full use of the National Roma Contact Points' network and the annual European Platform for Roma Inclusion that brings together national governments, EU institutions and international organisations with Roma civil society organisations, to promote successful inclusion at the grassroots level. A follow up EC communication of May 2012⁹ further demands from member states meaningful targeted actions in the implementation of the National Roma Integration Strategies (NRIS) and a robust monitoring mechanism to ensure concrete results for Roma.

There is increasing attention in EC policies to the importance of education for Roma inclusion – within Roma communities to increase their potential to get out of the vicious circle of exclusion and poverty; as well as in the framework of developing more inclusive societies that understand and practice the European values of human rights, equality and active citizenship:

- In March 2015 the 'Declaration on Promoting citizenship and the common values of freedom, tolerance and non-discrimination through education' (known as the Paris Declaration¹⁰) points out the need to promote a more inclusive society through education, to foster social inclusion, to combat racism and discrimination on any ground and to encourage dialogue and cooperation among all relevant policies and education stakeholders. The declaration has been signed by ministers responsible for education from all 28 EU Member States and by the Commissioner for education, culture, youth and sport.
- A recent EC Study¹¹ published for the one-year anniversary of the Paris Declaration,¹² highlights the educational challenges facing Roma communities gathering and analysing evidence on education policies and practices to foster tolerance. The study also reports the importance of establishing partnerships between schools and Roma communities.
- The 2015 Joint Report of the Council of the European Union and the EC on the implementation of the strategic framework for European cooperation in education and training (ET 2020).¹³ The document calls for strengthened cooperation in education and training up to 2020 and especially promoting social inclusion. The report proposes six new priorities including improving people's skills and employment prospects and creating open, innovative digital learning environments, whilst cultivating fundamental values of equality, non-discrimination and active citizenship. The report also points out the need to provide inclusive education and training for all different learners, focusing on disadvantaged groups such as Roma.

Despite the progress in developing European and national level policy frameworks and matching them with significant and increasing funding devoted to Roma inclusion, the question of their impact and real results remains on the agenda of almost all meetings and discussions related to Roma inclusion.

⁶http://www.coe.int/t/dg4/youth/Source/Resources/Documents/2011_10_Common_Basic_Principles_Roma_Inclusion.pdf

⁷ http://ec.europa.eu/justice/policies/discrimination/docs/com_2011_173_en.pdf

⁸ 'Member States are already under an obligation to give Roma (like other EU citizens) non-discriminatory access to education, employment, vocational training, healthcare, social protection and housing through Directive 2000/43/EC.'

⁹http://ec.europa.eu/justice/discrimination/files/com2012_226_en.pdf

¹⁰ http://ec.europa.eu/education/news/2015/documents/citizenship-education-declaration_en.pdf

¹¹ http://ec.europa.eu/education/library/study/2016/neset-education-tolerance-2016_en.pdf

¹²http://ec.europa.eu/education/news/2015/documents/citizenship-education-declaration_en.pdf

¹³http://ec.europa.eu/education/documents/et-2020-draft-joint-report-408-2015_en.pdf

Do policies and projects make a real difference inside Roma communities and broader society? To what extent do resources actually reach communities in real need?

Sustainability of emerging change is also questionable. Even if successful interventions bring promising results, they rarely grow from 'pilots' into mainstreamed practice and often die out once the funding is over. The cyclical political process could explain this – the frequent political changes with elections can reverse political commitment of both central and/or local administration and slow down the progress of Roma inclusion policy implementation. Weak commitment on the side of the local governments and underrepresentation of Roma in local governments and councils is another.

A major challenge for the effective implementation of Roma Inclusion policies adopted at European and national level is the considerable gap of low understanding, capacities and political commitment at municipal level. The local level is of critical importance for the effective implementation of policies and programmes for Roma inclusion. This is the level where exclusion is most visible, and where practical steps for inclusion are desperately needed.

The local level is where European and national policies are transformed into practice. It is the meeting point of three interrelated and equally important areas of Roma inclusion as a process and an outcome:

- ***Roma community empowerment*** - on the individual level (assisting people to practice their basic rights and to expand their capacity and skills), as well as on the community level (assisting people to get organised to voice out their interests around community problem solving);
- ***Inclusive institutions*** (expanded commitment, capacities, knowledge and skills in working for Roma inclusion, putting in practice the concepts of good governance);
- ***Unbiased and non-discriminatory society at large*** (change in negative perceptions, discriminatory attitudes and practice, and overcoming the gap between Roma and the majority).¹⁴

There is an increased focus on processes of Roma inclusion at the local level. ***Due to the years of work of the Council of Europe on testing and promoting intercultural mediation as one of the tools for inclusion at the local level, mediation became increasingly important on the policy agenda at European level.*** The Strasbourg Declaration on Roma adopted at the Council of Europe High Level Meeting on Roma on 20 October 2010 fostered the need for developing a 'European training programme on intercultural mediation for Roma communities' which gave birth to the Council of Europe's ROMED programme.¹⁵

Later on, the work and lessons emerging from the ROMED programme itself contributed to the adoption of the Recommendation of the Committee of Ministers to Member States on Mediation as an Effective Tool for Promoting Respect for Human Rights and Social Inclusion of Roma¹⁶ (September 2012). The subsequent Recommendation of the Council of the EU of 9 December 2013 on effective Roma integration measures in the Member States reiterates the importance of 'training and employment of qualified mediators dedicated to Roma and use mediation as one of the measures to tackle the inequalities Roma face in terms of access to quality education, employment, healthcare and housing.'¹⁷ It also recommends support to active Roma citizenship and participation especially at the local level.

¹⁴ <http://eeagrants.org/News/2013/Study-on-Roma-inclusion>

¹⁵ <https://mycloud.coe.int/index.php/s/3vwCekIOyLUkNx0#pdfviewer>

¹⁶ [https://wcd.coe.int/ViewDoc.jsp?p=&Ref=CM/Rec\(2012\)9&Language=lanEnglish&Ver=original&Site=CM&BackColorInternet=DBDCf2&BackColorIntranet=FDC864&BackColorLogged=FDC864&direct=true](https://wcd.coe.int/ViewDoc.jsp?p=&Ref=CM/Rec(2012)9&Language=lanEnglish&Ver=original&Site=CM&BackColorInternet=DBDCf2&BackColorIntranet=FDC864&BackColorLogged=FDC864&direct=true)

¹⁷ [http://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/PDF/?uri=CELEX:32013H1224\(01\)&from=en](http://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/PDF/?uri=CELEX:32013H1224(01)&from=en)

The European Parliament resolution of 12 December 2013¹⁸ on the progress made in the implementation of the National Roma Integration Strategies encourages Member States to 'show more political determination in favour of the effective inclusion of Roma' and refers to Roma mediators' programmes as examples of good practice.

Finally, the 2015 study commissioned by the European Parliament's Policy Department for Citizens' Rights and Constitutional Affairs at the request of the Parliament's Committee on Civil Liberties, Justice & Home Affairs includes policy recommendations for enhanced policies and strategies in Member States supporting a more effective integration of disadvantaged Roma EU citizens and recalls the importance of training of Roma mediators to promote employment among Roma.¹⁹

The Commission is currently undertaking targeted communication activities in EU Member States 'For Roma with Roma'²⁰ to fight discrimination and stereotypes against Roma population.

1.2. Object of the Evaluation: The ROMED Programmes

1.2.1. The Council of Europe and the birth of the ROMED concept

The practice of employing Roma mediators as intermediaries between the Roma communities and relevant local institutions emerged in the late 80s and early 90s. Starting with pilot non-governmental organisation (NGO) initiatives mostly for school and health mediators, they were later expanded by PHARE to larger scale national programmes in some countries (for ex. Bulgaria and Romania), as well as supported by various donors, in particular Open Society Foundation (OSF) programmes for school and health mediation throughout Europe.

An important multi-country initiative in this direction was the Council of Europe's 'Education for Roma Children in Europe' which was initiated in 2003 and continued until 2009 to implement recommendation No R (2000)4 adopted by the Committee of Ministers in February 2000 'to use mediators from the Roma/Gypsy community for improved communication of parents and schools.'²¹

Based on the interviews with the ROMED Management and the International Pedagogical Team the concept of the ROMED programmes is rooted in the learning from this previous work of the Council of Europe, as well as from exploration of existing practices of mediation among Roma communities and various local institutions in the different countries. While due to all of the above efforts the practice of Roma mediators started to be introduced in some of the countries as a tool for Roma inclusion, there were a number of gaps and challenges. These were discussed, in particular, at a meeting with representatives from 20 countries organised by the COE and the Institute for Intercultural Studies in Timisoara in 2004²².

The need to develop a consistent concept of real intercultural mediation was identified on the basis of the discussions at this meeting and on a survey conducted by the CoE in 2006²³ on the situation of mediation. Despite the success and diversity of mediation practices, mediation was, in practice,

¹⁸<http://www.europarl.europa.eu/sides/getDoc.do?pubRef=-//EP//TEXT+TA+P7-TA-2013-0594+0+DOC+XML+V0//EN>

¹⁹http://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/etudes/STUD/2015/536485/IPOL_STU%282015%29536485_EN.pdf

²⁰http://ec.europa.eu/justice/discrimination/roma/for-roma-with-roma/index_en.htm

²¹ [https://wcd.coe.int/ViewDoc.jsp?p=&Ref=Rec\(2000\)4&Language=lanEnglish&Ver=original&Site=CM&BackColorInternet=C3C3C3&BackColorIntranet=EDB021&BackColorLogged=F5D383&direct=true](https://wcd.coe.int/ViewDoc.jsp?p=&Ref=Rec(2000)4&Language=lanEnglish&Ver=original&Site=CM&BackColorInternet=C3C3C3&BackColorIntranet=EDB021&BackColorLogged=F5D383&direct=true)

²²http://coe-romed.org/sites/default/files/Mediators_Analyse_EN.PDF

²³ Idem

frequently the opposite to what it was supposed to be. The biggest challenge was to unlock the blockages in the school, health care and other public service systems and to work in a more systemic way in order to address the causes of the problems, rather than only their consequences.

Two main milestones were of critical importance for the birth of ROMED as a systemic paneuropean effort in the area of effective intercultural mediation:

- The first milestone was the ***Strasbourg Declaration on Roma adopted at the CoE High Level Meeting on Roma on 20 October 2010***. It promoted the development of a 'European Training Programme for Roma Mediators with the intention of streamlining, systematising, adapting, and consolidating the existing training programmes for and about Mediators for Roma, through the most effective use of existing Council of Europe resources, standards, methodology, networks and infrastructure, notably the European Youth Centres in Strasbourg and Budapest, in close cooperation with national and local authorities.' It resulted in the launch of the CoE ROMED programme in 2010 and work on effective intercultural mediation became a strategic priority for the CoE.

In the framework of the ongoing policy debates at European level about the need for the development of the Roma inclusion strategies in the different countries and the promising start of ROMED on 06 July 2011, ***ROMED became a Joint Programme of the CoE and EC DG Education and Culture (EAC)*** upon the signature of the Declaration between the Secretary General of the CoE and the EC Commissioner for Education. This elevated the ROMED programme to a higher level initiative, expanding its scope to a larger number of countries in Europe.

The inception phase of ROMED involved the work of experts and practitioners from different countries (especially from Romania) who had much more advanced practice in testing a variety of approaches to mediation.

1.2.2. The ROMED programmes: key phases, objectives and stakeholders involved

The ROMED Programme evolved as two main phases. Both aimed to enhance Roma inclusion at the local level. Although similar, the two programmes differed in their specific objectives, desired outcomes, scope, and stakeholder involvement.

ROMED1 European Training Programme on intercultural mediation for Roma Communities'

The main focus of this first phase of ROMED was on capacity building of Roma mediators for effective intercultural mediation through a European educational program with common standards and training methodology.

The general aim of ROMED1 was to improve the quality and effectiveness of the work of school, health, employment and community mediators, with a view to supporting better communication and co-operation between Roma and public institutions (school, health-care providers, employment offices, local authorities etc.). To achieve this aim, the ROMED programme focused on the following objectives:

- To promote effective intercultural mediation to improve the communication and co-operation between Roma and public institutions;
- To ensure the integration of a rights-based approach in the mediation between Roma communities and public institutions;

- To support the work of mediators by providing tools for planning and implementation of their activities, which encourage democratic participation while generating empowerment of Roma communities and increased accountability of public institutions.

ROMED1 was a pedagogical programme consisting of two training sessions (the first one of four days and the second one of three days) and a six-month period of practice in between. Focusing on the professionalisation of the work of mediators it also aimed to promote the official recognition of this profession and to create or improve the conditions for the employability of mediators by local, regional, national institutions as well as NGOs in the different countries.

This concept could not be applied only by training mediators. It required the involvement of a broader group of stakeholders, especially from institutions that use mediation services and employ mediators. The main stakeholders involved in the programme included:

- **National and Local Authorities** played a key role in placing the programme in the national policy context and ensuring the presence of employed mediators in different fields, as well as in the selection of participants for ROMED training;
- **The National Focal Points** were individuals hired by the CoE to support the monitoring process and provide feedback on national activities,
- **Mediators in different fields**(health, employment, education, multifunctional mediators, etc.) who participated in the trainings and had the obligation to put in practice the acquired new skills and methods for effective intercultural mediation;
- **Local and national institutions** as current and potential employers of mediators who took part in the last day of the first training and the first day of the second training, this way learning together with mediators about effective intercultural mediation and the results of the six-month practice.

The main phase of ROMED1 was implemented from 06 July 2011 to 31 March 2013. The programme was financed by two joint programme agreements amounting to €2,000,000, provided as 50%-50% matching funds by DG EAC and the CoE.

Table 1: ROMED1 Joint Programme grant agreements

Joint Programme grant agreements	Starting date	Closing date (with extension)	Amount (in Euros)
EAC- 2011 - 0261 ROMED / Intercultural mediation for Roma communities	6/07/2011	31/03/2012	1 000 000
EAC- 2012-0211 ROMED / Intercultural mediation for Roma Communities	01/04/2012	31/03/2013	1 000 000

The main phase of ROMED1 is completed. As of 31 of March 2013, it resulted in the training of 1,089 mediators from 20 countries across Europe.

ROMED1 training of mediators continued throughout 2014-2016, in response to demand from the relevant national institutions in the different countries, including 'new' countries requesting training of mediators. ROMED1 thus accompanied the implementation of the second phase of the programme –

ROMED2. As a result, during the period 2011 – 2016 a total of 1,479 mediators were trained in 22 countries.

ROMED2: Democratic Governance and Community Participation through Mediation

This second phase of ROMED focused on the promotion of the democratic participation of Roma through local processes of mediation, by supporting community organising in disadvantaged Roma communities for their effective interaction with local authorities.

ROMED2 emerged from the lessons learnt from the ROMED1 training of mediators. The main questions were: to what extent could mediators by themselves achieve real change in communities; and what else was needed to stimulate the application of principles of good governance and to promote Roma inclusion? Discussions and learning from the training of mediators outlined the need for deeper action in municipalities where mediators had been already trained through ROMED1.

ROMED2 shifted the focus from capacity development of individual mediators to a process of building the capacity and practice of local stakeholders by stimulating the empowerment of disadvantaged Roma communities and enhancing dialogue between them and local authorities. Mediators trained by ROMED1 were an integral part of this process.

The goal of the ROMED2 Programme is to enhance the participation of members of Roma communities in the decision-making processes at the local level. The Programme provides support to both local administration and Roma communities, enabling both sides to engage with each other and cooperate for concrete positive changes at local level. The programme works simultaneously on Roma citizens' ability to participate and on local authorities' ability to respond.

The approach of ROMED2 is based on three main pillars: effective intercultural mediation; applied principles of good inclusive governance; and community organising and empowerment. The programme invests in local democratic processes which are as important as the outcomes. At the heart of the process is the assistance of the Roma community for self-organising in a Community Action Group (CAG) and gradually building its capacity for constructive dialogue with local authorities and institutions. The objectives of the process are: to identify important problems for the community; to suggest solutions; to include these proposals in the local plans of the municipalities; and to develop initiatives and projects that can improve the situation.

As compared to ROMED1 this new phase of ROMED is much more action oriented. It combines training of local groups and institutions in the main principles of participatory local planning with practical organisation of this planning and its implementation. It educates the local stakeholders and stimulates their learning through doing, thus creating functional capacities for active citizenship and democratic governance which in turn can lead to changes towards Roma inclusion.

The implementation of the ROMED2 process involves several **key stakeholders**:

Community Action Groups – groups of voluntary Roma citizens from the community, who agree to function in an open, democratic and transparent way in order to contribute to the improvement of the situation of the Roma community, based on a constructive dialogue with local authorities and other institutions.

- ***Representatives of local authorities and institutions*** organised in Institutional Working Groups, designated employees of local authorities and of other local institutions to engage in dialogue and cooperation with the CAG;
- ***A National Support Team including:***

- **The National Project Officer (NPO) and the National Focal Point (NFP)** responsible for the coordination of the programme and working under the umbrella of the National Support Organisation;
- **National facilitators**, individual experts external to the local community and competent to work with both stakeholders mentioned above, and who are in charge of supporting the process at the local level from its initiation until it becomes effective and sustainable;
- **The local facilitator (who could be a mediator trained through ROMED1)** a Roma person preferably employed to work on Roma issues, with good connections within the Roma community and with good knowledge of the local institutions;
- **Decision-makers (mayor, local counsellors, etc.) and a Municipality Contact Point**, a member of the staff of the municipality designated to support the process from the institutional side.

ROMED2 programme started in April 2013 and was active in 54 municipalities in 11 countries: Bosnia and Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Italy, Portugal, Romania, the Slovak Republic, FYRoM and Ukraine.

The programme was financed by three Joint Programme Grant Agreements with a total value of €3,100,000 provided as 50%-50% matching funds by EC DG EAC and the CoE.

Table 2: ROMED2 Joint Programme grant agreements

Joint Programme Grant Agreement	Starting date	Closing date (with extension)	Amount (in Euros)
EAC- 2013-0152 ROMED2	01/04/2013	31/03/2014	1 000 000
EAC- 2014-0161 ROMED2 Democratic Governance and Roma Community Participation Through Mediation	01/04/2014	28/02/2015	1 000 000
EAC -2015 – 0294 ROMED2 Democratic Governance and Roma Community Participation Through Mediation	01/03/2015	31/08/2016	1 100 000

ROMACT, the **new Joint Programme** of the Council of Europe and DG Employment, Social Affairs & Inclusion (EMPL), started in late 2013. It was inspired by ROMED2, but shifted the focus from community empowerment to building the political will and capacity of local administrations to develop and implement local strategies for Roma inclusion together with Roma communities and to access resources and EU Funds for their implementation.

It was agreed that ROMACT would use the ROMED2 methodology, where the CAGs were seen as a resource to use for local planning and project development. It also added targeted capacity building of local stakeholders to access EU funds. During 2014, ROMED2 and ROMACT were implemented simultaneously in four countries: Bulgaria, Hungary, Slovakia and Romania. By the end of 2014 it was decided that ROMED2 would no longer cover these four countries, which remained part of the ROMACT programme only.

ROMACT is not covered by the present evaluation. Therefore, it will be considered only from the perspective of complementarities and synergies with ROMED2.

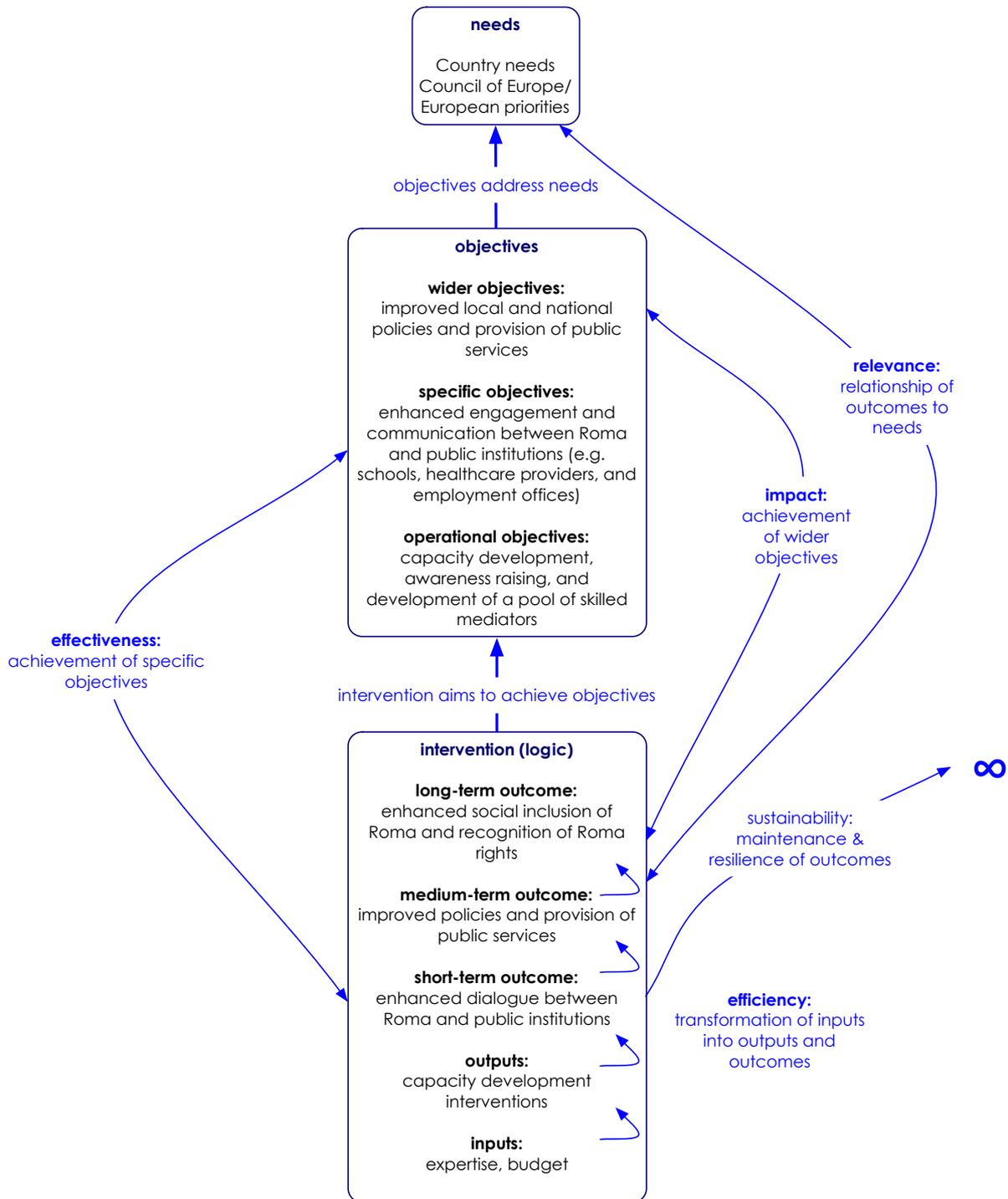
1.2.3. The complexity of the object of the evaluation

All phases of ROMED are highly relevant to the critical need of expanding the capacity for effective Roma inclusion at the local level. ROMED aims to: reduce the gap between Roma communities and institutions and the majority population by supporting capacity building for Roma mediators; and develop effective processes of Roma democratic participation and interaction with local authorities for the development and practical implementation of local strategies for Roma inclusion:

- ROMED1 invests in developing professional Roma mediators, acting as 'neutral translators' able to communicate the needs and rights of the communities to local institutions, and the policies and ways to practice their rights to the communities. However, skilled individuals on their own are not enough.
- ROMED2 invests in mediation as an instrument for community empowerment – community self-organising in active civic groups to become active participants in local participatory planning. This will help the community to express community needs and interests and to engage in dialogue, as an equal partner, with the local administration. Cooperative work of community representatives with local authorities and institutions will promote the application of good inclusive governance principles.

Figure 1: ROMED Theory of Change below provides a brief overview of the multiple levels of change desired by the ROMED interventions.

Figure 1: ROMED Theory of Change



In a nutshell, the joint programme's interventions (e.g. capacity building, awareness raising, development of mediation skills at individual and community levels) will contribute to enhanced culture and practice of engagement and communication between the Roma community and public institutions, such as schools, healthcare providers, and employment offices (short-term). This in turn will lead to increased empowerment of communities, more accessible public services and policies that

are more inclusive and better address the needs of Roma communities (medium-term), which in the long-term will contribute to better social inclusion and equal access to development for Roma communities.

Both ROMED programmes have the strategic objective to foster Roma inclusion through effective intercultural mediation. At the same time each of them has its own objective and specific intervention logic involving different approaches and aiming at a variety of changes at different levels.

As outlined in previous sections, ROMED1 is an educational programme aimed at expanding the capacities and empowerment of individual Roma mediators. It focuses on: increasing the functional competencies of mediators; developing a common understanding of the role of mediators; and involving local and national institutions. These are expected to lead to increased support for the recognition of the profession of mediator, and contribute to their employability.

ROMED1's effects relate to processes of individual change and professional development of mediators, as well as system change – of the attitudes, awareness and support of local and national institutions - a precondition for the sustainability of mediation. The complexity of these tasks is further increased by the wide contextual diversity of the 22 countries covered by ROMED1. In particular, there is variable political support for, and recognition of mediators as a profession, and variable financial support for their employment.

ROMED2 in turn is an investment in local processes of increased Roma inclusion based on intercultural mediation, through internalising and applying the principles of good governance and community organising. It aims to create sustainable local mechanisms that will ensure Roma empowerment and participation in the process of local policy development and implementation.

The complexity of the tasks of the ROMED2 programme relate to the need of multiple processes of change at the local level:

- ***Gradual change of attitudes and behaviour at individual level*** – of community members, of representatives of local institutions and authorities, and of the broader Roma and non-Roma communities;
- ***Expanding the institutional capacity of local governments*** for democratic governance and openness to inclusive policy development and implementation with the participation of Roma;
- ***Stimulating the empowerment process and active citizenship within Roma communities*** – first within a core action group of community members that in turn will consult and involve broader parts of the Roma communities.

Each of these processes requires time and good facilitation. Their success depends on a variety of internal and external factors which differ among the broad diversity of municipalities involved in the programme. Also, success is relative and will depend on the local situation – the level of marginalisation of communities, community self-organising capacity, openness and capacity of local authorities and how these have changed with local elections, availability of funding to support local initiatives, etc.

In addition, both programmes are multiple country efforts with different levels of interventions – local, national and European. In this respect, they have complex management structure involving all levels. This increases the complexity of the programmes and it will be important to identify the balance and effective interaction and complementarities among the different levels, as well as the ability of the programmes to accommodate the diversity of contexts and needs of stakeholders involved and to systematise lessons.

Finally, both programmes have expanded. The number of countries covered by ROMED1 increased. In six of the 11 ROMED2 countries, additional resources became available through ROMACT, which simultaneously covered some of the same municipalities as ROMED2 and expanded to new municipalities using the ROMED2 approach but with a different objective and focus.

1.3. Evaluation purpose, methodology and limitations

1.3.1. Evaluation purpose and objectives

Table 3 provides an overview of the overall goal, specific objectives, and purpose of the evaluation.

Table 3: Evaluation Objectives

Goal	Specific Objectives	Purpose of use
Assess the impact of ROMED Programmes' approach	<p>Assess the effectiveness of ROMED1 and ROMED2 respectively in contributing to the situation improvement of the targeted groups, in the framework of priorities and methods set by the Programme;'</p> <p>Analyse the impact of the Programme on policies and practices at local, national and European level, in particular as regards education and training;'</p> <p>Identify lessons that the Council of Europe and the European Commission, as well as other programme stakeholders should learn from its implementation</p>	<p>To support the implementation Unit in reviewing relevant lines of intervention and adjusting the programmes' activities, for optimal impact on the target groups.</p> <p>The evaluation report has also to 'contribute to the orientation and development of CoE and European Commission's activities in the field of Roma inclusion in general and of its Joint Programmes in particular.'</p>

The evaluation was commissioned to assist learning about the effectiveness and emerging outcomes and impacts from the ROMED programmes at the time of finalising the current phase of ROMED2. From this perspective the evaluation has both a summative and a formative character – summative to identify the results and impacts of the two phases of the ROMED programmes so far, and formative to assist reflection on their further improvement and development in the framework of the overall ROMED strategy.

To meet the above objectives the leading evaluation questions and relevant aspects and sub-questions were organised under the following 6 evaluative areas: relevance, effectiveness as process and results, emerging impacts, efficiency, sustainability prospects and lessons for future applications.

The evaluation should assess two programmes simultaneously: ROMED1 'European Training Programme on intercultural mediation for Roma Communities' and ROMED2 Democratic Governance and Community Participation through Mediation". As they are strategically linked, the evaluation framework followed a common structure of key evaluative areas and leading questions for both programmes. However, as the two programmes have different objectives, anticipated outcomes and to a certain extent diverse respondents/audiences that can inform the evaluative study specific sub-questions were developed for each of them.

Each of the evaluation question frameworks includes 8-9 lead questions (one to two in each evaluation criterion/ area) and sub-questions within each leading question to be explored during interviews or focus groups with different groups of stakeholders.²⁴

1.3.2. Evaluation methodology

Approach

Focus on learning for improvement at both strategic and operational levels guided our approach throughout the evaluation. This entailed facilitating reflection on initial expectations and perceived outcomes as seen by the programme stakeholders, by the direct beneficiaries, as well as outside resource people and organisations in order to provide in-depth understanding of the processes and qualitative changes that resulted from them.

We explored the ROMED programmes, not as predictable, linear mechanisms operating in a vacuum, but as complex systems and learning processes, which themselves are elements within larger, constantly changing systems. This approach responded better to the formative nature of the evaluation and its purpose - to help understand what has worked and why, and what could be done to address remaining issues of concern in a constructive and sustainable way, as well as to the pilot and experimental nature of the two programmes.

Scope

The evaluation was implemented in the following seven countries: Romania, Bulgaria, Slovakia, Portugal, FYRoM, Ukraine, and Hungary. The countries were pre-selected by the EC and CoE, and included in the technical specifications for the evaluation. They have been selected on the basis of coverage in terms of EU membership, enlargement and neighbouring countries, density of Roma population, different stages of the ROMED processes and the commitment of local authorities to the Programme.

All of the focus countries were involved in both ROMED1 and ROMED2, and four of them were also covered by the ROMACT programme.

Methods and tools

The evaluation was based on a set of evaluation tools combining both qualitative and quantitative methods guided by the common framework of the above stated evaluation criteria and specified for each of the two programmes. The table below outlines the set of tools used for the assessment of ROMED1 and of ROMED2.

Table 4: Evaluation Toolset

Programme	Set of evaluation tools
ROMED1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • desk research, • semi-structured interviews with key programme stakeholders at European, and national level in the seven focus countries • survey with all mediators trained by ROMED1 in the seven focus countries • focus groups with mediators trained by ROMED1 • interviews with local stakeholders – institutions and mediators at the ROMED2 case study locations who also participated in ROMED1

²⁴Appendix 4 – Question Guides

Programme	Set of evaluation tools
ROMED2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • desk research, • semi-structured interviews with key programme stakeholders at European, and national level in the seven focus countries • focus groups with mediators trained by ROMED1 • in-depth case studies of a sample of 15 localities in the seven focus countries where ROMED2 was active

In applying the set of evaluation instruments for each of the programmes we attempted to triangulate as much of the information as possible – to have the same information confirmed by different sources, views and perspectives. This also involved the validation of qualitative feedback with available quantitative data on the performance of ROMED1 and ROMED2, as well as other statistic information in the different countries.

All instruments were based on the general question guide leading the evaluation, but specified for the different audiences of respondents and their specific knowledge and experience with the programme.

The overall evaluation framework and the application of specific tools were consulted with the Evaluation reference group in the inception phase of the evaluation, as well as with the national teams from the seven focus countries at the meeting with NPOs and NFPs organised by the CoE on 10-11 March 2016 in Strasbourg.

The case study locations in the seven focus countries were selected in consultation with the national teams and the ROMED management team.²⁵ Case studies were intended to be representative of the overall programme, not only of the individual countries. The selection was based on the following criteria:

- Level of success of the ROMED2 process in each country (one more advanced municipality as process and outcomes, and one that has faced difficulties and challenges);
- Type of municipality (urban - small town or larger city, rural, share of Roma population, type of Roma community etc.);
- Type of community action group (selected as representative of the community, or selected as a group of more active citizens without being nominated by their community);
- Level of openness of the local authorities to the process (very supportive , indifferent or obstructive);

Each case study was conducted based on a common framework and design across the different countries and included:

- Semi structured interviews with local authorities – the mayor, the municipal contact point and the municipal officials participating in the Joint meeting with the CAG;
- Focus group discussion with the local CAGs;
- Semi structured interviews with the national and local facilitator;
- Semi structured interviews with mediators working in the same locality;
- Individual or group feedback interviews with people living in the community (wherever possible);

The evaluation was implemented from 15 February to 30 May 2016, and the field work and data collection were undertaken between 17 March and 30 April 2016. The implementation team included

²⁵ Appendix 1 – ROMED2 Case Studies

country based experts in each of the seven focus countries, as well as team leader and senior evaluation team.

In total the evaluation consulted 363 stakeholders, out of which 348 were stakeholders at national and local level in the seven focus countries. 15 of those consulted were CoE and EAC programme stakeholders, other EC representatives, and other stakeholders at European level. The distribution of participants in the evaluation per type of stakeholder group and per country is illustrated in the Table 5.

Table 5: Stakeholders consulted during the evaluation

Stakeholders consulted In the seven focus countries	Bulgaria	FYROM	Hungary	Portugal	Romania	Slovakia	Ukraine	Total
National teams (ROMED I and ROMED2): NFP, NPO, trainers, national facilitators	6	5	7	5	11	7	3	44
Mediators/ focus groups	16	8	5	7	34	8	4	82
National institutions including CAHROM representatives	2	10	2	2	2	2	5	25
Local administration and institutions	8	4	6	8	14	11	3	54
Members of CAGs	25	15	11	25	25	6	5 ²⁶	112
Other stakeholders	6	7	4		1	8	5	31
Totals in-country stakeholders	63	49	35	47	87	42	25	348

The evaluation conducted:

- 10 focus groups with 82 mediators (in total for all seven countries) trained by ROMED1 (one per country except for Bulgaria where there were two, and Romania where there two additional focus groups, with school principals).
- 15 case studies in ROMED2 locations (three in Romania and two in each of the other six focus countries); case studies in the seven focus countries involved group discussions with 112 Roma CAG members, 54 individual and group interviews with representatives of local administrations and institutions, as well as other local stakeholders where possible.
- Semi-structured interviews with 15 stakeholders at European level, 25 representatives of national institutions and 31 other stakeholders.
- Over 55% of the consulted stakeholders (194) were representatives of Roma communities – mediators or members of the ROMED2 community action groups.

In addition, the evaluation conducted a survey with mediators from the seven focus countries. The rate of response of approached mediators - overall and per country is illustrated in the Table below.

²⁶ The reason for the small number of interviews in Ukraine is explained in 1.3.3.

Table 6: Mediator Survey Response Rates

Country	Mediators trained	Email invitations	Bounced	Reached addressee	Responses received	Response rate	% of trained mediators who responded
Bulgaria	173	109	17	92	28	30,40%	16%
FYROM	134	134	34	100	24	24%	18%
Hungary	40	21	5	16	7	43%	17.5%
Portugal	39	14	1	13	4	30%	10%
Romania	347	228	59	169	58	34%	16.7%
Slovak Republic	42	41	4	37	13	35%	40%
Ukraine	88	25	4	21	4	19%	4%
Total	690	572	124	448	138	30%	20%

1.3.3. Limitations of the evaluation

The main limitation of the evaluation relates to the very short timeframe provided for the implementation of the field work, as well as for the preliminary analyses and the development of the interim report. In practice the field work had to be organised and conducted in a month and half, and even with the granted extension we had only 10 days to systematise the results and findings from the seven countries and develop the interim report.

A second limitation was the low reach out to mediators by the survey, as well as low response. We were provided with email contacts of 572 mediators out of the 690 mediators trained by ROMED1 in the seven focus countries. Of these, 124 emails were not valid and bounced back.²⁷ This meant we were able reach to 64% of all trained mediators, of which only 30% responded to the survey questions. This limits the representativeness of the survey findings, as the mediators who participated in the survey represent only 20% of the trained mediators in the seven focus countries. The use of the survey results was therefore limited to general orientation, and triangulation with the feedback provided by the 112 mediators who took part in the 10 focus groups in the seven countries.

The evaluation team included national experts from (and based in) most of the focus countries. This provided for maximum flexibility in organising meetings with local stakeholders in the limited timeframe. In the case of Ukraine, the national expert was based in another country and data gathering and meetings with stakeholders were therefore carried out in the framework of one field trip. This, together with the very limited time available for data collection for the entire evaluation meant there were fewer opportunities for stakeholder consultations in Ukraine compared with other countries. In addition, the CAG in one of the selected case study locations (Kiev) had recently undergone significant changes and it was possibly to meet with only a few of the new members.

²⁷ The CoE database included emails of participating mediators collected in the period of 2011-2016. Many of these email addresses are no longer valid.

Despite time limitations we succeeded to reach all stakeholders recommended and planned for this evaluation with the exception of very few (3) who did not respond or could not participate due to their busy schedule.

1.4. About the report

The draft report consists of three main sections:

- The first two sections focus on the assessment of ROMED1 and ROMED2 respectively. Each section covers the horizontal findings on the main evaluation questions organised around the key evaluation criteria related to relevance, effectiveness, impact, and sustainability, also elaborating on the link and synergy between the two phases of the programme. Both sections follow a thematic/program approach outlining common features and country specific differences understood through instruments applied across countries (survey, interviews, focus groups, and case studies in the sample of selected municipalities in the focus countries).
- The third section includes summary conclusions, lessons and recommendations coming from both phases of the ROMED programmes.

Chapter 2. ROMED1 Horizontal findings: Empowering mediators

2.1. Relevance of ROMED1 to Roma inclusion and needs

2.1.1. ROMED's Concept and Vision

The ROMED programme was developed and implemented by the Support Team of the Special Representative of the Secretary General of the Council of Europe for Roma issues, and since 2014 has come under the Strategic Partnership Unit of the same entity within the Council of Europe.

The mission of the ROMED programme has been defined by the Strasbourg Declaration adopted in October 2010 at the High-Level Meeting on Roma, where the representatives of member states agreed that the Council of Europe should implement a *European Training Programme for Roma Mediators* in order to consolidate the existing training programmes and more effectively use existing Council of Europe resources, standards, methodology, networks and infrastructure, in close co-operation with national and local authorities.

The concept was designed in the inception phase of ROMED (2010-2011) involving a variety of leading experts in Roma inclusion and intercultural mediation, as well as using training and capacity building resources of the CoE. Their work resulted in the ROMED Curriculum which is the synthesis of the ROMED concept and approach, translating it into a systematic capacity building programme for mediators.

Based on the desk review of the ROMED1 Trainer's Handbook and the interviews with the ROMED management and the International Pedagogical Team the following key aspects of the concept and vision of the programme can be outlined:

- ROMED1 **aims at improving the quality and effectiveness of the work of school, health, employment and community mediators**, with a view to supporting better communication and co-operation between Roma and public institutions (school, health-care providers, employment offices, local authorities etc.)
- ROMED1 introduced **a common framework of standards and methods but took a pragmatic approach** recognising the wide diversity of contexts of practicing the mediator's profession and the level of its recognition in the different countries. It focused on supporting all professionals (people with Roma background or from local Roma communities) hired to act as intermediary between the Roma communities and public institutions and whose tasks and responsibilities include facilitating communication and improve the direct co-operation between them.
- A core place in its methodology **is the concept of real intercultural mediation**. This means that the mediators, their employers, public institutions in general, as well as members of the Roma communities, need to clearly understand and accept co-operation based on the principles of mediation. The real intercultural mediator needs to have a good knowledge of the 'cultural codes' of the community and of the institution. He or she has to be impartial and focused on improving communication and co-operation and on stimulating both parties to take responsibilities and to be actively involved in a change process.
- **The neutral and impartial role of the mediator in enabling the contacts** between Roma and public institutions is clearly differentiated by other approaches of practicing mediation: the 'Trojan Horse' (the mediator is an instrument of the institution, having as mission to reach out to

the community with the aim of changing its attitudes and behaviours); or the 'community activist' (the mediator is perceived as a representative of the community, fighting against the institution, for the rights of the Roma).

- **The human rights based approach** is another core element of the ROMED methodology. It promotes the idea that the intervention of a mediator is necessary to build trust between Roma and public institutions, not as an act of charity, but as a responsibility for ensuring effective access to fundamental rights of citizens.
- Mediation needs to contribute to empowerment of Roma citizens to know their rights and to systemic change of institutions to provide accessible and accountable services, rather than reconfirming dependency of Roma community members. The ROMED1 programme proposes a participatory work cycle starting with the set-up of local support teams, both at community level and within public institutions. The work is structured as a cyclic process including participatory planning, implementation and evaluation. All of this has to lead to empowerment, accountability and better direct co-operation.
- The programme is not perceived as one-time training. **It is viewed as a capacity building process that needs to address the whole system within which mediators are performing their job** and to consider the variety of power relations within the community and among the communities and local authorities. It does not substitute existing training programmes in the different countries, but aims to complement them by contributing to the development of core functional competencies all mediators need.

2.1.2. Relevance of ROMED1as seen by stakeholders

All the stakeholders approached by this evaluation consider that the focus of ROMED1 programme on supporting the capacity development of mediators is highly relevant to the Roma inclusion priority.

From the perspective of the European Commission, the ROMED programme responds to the need of creating capacities at the local level for effective inclusive processes. Involvement of the Roma community is critical for the success of these processes, and mediators are seen as one of the important instruments in this direction. They can help to reduce the gap between Roma communities and public institutions, and they can serve as role models in their communities. They can make a special contribution towards educating people about their rights and making the services of local institutions much more accessible. In particular, school mediators can assist the process of access to education of Roma children by working with schools, teachers and parents.

The importance of well-trained mediators was also outlined by a number of the representatives of national and local institutions that were interviewed. Mediators are seen as an important link between the public institutions and the communities, expanding the outreach of public services to Roma communities and helping institutions to better understand the needs and problems of Roma people. They assist in gathering real data about the situation of Roma and in this way make services and policies more relevant.

As underlined by both institutions and NGOs or other organisations supporting mediators, one of the main assets of mediators is that they come from the Roma community and know its culture. They are therefore more sensitive to people's needs and can generate more trust within communities. In many cases they have a personal commitment and passion to help people secure better services and thus to practice their rights.

On the more challenging side, the work of mediators faces a number of constraints in all countries with a more or less developed practice of mediation. They are assigned tasks that are not relevant to their function or in their job description. They have very low status within the institution. In certain

cases, they are used by institutions to completely 'outsource' the responsibility of solving Roma issues and this serves as an excuse for institutions to avoid direct work with the community. In some countries it was reported that mediators are subject to political influence and trained mediators are substituted by political hires (for ex. Bulgaria).

The application of mediation practice varies across Europe. In some countries, mediators are officially recognised as a profession and their employment in municipalities and local institutions is supported by state budget (e.g. Bulgaria and Romania). In others it is either a new emerging idea, practiced mostly by NGOs (e.g. Ukraine), or an emerging national practice where mediators are employed in pilot national programmes (e.g. Portugal).

As outlined in interviews with external stakeholders, a major issue is that in countries where the mediator profession is institutionalised, there is no monitoring of the practice of mediators. National authorities should ensure that the mediators are not utilised by employers for purposes that are not in line with their intended mission. In countries such as Bulgaria, there is an organised mediator NGO, the Bulgarian Association of Health Mediators, which monitors the quality of employment and work of the mediators, and organises peer support among mediators.

In countries where the profession of mediator is institutionalised, it is up to the local institutions to request a position. In many cases, Roma communities are not aware of this possibility, so it is important that they are informed about their rights in this regard and assisted in requesting this from their local authorities. Addressing this simple gap can help increase the number of municipalities that employ Roma mediators.

The concrete strategic meaning of the ROMED1 training for mediators and respectively its potential for impact contribution in the different countries depended on the local context. Based on the sample of the selected seven focus countries the contexts of application of the ROMED1 programme was quite diverse in terms of existing practice of mediators and specific sectors and fields in which they are engaged, the extent to which they are officially recognised and respectively employed by public institutions, as well as the existence of other training programmes and opportunities for the development of mediators.

In some of the evaluation focus countries, ROMED1 was ***a complementary, upgrading effort adding new perspectives and resources to national policies and initiatives.***

- In countries like **Bulgaria and Romania**, mediators are a well-established practice with years of capacity building history, included in the NRIS. Health mediators in both countries and school mediators in Romania work based on officially adopted standards for their profession and in most of the cases on long-term employment contracts. In the case of these two countries, ROMED1 came as a timely programme that can *upgrade and complement existing national efforts* for increasing the functional competences of employed mediators in different sectors.
- **In Portugal**, ROMED1 fostered intercultural mediation by adding new perspectives and more resources to the efforts of pilot national initiatives of the Government for municipal intermediation that was going on since 2009. From this perspective ROMED had *synergistic effect* complementing with resources and methodology this programme.

In other countries, the practice of mediators was either missing or not officially recognised as a profession. ROMED ***came as a stimulus and potential drive*** for the development, expansion and institutionalisation of intercultural mediation as a tool for Roma inclusion. Again, the situation was very diverse, depending on the strategic fit of ROMED1 with national government policies and commitment:

- **In FYRoM**, the ROMED programme was strategically matched with government efforts to expand and work on the institutionalisation of mediators as a profession. ROMED1 served as a catalyst, activating the interest of institutions at local and national levels in adopting the position of mediators across sectors.
- **In Ukraine**, ROMED1 brought a pioneer effort in introducing intercultural mediation for the first time in the country, which opened the awareness of national and local institutions of its potential for inclusive public services.
- **In Hungary**, the profession of mediator is not recognised by the Government and was practiced only through NGO projects. In 2011 during the Hungarian presidency of the Council in Europe, the Hungarian government requested the implementation of ROMED1 in their country. In practice however, other support was not ensured afterwards. ROMED's potential to expand and support efforts for the official recognition and institutionalisation of the mediator's profession could not be realised and the programme had to rely on the support of NGOs only, in an effort to mobilise support from other sources.

Slovakia was a more special case. Both the function and the name of mediation existed but they had different meaning and were applied for different purposes. 'Field social workers' were introduced as a measure within national projects targeting Roma. The approach was evolving over time and since 2011 it is implemented under a 'National Field Social Work Project' with an allocation of almost €30 million. The core task of field social workers is to know the community (individual families) and help solve the problems they face, acting as a bridge between the local authorities and the Roma communities. In practice they play a mediation role, but they are not called mediators. At the same time, there is an officially recognised profession of mediators who work on solving legal disputes. These are legal professionals and have nothing to do with Roma inclusion issues.

ROMED1 had a lot of potential to strategically match national efforts in Slovakia adding to the functional competencies of the *social field workers* active in municipalities, but it failed to use this opportunity strategically. The strategic relevance of the programme remained minimal due to differences between the national and local contexts, specifically regarding who actually mediates and who is recognised as mediator.

2.2. Efficiency and effectiveness of the ROMED1 training process

2.2.1. Setting the ROMED1 framework

The implementation of the programme started in November 2010 with the selection of the first group of trainers and continued with the training of trainers. In the course of the programme **a large pool of ROMED trainers** was created. They are based in different countries, and able to deliver ROMED1 training in local languages. More than half of the trainers are Roma.

Another result at the early stage of the programme was the design and elaboration of **the ROMED1 Trainer's Handbook**²⁸ and the translation of some of the modules and hand-outs in 20 languages. The handbook is a very comprehensive framework built around the core pillars of the ROMED1 mediation approach – cooperation, intercultural mediation, human rights and effective work cycle organised around participatory planning. It consists of 26 modules and 24 handouts, with a strong

²⁸ Available for download in English: <http://coe-romed.org/sites/default/files/documentation/ROMED1%20Trainers%20Handbook.pdf>

focus on practice and adaptable to specific training needs of mediators working in different contexts and with different institutions and Roma communities.

The training programme was designed with the intention to provide for maximum flexibility and adaptation according to the local contexts, as well as the specific needs of the different type of participating mediators – health, school, employment, multi sector or community mediators. In addition, it should be noted that feedback from trainers and adaptation to the needs of mediators resulted in on-going improvement of the curriculum and adaptation of the training process.

The training programme consisted of two sessions, the first one of four days and the second one of three days, separated by a period of around six months of practice for the trained mediators. The practical activities were to be monitored and supported by a local support team, co-ordinated by the National Focal Point which is in contact with the Council of Europe. The first day of the second training session was focused on discussion of lessons coming from the practice.

Another important element of the design of the training programme was the participation of local and national institutions during the first day of the first training session and the first day of the second training session. This was to ensure interaction and joint learning among the mediators and relevant institutions, as well as to contribute to the recognition of the mediators and their employment.

A third important resource developed by ROMED was the **European Code of Ethics for Mediators**.²⁹ It consists of a set of core principles and norms that guide the work of mediators. These have been identified based on wide consultation with specialists and practitioners. The purpose of the Code was to serve as a key tool for protecting the mediator against abuse and for enhancing the quality of the services provided.

Setting the structure and organising the effective functioning of this multi-functional team is another important result at the start of the programme. The organisation of the programme was structured as a multi-country team of consultants contracted by the CoE, with coordination and management ensured by the CoE. Methodological coordination was ensured by the International Pedagogical Team and the growing pool of national trainers, as well as by the NFPs. The NFPs are consultants hired in each country to support the CoE with monitoring, to provide feedback on national activities, and to support mediators during the six-month practice. Trainers and NFP were selected through an open competition and selection process.

2.2.2. Direct results of ROMED1 training

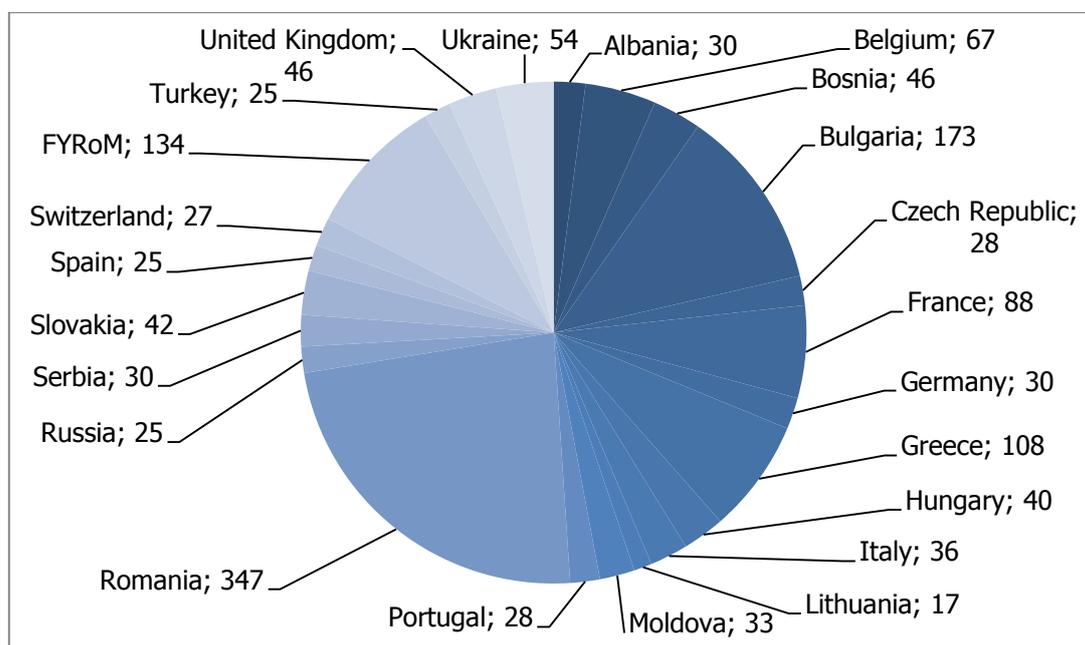
The delivery of the first trainings of mediators started in the spring of 2011. For the period 2011-2016:

- **1,479 mediators working in over 500 municipalities were trained in 22 countries across Europe.** Of these trained mediators, 1246 received Council of Europe certificates confirming completion of the ROMED1 courses.
- A large majority of the mediators (1,089 in 20 countries) were trained during the main phase of ROMED1 (2011-2013). The training of the other mediators from 2014 to 2016 involved new countries approached by the programme, or was based on the demand of the national authorities for additional training in countries already involved in ROMED1.

²⁹http://coe-romed.org/sites/default/files/leaflets/code_ethicEN_0.pdf

The distribution of the trained mediators and mediators who received certificates for completing the training of the ROMED1 Joint Programme in the different countries is illustrated in Figure 2 below.

Figure 2: ROMED1 mediators trained 2011-2016



- **Approximately 90% of the trained mediators are Roma. Over 50% of the trained and certified mediators are women.** The share of women trained varies between countries. For example, in countries like Portugal, the participation women in the ROMED1 training was very low due to cultural factors. The majority of mediators hired by municipalities were men.
- The share of women also differs among the different types of mediators or sectors they work in. In most countries the percentage of women is the highest among health mediators (over 50%).
- **An estimated 700 representatives of local institutions** participated in some of the training, enabling direct interaction with mediators and joint learning about the role and approaches of mediation work for Roma inclusion.

Mediators who completed both training sessions and the six-months practice period in between, received a ROMED1 certificate issued by the Council of Europe on behalf of the Joint Programme. Mediators who were not able to attend the second session were able to join a session with another training group in the same country. The CoE certificates were issued to participants based on assessment done in each country by the team of trainers that trained a particular group and the NFP. The NFP then forwarded the final list of certificate recipients to the CoE.

In total, 1,246 mediators (or 84 % of all trained mediators) received certificates for completing the programme. The percentage of trained mediators that were awarded completion certificates varied between the seven evaluation focus countries. The percentage was higher when mediators were employed, or when their training was an obligation of their employment as mediators.

Figure 3 below illustrates the distribution of mediators who received ROMED1 certificates in the different countries.

The selection process was more problematic in two of the evaluation focus countries:

- **In Slovakia**, this was due to the need to change the initially appointed NFP immediately before the first training session. The new focal point, the Romani Institute, effectively had to rescue the training and organise a rushed selection of participants for the first training using its own contact lists.
- **In Hungary**, the partnership with the government became problematic, as it perceived the NFP as politically affiliated to opposition parties. As a result, it did not participate in the selection of the second group of ROMED1 trainees and did not cooperate with the programme.

2.2.4. Level of training and distribution of resources among countries

Based on data available for the seven focus countries, there are differences between countries in the number of mediators trained, and in the budget allocation per country.

Stakeholders interviewed perceived ROMED1 as a large scale and well-resourced programme. However, in view of its vast geographic coverage the actual allocation of funding per country is not that big. In the majority of the seven focus countries, the direct cost of the training implemented from 2011 to 2016 was less than €100,000 per country. The main exception is Romania (€494,000) due to the much higher number of training sessions and participating mediators (347). The next two countries in terms of investment were FYROM (€137,000 for the training of 134 mediators) and Ukraine (€113,000 invested in the training of 54 mediators).

Based on interviews with the ROMED management team, the differences in the number of training sessions, the number of trained mediators, and the level of invested direct resources was due to various factors:

- The most significant factor was the demand for training of mediators coming from the national governments or other national stakeholders combined with their capacity to support employment. In the case of Romania, the Ministry of Health and the Ministry of Education had already ensured the employment of most of the mediators and requested their training. In the case of FYROM, the Ministry of Labour and Social Policy was very keen to start more systematic employment of mediators and set the requirement that they should follow the ROMED1 training. In countries such as Hungary and Slovakia, both the demand for training of mediators and the commitment towards their employment was very low.
- Another factor that was considered was the capacity of the CoE and the national teams to influence the authorities regarding the training and employment of mediators. This influence was greater in some countries such as Ukraine and FYROM, than in others such as Hungary.
- Other factors included the capacity to identify mediators with suitable profiles and who could commit to the training; the existing level of mediation practice (more established vs. just emerging); and the varied Roma demographics in the countries.

2.2.5. Cost efficiency

Table 7 summarises the available financial information on total direct costs per country, national coordination costs and how they were distributed per number of mediators trained. The cost per unit (trained mediator) does not include the indirect costs (international teams, international training of trainers, overall management etc.).

Table 7: Direct costs (euro) per trained mediator in the seven focus countries

ROMED1 – direct costs per trained mediator by country	Total cost per trained mediator	National coordination per trained mediator	Cost of training per trained mediator	Cost of national coordination as % of total costs	Cost of training as % of total costs
Bulgaria³²	1,000	79	921	8%	92%
FYROM	1,022	45	978	4%	96%
Hungary	1,200	100	1,100	8%	92%
Portugal	1,667	154	1,513	9%	91%
Romania	1,424	40	1,383	3%	97%
Slovak Republic	1,000	143	857	14%	86%
Ukraine	1,284	80	1,205	6%	94%
Average	1,228	92	1,137	7%	93%

As it can be seen from the table, the direct cost per trained mediator in the seven focus countries varies between €1,000 and €1,667. It includes the payment of national trainers, direct cost for trainings (accommodation, travel, and food, adapting the training materials, translation, printing and hall rental).

The share of the cost of national coordination varies from 3% of total costs (the lowest in Romania) to 14% (the highest in Slovakia). As it can be seen from Table 7, the cost for national coordination was quite low in the majority of the countries. From the perspective of a training programme, this makes ROMED1 very cost efficient.

However, this cost efficiency is questionable from the point of view of the other objectives of the programme – advocacy for the recognition of the position of mediators and improving their employment conditions, support to networking and peer exchange among trained mediators within the country, etc.

The resources to meet these objectives were very limited which implies that effectiveness was constrained. This was also confirmed by the interviews with the International Pedagogical Team, as well as with some of the NFPs. Limited resources for monitoring, mentoring and stimulating networking and peer support among mediators in each of the countries, as well as for more targeted advocacy was among the main shortages of the design of the programme. Another factor affecting the implementation was the pressure for rapid expansion of the geographic scope of the interventions and the expectations to rapidly generate visible results.

³² The cost per trained mediator in Bulgaria was calculated on the basis of 76 mediators trained explicitly by the ROMED1 programme. The investment of ROMED in the training of the group of 97 mediators was only for the cost of the trainer and providing the adapted training methodology. The other costs were covered in the framework of a project funded by other sources.

2.2.6. Effectiveness of the training processes seen by national teams of trainers and NFPs

Strengths of the ROMED1 training process

Based on the interviews with trainers and NFPs the following strengths of the ROMED training process were outlined:

The ROMED1 Trainer's Handbook provided a comprehensive framework covering a variety of important functional aspects related to the multidimensional work of mediators.

The Trainer's Handbook combines the best of the theories and training approaches in areas like conflict mediation, participatory planning, human rights, case management and communication. Both trainers and mediators consider that one of the added values of the ROMED1 training was that it was organised around the core ideas and practice of rights based approach. This element was missing in other training of mediators, which focused mostly on the specific sector where mediators work (health, education, employment etc.).

The flexibility of the ROMED1 Programme to adapt the training content to the local context and concrete needs of the trainees.

As outlined in interviews with NFPs and some of the trainers, a 'one size fits all' approach does not work. Due to the wide diversity of local contexts, it is unrealistic to expect that a single approach will be relevant to different countries. In many cases, the trainers reported that they used the ROMED1 Trainer's Handbook more as a guiding reference, and used other materials for the practical training, along with examples of practice in their country.

The collaborative approach through the involvement of local institutions in the training was valuable, but not always sufficient.

All interviewees considered the direct involvement of local institutions in the training process to be important. However, its effect on the change of attitudes of local institutions due to their direct interaction with mediators during the trainings was insufficient. Participation of institutions was limited to only some of the days of the training. In addition, participation of local institutions could not be ensured in some of the trainings in the countries (for example in the first training in Slovakia due to the lack of time for preparation, or in Hungary due to the limited or missing cooperation with national institutions).

In some countries, local institutions were directly involved in the whole training together with mediators. Both institutions and mediators considered this a more effective approach.

In Portugal ROMED1, training was organised in partnership with the National Municipality Mediators Programme.³³ Roma mediators hired by municipalities were linked to a coordinator from its social inclusion department. Both mediators and their counterparts from the municipality were trained together by ROMED. They considered this arrangement very productive.

In Romania, school mediators were trained together with their respective school directors in one of the groups. This allowed for the development of mutual empathy and of a more realistic planning of

³³http://coe-romed.org/sites/default/files/documentation/Roma%20municipal%20mediator%20project.%20Experimental%20project%20evaluation%20results%20-%20Summary%20report.final_0.pdf

future activities. It also required the adaptation of some of the modules, particularly those referring to the awareness of discrimination of Roma and the interaction with Roma parents.

Joint training sessions of social workers and Roma mediators were also organised in Ukraine. They were considered very useful both by mediators and by social workers because they could establish personal contacts, develop working relations, see how cooperation is developed in other regions in Ukraine and learn how they could help each other.

Challenges to the effectiveness of the training process

Interviews with trainers and NFPs identified, among others, the following challenges to the effectiveness of the training process.

The limited time to prepare and adapt the training to the local needs remained a main challenge, especially with the expansion of the programme.

The programme was under pressure to deliver results and demonstrate success quickly. The Strasbourg declaration included a target of 1,000 mediators to be trained in a short period. In addition, the level of consultation in the process of developing the ROMED1 concept and approach differed between implementation countries. While in some countries (for example Romania) a number of stakeholders felt that they were consulted in this initial process, in others (for example Slovakia, Bulgaria, and Hungary) it was felt that there was not enough consultation about the design of the programme. Especially in Slovakia, the prevailing impression was 'that the design of the programme is set and all you have to do is take it and implement it.'

The low quality of the translation of the training materials was an issue in some of the countries for example Slovakia. This required additional clarifications, explanations and editing to make them adequate to the country context. As already mentioned, a serious issue in Slovakia was the confusion of terminology of who is 'mediator', and who actually performs mediation in Roma communities.

Diverse groups of participating mediators – as field of work, or level of experience.

Trainers needed to find the balance between those mediators with more experience (including from previous training) and those who were just starting this profession. In a number of countries, the ROMED1 training involved mediators specialising in different types of work, and in some cases, they were called social workers, teacher assistants, etc., instead of 'mediators'. This required specific translation of the methodology to relate to the concrete nature of the work of the different type of mediators. As outlined by trainers (especially in FYRoM and Slovakia) there was a need to prepare national training handbooks, not just direct translation of the general methodology into the local languages.

Participating mediators had high expectations of employment as a direct result of the training. In Slovakia, some of the participants who were not employed expected that ROMED1 would lead to employment. Especially in Hungary, where the position of mediator is not recognised, most of the participants in the training had high expectations and motivation when they applied, as they anticipated that ROMED1 would contribute to their recognition and employment. There was dissatisfaction in both countries, as the limited impact of ROMED1 training fell short of these high initial expectations.

Lack of resources to provide for effective monitoring and support during the six months period of practice. During the initial years of ROMED1 training, it was assumed that national and local institutions would take their responsibility in providing better conditions for the work of mediators during the six months practice period. However, while this practice period was effective in some

cases, it was not so effective in others, and this depended on the accountability of institutions in the country. A major shortcoming of the programme was the insufficient resources for effective mentoring during the practice period. In later ROMED1 training, there was more strategic planning regarding practice and employability before the first training session.

2.2.7. Relevance of the ROMED1 training process for the needs of mediators.

Mediators trained by ROMED1 who participated in the focus groups in the seven countries outlined the following values and challenges of the training process.

The high quality of the national trainers.

In the majority of countries, trainers were much appreciated as very knowledgeable, and well acquainted with local contexts and the challenges involved in the work of mediators. There were very few exceptions where the trainers were considered not adequate. One example is Slovakia, where one of the trainers selected by the CoE was the leader of a Mediation institute (dealing with the legal profession of mediators that is not related to Roma issues/ inclusion). During the training, he was promoting legal mediation, which is not so relevant in the context of ROMED1, as well as the certification services of his institute. This confused the participants.

Interactive and participatory training approach.

Most valuable was the fact that the training approach was focused on local realities. All participants praised the interactive forms of education chosen by the organisers, which included examples and real-life case studies to be solved during the training, active participation of the audience, and the division of the participants attending thematic groups.

Rights based approach and empowerment orientation.

The added value of the programme compared to other types of training was that it included topics like human rights and anti-discrimination, as well as the issue of empowerment of people who usually not participate in the training of mediators.

Comprehensive training modules assisting the work of mediators in a practical manner.

The majority of mediators who participated in the focus groups found the modules related to interaction with members of the Roma communities and facilitating intercultural communication very useful. They also noted the value of training related to strategies for building confidence and consensus based on non-violent communication, planning work cycle (especially assessing community needs).

There were no specific training topics on Roma women's empowerment and other issues. However, these issues were covered in the training and in the discussions about concrete cases raised by mediators from their practice.

Focus on the complexity of the function of mediators and clarity of their role.

Mediators participating in the focus groups considered that the training was unique in putting forward the multiple aspects of the role that the mediators play. Definition of the role of mediators is much needed, as different interpretations could lead to changes in their functions.

However, in a number of cases some doubts were expressed by mediators in terms of the feasibility of playing **the role of 'neutral' or 'impartial' link** between the community and relevant institutions. On the one hand, if the mediators are hired by institutions, they have to follow their job descriptions, as they are part of the local institution. On the other, in the majority of the cases mediators come from the Roma community and they cannot be impartial, as they need empathy and belong to the same community.

The need for further reflection on the 'neutrality' terminology (rooted in conflict mediation) was also outlined in interviews with some NFPs and external stakeholders.

Based on the interviews with the International Pedagogical Team, the concept of mediator neutrality and impartiality is a concept that is not easy to translate into practice. However, it is important to make mediators aware that they are not supposed to pick a side, but support both parties – the community and the institutions so that effective communication is in place and problems are resolved.

The European Code of Ethics for the work of mediators was an important tool for regulating their work, but only in some of the countries is it still remembered.

The Code of Ethics developed by ROMED1 was considered as most relevant by school mediators participating in the focus groups in Romania. It helps avoid involving mediators in resolving all problems and explains clearly what their function is. Effective communication of the Code of Ethics to school inspectors, directors and doctors, contributed to increasing recognition of the work of mediators. Mediator feedback indicates that, in some situations, working conditions improved as a result of the Code in terms of access to facilities such as offices, computers, students' situation and marks. There are also cases when employers adopted the Code of Ethics and attached it to the mediator's job description.

The Code was very highly appreciated and used in Portugal as well. It is viewed by mediators as a very clear and concise statement regarding the role of the mediator, providing a framework that is easy to understand and to explain, and contributing to a more formal recognition of their status as professionals.

In other countries, the Code of Ethics was not noted as a high priority, and nor was it mentioned as one of the most relevant elements of the ROMED1 training.

The six-month period of practice was needed and innovative, but lack support and mentoring constrained its effectiveness as a capacity development tool.

Mediators trained under ROMED1 were given tasks in order to put into practice some of the ROMED1 approaches, developing local support groups with institutions, members of the community, parents etc. They were also supposed to receive close monitoring and support from the NFP during the practice period. This element is generally missing from other mediator training. While positively assessed as a needed and good attempt, mediators provided differing assessments of the effectiveness of the practice period during the focus group meetings.

Mediators faced some significant difficulties when putting into practice some of the ROMED1 elements in their work. They had to go back to the realities of the institutions that they were working for, where in many cases concepts like participatory planning, or the rights based perspective of work were not encouraged. The fact that a representative of the institution joined the opening of the training did not necessarily ensure institutional support for innovations in the work of mediators. In some cases, the functions of the mediator as promoted by ROMED1 conflicted with mediators' job descriptions. One such example was the case of employment mediators in Bulgaria, who do not conduct fieldwork within

the community. They are office-based employees of the local administration and take on cases that are assigned to them.

In this situation, support and mentoring during the practice period was very much needed, but according to mediators, it was generally limited or missing in most of the countries. NFPs support was provided mainly by email or by telephone, or in the course of monitoring the progress of activities.

At the same time, there were some exceptions and examples of good practice:

- In some countries, for example Romania, mediators and trainers were in contact by mail or telephone and there were cases when mediators approached their trainers individually for advice on certain situations. However, as noted by trainers, consistent and tangible mentoring and assistance was missing.
- In Portugal, a number of complementary follow-up activities and coaching sessions for mediators were organised in 2012 with the ROMED trainers and NGOs. This coaching model was considered to enhance the confidence of the mediators, with a positive impact on their work. However, according to several of the mediators, more intensive mentoring was needed.
- In Ukraine, mediators have been supported throughout the programme. The NFP and the Roma organisation 'Chirikli' has been supporting the work of mediators through mentoring and assistance, and acting as a liaison between authorities and mediators. It has invited mediators to join other training programmes supported by other donors, or to attend training for civil servants when the topic of Roma inclusion was covered. It has helped to overturn social stereotypes about Roma and It has engaged in dialogue with the social workers and civil servants.

2.3. Emerging outcomes and impacts

2.3.1. Impact of ROMED1 training on the empowerment of mediators

Fostering the professional development of mediators

The survey of mediators explored the utility of the ROMED1 training for their development. Figure 4 below summarises the responses of the 138 mediators who responded to the survey (or 20% of all trained mediators in the seven evaluation focus countries).

Figure 4: Utility of the ROMED1 training for the professional development of mediators

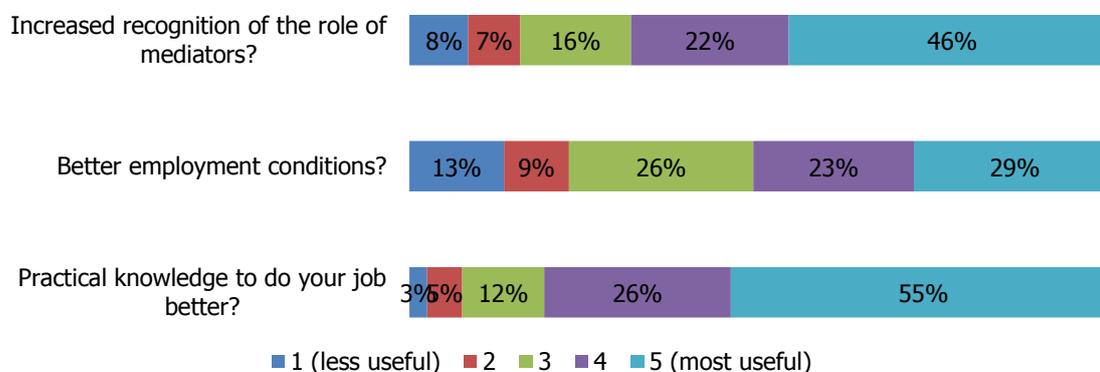


Figure 4 shows that respondents consider the ROMED1 training very useful, particularly regarding the practical knowledge acquired and the recognition of the role of mediators. However, the surveyed

mediators are less convinced about the utility of the ROMED1 training with regard to improvement of their employment conditions. The results of the survey were confirmed by findings from the mediator focus groups and interviews with local stakeholders in the seven focus countries. Their responses can be summarised as follows:

The ROMED1 training had a visible impact on the mediators' functional skills to perform in the field.

The ROMED1 programme met expectations regarding mediators' increased functional skills. The participants interviewed for the purpose of this evaluation mentioned that the training was helpful and provided participants with additional skills in the areas of communication, planning, interaction with the community and cooperation with local institutions. Some of them reported that they continue to use the skills and techniques acquired during the training.

In some countries, ROMED1 had an additional impact on the professional development of mediators. Some mediators trained under the ROMED1 programme decided to continue their education, but there are no exact statistics to confirm their number (for example, Portugal, Ukraine, Romania, Bulgaria). This trend cannot be attributed only to ROMED1, but it was among the catalysts for mediators to continue their professional development through higher education.

The tendency of mediators to search for ways to continue their education was also confirmed by the interviews with some outside stakeholders. For example, internal statistics of the National Network of Health Mediators in Bulgaria indicated that more than half of their 196 members are currently studying at universities (various professions). One of the impetuses was the consistent capacity building done by the Network, which broadened the perspectives of mediators regarding their personal and professional development.

In most of the focus countries, ROMED1 training generally did not lead to significant improvements in the employment status and conditions of mediators.

Only 29% of survey respondents considered that the ROMED1 training and the certificate issued by the programme were most useful in providing them with better employment conditions, and 23% believed that it made a limited contribution. The majority of the respondents are negative about the direct impact of the training and certificate to improving their employment conditions. Only 11% consider that these were the basis for their salary increase. Only 22.6 % consider that ROMED1 helped them secure long-term contracts, and these were mostly mediators who found employment as a result of the training (FYRoM).

The results of the survey were confirmed in the mediator focus group discussions in the seven focus countries. Mediators' employment status and conditions vary considerably between countries:

- In countries where the position of mediator is not officially recognised, the trained mediators continue to be employed either by an NGO or by other projects, or they are not employed at all (for example Hungary and Ukraine). Following the training in Ukraine, most mediators were contracted by the NFP's NGO (Chirikli) to provide project –based mediation services to Roma communities basis, based on agreements with social centres in the country.
- In **FYRoM**, the ROMED1 training was requested by the Government to meet its strategy for employing new mediators. For this reason the training resulted in new employment for most of the trained mediators
- **In Portugal** ROMED1 did not lead to a significant increase in the employment of mediators. After the end of the funding granted by the National Municipal programme, municipalities did not

continue employing mediators. Of the 26 mediators trained under ROMED1, six continued an activity related to mediation. Only three of them continued working as municipal mediators and this was due to the implementation of the second phase of ROMED2 in these municipalities.

- **In Slovakia and Hungary** there was considerable disappointment with the limited impact of the programme on the employment of trained. They initially had high expectations that ROMED would lead to new job opportunities, and some interviewed mediators referred to promises of employment that would follow the training. One reason for such high expectations of employment as a direct result of participating in the training was the use of the term 'employing people with a Roma background' in the description and the presentation of the programme.
- **In Bulgaria and Romania**, mediators continue to be hired through permanent long-term labour contracts (except mediators in Bulgaria who are hired through annual project contracts). However, the acquisition of new qualifications did lead to higher salaries. Mediator salaries are generally very low in both countries, usually at the level of the minimal salary. This is more or less the case in other countries too. Other stakeholders confirmed during interviews that there is little prospect for mediator pay increases, as they are specified in their job descriptions, and the mediator profession is low on the salary scale of public administration bodies. Even if mediators have, or subsequently acquire, a university education, which is the case in a number of countries, they are usually not remunerated according to their newly acquired competences.

Increased shared understanding of their role among mediators across Europe

In interviews and focus group meetings with mediators, we asked the question: *what is most important for the role of mediator?* Based on the answers they provided, **the summative picture of a good and successful mediator includes:**

- **Being a mediator is both commitment and responsibility.** This is not just a technical job - it requires full involvement.
- **Mediators are 'translators.'** They translate Roma issues to institutions, local policies to communities so that they can know their rights. They need to have the ability to reduce gaps and to create trust on both sides, to manage conflicts and promote positive collaboration for solving of issues.
- **In order to perform their jobs well, mediators need to have empathy** with the community, and to engage with the community but also must be able to manage expectations. They also need to be a model for community education and behaviour.
- **They need to be well trained and have a strong motivation and inspiration.** They need to be excellent communicators, to have experience in community-based work and to work effectively in the field, identifying support groups and allies.
- **It is essential that mediators have the trust of the community, and recognition from institutions.** Both the community and the institutions acknowledge their work. Results are expected and demanded.

Fulfilling these multiple roles is not easy. Among the main challenges outlined in the focus group, meetings with mediators are the poverty and marginalisation in some segments of the Roma community and the lack of models and vision resulting from this situation. There is continuing institutional discrimination towards Roma and in some cases, mediators themselves have a submissive attitude.

Despite these challenges, one of the main contributions of ROMED1 was that it put forward a new vision for the role of mediators and promoted it at European, national and local levels. As outlined in

some interviews, ROMED1 was the first programme that put the development of mediators and the need for systemic change at its centre, rather than simply training them in specific skills.

Another important contribution of the ROMED1 programme was that it improved understanding of the benefits of employing mediators. If before the activity of the mediator was focused on solving emergencies and single cases (e.g. one child and/ or one family) the ROMED1 approach emphasised the importance of the role mediators in addressing problems before they materialise.

Attitudes and understanding of the role of mediators by local authorities and institutions

We were able to meet with only a limited number of representatives of local authorities and institutions that participated in the ROMED1 training. This was mostly in the framework of the case studies in municipalities involved in the ROMED2 phase, as well as a focus group with school directors and inspectors that we organised in Romania.

Interview feedback from representatives of local institutions indicates that there is clear recognition of the need for mediators. Their role is recognised as very important in ensuring the link between the institutions and the community. The main benefit of employing mediators is that they know people in the community. They can find the right people that can influence the wider community, and they can translate policies and requirements for people in the community. At the same time, they can be very helpful in 'educating' municipalities and institutions about the specificities of Roma communities, the real needs of people, and the ways of approaching these needs. As phrased by a representative of local administration (school policies) ³⁴ *"we learn together with communities and the mediators are our main teachers"*.

As outlined in the previous section, the impact of ROMED1 on changing the attitudes of local institutions was much more visible where they were trained together with mediators throughout the whole training programme. However, there is a need for an ongoing system to get local institutions involved in capacity building efforts so that they better understand Roma inclusion and community issues, and the role of mediation as one approach to improve the situation. In some cases, representatives of local institutions are subject to politically motivated replacement. For example, some school directors in Romania were replaced following elections.

Feedback from mediators during focus groups meetings suggests that there is some emerging change in the attitude of the local institutions they work for or work with. Previously, mediators were treated as 'second class' by the administration and tended to project a submissive attitude. Today there is more recognition of their role and functions. This cannot be attributed only to ROMED1, but the programme definitely helped raise the profile and importance of the work of mediators.

Another tendency outlined in interviews and focus group meetings is that with recognition of the importance of mediators at the local level, there are increasing expectations that they can solve all problems. In some cases, they are given tasks that may go beyond their competence and their job description. Charging mediators with 'solving problems' can make it more difficult for Roma to gain direct access to institutions, and it may release the institution from its obligation to address problems. Mediators can only facilitate community access to mainstream services.

³⁴Tundzha municipality, Bulgaria

Peer networking and exchange of experiences at national level

In addition to the capacity development of individual mediators, the ROMED1 training aimed at stimulating peer networking and exchange of experiences among trained mediators within the countries, thus increasing their ability to build collective responses to problems.

Results in this direction were most visible during the training sessions where people worked in groups and there was intensive exchange of experience. In most of the countries after all training sessions were over, ROMED1 did not provide any support to the whole group of trained mediators. The link with mediators was confined mostly to those who continued to be involved in the municipalities covered by ROMED2, especially in countries where the ROMED1 training finished in 2012-2013.

Feedback from the ROMED management team indicates that networking among trained mediators was not strategically addressed during the preparation of the ROMED1 programme. Maybe for this reason, ROMED1 did not have enough resources to support the intended networking and meetings of already trained mediators. However, the programme has tried to encourage mediators to stay in touch and create networks. This resulted in creating national Facebook pages or mailing lists in some of the countries. In several countries, there were more structured efforts for organised networking of trained mediators and in some cases, the programme provided support (including financial support):

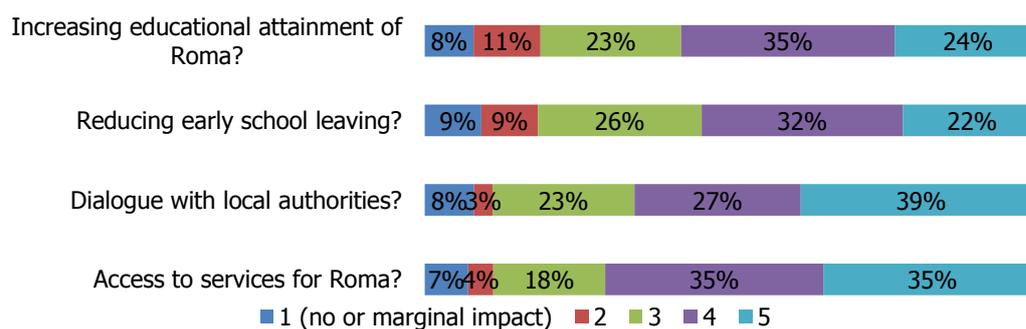
- In Romania ROMED1 provided support for the legal establishment of an association of school mediators;
- In Bulgaria, an association of employment mediators was registered with help from another project of the Intercultural Centre Amalipe (the Roma NGO led by the NFP);
- In Ukraine all mediators trained under ROMED1 function as an informal network facilitated by the Roma NGO Chirikli led by the NFP;
- In Portugal two Roma organisations were formed. One is the NGO Letras Nomadas established by trainers and trainees involved in the programme (which became the National Focal Point for ROMED2) and the newly formed Association of Portuguese Roma Mediators in 2014.

However, most of the newly established associations of mediators are at their initial organisational stages, except Letras Nomadas in Portugal, which quickly became very active due to the fact that it became the National Support organisation for the implementation of ROMED2.

These new associations can make a very important contribution in providing for constant networking, capacity development, and advocacy to improve mediators' working conditions and more generally for Roma inclusion. Outside the ROMED1 Programme, a very good model in this regard is the history of the National Network of Health Mediators in Bulgaria, which has over 195 members - health mediators. It acts as a watchdog organisation, ensuring the quality application of the profession of health mediators. It participates in the selection and examination of mediators, promotes mediators among municipalities, organises training, and participates as an equal partner in meetings with national institutions on various issues related to Roma inclusion.

2.3.2. Emerging impacts towards social inclusion in communities

The main direct impact of ROMED1 as a training programme was on the professional development of mediators. We also tried to explore to what extent the presence of trained mediators has increased Roma communities' access to public services. Figure 5 summarises the answers of trained mediators on this survey question.

Figure 5: Impact of ROMED1 on communities


Overall, mediators rate positively the impact of their work, particularly regarding access to services for Roma, and dialogue with local authorities.

The survey indicates that mediators' assessment of the impact of their work is very positive in Romania, Bulgaria and FYRoM. This is due to the fact that mediators in these countries had employment contracts with relevant local institutions. Especially in Bulgaria and Romania, mediators have been working on longer term or permanent contracts which provides for consistency of their impact towards increased accessibility of various public services of Roma communities.

The self-assessment of impact in the areas of education is more modest. As explained in the discussions with the focus groups (especially in Romania with school mediators) overcoming the educational challenges requires processes of consistent work with children, parents and institutions. A major challenge is changing the attitudes of parents who are illiterate or have low levels of education. Another difficulty is the cultural specificities in some the Roma communities. School mediators (as well as health mediators in other countries) have done a lot of educational work with Roma families to prevent the early marriage of Roma girls and to prevent them dropping out of school. However, it is a slow process that cannot bring significant immediate results. As noted by some mediators, "*results appear slowly but surely*". Every small success is a great step forward, providing new chances for the development of these girls.

Based on interviews with local and national stakeholders, the presence of well-qualified mediators is making a significant difference in the locations they are working in. We were provided with numerous examples of the successful individual work of mediators who helped resolve conflict around housing, helped people to obtain their identification documents, or to access various types of social, health and educational services.

Particularly important is the work of mediators for reducing school dropout amongst Roma children by working with their parents, school authorities and teachers. Health mediators are contributing to increased access to basic health care, immunisation of children, health literacy of mothers and young girls. They are also contributing to preventive care and diagnosis, which were missing before in Roma communities. Community mediators and social workers help solve a variety of issues related to missing infrastructure in Roma settlements as well as other issues.

Feedback from interviews indicates that the issues of Roma women and girls are present in the work of all mediators, especially in the areas of health, education and, to some extent, employment.

However, it is impossible to quantify how ROMED1 directly influenced the accessibility of services to Roma communities. The only data that can be reviewed in this regard are the reports on the mediators' six-month practice period. However, this data is fragmented and was gathered at different times from 2011 to 2015. It cannot provide an overall picture of the continued contribution of

mediators towards access to services of Roma after the programme is over. In addition, identifying the attribution of ROMED1 would require a baseline study of the situation before ROMED1, which is missing. The programme had neither human resources, nor time to do such a baseline study and provide for consistent monitoring, due to the political pressure to launch the programme quickly, followed by the pressure to expand rapidly to a large number of countries.

In principle, the evidence of the impact of mediators (including ROMED mediators) on increased accessibility of services should be available from national institutions. We asked various stakeholders in the countries about such data, but it is either missing or fragmented. Based on the interviews, good national systems of monitoring of the impact of mediators as one of the measures for Roma inclusion is limited. There is some research in the different countries but usually in the framework of assessment of specific projects or programmes

Some Roma NGOs gather such information. We found two such examples. One is within the ROMED1 programme and the other one comes from other stakeholders' experience.

The first example is from Bulgaria, where the National Network of Health Mediators, which is gathering systematised information from its members – 195 health mediators (only 30 of them were trained by ROMED1).

Based on the National Network of Health Mediators annual report for 2015 the 195 health mediators in Bulgaria have provided 130 657 services to Roma individuals and families, as well as campaigns. The majority of these services relate to health care prophylactic exams, immunisation campaigns, prevention campaigns, health literacy and information, reproductive health, campaigns and work with families for prevention of early marriages, assisting people with documentation and health insurance, etc. For more than 10 years of the work of health mediators, the immunisation of children in Roma settlements was very low. It is currently 90%.

Currently the National Network of Health Mediators is working together with the Ministry of Health Care to establish a uniform reporting system on monitoring the results from the work of health mediators, which will be sent to municipalities

The other example is from Ukraine.

Based on the information provided by the Roma NGO Chirikli, the informal network of 40 mediators trained by ROMED1 over a six-month period (October 2015 – March 2016) have provided services to 34,683 Roma representatives, or 7,144 families (11 125 are women, 7,890 men and 15,668). They also provide services to around 200 to 300 Roma per month that are internally displaced because of the conflict in the Donbas.

The most popular services include assistance with application for identification documents, residence registration, access to financial subsistence and services (utility subsidies, pensions, and disability payment), information about social protection and basic rights, assistance with social housing and employment, educational support to improve school attendance, medical assistance with access to diagnosis and access to hospitals.

2.3.3. Impact at national level

Level and manner of acknowledgement of ROMED1 by national administrations

ROMED1 applied several main strategies to promote the programme with national level institutions.

First and most important was establishing cooperation with national authorities for the implementation of ROMED1. National authorities were seen as key actors shaping the demand for training matched with the commitment to employ trained mediators. They had to be involved in the selection of mediators, and participated in some of the training modules.

The implementation of this cooperation varied between the countries:

In some countries it was shaped as a structured cooperation. Examples are the synergy of ROMED1 with the National Municipal Programme in Portugal; the active partnership with the Ministry of Education and of Health in Romania which led to the intensive training of a much larger number of mediators; the strategic fit of ROMED1 at the heart of the strategic programming of the government in FYRoM, which introduced the requirement for newly employed, or planned to be employed, mediators to be trained under ROMED1.

In other countries, such as Bulgaria, ROMED1 fitted into the already established priority of mediators as part of the NRIS. The government was supportive of the implementation of the programme, but not proactive in demanding more training (as was the case in countries such as Romania or FYRoM) or including ROMED1 as part of the official training of health or employment mediators.

In Ukraine, ROMED1 raised the interest of the government in mediators as a new concept and solution and triggered discussions around the need for the institutionalisation and recognition of the position of mediators. But the main engine for using the impetus of the programme was civil society (the National Focal Point and Chirikli Roma NGO).

In Slovakia, ROMED1 had very limited promotion and effect at national level. The start of the programme was marked by damage limitation (wrong selection of the initial NFP, and later of some of the trainers, who subsequently became the NPO of ROMED2). Despite the need for capacity development of social workers (who are actually the ones doing mediation work) and the opportunities provided by existing strategic national programmes to support them, ROMED1 had very limited impact. It trained only a small number of mediators, a large proportion of these were not certified.

In Hungary there was some initial cooperation with national authorities at the start of the programme, but this went completely dormant as the government suspected that the different political affiliation of the NFP might lead to a 'not well-controlled network' of Roma mediators. ROMED1 consisted of fragmented training. A large proportion of trained mediators were not certified and, in the context of missing official recognition of mediators, they were not employed by institutions.

The participation of national authorities in some of the training sessions provided a direct link between them and the Roma mediators. This was viewed by the ROMED management team as a possibility to influence and advocate. While this direct encounter opened discussions on critical issues coming directly from the community level, there was not enough time to go into more depth and advocate for some issues.

A second important strategy of ROMED1 to influence the national level was the role of the National Focal Points. Part of their task was to communicate the priorities and values of the programme at the national level, to influence and advocate for changes related to policies affecting mediators. As outlined in previous sections, the NFPs were hired as individuals, however the majority were leaders of prominent and active Roma NGOs in the relevant countries.

Based on the interviews with the NFPs, they were doing as much as possible to promote the programme with institutions. As explained in most of the cases, this was not because of the job (and some did not recall that they had the specific task of structured advocacy for mediators). The most active NFPs were those whose organisations had Roma inclusion and mediation at the heart of their mission. Especially good examples are the work of 'Chirikli' in Ukraine, and 'Sonce' in Macedonia.

A third strategy of the CoE was to use as much as possible the potential of CAHROM meetings and discussions. CAHROM is the Ad Hoc Committee of Experts on Roma and Travellers Issues. As an intergovernmental structure, it is a platform for the exchange of information, good practices and experiences.

ROMED1 and the application of intercultural mediation are the focus of a number of the thematic reports of CAHROM from 2012 to 2015. References to ROMED1 training of mediators are present, especially in thematic reports on inclusive education, providing good practices in some of the focus countries (e.g. FYRoM) or more challenging ones, like Hungary. The need to reinforce the role of Roma mediators or teaching assistants in pre-schools is also identified. Other reports refer to the role of trained mediators to reduce school dropout rates. ROMED is also acknowledged in other reports related to broader Roma inclusion policies, the role of central and local authorities in their implementation, and fighting anti-Gypsyism and hate speech.³⁵

Although the target audience of these reports is mainly at expert level, they reflect the evolving perception of governments on thematic points around Roma inclusion. ROMED1, and the importance of mediators, became increasingly evident in experts' discussions and recommendations, and this provided evidence of the acknowledgement of the programme and its influence on national policy debates related to Roma inclusion.

Contribution of ROMED1 to the inclusion of Roma mediators as a priority in national policies

In Bulgaria and Romania, where mediators are officially recognised and are present in the NRIS, the efforts of the NFPs and the CoE aimed to further improve the employment of mediators and their functions. For example, in Bulgaria, ROMED invested in the training of employment mediators. The NFP, through other projects of its NGO, the Center for Intercultural Dialogue 'Amalipe', assisted the process of establishing the network of employment mediators as a legally registered NGO. Later, through other small scale projects, 'Amalipe' tried to pilot a new approach to the work of employment mediators including field work in communities, and advocacy to include field work as part of the functions of employment mediators. But this initiative which was not successful.

In countries where mediators are not officially recognised, ROMED1 had a different level of contribution depending on the type of partnerships and the local context:

³⁵[CAHROM \(2015\)6 Thematic report on inclusive pre-school education of Roma children](#), CAHROM (2012)18 EN Thematic report on inclusive education for Roma children as opposed to special schools; [CAHROM \(2012\)6 EN Thematic report on school drop-out and absenteeism of Roma children](#); [CAHROM \(2012\)7 EN Thematic report on the role of central local and regional authorities in implementing national Roma inclusion policies](#); [CAHROM \(2013\)21 EN Thematic report on combating anti-Gypsyism hate speech and hate crime against Roma](#)

ROMED made a significant contribution to national policies in FYROM.

The programme put the concept of mediation in the strategic planning of government programmes. It helped achieve synergies between the different policies related to Roma inclusion at national and local levels. Mediators were adopted as a policy priority and became part of the strategy of the government and are a cross cutting element of different sector programmes. The uniform standards for the work of mediators are being developed. The main success factor was the commitment of the government and especially the strategic partnership established between the CAHROM representative and the ROMED NFP, who leads the Roma organisation Sonce.

In Portugal, ROMED1 contributed to recognising mediation as an important policy instrument.

The National Strategy for the Inclusion of Roma Communities (2013-2020) adopts mediation as the seventh strategic dimension to be followed, with three priorities to be considered: to promote the training of socio-cultural Roma mediators; to mainstream the programme of municipal mediators over the medium-term; and to raise the awareness of public institutions about the role of intercultural mediation as a strategy for more inclusive services. The National Operational Program for Social Inclusion and Employment (POISE 2020), investment priority (9i) focusing on active inclusion, will allocate structural funds for mediation projects at municipal level, in line with the national strategy.

ROMED1 is making significant steps towards the institutionalisation of mediators in Ukraine.

In Ukraine the ROMED NFP, through its NGO Chirikli, was very active in creating an Inter-Agency Working Group for Roma at the level of Cabinet of Ministers, which will oversee the implementation of the Strategy for protection and inclusion into Ukrainian society of Roma national minority until 2020. The group was established on 25 November 2015.³⁶ It includes six Roma, four of whom were trained under ROMED1, of whom three are Roma mediators. Although the launch of the group was delayed due to the political crisis, it has great potential for effective advocacy to include mediators as part of the strategy in the future. There is a gradual integration of the ROMED1 methodology in state education for social workers.

Most recently, a special course, 'Mediation as a form of social work with the Roma minority', was approved by the National Pedagogical Dragamanov University, the Institute of Social Work and Management. The course is included in the curriculum of the Institute and will be taught from September 2016. This is considered an important step towards the institutionalisation of the practice of mediators in the country.

2.3.4. Impact at European level

The ROMED1 programme became highly visible and acknowledged at European level.

One of the most visible and significant contributions of ROMED1 was the adoption of the Recommendation of the Committee of Ministers to Member States on Mediation as an Effective Tool for Promoting Respect for Human Rights and Social Inclusion of Roma³⁷ (September 2012). Based on this recommendation, the CoE encourages governments of member states to:

³⁶ <http://www.kmu.gov.ua/control/uk/cardnpd?docid=248677547>

³⁷ [https://wcd.coe.int/ViewDoc.jsp?p=&Ref=CM/Rec\(2012\)9&Language=lanEnglish&Ver=original&Site=CM&BackColorInternet=DBDCF2&BackColorIntranet=FDC864&BackColorLogged=FDC864&direct=true](https://wcd.coe.int/ViewDoc.jsp?p=&Ref=CM/Rec(2012)9&Language=lanEnglish&Ver=original&Site=CM&BackColorInternet=DBDCF2&BackColorIntranet=FDC864&BackColorLogged=FDC864&direct=true)

- 'Develop and maintain an effective system of quality mediation with Roma communities and recognise the importance of professional self-regulation by mediators themselves';
- '[E]nsure that official recognition to the professional status of mediators is given, taking measures, where necessary, to render the employment of mediators more stable, and ensure fair remuneration and adequate working conditions';
- '[P]romote a favourable environment at local level for the work of mediators'.

The subsequent recommendation of the Council of the EU of 09 December 2013 on effective Roma integration measures in the Member States reiterates the importance of 'training and employment of qualified mediators dedicated to Roma and the use of mediation as one of the measures to tackle the inequalities Roma face in terms of access to quality education, employment, healthcare and housing.'³⁸

Roma mediators' programmes are referred to as good practice examples in the European Parliament resolution of 12 December 2013 on the progress made in the implementation of the National Roma Integration Strategies. The importance of training of Roma mediators to promote employment among Roma is underlined in the study commissioned by the European Parliament's Policy Department for Citizens' Rights and Constitutional Affairs in 2015.³⁹

The Roma Mediators' Congress was one of the most significant and visible events organised by ROMED1 at European level. It was considered unique as it brought the voices of communities to Brussels. More than 400 mediators from different countries participated in the congress. Furthermore a group of ROMED1 trainers received their certificates for the ROMED1 training from high level representatives of the CoE and the EC. Based on the feedback from mediators who participated in the Congress, this was a very important event for them, contributing to their empowerment. It was visible recognition of the importance of their work in communities. In addition to increasing the visibility of the programme, the Congress of Mediators contributed to networking among mediators from different countries.

There were initial ideas of further developing the European network of mediators by the use of an online platform, but the idea was dropped due to the multiple languages it would have required and the fact that mediators do not always have access to the internet.

The broad impact of ROMED1 was outlined in the analyses developed in 2012-2013 by the French sociologist professor Jean-Pierre Liégeois. Among the numerous aspects of the impact of the programme was the contribution of trained mediators to the development of numerous projects at the local level. Their networking at regional, national and European levels to increase that potential was also important. Mediators not only have an impact on the situation of Roma communities, but they also have an effect on non-Roma, serving as translators and helping them better understand Roma culture. From this perspective, it will be important in the future to invest in cultural mediators as agents for the empowerment of Roma communities, as well as for raising the awareness of the majority population on intercultural issues.⁴⁰

How did CoE and EC ownership of the program contribute to impact at different levels?

The fact that the programme was led by the CoE and the EC has helped to generate interest in, and support to, the programme. This increased the involvement of national authorities. Locally, it has

³⁸ [http://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/PDF/?uri=CELEX:32013H1224\(01\)&from=en](http://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/PDF/?uri=CELEX:32013H1224(01)&from=en)

³⁹ http://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/etudes/STUD/2015/536485/IPOL_STU%282015%29536485_EN.pdf

⁴⁰ <http://coe-romed.org/sites/default/files/documentation/Developments%20and%20challenges%20in%20Mediation%20ENG.pdf>

raised the recognition of the importance of mediators by local institutions. The European nature of the programme raised the self-esteem of mediators who were trained. Mediators are proud to have a certificate issued by European institutions (the certificates included a joint programmes' logo clearly stating the contributions of both the CoE and EC). However, as outlined in previous sections, the European certificates had limited direct impact on mediators' conditions of employment, and this was mainly in Romania.

2.4. Sustainability

In terms of sustainability we explored two interrelated main aspects:

- How sustainable are ROMED1 results and emerging impacts?
- What are the capacities of the in-country systems and stakeholders to continue systematic work in support to quality work of mediators?

Regarding the first question, the main impact of the programme was the investment in the development of mediators. Its sustainability depends on the extent to which mediators continue to work and put into practice the skills acquired through ROMED1.

There is no representative data for the employment status of mediators trained by ROMED1 in the evaluation focus countries. Since the majority of the ROMED1 training sessions were organised three or four years ago, data on the performance of mediators is limited as there is no system to monitor trained mediators after they completed the training.

The survey of ROMED1 mediators conducted for the present evaluation was an attempt to find answers concerning their employment status. Due to the low response rate, the survey covers only a small share (20 %) of the trained mediators in the seven focus countries. However, it provides some general orientation on the extent to which mediators continue working.

A survey conducted a year after the ROMED1 training indicates that 19.5% of participants stopped working as mediators, 69.5% continued to work as mediators and 11% started to work as mediators (mostly in FYROM). At present 60% of the mediators are employed, and 40% are not.

Feedback from interviews and focus group meetings in the seven focus countries indicates that the worst situation is in Slovakia and Hungary, where employment of trained mediators is very sporadic. While in Portugal all of the trained mediators were employed on a project basis, only three of them continued working as municipal mediators and this is due to the ROMED2 programme. It is hoped that in the future, with the implementation of the government strategy, this programme will be renewed. The employment of mediators trained by ROMED1 in Bulgaria and Romania is most stable due to the existing policies and standards for employment of mediators in the two countries.

A second important issue related to sustainability is the very low salary of mediators. In a number of cases mediators leave their job to find better opportunities (and some emigrate to other countries in Europe).

Several important aspects of sustainability were outlined in the research of the French sociologist, professor Jean-Pierre Liégeois,⁴¹ as well as in an interview with him for this evaluation. They relate to the importance of the recognition of the institutions providing the training and certification of

⁴¹ <http://coe-romact.org/sites/default/files/leaflets/Developments%20and%20challenges%20in%20Mediation%20ENG.pdf>

mediators. Developing a good modular system, with credits earned with each module is also linked with the broader professional development of mediators and can later assist them in getting further academic qualifications. The fact that ROMED1 is a European programme can also help link the ROMED1 training with a European vocational certification system.

Despite the effort of ROMED1 to provide certificates for the training, as outlined in previous parts of the report, these certificates were usually not officially recognised and did not contribute much to the recognition of mediators' qualifications, or to their employment. Qualification and recognised certification remain an important need for the future sustainability of the ROMED1 investment. These need to be linked to the system for paying mediators, so that acquiring a new qualification and better education is better reflected in salaries.

Despite the growing recognition of the importance of mediators, there are very limited national programmes for the training of mediators. If they exist, they are targeted at developing some sector-specific skills needed for the work of mediators in different sectors. In most of the countries it was reported that funding for training like ROMED1 is missing.

At the same time, in most of the countries, the need to support the training and development of mediators was clearly expressed by some representatives of institutions and by mediators.

However, as outlined in interviews with stakeholders never involved in the implementation of ROMED1, even in countries where mediators are recognised and hired, ***sustainability is not one act, but a process of systemic change*** to develop local institutions, employment programmes and consistent capacity building.

Sustainability of the investment in developing Roma mediators depends on the awareness and consistent involvement of several key actors:

- ***National institutions*** recognising the importance of training and capacity development of mediators as part of the NRIS and ensuring funds for this;
- ***Local institutions*** recognising the need for mediators and ensuring funding for this;
- ***Roma civil society*** (Roma NGOs, networks of self-organised mediators, trainers) doing consistent advocacy with the government to invest in the development of mediators;
- ***Raised awareness in communities*** about their right to request that local authorities to hire mediators, especially in countries where the mediator's position is institutionalised. Such a process will not happen by itself or just as a result of an outside training programme. It requires strategically focused investment, creating local ownership, alliances and consistent interaction of all actors involved leading to the development of sustainable in-country systems supporting mediators as part of Roma inclusion strategies.

Chapter 3. ROMED2 horizontal findings: Empowering Roma communities

3.1. Relevance of ROMED2 in response to Roma inclusion needs

3.1.1. Transition from ROMED1 to ROMED2: vision and synergies

ROMED2 evolved based on the lessons emerging from the implementation of the first phase of the programme. ROMED1 invested in expanding numbers of mediators trained in a growing number of countries with the assumption that this will 'seed' mediators as agents of change in multiple locations which will lead to the improvement of local interactions for Roma inclusion. A second assumption was that by involving representatives of local institutions in some of the training, this will help create a common ground and interaction between them and the mediators. This attempt to use the training for effective dialogue among local stakeholders proved to be insufficient.

ROMED1 as a short term intervention – effectively seven days of training over a six-month period , could not provide for sustainable change in local communities by itself. Upon returning to their workplace, mediators faced a number of challenges related to the local environment. It was difficult to apply the ROMED1 approach when neither the community nor local institutions were ready. It could not be expected that mediators could change both sides alone. A different type of intervention was needed, going beyond the focus on mediators, and investing in institutional change – active and self-organised Roma communities as recognised partners of local authorities in planning and implementing local policies and initiatives.

ROMED2 is a response to this recognised need for a more systematic approach to stimulate processes of community change and the engagement of local stakeholders with each other in a constructive dialogue. The programme invests in a longer process involving different local stakeholders at the local level.

The new phase of the ROMED programme was designed in synergy with the previous training of mediators:

- The two phases of the programme shared the same approach to mediation, aiming at responsible and constructive dialogue in the community in search of cooperation to solve issues and problems. But ROMED2 took this approach from the individual level to group and institutional level. It focused on initiating and developing active groups of Roma citizens in communities. In the course of dialogue with local institutions and authorities, these groups are intended to become institutional structures (formal or informal) for consultation on local policies so that the voice of citizens can be taken into account, this way leading to institutional change within local authorities towards more inclusive governance.
- ROMED2 built on the human resource developed by the first phase of the programme. Previously trained mediators remained a key factor in this process of institutional change. One of the criteria for selecting locations to work deeper in the communities, was the availability of active mediators trained through the first phase of the programme. Mediators thus played a new special role inside the local process – to act as local facilitators, to provide needed information and assist the emerging civic groups in their communication with institutions.

- In some countries, the implementation of ROMED2 was accompanied by the continuation of training of more mediators based on the demand of governments, this way ensuring the potential dissemination of the results of the community based interventions to other localities.

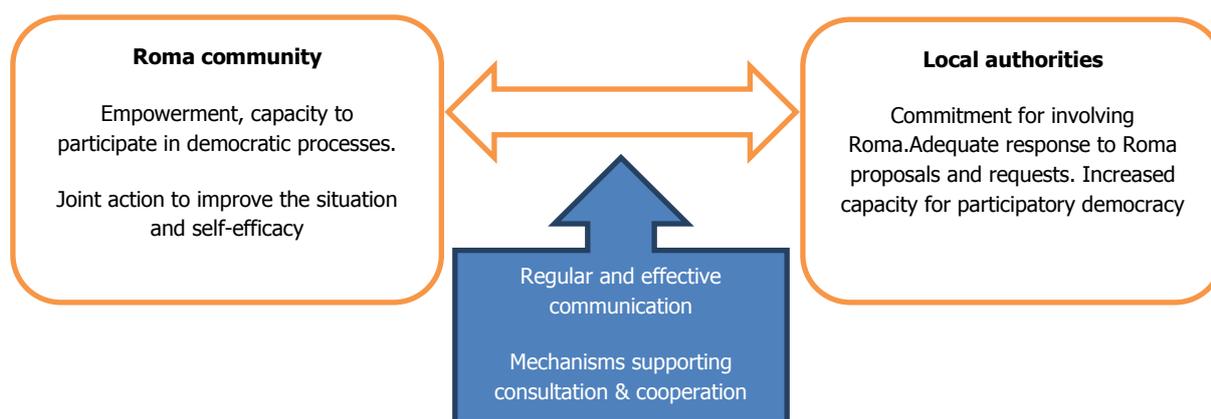
At the same time there were some significant differences:

- ROMED2 was designed as a process of at least 18 months, in contrast to the short term nature of the ROMED1 intervention (seven days training over six months)
- At the centre of the new phase of the programme was the Roma community, not just the individual mediators. At the core of the process was the development of community action groups (CAG) as a form of community organising.
- Engagement of local authorities was ensured as part of the process in a structured way, not as one time encounter during training.
- Both programmes aimed at capacity building, but ROMED2 was not designed as a series of training activities. **It was a consistent process of democratic citizenship learning**, applying bottom-up participative approaches by introducing new knowledge and putting it into practice. It was assisted by on-going mentoring and support by the programme. The aim was to expand the practical capacity and experiential learning of communities for active citizenship, and of institutions for democratic governance which in turn can stimulate changes towards Roma inclusion.

The aim of ROMED2 was to contribute to a shift from '*a vicious circle of blame and discouragement to a virtuous circle of trust-building and cooperation.*' More precisely, this means moving from dependency and paternalism to empowerment and recognition, stimulating respect for human rights, active citizenship and inclusive implementation of the principles of good governance and of participatory democracy.⁴²

Figure 6, below, illustrates the vision of change behind ROMED2.

Figure 6: ROMED2 concept



Source: ROMED2 Guidelines⁴³

⁴² Ibid.

⁴³ ROMED2 Guidelines and resources for national and local facilitators

Based on the interviews with the ROMED management team and the International Pedagogical Team, ROMED2 was viewed as a systematic local process of up to one year to support an initial cycle (group formation, prioritisation, planning, monitoring and evaluation) until there is a renewal of the cycle with increasing local ownership of the process. Developed plans as part of the process needed to include short term, medium term and longer term objectives. Tangible initiatives meeting the short term objectives needed to be developed and monitored every two to three months. People in communities had to see concrete results in order not to lose patience and trust in the process. Longer term objectives and plans will require larger scale initiatives and will need several cycles of monitoring, evaluation and updated planning.

The vision of the programme was also evolving following its experimental application of change processes in multiple countries and diverse local contexts. It was developed as collective learning across countries at the start of the programme, as well as in the course of its implementation during a number of meetings of the international and national teams. This resulted in the evolving ROMED2 theory of change, which was further adapted to meet identified challenges and risks at the local level.

The initial vision was not confined into a predefined structure with a specified set of outputs to be delivered in fixed timeframe. Interview feedback from international and national teams and local stakeholders indicates that the application of such local processes required a timeframe of at least three to four years in the locality in order to ensure some sustainability. Participative planning and changing the paradigm of power relations and decision making towards the active involvement of citizens is always a long-term process of individual and institutional learning. It requires much more time to seed the idea of participation, and to build trust and ownership in the context of communities living in social exclusion and marginalisation.

3.1.2. Relevance of ROMED2 for Roma inclusion needs

All the stakeholders approached by this evaluation considered that the focus of the ROMED2 programme on the empowerment of Roma communities for democratic participation responds to one of the most critical needs related to the priority of Roma inclusion. It is at the core of European policies related to Roma inclusion, which increasingly underline the importance of building the capacity of Roma communities to become active participants rather than remain a target population, or recipients of assistance and subsidies. It is a practical attempt to apply principles like 'for Roma with Roma' and responds to the priority of education to active citizenship and democratic values of human rights, equality and non-discrimination.

The ROMED2 programme fosters the practical implementation of the 10 Common Basic Principles on Roma Inclusion and of the 12 principles of good governance adopted by the Council of Europe.

The European Council recommendation on effective Roma integration measures in the member states, adopted in December 2013, also promotes the same key principles, stating that it is crucial to provide support for *'the active citizenship of Roma by promoting their social, economic, political and cultural participation in society, including at the local level'*, and that mediation is *'one of the measures to tackle the inequalities Roma face in terms of access to quality education, employment, healthcare and housing.'*⁴⁴

All consulted national and local stakeholders in the seven focus countries consider the focus of ROMED2 on local processes of effective dialogue and interaction between communities and local authorities as highly relevant to the needs of Roma inclusion.

⁴⁴ http://www.consilium.europa.eu/uedocs/cms_data/docs/pressdata/en/lisa/139979.pdf

Based on country findings, the two main aspects of relevance can be summarised as follows:

One of the most valuable aspects of ROMED2 is that it puts the Roma community at the heart of the effort.

ROMED2 does not confine participation to the use of intermediaries that claim to represent the community – informal leaders, local NGOs or other intermediary organisations working for Roma. It approaches the community directly, providing for the involvement of ordinary community members in the process and building confidence within communities that their voices matter.

This emphasis on direct communication with community members contributes to their awareness of their rights and the way in which they can be practiced by formulating collective demands based on community needs, rather than individual needs. This perspective is a critical part of the inclusion process itself.

According to all stakeholders from the seven focus countries, the most unique part of the programme is the support given to the creation of CAGs. These provide the space for the direct involvement of the Roma community in the design and implementation of local policies.

Process orientation and flexibility to grasp diversity of the situations at local level

The bottom up approach and flexible methodology which provides room for adaptation to diverse local contexts was another key value noted in interviews. Usually, large scale international programmes miss the diversity of local contexts and the internal diversity of Roma communities. A major strength of ROMED2 is its focus on building social capital within Roma communities enabling sustainable local consultation processes between the Roma community and representatives of local authorities. Such genuine intention for process orientation is not typical of large scale European programmes, which are usually under pressure to deliver planned outputs and stated outcomes.

At the same time, interviewees outlined a number of ***contextual challenges to the intended effectiveness of local processes*** sought by ROMED2. The main contextual challenges can be grouped as follows:

- ***Political crises, instability and growing nationalistic votes that can change the commitment of local authorities in the process*** (noted as negative factors in most of the countries);
- ***Level of marginalisation in communities and the time foreseen for developing the CAGs.*** In communities with a higher level of marginalisation and lack of previous experience in initiatives for participation or self-organising, a much longer process is needed for the formation of the groups. Expectations about their performance need to be adjusted.
- ***Low level of trust inside communities – in some cases there was a 'social inclusion fatigue.'*** Communities have witnessed various programmes promising inclusion and raising expectations for improvement, but with limited tangible effects. Establishing trust in the genuine intentions of the programme also takes time and consistency of effort.
- ***High local expectations from the programme, including expectations of financial support.*** It was reported in most countries that the initial expectations, especially among local authorities, was that ROMED2, as a European programme, would provide not only advice and facilitation, but would also provide funding to solve local issues.

3.2. Effectiveness of ROMED2 assistance to local processes

3.2.1. Design and Guidelines of the local process

ROMED2 support to local processes as vision, approach, concrete methods, key actors and their roles is described in detail in the document '*Guidelines and resources for national and local facilitators*' (or the 'ROMED2 Guidelines'). As noted in interviews with the International Pedagogical Team, the ROMED2 Guidelines were designed as a flexible framework and resource package. The Guidelines are not a classic training curriculum that follows exactly prescribed modules. They provide an overall approach to local processes with a number of possible tools and options to be used depending on the needs of the local contexts.

There are two obligatory steps in the process which included the creation of a *community action group* (CAG) and facilitating *structured interaction with local authorities*. Both steps had to be implemented in the framework of the application of all phases of the Participatory work cycle promoted by the ROMED Programme (preparation, assessment of the current situation, planning, implementation and evaluation). In the planning phase, the CAGs in cooperation with communities and with local authorities had to define both short term and long term priorities and relevant solutions and initiatives. While the above steps were obligatory, their concrete application was left open and flexible to accommodate the local needs and variety of contexts.

The estimated timeline for putting in practice the whole participatory work cycle was 18 months of consistent work of the CAGs with the support of national support team and national facilitators. To ensure sustainability it was considered that the full work cycle needs to be repeated at least once, especially in terms of monitoring, evaluation and update of plans related to long-term priorities.

The ROMED2 Guidelines are extensive, with sections on each of the steps envisaged in the process, including conceptual and practical sections, supported by a wide variety of facilitation resources and materials. The Guidelines are clearly conceptualised and provide concise but clear descriptions of multiple aspects of the local processes and the links between them.

Based on the feedback of national facilitators and National Support Teams, the ROMED2 Guidelines provide a sound basis for the facilitation of local participatory planning processes. Nevertheless, interview feedback indicates that for two reasons, it is practically impossible to use the Guidelines exactly as they are presented, or to make use of all the proposed tools. Firstly, the Guidelines needed to be adapted to the level of the local groups so that people in the communities can relate to them. Secondly, insufficient time was envisaged for the introduction and implementation of complex, and often very new, principles and approaches. As mentioned above, it was up to the national teams to determine how they were going to use these resources while following the main steps envisaged. A number of facilitators and members of the National Support Team noted that they used the Guidelines mainly as a background resource, while in most of the cases they were relying on their previous experience and knowledge of community based work and facilitation.

It should be also noted that the ROMED2 Guidelines have been constantly updated and developed based on feedback from ROMED2 NFP/NPO meetings, as well as consultations of the Pedagogical team with the national teams of trainers and facilitators.

3.2.2. Setting the ROMED2 framework: Key actors, roles and capacities

The ROMED2 programme was implemented by a set of key teams and actors at the international, national and local levels.

International level organisational framework

At the Council of Europe, ROMED2 was managed and assisted by two teams – the management team and the International Pedagogical Team.

The ROMED2 programme was placed under the Strategic Partnerships Unit of the Support Team of the Special Representative of the Secretary General of the Council of Europe for Roma issues, and was managed by a small team including the head of unit, a programme manager, a senior administrative assistant, a communication officer and an administrative assistant who joined the team later in 2014. The task of the programme manager is to follow the implementation of the programme – both in operational, pedagogical, financial and content terms. The administrative assistants share tasks which often go beyond the 'administrative assistant' status, including financial monitoring, operational follow-up, and content analysis. An online reporting system is used to record the evolution of the programme. It is linked to financial and contractual clauses, and was designed in terms of questions responding to indicators elaborated by the International Pedagogical Team in cooperation with CoE management. It is implemented and monitored by the CoE management.

The International Pedagogical Team was initially composed of five experts from different countries and currently includes three experts. The pedagogical team was responsible for the elaboration of the pedagogical approach of the ROMED programme (both ROMED1 and ROMED2), including the Trainer's Handbook, and its intervention takes place mainly during regular meetings with the national teams. They test and update the methodology of the programmes, help the CoE management to update their publications, and provide training for the National Support Teams.

Based on the interviews and interaction with the CoE management team and the International Pedagogical Team during the present evaluation, we were impressed by the high commitment and professionalism of the experts involved. Both teams are value based, with a passion for making a difference to Roma inclusion, creativity, and openness to different opinions, innovation and risk taking. The two teams are one of the main success factors for initiating and putting into practice the innovative ROMED2 approach across Europe.

International meetings and networking between the ROMED2 National Support Teams is another important element of the organisational setting at international level.

The concept of networking between the national support teams started in September 2013 during the first "Accountability meeting" aimed to gather input for extracting the lessons from ROMED1 and the design of the new approach of ROMED2. The meeting gathered Trainers of ROMED1, National Focal Points of ROMED1, as well as some international partner organisations, such as the Roma Initiatives Office of OSF. The participation of OSF as an outside strategic stakeholder not directly involved in ROMED was very valuable as it brought a new perspective, based on the extensive experience of the Roma Initiative Office of OSF in community based organising. They contributed to the idea of creating the CAGs as catalysts to activate and organise Roma communities.

After the selection of National Project Officers (NPO) and National Focal Points (NFP) in December 2013, the first training of trainers/ facilitators, combined with the first NPO/NFP meeting took place in Bucharest, where close to 80 persons attended (NPOs, NFPs, national facilitators, the International Pedagogical Team and the CoE management team). The methodology of ROMED2 was also tested for the first time during this meeting, and as a result national facilitators were prepared for the interventions in the field.

A second training of trainers took place one year later (December 2014) in Berlin, where the ROMED2 methodology was updated with the facilitators and the NPOs/NFPs.

Since the beginning of the ROMED2 programme in 2013 there have been 12 meetings of the NPOs and NFPs. The pace was most intensive in 2013 and 2014 with seven meetings organised during this period. There were several objectives behind the international networking and meetings of the national teams:

- Ensure participatory monitoring and collect updates on the next cycles of implementation with a focus on the content and approach;
- Share and learn from emerging good practices between countries;
- Become acquainted with improvements and updates in the pedagogical approach of the programme;
- Look into possibilities of networking for the empowerment of the Roma communities at local level;
- Develop synergies with other sectors of the CoE working with Roma.

In addition, during all these meetings, bilateral meetings were held between each national support team and the ROMED CoE management for updates on implementation and administrative issues.

The evaluators were able to directly observe two of the meetings of the national teams which included in their objectives discussions related to this evaluation. Based on these observations, the meetings are very interactive and participatory, stimulating open discussions and developing a shared vision and approach of the programme. They have contributed to creating an international programme platform, with the national teams as a sounding board for the methods applied. As mentioned above, these meetings contributed directly to continuous updating of the methodology and the ROMED2 Guidelines for national facilitators.

National level organisational framework

At the national level, the implementation teams (National Support Teams) included national facilitators, NFPs and NPOs. All of them were selected and hired directly by the CoE. More concretely, their roles and observations on their capacities are outlined below.

The national facilitators.

The national facilitators had a central role for assisting the processes in localities. As outlined in the ROMED2 Guidelines they were performing the role of the 'mediator' in the mediation process between the community and the local authorities and institutions. Their task was complex – to assist the development of the CAG and to facilitate its interaction with the local authorities. They had to identify the best way to use the resources provided in the guidelines, as well as to 'feel the pulse' of local stakeholders and optimise their joint action. This role of the national facilitator had to be gradually replaced by local facilitators in the selected municipalities. This was envisaged as one of the steps for sustainability of the local process.

Based on interviews with national facilitators, and in some cases observation of their work, the following findings on their capacities are noted:⁴⁵

- ***Developing a network of facilitation experts in all countries who are accountable to the community is a major success of the programme.*** ROMED2 national facilitators are very competent and skillful experts, the majority of whom are Roma. Most of them have years of experience in working in or with Roma civil society in a variety of programmes for Roma

⁴⁵ The evaluation team observed the work of the national facilitator with the CAG of Tundzha Municipality (Bulgaria) and with the local authorities in preparation of a round table on the achievements and evaluation of the local plan of the municipality. It was attended by representatives from the majority of CAGs and some of the local authorities involved in the implementation of ROMACT in Bulgaria.

empowerment and local development. All have a high commitment to Roma inclusion and direct work in communities. They perceive their function not as a 'technical job' but as a cause and responsibility to local people.

- ***The presence of national facilitators and the quality of their work was highly assessed by local stakeholders*** during the focus groups and discussions in the framework of the case studies conducted in 15 selected municipalities. They were viewed as an important external impulse to activate the community and a key factor to maintain the dialogue between the community and the local authorities.
- ***The feedback on the work of individual national facilitators was very positive with very few exceptions.*** The only completely negative feedback came from Slovakia, and this related to the work of the first national facilitator for Cicava, who did more damage than good to the local process. There were also references to more problematic situations where national facilitators did not follow the approach of the Guidelines. However, this was corrected with the help of the national support teams.
- The frequency of the visits and consistency of support provided by the National facilitators to the local CAGs was of critical importance to the effectiveness and sustainability of the process. In those cases where the facilitator was changed frequently (e.g. Byala Slatina in Bulgaria, and Cicava in Slovakia) the interventions were not productive and yielded few or no results. Slovak experience shows that in places where the national facilitator lives close by (in the region of the selected municipality) and visits it frequently, real results are achieved. In these cases, the groups exist and are active. In localities where this is not the case, the sustainability of the CAGs is questionable.

The National Project Officer and National Focal Point.

Based on interviews with the International Pedagogical Team, the NFPs were much more involved in this new phase of the programme. Both the NFPs and the NPOs of ROMED2 had to be much more aware of the concept and approach, and to be able to analyse the diverse local contexts of its application.

The NFPs and NPOs had the responsibility to coordinate, monitor and assist the quality of work in the different municipalities. They have to monitor the implementation and extract learning from the process, which was shared at the regular international meetings and trainings organised by the program. The NPOs had to provide quality control and guidance to the national facilitators to ensure the adequacy of approach in the different local situations and adapting the methods accordingly. This helped identify deviations from the approach and enabled quick adjustment in situations where the approach was not in line with the ROMED philosophy (for example cases of guidance that imposes decisions on the CAG rather than facilitating the group). Based on our observations and feedback from national and local stakeholders:

- ***A good selection of NFPs and NPOs is among the key factors for the successful implementation of the ROMED2 programme.*** All the NPO and NFPs we interviewed are passionate leaders committed and working for Roma inclusion. In some countries there was the need to change the initially selected NPO or NFP (Slovakia, Hungary and Romania). This happened for different reasons, and had different effects on the programme. Only in one case (Slovakia) the wrong selection of the first NPO had a serious negative effect on the programme.
- ***National facilitators could rely on the support of the NPOs when addressing difficult local situations*** related to the political context, or problems within the community. This support was considered very valuable both by facilitators and CAGs (examples were provided in Bulgaria and in Hungary).

- ***The backup and support of the NFPs and NPOs was also highly appreciated in municipalities.*** In the majority of the countries, the NFPs and NPOs were highly visible at the local level due to their more direct involvement in the process as back up support to national facilitators, or in cases acting as national facilitators themselves.

The National Support Organisation

The introduction of a National Support Organisation was a new element for the implementation structure of ROMED2 (compared to the previous ROMED phase). The function of the National Support Organisation was to provide for the administration of the programme, including distribution of the finances needed for local travel and interventions. In most of the cases this was the organisation led by the NPOs (and in several cases the NFPs also belonged to it).

Based on our meetings in the seven focus countries, ***the majority of the National Support Organisations are prominent Roma or civil society organisations with a very good track record*** in working on Roma inclusion, mediation and/ or community empowerment processes. The only newer organisation is Letras Nomadas in Portugal, which was established as a result of the ROMED1 programme in 2013. However, it has already built a record as an effective and important new actor in the country, working on Roma inclusion in Portugal with committed and passionate leadership.

At the local level several key elements were envisaged as part of the local process.

The key element was the **CAG**, whose formation and development is assisted by the national facilitator and a local facilitator. In terms of local authorities, the main human resources allocated to the process was the **municipal contact point** appointed by the mayor, as well as an **institutional working group** with the participation of different departments of the administration. In some countries (for ex. Romania) representatives of CAG were also part of the Institutional working group. As the CAGs, the contact points and institutional groups in the municipalities were both an instrument and an outcome of the local processes, their development is reviewed in detail in the next sections of the report.

Local facilitators were envisaged as key actors to assist the organisation of the process at the local level and provide for its sustainability in the future.

Based on the ROMED2 Guidelines, the local facilitator had to be identified usually among the mediators trained by ROMED1 in the same locality. He or she had to assist the national facilitator in the work with the CAG and the local authorities. Local facilitators were also referred to as a sustainability step. With time they had to continue the support to the local process without the national facilitator. We could not find more details in the guidelines of concrete strategies of how this was planned to happen.

Visits to case study locations identified the following findings on the role and capacity of local facilitators.

In a number of the case study locations, mediators were playing the role of local facilitators - some of them trained by ROMED1, and others not. There were also a number of cases where there was no clear local facilitator function. Here, mediators were participants in the CAG but were not aware of their local facilitator role. They were referred to as a contact point assisting the work of the national facilitator (e.g. Bulgaria, FYRoM).

Interviewed local mediators/facilitators are very committed people with different levels of experience in their area of mediation work. They helped identify members of the CAG and establish contacts with

institutions. Furthermore, they provided needed information and maintained the motivation of people to stay involved.

An issue outlined in all countries was the fact that the methodology did not envisage any remuneration for the work of local facilitators/mediators. It was based on the assumption that mediators are employed by the municipalities and can serve as a support and resource for the local group with no additional payment.

There were only two exceptions to this. In the course of the implementation, the ROMED2 programme decided to provide some remuneration for the work of local facilitators/mediators in Portugal and Hungary. In Portugal, ROMED2 provided small bridging financing for mediators until they were hired on temporary contracts by the municipalities. In Hungary mediators were unemployed later during implementation. Here the CoE agreed to pay them for specific tasks to address the needs of their municipality.

As explained by the CoE's ROMED management team this contribution of the CoE was more of an exception rather than a general possibility provided by the Programme. The CoE did not want to create a precedent in taking over what should have been the responsibility of the state authorities, national or local. Remuneration in Hungary was perceived as a tool to boost the participation of mediators by paying some fees for their facilitation work. This in turn could be used by the National Support team to lobby for the employment of mediators, as their presence brings a valuable contribution to the government initiatives towards Roma.

Based on interviews with the national teams and national stakeholders, as well as the focus groups with mediators, the assumption of the methodology that mediators can serve as local facilitators with no remuneration for this additional function was considered in all countries with the exception of Ukraine as a constraint rather than strength of the design of the programme. Where mediators were hired by the municipality or other institutions, this is a full time job and the job description does not include facilitation of the CAG and its interaction with local authorities. Moreover, remuneration is usually close to the national minimal salary). If mediators were perceived as local facilitators who could substitute for the national facilitator in the over time, some remuneration for this position should have been included in the initial programme design.

3.2.3. Selection of municipalities

The main criteria for the selection of municipalities were local demand, political will, the presence of active persons in local institutions and NGOs, and the availability of skilful mediators, if possible trained under ROMED1. A leading criterion was political will, demonstrated by the readiness of municipalities to sign a memorandum of understanding with the CoE to implement ROMED2. Initial selection was based on visits to municipalities and assessment of the interest of local authorities and community members to participate in the programme. Final selection was made by the ROMED2 management team.

The process of selection was similar between countries, but with some adjustments for the local context. In some countries national authorities were more actively involved in the selection of municipalities. This was mainly in Portugal (The High Commissioner for Immigration and Intercultural Dialog (ACIDI) was the NFP) and in FYRoM where both ROMED programmes were implemented in strategic partnership with the government/ CAHROM representative. In other ROMED2 countries, national authorities were consulted but not actively involved (e.g. Bulgaria) or not involved at all (e.g. Hungary).

ROMED2 sought partnerships with other international initiatives active at the time, such as the OSF programme '*Making the Most of the European Funds*' (MtM). This partnership encountered challenges in some countries, but in others it worked. For example, in Bulgaria the selection of municipalities was assisted by the local MtM office in Sofia. Interview feedback from MtM indicates that it considered this collaboration interesting and fruitful.

In total, 54 very diverse municipalities from 11 countries were selected to participate in ROMED2.⁴⁶ Based on the 15 case study municipalities covered by the present evaluation, they are diverse in terms of:

- ***Size*** (varying between Roma neighbourhoods in the capital city, district or large towns, to very small villages);
- ***Type of municipality*** (urban or rural, some composed of one village, others of 14 to 20 villages);
- ***Level of overall economic development*** (some have more active industries, while others are afflicted with poverty and situated in the poorest regions of the country);
- ***Level of openness of the local government towards Roma inclusion*** (some already had a long history of initiatives to improve the situation of Roma and a well-developed system for inclusive project development. Others were at the starting point);
- ***Level of self-organisation of Roma communities*** (some were marginalised Roma settlements with little history of community based activism. In others there were local Roma NGOs and active Roma churches, and there was political representation of Roma on local municipal councils).

Not only were the selected municipalities diverse, but there was also significant diversity between countries. Some countries were EU member states, with access to structural funds but with different levels of accessibility to these funds at the local level. Others were pre-accession countries, with inclusion of Roma as one of the conditionalities; others were Eastern neighbourhood countries, such as Ukraine, where there was much less support available for such initiatives, combined with severe political and economic crises.

While the majority of municipalities that were initially selected by ROMED2 stayed involved throughout the process, based on the study of the seven focus countries some dropped out at different stages of the process. The reasons for that was a combination of factors, but in most of the cases it was the withdrawal of the initially stated commitment of the municipality for cooperation. Such cases were reported in Bulgaria, Portugal, Hungary, Slovakia and Ukraine.

3.2.4. Effectiveness of the Development of the Community Action Groups

Process and approach

Based on the interviews with ROMED management and the International Pedagogical Team, the vision for the CAG was to model a different way of self-organising and leadership within Roma communities. "*We wanted a platform for Roma community participation, to be known and recognised, but also to be open and democratic.*"

The ROMED2 Guidelines outline **ten key characteristics of the CAGs**. According to these, the CAG should be:

⁴⁶ This does not include the expanding number of municipalities in Bulgaria and Romania in the framework of ROMACT.

- **Local and diverse**, inclusive of different segments of the community, men and women, young and old, experienced and less experienced;
- **Open** – anyone should be able to join or leave the group at any time;
- **Democratic and functioning as a team with shared leadership** – no hierarchy;
- **Based on human rights and focused on community progress**, not on achieving the personal interest of its members;
- **Transparent** and communicating what the group does and achieves to the broader community;
- Seeking to formulate **constructive** proposals for change, specifying responsibilities, legal basis and resources and **recognised partner** by the local authorities as a partner for dialogue.

Stakeholders interviewed in the evaluation focus countries noted that these guiding principles are very valuable for the development of the CAGs. They bring the principles of democracy and community organising inside Roma communities. Many of these characteristics are against prevailing trends and normal practice not only within Roma communities, but also in civil society and NGOs generally. ROMED2 tried to overcome this inertia and the usual way of 'doing business' by introducing community-based organising principles.

The new CAG principles went against traditional culture in some Roma communities where diversity, especially participation of women, is not always an 'internal cultural code', or there is a long history of centralised 'one-man' decision-making and dependency on traditional leaders. From this perspective the application of each of these principles required a process of gradual change in perceptions within the community. The way they were put into practice differed between locations and depended on a variety of internal and external factors.

The approach and process of creating the CAG as initially envisaged in the methodology involved several meetings of the national facilitators with the representatives of local communities in the timeframe of 2-3 months. Mediators trained under ROMED1 were one of the key resources in identifying and attracting community members to get involved. The process of developing the group as outlined in the ROMED2 Guidelines included at least three sessions ("first two of them could be done together for example in a weekend and the third one – several months later finishing with the Joint planning meeting with the municipality").

Based on our review of the ROMED2 Guidelines, the objectives of each session seem extremely ambitious for the short time frame envisaged in all three directions they were set forth – group development, addressing concrete issues and delivering concrete outputs while simultaneously building knowledge, skills and attitudes needed for addressing the chosen issues. Especially in view of the desire of ROMED2 to involve diverse people, including community members with no experience, more time should have been envisaged for the process with the CAGs.

The practice of local application of the process confirms this. National facilitators note that they continuously had to come back to a number of issues that were introduced in the first sessions. The time needed to foster the feeling of belonging to the group, as well as the speed of acquiring new capacities was different for different members. It depended on their previous experience with other initiatives, and in some cases on the level of education (when they had to formulate and write desired outputs/documents). As explained by the international team, based on learning from communities in the course of implementation, the programme started to provide more time for the process for the development of the community action groups.

Most valuable in the application of the process of establishing the CAGs was its flexibility, to accommodate the wide diversity of situations. Some localities required many more visits, and in others the process ran more naturally, by itself. Another important aspect outlined in all interviews with national teams was that ROMED2 wanted to involve the voices of the community, not just of its

leaders. The principle of "all citizens have equal voices in expressing real and common needs" was guiding the selection process of CAGs' members.

In most of the localities the CAGs were created around active mediators who identified active people. To expand the knowledge on new approaches to wider groups of community representatives in FYRoM it was decided that it is better to involve other people in the CAGs and not include the ROMED1 mediators. ROMED1 mediators were not members of the CAG, but outside partners as employees of the relevant local institutions. In some countries the National team and facilitators were also proactively involved in direct identification of active people (e.g. FYRoM, Ukraine)

Results of the process: composition and dynamics of the CAGs

The process of selecting CAG members varied and depended on the local context and the approach of the national team. In some communities, the groups were selected from a smaller pool of community members, based on their individual interest to get involved in the process. In others, the selection of CAG members was based on a broader democratic process and a search for representation of wider community interests.

Examples of broad and representative selection of CAG members

The Giulesti Sarbi neighbourhood (Bucharest, Sector 6, Romania) organised a meeting attended by over 400 Roma from the neighbourhood. After discussions they elected 27 community members to represent them in the CAG.

The CAG members in *Targu Jiu (Romania)* were selected based on broad community meetings in each of the three Roma neighbourhoods. They had to identify priorities and to elect nine people from each community to represent it in the CAG. As a result, the CAG consisted of 27 members, representative of all communities and coming with a mandate to promote priorities selected by them.

The CAG members of *Tundzha municipality (Bulgaria)* were selected, through community consultations, from all 13 villages with a more significant share of Roma population.

Based on the case studies, a more representative selection of CAG members turned out to be a critical factor for better formulation of collective community demands for discussion with local authorities. It also enhanced the legitimacy of the CAGs as representative of all interests and segments of the communities. Where CAGs represented the interests of only one part of the community, or a narrower interest group, this turned out to be a challenge for effective identification of broader community needs (e.g. Kiev, Ukraine, Nagyecsed, Hungary, Byala Slatina, Bulgaria).

The size and composition of established CAGs is very diverse, reflecting differences in the context of local communities. Based on the case studies, CAG membership varied between six and 27, which was considered by the International team as the optimal number for effective group dynamics and processes.

Personal motivation and interest in the process led community members to get involved. Based on the interviews and focus groups with CAGs in the different countries, the main motivation of people participating in the groups was to see some difference in their communities. A very important driving factor was the wellbeing and better life of children as the future of communities. Keeping this motivation was not an easy process as people wanted to see tangible results from their work.

"We are mothers and we want our children to have education and better chances than us, instead of repeating what we did not have."

CAG members in Tundzha, Bulgaria

In most cases CAG membership fluctuates, and tends to shrink rather than expand. This was also a response to one of the principles of the CAG - to be an open structure with people joining and leaving. While this principle was intended to avoid the CAGs becoming closed, self-centred, and disengaged from the community, it also had some challenges. First, some of the municipalities wanted a CAG with some clear parameters, for example a list of the members as a requirement for official recognition of communication with them. Second, openness of the group and keeping it connected to the community should mean people leaving, but new people also joining.

Based on the review of documents and on interviews, it seems that there is a tendency for CAG membership to shrink rather than expand. This differs between localities, and some CAGs did have a stable membership. If the group remains too small it can limit the process of empowerment to a few individuals, especially if they have no effective links with different parts of the community. At the same time having too many group members can make the process of cooperative planning unmanageable.

The ROMED2 Guidelines do not provide much guidance on the maintenance of linkages with the community, or on CAG membership development and representativeness. Maybe this is due to the fact that the Guidelines focus on a cooperative process of mediation and planning, which requires groups that can be trained and are able to participate in planning.

Stakeholder feedback about CAG experiences suggests that there is a need for more reflection on the community based nature of the CAGs, especially regarding the successes of CAGs where there was a more representative membership selection process. Is it enough to have a CAG made up of a small group of community members? Or is it also important to focus more on facilitating consideration by CAG members about involving more community members to ensure broader community support and involvement?

Shrinking of membership also relates to the issue of keeping people motivated. Keeping the motivation of the group was outlined as one of the greatest challenges across countries. As outlined in interviews from all countries, most important to keep the motivation of people involved is that they see tangible small changes coming from this involvement. This required consistency of the process and respectively the presence of the national facilitator in order not to lose the momentum and trust of the group. The interruption of the programme, especially in 2015, affected negatively the motivations of the CAGs in the four countries where ROMED2 and ROMACT were implemented simultaneously. In other locations the frequent change of facilitators affected negatively the group.

"The programme was very promising but activities took place in waves with months of silence in-between."

CAG member, Bulgaria

Promoting the participation of women is not just about counting the number of women involved in activities. It is a process of overcoming cultural specificities which were stronger in some communities and/ or countries.

In all countries national teams and facilitators consistently sought to involve active women in the CAGs. Specific sessions during the NFP/ NPO meetings contributed to raised awareness amongst the teams about women's issues. Questions related to the participation of women were part of the reporting system of the national teams. Based on the programme statistics and on the case studies, the participation of men is higher than of women in the majority of the groups. However, there are a few groups (for example in Hungary, Bulgaria and Ukraine) which are composed mostly of women. The situation also differs between countries. In countries such as Portugal, the predominant tendency was reduced female involvement in the CAGs, although this was changing over time. For example in Torres Vedras (Portugal) there was a slow increase in the participation of women. In Ukraine women comprised more than 50% of CAG .

As the involvement of CAG members changed over time, this also affected the share of women in the groups. Different tendencies were noted in different countries. In Romania, there was a tendency for women to leave the group due to their family responsibilities. In FYRoM the share of women CAGs members is falling as the number of participating municipalities increases. On the other hand, in Slovakia women constitute the stable core of the groups, although there are fewer women than men. The overall impression there is that women are better motivated and tend to be permanent members.

Three other aspects of diversity can be also outlined:

- In a number of CAGs there is significant presence of members of ***the Roma Evangelic Church*** (Portugal, Bulgaria, and Romania). The involvement of pastors of these churches was a good entry point to large segments of the community.
- In Romania, ROMED2 tried to involve a wide range of people in the CAGs, not only from the Roma community, because the programme aimed to impact the whole community. In two of the case study locations the group is mixed and ***involves both Roma and non-Roma***, and this helps to build bridges between the Roma and majority community groups.
- ***Involvement of organised civil society or locally elected Roma***. In a number of locations, people active in communities approached by ROMED2 were also active in other fields or organisations. These included representatives of local Roma NGOs, representatives of Roma communities who are elected members of local municipal councils, and representatives of community centres or Roma information centres (e.g. CAGs in FYROM and Slovakia). Stakeholders noted that this participation provided more organisational experience, it increased legitimacy and contacts with institutions, and it led to the provision of office space and support from the local NGOs.

The group dynamic was driven by the participatory work cycle: identification of community needs; definition of proposals for solutions; planning and implementation of initiatives together with the municipalities.

3.2.5. Effectiveness of cooperation between the CAGs and local authorities

Effective interaction of the CAG with the local government is essential for the success of the local processes facilitated by the ROMED2 programme. The starting point for selecting municipalities to participate in the programme was that the local authorities should demonstrate political will and openness to the proposed local processes.

The envisaged steps for cooperation between the CAG and the local authorities are outlined in the ROMED2 Guidelines. Their practical application depended on the type of municipality, the commitment

of local authorities to Roma inclusion, and the availability of resources from the local budget or national programmes.

Changes in administration following elections affected the process in some municipalities. Increasing nationalism amongst the local electorate is a disturbing trend that has led to the election of local councillors who are less open to addressing Roma issues and inclusion.

Cooperation was organised around ***the Institutional Working Groups***, which have been set-up in each location. They are composed of representatives of the local administration and institutions and the CAG. Each municipality assigned a person responsible for cooperation on Roma issues. These are heads of department or deputy mayors. In some municipalities we met with the all relevant heads of department, who were working together as a team around a shared vision on priorities for Roma inclusion (for example Tundzha in Bulgaria and Jarovnice in Slovakia). The experience of the Institutional Working Group in Targu Jiu is very interesting. This involved all key local stakeholders, including institutions in the areas of education, employment and public healthcare, the CAG, and the two local Roma NGOs with broad support in local communities.

The dialogue is supported through regular meetings of the Institutional Working Groups, where Roma issues are raised. These generally take place once per month. It was also reported that, in many of the case study locations, there is informal communication between CAG members and the local administration, especially in locations where there were good relations, or where CAG members also worked in the municipality or were locally elected officials.

In all visited case study locations, we interviewed the municipal focal point and, where possible, the members of the Institutional Working Group and the mayor. Local authority interview feedback can be summarised as follows:

ROMED2 opened new channels of communication between the Roma community and local authorities. It established a form and a structure for communication, namely the Institutional Working Group and the joint planning sessions with the CAG, which were considered useful. The joint work of local authorities and CAGs was a mutual learning process in applying more inclusive principles in the work of the municipality.

"Before we worked on some assumptions that we developed at our desks. Now we have a direct link with communities and they give us much more accurate statistics on a range of issues. This helps us learn directly with communities and together find what can make a difference for them and for the whole municipality".

Tundzha Municipality, Bulgaria

- ***Investing in the CAG as a group of representatives from the Roma community gives the local government a good tool and partner to solve specific problems.*** Purposeful development of such groups makes the programme unique, and in the opinion of local government representatives *"other programmes so far have not provided such direct and constructive communication with the Roma community"*.
- ***The action orientation of the programme, with a tangible focus on solving community problems and creating local plans*** was viewed as useful to local authorities.
- ***Organised by CAGs, the community diagnosis of needs in most locations was considered very useful*** by the local administration. It helped to identify the real problems and to design plans and measures that were more realistic.

- **Interaction between the CAGs and local authorities was much more frequent and efficient when members CAG members were also members of the local administration or were Roma local councillors** (for example in FYRoM and Slovakia), or when they were mediators or a similar profession (e.g. community workers, social workers and health assistants (Slovakia)) and they were in direct contact with the local authorities on a daily basis due to their professional responsibilities.
- In some countries (e.g. Ukraine) some of the main problems related to **changing the composition of the CAGs which made the process unstable**. Another challenge was the high turnover of public officials due to elections or reforms at the local level.
- Finally, **the biggest challenge was the lack of resources from state and local budgets**, and limited donors to support local initiatives.
- **Political changes due to elections (of mayors, or of the majority within the local councils) were identified as a challenge in a number of the visited locations**. Replacement of key people who supported the process in local administrations undermined interaction between local authorities and CAGs, especially in cases where the CAG was not institutionally recognised (e.g. the resignation of the deputy mayor in Bucharest, Sector 6).

The effectiveness of the interaction between the CAGs and the local authorities varied between locations and depended, for example on:

- The size of municipality;
- The organisation of the CAG;
- Whether or not Roma had local political representation;
- The openness of the local administration and support of the local council;
- The existence of national programmes and availability of funding in support of local initiatives for Roma inclusion and the extent to which the relevant municipality was covered by the priorities of these programmes.

The following paragraphs provide examples of successful interaction that were noted at case study locations:

The main results from the cooperative process were the local action plans developed by local authorities together with the CAGs, and adopted in the local development plan in a great number of the municipalities in the seven countries. In some of the countries a facilitating factor was the good momentum and timing. For example, in 2014 all municipalities in Bulgaria had to develop local strategies and plans for Roma inclusion in order to be included in EU Structural Funds Operational Programme priorities. The level of implementation of adopted plans varies between municipalities depending on national strategic priorities and national programmes supporting Roma inclusion.

Timely solving of urgent community needs identified by the CAGs. Examples included:

- Addressing lack of access to drinkable water in villages;
- Access to waste collection services;
- Street lights and improved road infrastructure;
- Access to public transport (bus stops close to Roma neighbourhoods),
- Resolving conflicts around housing.

As a sign of successful cooperation and recognition of the CAGs, some municipalities are starting to support their CAGs. Some municipalities provided technical and organisational support (e.g. municipalities providing rooms for CAG meetings in Portugal, Romania, and Bulgaria). As a sign

of increasing trust and recognition of the CAGs some municipalities provided small financial support for CAG initiatives, for example to organise the International Roma Day (e.g. in Bulgaria, FYRoM, Ukraine, and Portugal).

There were also cases where municipalities employed members of the community at the request of the CAGs (e.g. in Portugal the seven ROMED2 municipalities created approximately 30 jobs over almost two years, generally on temporary contracts. In Bulgaria, Tundzha municipality provided employment for eight school mediators on part time project contracts.

While most of the examples were in the framework of local cooperative planning and implementation processes, this did not always run smoothly. Where the cooperative process was not working and local authorities did not respond to urgent community problems, the effectiveness of interaction depended on the capacity of the local CAG to put pressure on decision makers through community based advocacy action.

Community based action to restore transport services in Giulesti Sarbi Roma neighbourhood of Sector 6, Bucharest. Romania

Due to the catastrophic state of the main road connecting the Roma neighbourhood to the city, the transport services were interrupted. In order to attend school, children had to walk for more than a kilometre in an unsafe area.

Over 200 petitions and complaints from community residents were sent to the City Hall. Due to the lack of response, CAG members and Roma NGOs organised a peaceful protest in September 2014. As a result the metropolitan administration of Bucharest repaired the road and the transport services were restored in October 2014.

3.3. Efficiency of allocation of human and financial resources

In terms of efficiency of resource allocation, we had to explore two main aspects:

- Reconciling the aim of close and efficient synergies with the need to maintain a clear distinction of resources between ROMED2 and ROMACT which were implemented simultaneously in four of the seven focus countries;
- Level and type of resource allocation in the selected municipalities to generate the desired results of ROMED2 – facilitating factors and challenges.

3.3.1. Synergy between ROMED2 and ROMACT and differentiation of resources (Bulgaria, Hungary, Slovakia and Romania)

As outlined in the introduction, ROMACT started as a Joint Programme of the CoE and DG Employment shortly after the start of ROMED2. During 2014 the two programmes were implemented simultaneously in four of the seven focus countries – Bulgaria, Hungary, Romania and Slovakia. In late 2014, was decided that these four countries would continue to participate only in ROMACT.

ROMACT is not the subject of this evaluation. As it was implemented simultaneously in four of the seven focus countries the evaluation team had to explore it only from two perspectives: firstly, to identify the complementarities between the two programmes as strategies and resources, and secondly, to pinpoint the differentiation between their resources.

Based on interviews with the ROMACT management and DG Employment, the aim of ROMACT was to build the capacities of local authorities to develop and implement policies, strategies and services that are inclusive of all. The programme has four clear cut phases with clear benchmarks and desired outputs for each of the phases. The main synergy with ROMED2 was in the second phase of ROMACT – *'Agreeing on what needs to be done to improve the living conditions of Roma.'* This phase accommodated the creation of the CAGs, the community needs assessments, and the development of the joint action plans and local strategies, although in a much shorter period.

The main difference between the two programmes is that in ROMACT the CAGs were not at the centre of the process. They were a counterpart representing the views of the community and a tool for participatory municipal planning. The rest of the ROMACT phases were focused on targeted capacity building aimed at developing concrete plans and projects to integrate Roma communities and for accessing EU funding. For this, in addition to national facilitators, ROMACT also worked with experts who assisted municipalities in accessing European funds (project development and applications).

Stakeholder feedback in the four countries indicates there is a lack of clarity on the synergy between the strategies of the two programmes. As noted in one interview, the synergy was that *"ROMACT practically absorbed ROMED"*.

The main difference is that ROMACT shifted the focus, from communities and their empowerment, to local authorities and development of their capacity to generate successful project proposals. From this perspective the two programmes view Roma inclusion differently.

Moving the focus, objectives and desired outcomes, from community empowerment, to increasing the awareness and capacity of local authorities led to very different programme processes that require different approaches and different types of resources, and expertise.

Limiting the space for the process of activating local communities and accelerating the formation of CAGs was interpreted as a *"deviation from the original idea of ROMED2, not a synergy"*.

Another difference is that ROMED2 has a clear process orientation to meet its Roma community empowerment objective, which was valued by all national teams. ROMACT is perceived more like a project aiming at delivering outputs and outcomes in the form of projects successfully applied by municipalities and inclusive local approach to social inclusion.

ROMED2 was designed in a very participatory way involving the collective thinking of national teams and experts from the different implementation countries. Their feedback suggests that there could perhaps have been more dialogue about the envisaged interaction of ROMACT and ROMED2, and how ROMACT might affect local ROMED2 processes.

The merging of the two programmes in the four countries, first as parallel efforts in the same municipalities, and later only as ROMACT, caused much confusion amongst the national teams and in municipalities. It was reported that in some cases it also affected the selection of municipalities.

The shift of objective, meaning and approach with the merging of the two programmes was also perceived as counterproductive to the objective of ROMED2. It was sending to local stakeholders (especially the community action groups) the message that empowerment is not so important. It was effectively confining empowerment to participatory project generation. The main benchmark was successfully applied projects. This made the task of national teams and facilitators challenging and they did their best to continue the local processes started in the initial ROMED2 municipalities.

ROMACT is expanding to new municipalities. Even though it is stated that ROMACT applies the ROMED2 process, the actual process in the new places is different. As outlined in the interviews in the

four countries "there are no resources [in ROMACT] to do real empowerment process through the development of CAGs".

Based on the interviews with the ROMED management team, avoiding the overlap of resources between the two programmes was ensured centrally by clear differentiated allocations from the two budgets. It was also carefully monitored. This relates mainly to the implementation in 2014 when the programmes were running simultaneously in the same localities. At that time local allocation of resources was 50%-50% between the two programmes.

The link between the two programmes was referred mostly through the perspective of avoiding duplication of resources, rather than of how the investment of the two programmes could be strategically optimised to increase impact in localities. While we could evidence shared understanding among all levels of the ROMED2 teams about the synergy between the objectives, desired outcomes and optimisation of resources between ROMED and ROMED2, we could not identify the same in terms of strategic linkage between ROMED2 and ROMACT.

3.3.2. Level and type of resource allocation in ROMED2 municipalities

Table 8 below summarises the allocation of resources in the different countries for period 2013 to 2016. This shows that ROMED2 allocations are modest.

Table 8: ROMED2 (2013-2016) direct costs (euro)

ROMED2	Number of Municipalities	Total Direct costs	National Coordination	Training and Local interventions	National coordination as % of total costs
ROMED2 Direct costs (2013-2016)					
FYROM	10	286,000	46,000	240,000	16%
Portugal	9	246,000	36,000	210,000	15%
Ukraine	7	201,000	31,000	170,000	15%
ROMED2/ROMACT Direct costs (2014)*					
Bulgaria	6	127,000	24,000	103,000	19%
Hungary	6	138,000	26,000	112,000	19%
Romania	10	186,000	32,000	154,000	17%
Slovak Republic	5	85,000	14,000	71,000	16%
Totals	53	1,269,000	209,000	1,060,000	16%
*ROMED2/ROMACT direct costs for Bulgaria, Hungary, Romania and Slovak Republic until 2014 are estimated at 50%-50% from the budget of each programme. From 2014 on, work in localities in these four countries was funded by ROMACT only.					

The resources for national coordination include the payment of the NPO, the NFP and administrative costs of the national support organisation.

The sums in the column 'training and local interventions' cover diverse resources:

- Fees and travel expenses of national facilitators working in the different municipalities;
- Travel, food, facilities rental, and materials for the meetings of facilitators-CAG meetings;
- Travel costs for the needs assessments;
- Cost of local authority-CAG meetings;
- CAG training costs and local administration costs (including national meetings, roundtables, advocacy activities, etc..)

The average annual direct cost of training and local interventions was approximately €12,000 per ROMED2 municipality. The average annual direct cost per ROMED/ROMACT municipality (2014) is also low. The highest is Hungary (€18,666), followed by Bulgaria (€17,166), Romania (€15,400) and the Slovak Republic (€14,000). In practice, when run in parallel in 2014, the two programmes used the same teams and national facilitators. ROMACT had additional resources related to the objective of developing local administration capacity to generate project applications (an additional expert to support this objective and additional training and meeting costs).

ROMED2 can be considered a cost-effective process, achieving a lot in terms of community engagement with limited financial and human resources directly allocated to support local processes. But it is questionable from the perspective of local empowerment and development of local ownership.

Feedback from interviews with all national teams, and the focus groups meetings with CAGs and local authorities, indicates that lack of support at the local level significantly constrained the programme's impact. The financial resources reaching the local level (to cover meetings costs and CAG expenses) are a very small share of the overall modest resources allocated to support to the process at municipal level:

- A major constraint on the effectiveness of the empowerment process at the local level was that **there were almost no resources to support the work of the CAGs**. As noted by some of the NPOs: *"We had in the budget money for renting of meeting rooms, of multimedia and computers in order to show slides and educate the CAGs. Instead we could have invested this resource in the group"*.
- Most of the costs for the meetings and work of the CAGs were linked with the visits of the national facilitator, and this made groups dependent on the frequency of these visits. The municipalities provided meeting rooms in some cases, but this was not the practice everywhere. In other cases, CAGs were hosted by local NGOs which made their offices available for meetings.
- A second gap in the ROMED2 approach is that it relies on external resources and the local municipal budget to fund identified initiatives. However, these are not always available, and in some cases it is necessary to undertake additional work to access these resources. **The need for small funds in support of start-up initiatives to activate communities and increase trust and visibility** was noted in interviews with ROMED2 and external stakeholders from all seven evaluation focus countries.
- **The rule was that local facilitators were not paid**, on the assumption that they would be the mediators hired by the municipalities. As outlined in the previous section, in many cases mediators were actually unemployed, or if they were employed, they had a full time job, on the minimum salary, with a job description that did not include facilitating the local process. The CoE ROMED management team later decided to make minimal payments to local facilitators/ mediators in Portugal and Hungary.

From the perspective of the ROMED management and pedagogical teams, the programme should not provide resources other than human resources to enable the processes at local level. This was agreed at the outset of the programme with all national teams. This was to avoid making CAGs too

dependent on the programme, which would have been a risk if it had financed local initiatives or local facilitators directly, instead of helping local actors to look for existing local and other funding.

This is always a risk, and there are many examples of programmes that have resulted in unsustainable solutions because of this. However, there are also good examples of ***how financing can be provided at the local level as an incentive that can stimulate the search for other resources. Matching grant contributions, for instance, can serve as 'seed money' that will assist local community campaigns and actions that in turn will result in the empowerment of local people, but will also attract other resources.*** The lack of financial resources at the local level was as a significant constraint in all focus countries. With this in mind, It would be worth exploring more flexible and alternative ways of supporting the local process.

3.3.3. Efficiency of contractual agreements and provision of financial resources

Feedback from the national teams and facilitators on the efficiency of contractual agreements and the regularity of the provision of financial resources varied between countries. While it was very positive in countries like Portugal, Ukraine and Macedonia, in all four ROMED2/ROMACT countries there were serious interruptions in the process which undermined effectiveness.

Interview feedback from the ROMED management indicates that, in 2015, a new EU contractual arrangement, PAGODA ('Pillar Assessed Grant or Delegation Agreement'), came into force. PAGODA replaced the EU Contribution Agreement which had been used for the contracts between the CoE and the EU for a decade.

The negotiations between the CoE and the EU to fine-tune all the legal and operational implications of this new arrangement took several months. The present agreement with the EU covering the ROMED programme, with the start date of the Action on the 31st March 2015, and of the second ROMACT agreement with the start date of the Action on the 01 December 2014, were concluded under the new PAGODA arrangement. However, because of the long negotiations, the CoE only had access to funds from the EU in August 2015.

This situation disrupted implementation of the programmes in the field. Countries funded under the ROMACT programme, including four evaluation countries (Bulgaria, Hungary, Romania, and the Slovak Republic), were more seriously impacted than countries funded under the ROMED Programme, which include three evaluation focus countries (FYRoM, Portugal and Ukraine). While the negative impact on the ROMED programme was mitigated by the CoE's 50% budget share, the CoE's 20% contribution to the ROMACT programme was not sufficient to cover all the needs of the programme for the period in question.

As a direct consequence, the contracts for the operational costs and fees for the members of the team were interrupted for several months and the implementation of the programme at national and local levels was delayed. National teams and facilitators worked under consultant contracts, renewable on a three-monthly basis. In theory, the contracts were supposed to be renewed automatically. Feedback from interviews with national teams and facilitators in Bulgaria, Hungary, Romania and Slovakia indicated that contracts and payments were delayed for up to eight months.

Although the majority of country teams continued working with communities, this interruption had serious negative consequences. In some localities, the process was interrupted or very irregular. Some national facilitators left for another job resulting in discontinuity, and in some cases (e.g. Cicava in Slovakia), this ultimately resulted in the locality dropping out of the programme. Overall, this

undermined the fragile trust that had been established within Roma communities and local stakeholders with so much effort the previous year.

3.4. Emerging impacts towards stimulating change in Roma communities

3.4.1. General observations on impact

Feedback from interviews carried out in the course of this evaluation at international, national, and local levels, highlights several issues that need to be considered when exploring the ROMED2 programme's effectiveness with regard to stimulating change in Roma communities. They can be summarised as follows:

Stakeholders have diverse expectations about the programme's impact

ROMED2 is funded by DG EAC and this suggests that project activities might be expected to have some educational impacts. This is further suggested by the aims and intended results stated in the project proposal, as funded by DG EAC. These generally focus on raising awareness of Roma communities of the benefits of education, interaction with school authorities, on work with mothers as *'natural mediators to encourage their children to recognise the value of education'*.⁴⁷

The Joint Programme's logframe, agreed with DG EAC, guides the work of the CoE.⁴⁸ The aims and results given in the logframe focus on the functional aspects of the ROMED2 process – empowerment of communities and changed local environments which should lead to integrated approaches to Roma inclusion covering various priorities identified by communities, one of which could be education. The participation of women (mothers and girls) is a crosscutting issue, not an objective in itself.

The empowerment of communities for democratic participation is the main intended impact of ROMED2.

All levels of the ROMED2 programme implementation, including the CoE team, national teams, and local stakeholders, have a shared understanding of ROMED2 as a local cooperative process helping the development of integrated approaches to Roma inclusion. Central to the programme is the aim to achieve strong community capacity to self-organise (development of the CAGs), and to express priority needs and provide potential solutions to community issues. This needs to be matched by an environment in which cooperative local authorities adopt these needs and priorities in local policy implementation (joint planning process and institutional working groups).

Impact in terms of increased community access to services, including education, can be achieved only in the long term as a result of consistent implementation of the adopted plans and the capacity to attract the necessary resources.

"ROMED2 is a process. It thinks in terms of 'small victories' in building the local dynamics of change, rather than immediate large scale impact".

⁴⁷ ROMED2, Narrative Report, April 2013-March 2014. Appendix2 – Description of tasks of ROMED2.

⁴⁸ Information on purpose, results and status of activities as in programme log frame on 09 January 2016 (<http://www.jp.coe.int/CEAD/JP/Default.asp?TransID=349>)

The ROMED teams

Expectations and attempts to measure the impact of ROMED2 need to be realistic:

ROMED2 is a relatively short programme. It started in April 2013 and was originally planned to end June 2016, although it has recently been extended to February 2017. In practice the programme started in late 2013 or early 2014 in all countries. In four of the evaluation focus countries, where ROMED2 and ROMACT were implemented together, the practical implementation of both programmes was less than two years. This was due to the interruption of the programme for between six and nine months on account of delayed contracting and financing of local processes. External factors also reduced activities. These included national or local elections, and the need to restart the process following political changes in some municipalities.

As noted in the interviews with the national teams, the first year of ROMED2 (2014) was limited to the initiation, introduction and testing of the local cooperative planning, and development of community structures and sensitisation of local authorities to cooperation. Outcomes with prospects for real impact started to emerge only in the second year, 2015.

Expectations about impact should be realistic and correspond to the level of resources invested.

The programme has very modest resources at the local level but expectations for impact are high, locally and internationally. Much larger investment over a much longer period is required to change the lives of people in marginalised communities.

ROMED2 as a programme investing in local processes could only contribute by demonstrating another way of 'doing business.' It has formed community action groups that will gradually activate communities. It has created a new shared space for Roma communities and local authorities to meet, and plan and work together. This will gradually lead to sustaining new approaches to Roma inclusion at the local level. It is also important to consider how, and to what extent, the limited resources that ROMED2 invested have generated synergies with other resources available from national programmes, local municipalities or other donors.

Impact has a relative meaning, depending on the local context:

It is not possible to offer a unified definition and benchmarks for impact across municipalities and countries in terms of changes in the lives of Roma communities. Country contexts vary significantly and there are major differences in the level of local political support for Roma inclusion. 'Success' is understood differently by different municipalities. How they understand 'success' depends on the local context, for example:

- Size of the municipality;
- Existing level of economic and social development;
- Level of marginalisation and segregation of Roma communities;
- History of self-organisation and political participation of Roma;
- Openness and capacity of local authorities for Roma inclusion.

3.4.2. Contribution to Roma community empowerment

The most visible direct contribution of ROMED2 to the empowerment of Roma communities was the development of the CAGs in the municipalities covered by the programme. It was the result of

systematic capacity building (training, mentoring and coaching) provided to the CAGs, and facilitation of their interaction with local authorities.

From an educational perspective, *ROMED2 tested and successfully applied innovative experiential learning and **capacity growth in the area of democratic citizenship and inclusive governance***. This made an important contribution to empowerment:

- By assisting the development of core active groups of citizens, ROMED2 helped to create **new community leadership capacity** within the Roma communities, that was able to express the interests of the community and participate in local development, while gradually mobilising the broader community.
- By facilitating joint work between the CAGs and local authorities and institutions, the programme initiated learning around the practical application of good and inclusive governance principles. This resulted in the development of a **new interactive space for shared leadership and responsibility for Roma inclusion** within municipalities

At individual level, CAG members have gained new skills and self-esteem resulting from learning and practicing active citizenship.

During focus groups meetings, CAG members demonstrated enhanced self-esteem in the majority of visited locations. For some CAG members this was a first experience in democratic participation, and was their first encounter and direct work with institutions. As noted during focus group meetings, it is very empowering that the opinion of a community member has the same value as the opinion of someone who is working in local institutions. CAGs members in Portugal stated "*Now we feel like more important people*".

Increased individual self-esteem, as active citizens, has motivated some CAG members to continue their formal education.

This was an unanticipated result of ROMED2. In some of the municipalities where CAG members had limited education, they decided to continue their formal education as a result of their participation in the CAG. For example, in Tundzha municipality in Bulgaria, two women from poor villages who did not finish secondary education continued their education after joining the CAG. Now one of them works as a school mediator. Both are proud that they can be role models for their children, as well as for their communities.

An interesting case was provided in Portugal, which is described below.

Assisting access to university education of active young Roma in Portugal

Some active young CAG members in Portugal expressed an interest in continuing their education at university. To assist them, the ROMED2 national support organisation Letras Nómadas raised funding for eight Roma scholarships under "Programme Escolhas" (a national programme that receives applications for inclusion projects). The Portuguese government recognised the merit of the initiative and deliberated the funding of 25 additional Roma scholarships for 2016-2017.

At group level, the programme created new informal community structures composed of active people that were able to negotiate and cooperate with local authorities.

As reported at focus group meetings with CAGs, for a number of communities this was the first experience of developing collective demands, based on agreed priorities, for inclusion in local policies.

It is important that in some municipalities this process involves representatives of the most marginalised groups in the community, which do not usually communicate with the municipality.

The recognition of the majority of CAGs by municipalities is another significant victory for the programme.

In most of the visited locations, it was the first time that a local action plan was developed collaboratively within the community, and in most cases accepted by local authorities. Roma communities usually do not participate in the development of these plans, except where they have some representation. Functioning communication channels were established between the municipalities and CAGs. However, only in a few places has this started to be institutionalised, with some CAGs becoming part of municipal consultative bodies. In other places, CAGs are taking steps towards becoming legally registered civic associations, which gives more independence and legitimacy with local authorities.

The CAGs are demonstrating a new model of active citizenship in their communities.

CAG members are part of the community and live within it. They are constantly interacting with people, asking about their needs and suggestions, and meeting with women, youth, and families. The success of CAGs in negotiating with local government to achieve visible results in addressing issues prioritised by the community, is based on broader community involvement. Here, people are developing the belief that their voice also matters.

CAGs may also have an important role in terms of democracy.

In several cases, CAG members worked, prior to elections, to motivate the community to vote, in some cases for the first time. CAGs were reported to have been effective in mobilising voters in Portugal and Hungary (elections for minority self-government).

While all of the above are signs of emerging impacts, and can be seen as significant achievements, they are just initial steps in the process of empowerment. Ensuring sustainability will require CAGs to continue working effectively over a longer period. While the CAGs we met with were promising, all are at an initial stage of development. Some are still dependent on the national team and on facilitators. They require mentoring, training and financial assistance to enhance their sustainability and scale-up their activities. It will be critical to assist CAGs with community engagement to expand their reach to different parts of the community and interests groups.

3.4.3. Emerging concrete impacts towards social inclusion at community level

General overview

The extent of implementation of agreed local plans varies between the 15 case study municipalities in the seven focus countries. Most are in the early stages of implementation. Although the plans were adopted relatively recently, mainly in 2015, initiatives of different scopes and in different sectors are already being implemented. Usually they are projects developed by the municipality and funded by national programmes, and partly supported by local budgets. In some cases, projects initiated by the CAGs were funded from other sources (donors and programmes) attracted by the effort of the national teams, especially in Hungary and Ukraine.

All case study municipalities provide evidence of initiatives that are bringing, or expected to bring, concrete impacts towards social inclusion in different areas:

In the majority of locations there are initiatives leading to improved living conditions and infrastructure. These include the repair of roads, access to public transport, improved access to running water, electricity, street lights, regular garbage collection, formalisation of Roma settlements and development of cadastral planning, solving housing issues and avoiding conflicts.

In most of the case study locations there are tangible education-related results. They include:

- New or refurbished kindergartens;
- New schools built in villages;
- Children better prepared for mainstream education, who otherwise would end up in special schools;
- Initiatives to overcome segregation in schools;
- Initiatives to raise parents' awareness of the importance of education, especially for girls;
- Adult learning programmes to help people finish their education.

A more in-depth overview of educational achievements and impacts is provided in the next section of the report.

Citizenship and solidarity - several CAGs in Portugal organised solidarity initiatives (e.g. collecting food products to donate to social care institutions) with an important impact for the image and reputation of Roma communities. These initiatives showed that they are also willing to give and to help, despite their own difficulties. A number of CAG initiatives in Ukraine supported internally displaced persons.

A number of initiatives addressed women's issues. The most prominent initiatives focused on preventative health care, campaigns to prevent early marriages, and education of young mothers. Examples of such initiatives were provided in case study municipalities in Bulgaria, Ukraine, Romania and Slovakia, but there is no systematic data their impact. In some countries gender issues are integrated into local policies. For example, in Transcarpathia (Ukraine) the regional administration proposed to appoint an Adviser to the Deputy Governor on Roma Gender issues.

All these initiatives started to produce small but visible results in the communities. As suggested by the CAGs, the fact that they were approved proves to the broader community that the opinion of Roma can be taken into consideration and action can be taken. These results provide active CAGs with new arguments to convince other members of the Roma community to participate more actively in the development and implementation of various initiatives.

Impacts in the area of education

From an educational perspective, the main contribution of ROMED2 was in the area of informal education of active members of the Roma communities in democratic citizenship.

This, together with the practice of interaction with communities (to identify needs) and with local authorities (to develop and implement initiatives) had two important impacts: empowerment of core civic groups within Roma communities, and experiential learning by local authorities in participatory work and involvement of Roma communities.

The newly functional CAG infrastructure and established working relations with local authorities resulted in new initiatives, some of which will generate impact in different aspects of formal education. However, due to the wide diversity of local contexts in the 15 case studies locations, ***it is difficult to generalise horizontal findings and conclusions on impacts per area or sector*** (for example, education, employment, housing):

- ***The meaning of each of these initiatives and their impact is unique to each locations.*** It is rooted in the local context and provides learning for:
 - The process (the set of factors that help or hamper the empowerment of communities and more inclusive local institutions); and
 - Improvement of the situation in communities (the concrete activities and the emerging impacts they are generating).
- ***The open nature of the programme. There were no predefined sectors and priorities.*** Prioritising of needs and types of initiatives was left open to local stakeholders – the CAGs and the local institutions. As outlined in previous chapters this was one of the main merits of the programme. This bottom up approach ensured more ownership of the process, but it also generated diverse priorities and initiatives to meet these priorities.
- ***ROMED2 promoted integrated, rather than sectoral, approaches for Roma inclusion.*** From this perspective, the impact of initiatives was much broader than their sector or category. For example, the mentioned community-based campaign resulting in the repair of the road and the rehabilitation of public services in Bucharest, Sector 6 had a concrete impact on improved infrastructure. But it also had an impact on access to education for children, who could not go to school without public transport. This was actually the main driver that mobilised the Roma community to get organised in a civic protest and put pressure on the municipality.
- ***Finally, emerging impacts cannot be directly attributed solely to ROMED2 interventions.*** They depend on numerous local factors, including history of work in the area of education (of individuals, institutions and civil society involved), and attracting outside resources which in turn generated the concrete educational impacts. From this perspective we can talk about the contribution of ROMED2 rather than attributing educational impacts directly to it.

In the majority of the 15 case study locations there are initiatives directly or indirectly linked to education.

There are diverse initiatives, the importance of which is unique to each locality. In some rural communities, such as Valea Seaca in Romania, the main educational achievement was overcoming the barrier that children lacked birth certificates and could not be enrolled in school. In other communities, education initiatives were covered by consistent long-term educational strategies, searching not only for full coverage and enrolment of students but for increased quality of education.

Based on the case study municipalities, the types of educational initiatives are usually determined by the interrelation of a set of local factors:

- ***Level of poverty and marginalisation of the community*** – in more marginalised communities, there is a tendency to prioritise more immediate basic problems, such as living conditions, making a living, garbage collection, etc. Prioritising education requires that *the community horizon is extended beyond immediate needs*, to the future of the community. At the same time, children are perceived as the main asset, even in most marginalised Roma communities. This can serve as an entry point for starting or expanding initiatives to improve their education.
- ***Recognition of education as a priority by CAG members*** – CAG members are part of their community and reflect its level of vision beyond marginalisation. While the level of education of CAG members is an important factor, it is not the only one. As outlined in previous section, CAG members with no education were motivated to continue their studies because they recognised their lack of education was a barrier to their communication with institutions. A tendency noticed in the different case studies is that the involvement of women and youth in the CAGs contributes to the inclusion of education as community priority. Another critical factor was the capacity of national facilitator assisting the process and their understanding of education as a priority.

- ***Experience of local authorities and recognition of the importance of education*** – the case studies indicate that there are local authorities have differing attitudes to educational challenges in their municipalities, and differing capacities to address them. In some cases, these challenges are approached in a more fragmented way, especially when the municipality is poor, or has no previous experience in Roma inclusion initiatives. Results are much better when initiatives are based on a consistent, long-term vision that emphasises the importance of education.

The following paragraphs provide education-related examples from some of the case study municipalities.

Visible and consistent impacts resulting from shared long-term vision (municipality-CAGs) that prioritises education

Reducing school dropout levels from 30% to 15% in Tetovo and Prilep, FYRoM

Both Prilep and Tetovo have identified education of Roma as a long-term priority in their local development strategies. This priority is recognised by the younger members of the CAG in Prilep, and the CAG in Tetovo, which is supported by the Roma NGO 'Sonce'. Both CAGs have contributed to the development of the local strategies in the area of education.

An important contextual factor is that education of Roma is a priority in national strategies, and is supported by national programmes providing funding for local educational initiatives. Another important factor is the synergy between the ROMED1 and ROMED2 programmes, and between both programmes and national Roma inclusion policies.

By providing training to tutors in the two municipalities, ROMED1 contributed to their mediation capacity. This, together with the consistent support for their employment by municipalities had already achieved visible results in the communities. Due to the work of appointed educational tutors in the local schools, the percentage of children dropping out of school has been reduced from 30% to 15% in both municipalities.

Due to effective interaction between the CAGs and the municipalities, a number of projects were developed and funded by different sources, and these have contributed directly to increasing the level of Roma education. Initiatives include the reconstruction and rehabilitation of kindergartens and schools. Other initiatives relate to incentives for education. In Tetovo, 150 stipends for the completion of secondary education with a particular vocational specialisation were provided to Roma students with guaranteed employment after graduation. In Prilep, the Roma Perspective association, together with the contact points in the municipality are currently developing a fundraising strategy to create a fund for the implementation of small education projects.

Another example of visible impact resulting from the effective interaction of CAGs and municipalities based on a shared vision for education comes from Bulgaria.

Tundzha municipality, Bulgaria:

"Investing in all our children, including Roma, is investing in our future as a municipality".

This is the 'human mission' and shared motivational drive for local development by both the CAG and the municipality. Long-term vision in the area of education has guided Tundzha

Roma inclusion policy over the past 10 years. As a result of this, the municipality was first in Bulgaria to ensure full coverage and enrolment of children in preschool and school education. This was achieved by providing free of charge pre-school day care for all children, full board and food in schools, and free transport for all children from the villages to the schools and kindergartens.

By creating the CAG, ROMED2 assisted the municipality in identifying the specific educational needs in each of the 13 villages with a more significant Roma population. This resulted in a set of new initiatives for improving school and kindergarten infrastructure, as well as the quality of teaching and working with parents of Roma children. A new general school was built in one of the villages, that is more accessible to students from the surrounding villages. A new kindergarten in another village provides 50 Roma children with preschool education and thus enhances their prospects of being enrolled in school. Educational projects allowed the hiring of eight mediators in all schools in the villages.

"Full enrolment is not enough. We also need quality of education to make our children from the villages more competitive". Currently the municipality and the CAG are developing projects for improving the quality of teaching in rural schools in the municipality.

The municipality also supported 77 adult Roma from two villages to complete their basic education which will enhance their prospects of finding work.

Innovative initiatives resulting from broad stakeholder consultations, organised by a proactive CAG with a clear priority on education, and working in cooperation with local authorities.

Nyirbator Municipality in Hungary provides an interesting ROMED2 example.

Roma education as an opportunity: creating human resources needed for economic growth. Nyirbator Municipality, Hungary

The CAG in Nyirbator was led by a majority of active women. The two leading priorities identified by the group were education and employment. With the assistance of the national ROMED2 team and the mayor, the CAG organised issue-based meetings with a variety of local stakeholders to identify the best solutions in both priorities:

- An educational institutional meeting brought representatives of public and private schools, the municipality and the CAG together to discuss the main educational challenges of the Roma children such as segregation, cooperation with parents, and school drop-out.
- A joint meeting with the representatives of local companies and institutions called the attention of the companies to the available Roma human resources.

These efforts supported by ROMED2 produced concrete results in the area of education:

- Based on the initiative of the CAG, a second school bus was introduced for pupils commuting from the Roma settlement to their school. This greatly improved the access of Roma children to mainstream education.
- The local council adopted a local scholarship programme for primary and secondary school students with multiple disadvantages, jointly financed by the municipality and by local companies. The aim of the programme is to ensure completion of secondary vocational

school, and to provide a skilled labour force for local companies. The programme is planned to start in the 2016/ 17 academic year with between 50 and 100 students per year from Grade 5 to the final grade of vocational school.

- The municipality approved a sports scholarship program for talented disadvantaged students, which is expected to start in September 2016.
- The municipality also hired two school mediators, who monitor the attendance of children and facilitate communication between Roma parents and the school.

Proactive action of ROMED CAGs focused on fighting school segregation

Removing segregation practices in schools. Cicava, Slovakia

The CAG focused on removing possible segregation at schools and promoting the active involvement of Roma parents in school activities. The CAG mobilised mothers of students who were about to move from the primary school in Cicava to secondary school in Vranov nad Toplov, where Roma children from Cicava had to eat their lunch separately from the non-Roma children in a second shift. The active mothers, with the support of the school principal, managed to overcome this prejudice and all students started eating together in one shift.

3.4.4. Potential impact of ROMED2 at national level

The ROMED2 programme was built on local pilot interventions.

In some of the focus countries, meetings were organised between participating municipalities. However interview feedback suggests that more sharing of experiences, and more strategic dissemination of the ROMED2 approach through existing in-country networks of municipalities and civil society organisations.

National government support for this phase of ROMED2 varied between countries. In some countries (e.g. FYRoM) ROMED2 was implemented in synergy with existing national programmes and in close cooperation with the government. In others (e.g. Slovakia), ROMED2 did not succeed to link up with existing national programmes, one of which developed community centres in 150 municipalities with extensive national funding.

Despite its grassroots nature, the programme influenced national policies in some countries. Examples include:

- **In Romania**, the application guide for project proposals for the Human Capital Programme requires integrated measures for Roma communities. This application guide was influenced by the original idea of ROMED2, and will continue to shape the situation until 2020.
- **In Ukraine**, the NFP and the national support organisation 'Chirikli' have been very active in organising civil society to contribute to the NRIS. As a result, the National Strategy includes text about 'including Roma associations in the participation of community development, in particular in decision and development of policies that impact the development of Roma minority.' The NFP was very active in contributing to the development of the Strategy. Although, ROMED2 started in 2014, whereas the strategy was approved in 2013, the ideas of mediation practiced in ROMED1 revealed the importance of community empowerment for sustainable and effective Roma inclusion.

3.5. Sustainability prospects

The initial vision for sustainability of local processes supported by ROMED2 was to create mechanisms that would remain and ensure continued participation of Roma in decision making. There is a very brief section on CAG sustainability in the ROMED2 Guidelines for facilitators. It outlines three options:

- Keeping the CAG as ***an informal group of citizens***, with which municipal authorities consult on a regular basis;
- ***Registering the CAG as an NGO*** with the mission to contribute to local development by facilitating the participation of Roma citizens in the decision-making processes;
- ***Transforming the CAG into an official municipal consultative structure***, through a formal local council decision. This last option was based on the example of the neighbourhood councils in Timisoara in Romania.

Interview feedback from the International Pedagogical Team indicates that, during the start-up phase, a decision was taken to leave the options for CAG sustainability open rather than recommend specific actions because of the differing situations in each country and municipality. For example, not all countries have provisions for official consultative structures, like the neighbourhood councils in Romania. In some countries there are not enough Roma NGOs and registering a civic association was a preferred option (e.g. Portugal). In others, there are too many Roma NGOs and there is a growing concern about the way they function, which is not always participatory or representative of the communities (e.g. Romania).

Another envisaged step for ensuring the sustainability of the local processes was the role of local facilitators, usually fulfilled by mediators in the same locality. They had to take over the facilitation of the local process from the national facilitators provided by the programme.

We were unable to find clear evidence about the success of this strategy from a sustainability point of view. Firstly, in a number of countries, the local mediators were not aware that they were the local facilitators who were expected to take over the coordination of the process from the national facilitators. Secondly, we could not find clear evidence of concrete strategies to expand the capacities of local mediators so that they can take over as local facilitators. The only exceptions were Portugal and Ukraine, where the national team had consistent strategies for coaching and supporting the capacity of individual local facilitators. In the majority of the case studies locations, the key actor for the facilitation of the local process remained the national facilitator. In some municipalities other people from the CAG were emerging as the contact person for the group, not the mediators (examples were provided in Romania).

Another issue raised by outside stakeholders relates to the need of more in-depth reflection of the role of local mediators in the CAGs. As mediators are part of the municipality staff they can serve as resources for the CAGs, but they cannot drive their organisation. There is a need to develop leadership within the CAG as a structure which is not neutral – it clearly represents the interests of the community in dialogue with the local government.

The majority of the CAGs established in the seven focus countries are still active and are in different stages of institutionalisation:

- Some CAGs continue to meet as ***informal groups*** to discuss community issues and, in some cases, to initiate concrete actions when emergency situations occur without the presence or support of the facilitator.
- Some CAGs have decided to register as ***civic associations***. There are examples in all of the focus countries. They consider that registering as a civic organisation that is rooted in the

community provides more legitimacy for working with local governments, as well as more access to funds to sustain activities.

- There are also attempts to set up a **community consultative structure**. For example, in Timisoara in Romania, CAG members initiated an election process in the community to set up a consultative structure;
- In other countries it is considered that a better option for sustainability will be to develop a strategy for **synergies with existing structures in the community**(e.g. the Community Centres in Slovakia)
- Another option considered in different countries is to sustain the CAG by **working in partnership with existing local NGOs that can support their work**.

Most CAGs continue to need mentoring and support to become sustainable. Even successful groups consider that it will be very difficult to continue on their own without support from the national teams. This also applies to the CAGs that have been transformed into newly registered civic associations and NGOs. They are still very young organisations and need assistance in developing capacities for effective and accountable functioning, and in continuing to apply the participatory principles at the heart of the CAG concept. ROMED2 provided assistance in developing capacities for participatory planning, but it did not include focused development of capacities for effective community organising and leadership. This requires specifically targeted coaching and mentoring.

Based on the interviews with national teams and local stakeholders, it is vital for CAG sustainability to maintain their motivation through visible small successes. Without this there is a risk that the CAGs will become dormant or even disappear. Small but tangible changes in the community maintain interest and help to keep people actively involved. They also increase the trust of the broader community. Some actions require minimal funding but can generate impetus and change. Maybe for this reason, in a number of locations, the CAGs have decided to formally register as NGOs, because this form provides the best possibility for attracting outside support for community initiatives.

The advantages and risks of the different options for institutionalising CAGs were discussed during the international meetings of the national teams, the pedagogic team and the ROMED management. Feedback provided by the international teams about the case study municipalities indicates that the increasing tendency of CAGs to formally register as an NGO poses a serious risk that these new organisations will repeat the deficiencies of existing NGOs in terms of reduced community participation. If they become another local project holder, they may lose their authenticity as a new type of open, participatory, democratic self-organising with shared leadership. The trimestral reports from national teams also provide information about potential CAG sustainability.

At present, the discussion on sustainability has been intensified in view of the end of the current ROMED2 contractual period, and the decision to move ROMACT out of the first municipalities selected by ROMED2 in some countries (e.g. Bulgaria). A challenge in this regard is that the ROMED2 and ROMACT programme teams do not have a clear shared vision of success and sustainability should be assessed.

The issue of sustainability was also discussed with the national teams, and was covered in feedback on the draft evaluation report. As noted in interviews in the seven focus countries, and during the June 2016 meeting of NPOs/ NFPs (when the draft evaluation findings and recommendations were discussed), the sustainability of the investment of ROMED2 cannot be confined only to the issue of sustaining the CAGs.

Sustaining the local cooperation processes will depend on a number of interrelated factors:

- Sustained commitment of local authorities to continue the cooperation;

- Strong CAGs as community based structures to demand such commitment;
- Availability of national policies and programmes supporting local inclusive processes;
- Accessibility of funding at the local level to support community suggestions and local plans.

Based on the interviews with local stakeholders there are a number of challenges to sustainability. In more marginalised communities much longer processes are needed to get people organised. Building trust within the community also takes time.

Others challenges relate to the attitudes of local authorities - changing the institutional behaviour will take time. In some cases, local administration commitment and strategic vision for Roma inclusion might not be supported by the local council (e.g. Tundzha in Bulgaria). Elections can pose a serious risk, if this leads to changes in administration personnel. For example, in some locations, newly elected mayors completely reversed all their predecessor's Roma inclusion policies and frameworks (e.g. in Kavarna municipality in Bulgaria).

"Politicians come and go, but people in communities remain."

CAG member

As emphasised in all interviews with the CAGs, national teams and facilitators, ***strong self-organised communities are vital for the sustainability of the democratic participation of Roma communities in local decision making.*** Maintaining the interest and commitment of the local government in the process will depend on the capacity of active people and groups in the Roma community to demand this commitment. Another important factor, evident in several countries, is the involvement of elected Roma representatives on local councils who can advance the Roma agenda at the local policy-making level.

As noted by a participant at the NPO/NFP meeting in June 2016, during the discussions on the draft evaluation report, *"we talk about the sustainability of the CAG, but we should tackle the sustainability of empowerment instead"*. This is a very important issue that can help in thinking and strategising about the sustainability of the ROMED2 investment. It is also critical that the ROMED and ROMACT vision for the empowerment of Roma communities is clarified, and that the two programmes define how they can contribute effectively.

If the sustainability of the **CAG** is the main priority, then the investment will be limited to one group within the community. If this group is not representative and well linked with the different parts of the community, this could lead to a situation where the process of institutionalisation actively limits sustainability to a narrow part of the community. If the CAG is legally registered as an NGO, this may repeat the shortcomings of some of the existing Roma NGOs which are focused on projects and the interests of the people inside the NGO, rather than the interests of the broader community.

If the sustainability of local **Roma empowerment** is the main priority, then it will be an investment in the whole Roma community. This will require that the CAG effectively represents different community interests and remains an open platform for participation, that can mobilise and link different interest groups within the community. It should be accountable to the whole community. Then, if registered as a civic association, the CAG can become a new type of civic community-based organisation that can express the interests of the community and mobilise its involvement in local decision making in the long-term. Existing community based organisations provide examples of good practices, and learning from them can be of benefit to ROMED2.

Finally, It is important to consider the availability of national policies requiring local inclusive processes, and sources of funding for this. In some countries, such funding exists, and the issue is

more a matter of developing capacities to access it. In other countries, funds are not always available in localities that need it most. As suggested by the participants at the June 2016 NPO/NFP meeting, giving visibility to programme achievements could help secure support for the continuation and extension of the programme. It could also help advocacy for more accessible funds at the local level where the Roma inclusion process needs to happen.

Chapter 4. Conclusions and lessons

4.1. Conclusion and Lessons from ROMED1 'Training of Mediators'

4.1.1. ROMED1: key conclusions

ROMED1 was a large scale European effort developed by the Council of Europe and supported by the joint programme of the CoE and DG EAC to invest in the capacities and quality of work of mediators across Europe. With comparatively modest resources, it trained 1,479 mediators from more than 22 countries between 2011 and 2016.

ROMED1 developed and spread a new vision for the role of mediators at European, national and local levels. It is the first programme of this scale to have at its centre the development of Roma mediators and the need for systemic change to enable their effective functioning – it did not simply train mediators in specific skills.

ROMED1 significantly increased the functional capacities of mediators and by raising the profile of their work, it enhanced understanding of their complex role and the importance of their work..

There was limited impact on mediators' employment status and working conditions, especially in the countries where this profession is not recognised. This caused disappointment among trained mediators in some countries. In countries where mediators are recognised as a profession, there were minimal changes to their conditions of employment – their salaries remain low and there are no incentives for professional development.

The presence of well qualified mediators is making a significant difference for Roma communities in the locations they work in. We were provided with numerous examples of successful individual work. However, good national systems, to monitor mediators' working conditions and the impact of their work on Roma communities, are missing or limited.

ROMED1 had limited influence on national policies towards better recognition of mediators and their role. Its influence was most evident where there were strategic synergies between the programme and national programmes, where national governments were clearly committed, or where NFPs and their organisations mobilised effective advocacy actions.

The sustainability of the of ROMED1 investment will depend on national policies the capacity of and in-country systems to provide official recognition and continue capacity development for mediators. Based on the seven focus countries covered by this evaluation, there is progress towards recognition of mediators in some of the countries (e.g. FYRoM and Portugal). However, except for Portugal, there are no systematic programmes, and funding for training and capacity building for mediators, even in countries where the profession of mediator has been recognised for a long time (e.g. Bulgaria and Romania).

4.1.2. ROMED1: key lessons

Intercultural mediation is an important horizontal skill that complements substantive professional competence. There is a great need for a clear definition and understanding of the role of mediators to avoid the emergence of multiple interpretations of their functions.

Continuous development of mediators' functional competencies is critical for increasing the impact of their work. A one-time training is not enough. This requires comprehensive programmes including training and practice that will enable skills to be upgraded over time..

'One size fits all' international training does not work. Training content has to be continually adapted to diverse and changing local contexts, and to the concrete needs of trained mediators. The ROMED1 Trainer's Handbook was viewed as a general guiding reference, on the basis of which trainers contextualised the methodology. Additional national training guidelines with concrete local cases and examples would help to enhance acceptance of the methodology by other national programmes.

Lack of continuous monitoring and mentoring of mediators reduces the effectiveness of the programme, especially during the practice period. A major shortcoming of the programme was the lack of resources to provide effective mentoring. Consistent monitoring, together with peer support among mediators, needs to be envisaged as a strategy and supported by the allocation of relevant resources. Without this, the effectiveness of the practice period is limited.

Participation of local institutions in the training of mediators increases their understanding and acceptance of intercultural mediation. It enhances the positive recognition of mediators' work within institutions over time. Ideally, these institutions should be involved in the entire capacity development programme, and they should be encouraged to make a clear commitment to support mediators during the practice period.

It is better to concentrate the training of mediators in fewer countries rather than spreading resources too thinly. ROMED1 was extended too quickly to too many countries and this limited its strategic performance. Impact on national systems would have been greater if the right strategic niche and partnerships had been identified at the start of the programme, together with strategies for targeted promotion of the methods and curriculum.

More time is needed at the outset of the programme to ensure in-depth assessment and mapping of the country contexts, and more consultation with key stakeholders (including civil society). This will help adapt the programme to the local context, identify the right leading teams, ensure strategic positioning of the training of mediators and create alliances in support to intercultural mediation.

The training of mediators has greater impact if organised in partnership with existing national programmes to exploit strategic synergies, including concrete commitments by national governments regarding the employment of mediators. One-time training of mediators with no strategy to link the trained mediators with national systems produces only limited and fragmented results.

The sustainability of an outside training programme is likely to be limited if there is limited interaction with the key in-country key actors and they have no ownership or direct involvement. Key stakeholders who can contribute to the sustainability of the support provided to mediators include national authorities, local institutions, and civil society (Roma NGOs,

and organisations supporting mediators and the development by mediators of effective mediator networks).

Influence at the national level for improving policies and practices of mediators requires leadership and targeted investment. ROMED1 relied mostly on the leadership of national institutions and their involvement in training, as well as on the individuals hired as NFPs. But clear strategies and resources for national level advocacy and promotion were missing.

Advocacy for, and promotion of, better national policies for mediators are more effective if they are led by organisations rather than individuals. ROMED1 relied on the NFPs hired as individuals. The most active NFPs were those who led NGOs that had Roma inclusion and mediation at the heart of their mission. In some cases, (e.g. Ukraine) they succeeded in building broad NGO coalitions in support of NRIS policy change, including the position of mediators.

Networking and peer support among mediators is very much needed but requires strategically focused investment. ROMED1 provided space for shared learning during training and encouraged continued networking. This led to the creation of mediator networks in some countries, but clear targeted support and resources for their development was missing. If they are assisted to grow as effective associations, these networks could make an important contribution to the sustainability of policy and practice changes in the area of intercultural mediation.

4.2. Key conclusions and lessons from ROMED2 'Democratic governance and participation through mediation'

4.2.1. ROMED2: key conclusions

ROMED2 built on the lessons of ROMED1 training of mediators and focused on creating effective local participatory processes bringing together members of Roma communities and local authorities to plan and implement together local policies for Roma inclusion.

The programme created conditions for effective participation of Roma communities and joint work with municipalities. This included developing infrastructure for participation – the Community Action Groups (CAGs) and the institutional working groups with concrete objectives for this participation - developing local plans and their implementation. Local processes were assisted by outside facilitators providing training and assistance, and acting as mediators between the community and the local administration.

From an educational perspective, ROMED2 succeeded in testing and applying innovative experiential learning and capacity development for democratic citizenship and inclusive governance. This contributed to the creation of new community leadership capacity within the Roma communities, that were able to express the interests of the community and participate in local development. By bringing together the CAGs and the local authorities, ROMED2 developed interactive space for shared leadership and responsibility for Roma inclusion in municipalities.

The main results of the ROMED2 cooperative processes were the local action plans developed by the CAGs and adopted in the local development plans of most of the localities. Although only recently adopted (mostly in 2015) initiatives have already been planned or implemented in different localities, and these are having concrete impacts on social inclusion of Roma in different areas.

Cooperation between the CAGs and the municipalities has led to timely resolution of immediate problems in communities, such as community infrastructure, accessibility of public transport, access to waste collection services, resolving conflicts around housing, access to running water etc.. There are also a number of initiatives increasing access to education.

A number of initiatives improve school infrastructure and access to education for Roma children and adults, overcoming segregation practices in schools, and creating scholarships for Roma children and students. Each of these initiatives has an important impact which has a unique meaning for the locality. In some cases, initiatives are part of a shared, long-term vision reflecting the importance of education for the future of local development. In other locations, it is the first step in developing such a vision.

ROMED2 had only limited influence at the national level due to its pilot nature, building on locally based interventions. Impact at the national level was greater when ROMED2 was linked with strategic national programmes, or the ROMED2 National Support Organisation had a more proactive advocacy and communication strategy. More systematic strategies and more resources will be needed in order to disseminate lessons from localities and influence national programmes and policies.

ROMED2 has started important change processes at the local level but their sustainability is still fragile. More time is needed for processes aimed at empowering communities and changing local institutions and authorities towards more inclusive attitudes and practical work with Roma representatives. Despite successes, they are still at an initial stage and will need further support to ensure their sustainability.

Disruption of local processes reduced implementation of activities to less than two years and seriously affected the trust and credibility of the programme at the local level. This also undermined sustainability. In the four ROMED2/ROMACT countries there were gaps of six to nine months in implementation due to slow negotiations between the CoE and the EU regarding the new EU contractual arrangement, PAGODA. However, this delay affected only the four countries transferred to ROMACT, where the CoE's contribution was only 20%. The CoE was able to mitigate this negative effect in the remaining ROMED countries through its higher, 50%, contribution.

Lack of clarity and communication regarding synergies with other programmes, such as ROMACT, caused confusion at national and local levels in the countries where the programmes were implemented simultaneously. Shifting the focus from empowerment of Roma communities to developing local administration capacity in participatory project generation narrowed the space for the process of activating local communities. It accelerated the formation of CAGs as an instrument, not as a key actor of democratic participation. This was interpreted by national teams as 'deviation from the original idea of ROMED2, not a synergy'.

4.2.2. ROMED2: key lessons

Community empowerment and democratic participation

Community empowerment requires consistent support, and time, to activate multiple change processes at individual, group and community levels. The presence of outside facilitators assisting these processes helps communities to expand their vision, gain new knowledge and practices, and to access new resources.

Strong community self-organisation is critical for sustaining the success of the local cooperation processes. The CAGs that were created have acted as catalysts for activating the

community, as well as for putting collective demands for improvements to local authorities. They can be a key factor in maintaining local authority commitment for continuation of new local cooperative processes.

"If somebody from another community asks how we managed to achieve so much, our answer will be: the community is well organised –we know very well what we want, dedicated and committed people are involved, and there is constant dialogue with local authorities. We have to show that we are strong and reliable long term partners".

(CAG, Targu Jiu, Romania.)

Diverse representation of Roma community members in the CAG ensures that the process is kept open to broader community issues, and is not limited to specific interest groups. This can help consolidate the community around a longer term vision for empowerment and inclusion of Roma. This in turn is the force that drives work on specific causes and issues.

The presence of active and well-educated Roma and local Roma organisations working on specific issues can serve as a strong support network for the developing CAGs. This can be of mutual benefit for both the CAGs and the Roma NGOs. CAGs can benefit from the legitimacy of Roma NGOs due to their previous good record of work with local authorities. Creating CAGs around various issues or for an overall planning process can increase the constituency of Roma NGOs within the Roma communities. It can also contribute to a better representation of community needs and interests by Roma NGOs.

Community representation is difficult and less successful if the members of the CAG and the mediator are economically dependent on the municipality. In some poor rural communities, Roma community members depend entirely on the municipality for their income. In such a hierarchical situation, when the municipality is the main employer, it can be difficult to ensure that mediation is impartial, as can communication between the CAG and the municipality on an equal footing.

Support to small self-started community actions can catalyse the process of empowerment by gradually developing local capacity and greater self-esteem, maintaining motivation, and increasing trust among community members. ROMED2 provided only human resources and technical assistance. It relied mainly on generating projects to support community initiatives from the budget of the municipality or with outside funding. Due to the different opportunities for funding, and the gap between the momentum created in the community and the eventual success of the project application, this approach was not sufficient as the only source of support for empowerment initiatives. This led to disappointment and undermined trust in the process in many communities.

Local Roma inclusive governance

Openness and determination of local authorities to cooperate on Roma issues is crucial for sustaining the involvement and participation of Roma in local policy process. This emerged as a general lesson from all case studies. Different experiences exposed a range of critical issues:

- The personal, individual commitment of key people in the local administration is very important. But the process can be interrupted if it is not backed up by institutional commitment and human resource changes in the local administration.

- Ensuring the commitment of the mayor and local administration at the start of the process is important, but this commitment will be much more sustainable if it is supported politically with a vote by the local council.
- The support and involvement of the local council throughout the process can enhance the sustainability of local authority support.
- Representation of Roma on local councils and in the local administration is a key factor for ensuring long term political commitment in the local administration.

The direct involvement of active Roma community groups roots local policy in real community needs and issues. In a number of locations the local administration considered that CAGs helped them learn about communities and to interact more directly with them. As a result, new initiatives were based on real needs, and there was more direct feedback on implemented policies.

Small rural municipalities need to be linked in active partnerships with other actors, especially with NGOs, in order to access EU funding. Such municipalities depend on additional outside resources to advance the process of Roma inclusion. But their capacity is often limited and they may not be eligible for national programmes. Through increased partnership with NGOs, they can access the necessary additional expertise and human capacity.

Addressing emergency needs on a temporary basis might be an option if it is part of (and conditional on) the development of a comprehensive integrated solution that is coordinated with national strategies and financial support. It is not realistic to expect immediate improvement in completely segregated settlements faced with total exclusion, anti-Roma prejudice, weak NGOs, and lack of resources (e.g. Kortina in Slovakia). Creating integrated solutions requires a clear strategy, time and resources.

Education

Informal education of Roma communities members in active citizenship is critical for the empowerment of Roma communities. The creation and development of the CAGs has expanded the capacities and vision of active community members. This cannot be achieved by one-time training. It requires continuous coaching and mentoring provided by outside facilitators who understand the complexity of Roma empowerment. The CAGs became practical schools for active citizenship and at the same time the source of active community change, thus turning into an engine for democracy, learning, and education for the entire community.

Increased individual self-esteem as active citizens motivates Roma community members to continue their formal education. In some municipalities where CAG members did not have a high enough level of education for effective participation in the groups, they decided to continue their formal education. Their motivation was that, as members of the CAGs, they need to serve as role models for their community, and better education will help them stand as more equal partners in the joint work with local institutions. (e.g. case study Tundzha municipality, Bulgaria; Roma university scholarships initiated by ROMED2 in Portugal).

Experiential learning of local authorities of the benefits of consulting with representatives of Roma communities in local policy planning and implementation improves local governance. The channels that were established for structured communication between the local authorities and the CAGs have contributed to informal education of local administration representatives in participatory approaches and hearing the voices of Roma communities. A new interactive space has emerged for development of skills and shared responsibility for Roma inclusion in municipalities.

The ROMED2 integrated approaches to Roma inclusion, with bottom up community prioritisation of needs and initiatives, provided different entry points for addressing, directly or indirectly, education issues. This increased ownership of the process based on priority needs as identified by communities. Often, initiatives not directly linked with the formal education sector had a real impact on access to education. For example, in Bucharest, Sector6 (case study) a community based campaign led to the repair of the road and the restoration of public services, which in turn helped children go to school. Similarly, the work of health and educational mediators participating in CAGs to prevent early marriages meant that young girls did not drop out of school (examples of such initiatives were provided in the case studies in Bulgaria, Ukraine, Romania and Slovakia).

Making education a priority requires extending the perspective of community members beyond the immediate urgent needs of survival towards the future of the community. The case studies in more marginalised communities indicated that there is a tendency to prioritise more immediate problems related to basic needs –drinking water, basic living conditions, making a living, rubbish collection, etc. Resolving some of the immediate problems increases trust in the community and enables the community to think beyond immediate survival. Even in the most marginalised communities, children are the top priority and this can serve as an entry point for starting or expanding initiatives to improve their education, which in turn will expand their opportunities compared to their parents.

Involvement of women and youth in the CAGs helps to ensure that education is one of the leading priorities for local development. In a number of the case study communities where educational initiatives had been developed, there was strong presence of women whose main motivation was to ensure a better future for their children, which will depend on their access to better education. Mobilising mothers' interest groups in the community has led to effective combating of segregation against their children in schools (e.g. Cicava in Slovakia). Involvement of an educated Roma youth interest group in the CAG in Tetovo (FYRoM) has expanded the work of the CAG towards education, has raised professional aspirations of young Roma, and has increased opportunities for them.

The effectiveness of initiatives to address educational challenges in municipalities depends on the experience and coherent vision of local authorities about the importance of education. Evidence from the case studies indicates that education is approached in a more fragmented way, by single projects, mainly for infrastructure improvement. This is especially so in poor municipalities with little or no previous experience of Roma inclusion initiatives. Municipalities with longer experience of Roma inclusion initiatives have developed a consistent, long-term vision recognising the importance of education, and this results in more integrated actions addressing various aspects of education, including full coverage of children, work with parents, and quality of teaching (e.g. case studies in Tundzha Municipality, Bulgaria, in Prilep and Tetovo, FYROM).

Long-term policy vision for Roma inclusion centred around Roma education as an investment in the future of local development is a critical factor for sustaining the impact of local cooperative efforts. Several municipalities demonstrated this. It took them more than 10 years to develop and start testing this vision. They started from small initiatives and projects that proved to local politicians that such a vision is possible. In some cases, the presence of active local Roma civil society helped to establish this vision.

The availability of national programmes providing resources to support educational initiatives at the local level is essential for stimulating practical impacts in the area of education. While the education of Roma is a priority in most of the NRIS, putting this priority into practice requires targeted programmes

and funds that are accessible at the local level. The case studies locations in FYRoM (Prilep and Tetovo) provide good examples of the importance of strategic synergy between different national programmes in support of education. Consistent support to educational initiatives has led to a reduction in the school dropout rate from 30% to 15% in both municipalities.

Identifying Roma as a future skilled human resource needed for local economic growth opens municipalities to new education initiatives. Usually, Roma are considered only as a problem for local development, not as an opportunity. Shifting this perception can have an impact on both education and employment. This is the case in Nyirbator, one of the municipalities visited in Hungary. Here, thanks to ROMED2, the interest of companies in qualified workers led to the establishment of a scholarship programme for Roma students funded jointly by local companies and the municipality.

Targeted facilitation of broad stakeholder consultation and involvement leads to ***innovative initiatives that mobilise existing local resources.*** The ROMED2 national team and the local facilitator in Nyirbator municipality in Hungary organised a series of stakeholder meetings focused on educational challenges and opportunities in the locality. Bringing together schools, local authorities, local businesses and representatives of Roma communities led to the identification of concrete interests for improvement and increased the motivation and involvement of diverse local stakeholders. This included the agreement of local companies to provide resources matching municipal funding for the Roma students' scholarship programme.

4.3. General conclusions

Both phases of the ROMED programme (ROMED1 'European training programme on intercultural mediation for Roma communities' and ROMED2 'Democratic governance and community participation through mediation') were **very successful pilots, testing new approaches to functional capacity development for Roma empowerment and inclusion.**

Both programmes created a strong community around mediation as a tool for empowerment of Roma which is a tremendous resource for change at local, national and European levels. The majority of this community are Roma, working in different capacities and roles and with shared values and approaches – teams of trainers, coordinators, facilitators and mediators and community action groups.

ROMED as a whole became a school for democracy, empowerment and good governance, educating mediators, community members and local governments in new functional approaches based on participation and cooperation that can help address the challenges of Roma inclusion in different sectors and areas –access to education, health, jobs, and improved living conditions and infrastructure.

A Roma-community-centred approach for successful inclusive processes at the local level is feasible and beneficial. Emerging outcomes and impacts in the communities supported by ROMED2 provide growing evidence of this. This new functional approach can serve as a model for the bottom-up creation of new national participatory planning systems with the direct involvement of Roma communities.

ROMED had an important meaning at the European level.

Promoting mediators and community-based models for Roma inclusion based on mediation became a priority for the CoE. Direct operational work with Roma communities

provided for experiential learning directly from localities across Europe. This is a good basis for further conceptualising and promoting innovative approaches across Europe and building strategic alliances around them.

ROMED led to the development of bottom-up policy recommendations based on input from local actors - local institutions, and especially Roma communities. Getting the agreement of national governments and signing common declarations foster shared political will for Roma inclusion.

The main factors for the success of the ROMED programme included:

- *The commitment and hard work of the CoE ROMED management team and international experts, as well as the growing networking among implementation teams with shared values across different countries in Europe.*
- *Consistent support from DG EAC providing flexible space for piloting, experimenting, and applying innovative processes, and learning from their impacts.*
- *The commitment of national teams, trainers, facilitators and the national support organisations.*
- *The support of national institutions and CAHROM representatives in some countries.*
- *Increased motivation of mediators and members of Roma communities resulting from capacity development and learning from new active participation practices.*
- *Growing political commitment and increased local authority awareness of the benefits of applying new approaches oriented to empowerment and overcoming dependency of communities.*

The main bottlenecks and challenges for the implementation of the ROMED programmes included:

- *The programme was flexible in accommodating contextual differences, but it lacked resources and strategic space to explore in more depth the situation in each country, including existing needs, and potential alliances and synergies. Additional challenges for both programmes came with contextual changes and shifts in political commitments in different countries and localities, especially around elections.*
- *The two programmes were experimental pilots requiring systematic learning from their experiences, and strategic clarity regarding how, and for what purposes, these lessons will be used. Support strategies to mainstream the lessons were limited and there was a lack of clarity in the definition of success and how this success will be disseminated and sustained.*
- *Strategic capacity to learn and increase the potential impact of the ROMED programmes was reduced by the tendency for rapid expansion of the programmes – for ROMED1 the number of countries involved, and for ROMED2 the additional resources of ROMACT in six of the 11 countries, using the ROMED2 approach but with a different objective and focus.*
- *Rapid expansion of the programmes meant that the limited resources available to address their ambitious objectives were spread too thinly. This reduced their effectiveness, especially at the local level where resources in support of local processes was insufficient.*
- *Under pressure to deliver visible success quickly, and to prove the effectiveness of ROMED models, the CoE was involved as direct implementer ensuring the management of multiple country teams. This was another factor that limited its strategic role and the use of its resources to extract lessons and further develop strategies for sustained ownership of the models in the different countries.*

There is strong demand to continue the training of mediators and the processes started at the local level:

- In most of the countries, the need for continuing training and development of mediators was clearly expressed by some institutional representatives, and especially by mediators. A variety of needs were identified for continuing enhancement of specific and functional skills in different areas, as well as the need for systematic training of new mediators.
- In all countries there was a clear recommendation that support to established CAGs and local processes in the initially selected municipalities needs to continue. If it is stopped now, it would waste ROMED investments of previous years. Community empowerment through sustainable community structures and institutionalised dialogue with local authorities can not be achieved in less than three years.
- In-country systems and stakeholders lack the capacity to continue systematic work to ensure that these processes are sustained. In the countries where mediators are recognised, there is a demand for training, but funding for this is limited or missing. Targeted support for Roma empowerment and participation in local decision making is very limited.
- Despite some success with advocacy and promotion of ROMED methods and approaches at the national level, achieving ownership and sustainability of the ROMED processes and results requires further efforts and continuing support.

Chapter 5. Recommendations

5.1. General recommendations

- (1) ***The ROMED programme needs to continue in order to valorise the investment done so far.*** If the programme stops now it will lead to more disillusionment in Roma communities. It will be one more project-based experiment that had some effects, but had a limited implementation timeframe.
- (2) ***The continuation of the ROMED programme needs to be based on a more strategic framework, with greater clarity on mission, ownership and sustainability.*** This will better focus the programme and enhance its impact on the basis of learning from the previous pilot phases of ROMED1 and ROMED2.
- (3) ***In the next phase it is important to clearly communicate the mission of the programme – ROMED: ROMa Empowerment for Democracy, rather than its instrument (Roma MEDIation).*** It corresponds better to the nature of the programme which evolved from training into investment in complex processes to stimulate local democracy and Roma participation.
- (4) ***The next phase of ROMED needs to be developed with a clear strategic and focused investment in sustainability.*** While maintaining its openness and flexibility, it will be important to make the step from a pilot/ experiment to a strategy addressing who will take responsibility to mainstream good working practices into national and local policies and practices, and how this will be done.
- (5) ***While keeping the overall vision and principles of the programme, it will be important to develop more specific country-based strategies*** for its application both at local and national levels. Strategies have to be based on careful needs assessment and participatory planning, involving a variety of stakeholders, and facilitated by national teams. This will help exploit potential synergies with national programmes and the efforts of other actors, which will increase the impact of the programme. It will also assist in adapting the approach, strategies and expectations to existing contextual challenges and bottlenecks.
- (6) ***Stimulating the ownership of national and local stakeholders needs to be central in the next phase to ensure continuation of the efforts at country level.*** Some important steps towards increased ownership involve:
 - ***Clear strategy for links and synergies with existing national programmes,*** or in their absence, strategies for stimulating the debate and development of new policies and initiatives.
 - ***Systemic work to build advocacy evidence cases*** for the successful application of local processes that can be used in a targeted way to support advocacy efforts for mainstreaming the approach at country level.
 - ***Enhancing the role of the current national support organisation from programme administrator to strategic implementation partner,*** thereby developing its capacity to facilitate the process in each country in the long term.
 - ***Developing broad support coalitions and alliances around the programme.*** This will require participation of both national and local institutions, but also civil society.
- (7) ***Make a strategic shift in the role of the Council of Europe – from direct project implementer to strategic leader, coordinator of the efforts of national partners,*** and

convener of the growing platform of key stakeholders across Europe. This role fits better with the strengths of the CoE and will enable to better utilise its tremendous political and knowledge resources. This shift will entail the following steps:

- **Subcontract the in-country implementation to the national partners based on developed national strategies for implementation.** Transferring responsibility for the success of the programme to the national level will increase ownership and enhance sustainability. It will also enable the CoE's ROMED team to focus on strategic oversight and monitoring to identify lessons and their policy implications.
- **Develop a strategic advisory group or a working platform around the programme,** including key actors supporting Roma inclusion – other donors, experts and practitioners. This will assist strategic oversight of emerging effectiveness and impact of the programme, as well as expanding strategic alliances around the initiative.
- **Expand the human resources and capacities** of the CoE international teams to be able to provide strategic cross-country monitoring and identification of lessons that can be used to update strategy and dissemination.
- **Continue the good practice of cross-country learning** through the meetings of the national support organisations, and inviting strategic outside stakeholders who can help expand the vision of the programme.
- **Develop a more targeted strategy to promote/ disseminate lessons and to support the ROMED programme** through existing CoE platforms – the CAHROM network, the Alliance of Cities, youth networks, etc..
- **Increase synergy with other programmes within the CoE** - assist the dissemination of the ROMED approach through other Roma inclusion programmes managed or assisted by the CoE, including strategic partnership programmes with the EEA and Norway grants in different countries.

5.2. Specific recommendations

5.2.1. Recommendations regarding ROMED1

- (1) **Situate any follow-up of training for mediators within the new ROMED strategic framework** with a view to increasing ownership, developing in-country capacity for sustainability, and broadening support for mediator capacity development in each country. The aim should be not to supply training based on country demands, but to support building the in-country capacity to recognise the needs of mediators and provide for their development and training.
- (2) **Any future ROMED mediator training has to be based on clear commitment and matching resources from the national authorities** to provide employment for mediators, but also to support training with financial resources (partially or completely overtime).
- (3) **Focus support on developing the capacities of the newly established associations and network of mediators** in each country. This will help develop new actors in each country that can continue working on promoting the true mediation approach, as well as monitor improvements in mediators' employment conditions. Exchange of experiences among networks from different countries can also contribute to their capacity development.
- (4) **Help align resources for intercultural mediation in each country – ROMED trainers, networks of mediators and Roma civil society** for better peer support and developing in-country 'communities' to support intercultural mediation.

- (5) **Develop national guidelines further adapted to national contexts, while using the overall framework of the ROMED Trainer's Handbook.** Experience from previous training can be very helpful to enrich the training with examples from the country. National guidelines may be easier to transfer into the national systems needed to train mediators.
- (6) **Assist the development of a system to monitor mediators' working conditions and their impact.** This can serve as a model to be disseminated among governments to enhance their capacity to monitor the impact of mediators on increased access to services from Roma communities.
- (7) **Allocate resources to assist the advocacy efforts of national partners for** recognition of the position of mediators (in the countries where it is still not recognised) and for allocation of government training programmes for mediators in each country. In this, it is important to develop partnerships with national training institutions (universities or NGOs) and to include in advocacy the important issues of recognised certification of modular training for mediators and the potential linkage of better payment for mediators in recognition of their new qualifications and education.
- (8) **Support more systemic monitoring of the implementation of the Strasbourg declaration signed by national governments.** In addition to CAHROM, civil society and networks of mediators can contribute by developing annual reports on the situation of mediators in each country.
- (9) As suggested in some of the interviews it will be important in the future to **invest in cultural mediators as agents for empowerment of Roma communities**, as well as for raising the awareness of the majority population about intercultural issues. This can help improve the dialogue between Roma and non-Roma.

5.2.2. Recommendations regarding ROMED2

The following recommendations for ROMED2 are based on (1) suggestions from stakeholders consulted at national and local levels, and (2) analysis of lessons emerging from the implementation of ROMED2:

- (1) **Design the continuation of ROMED2 following the new strategic framework focused on clarity of mission, ownership and sustainability.** This will help better define expectations for success, the timeframe needed for this success, and synergies with other programmes and actors in working towards this success. This will also help answer operational questions, such as the selection of localities, strategies to phase in and phase out, as well as how lessons from supported municipalities can be more widely mainstreamed.
- (2) **Sustainability of local process needs at least three years of continuous support. However, when considering the local election cycle, ideally four or five years are needed.** This will help test the viability of the approach in at least one local election cycle and the extent to which results will be sustained in the event of political changes resulting from elections.
- (3) **Explicitly focus the approach on empowerment of Roma communities with clarity on the desired impact.** Lessons from the first three years of the ROMED2 approach outlined in this evaluation report can serve as basis for further discussions on conditions and factors that help or hamper local empowerment processes. This can help further adjust the approach to the development of community action groups in terms of their capacity to engage with, and activate, the broader community and represent their interests. This will also ensure the sustained

commitment of local authorities and institutions to include Roma in local policy development and implementation.

- (4) **Define clear progressive indicators for success in terms of empowerment and the desired impact on local processes.** This can help clarify the criteria and process for selecting municipalities. It can also facilitate better targeting of assistance to CAGs and their interaction with local authorities when they are created and as they develop. This will also assist more strategic monitoring and identification of lessons that can help further dissemination of the model.
- (5) **Continue the good practice of providing outside facilitators for the process, but with more clarity on their tasks with a view to strengthening local ownership and sustainability.** Sustainability of local processes should guide the work of national facilitators from the very start of the process. This will emphasise the development of local capacities for sustaining the process - institutional development of CAGs as formal or informal structures, local facilitation, and capacity for advocacy and interaction with local authorities.
- (6) **Increase the level of direct resources available to support local community empowerment processes.** In addition to human resources (facilitators and experts), some concrete financial support for the activity of the CAGs will accelerate empowerment processes locally. It needs to be provided as an incentive and made conditional on mobilisation of other support over time. More concretely:
- Small scale support to provide for space and coordination of the group (local facilitator or coordinator).
 - **Introduce a small seed fund to support community initiatives. This can assist local community campaigns and actions that will in turn help to empower local people, and will attract other resources** – from the community, the municipality or from other sources. Such a seed fund catalyse the empowerment of CAGs and communities by expanding their capacities to raise support for their initiatives. It will also strengthen legitimacy and the involvement of local administrations, and eventually, it can be used as a model for municipalities to support community initiatives.
 - **Support the local groups in expanding their knowledge and access to other funding opportunities.** This should be one of the tasks of the national support teams. It can help the CAGs to gradually develop their capacity to diversify support to local initiatives.
- (7) **Foster the focus on education as an engine for empowerment of communities.** While it is important not to restrict the process of identifying priorities for communities, stimulating more discussions and initiatives relating to the future of children may be a way to expand community horizons beyond current marginalisation. Practice has proved that the future of children can be an engine for the empowerment of communities. Such initiatives can also help to develop the long term vision of municipalities, with education as the core of sustained, integrated approaches to Roma inclusion. Some potential steps that could strengthen the impact of ROMED2 on education include:
- **Develop strategic partnerships with actors with specific expertise in different approaches to improved access of Roma to formal education**, such as the Roma Education Fund (REF). This will expand education expertise within ROMED2. It will also promote synergies between ROMED2 and REF in different countries.
 - Maintain the scope of the programme combining informal education (active citizenship and empowerment) and formal education (access to quality education, reduced drop out, pre-school education). In this it will be important to focus on work with parents, as parents are the first teachers to their children. Stimulating parents' involvement in school life (parenting

committees and meetings) will increase their awareness of the importance of education, but will also enhance their capacity as active citizens.

- **Make sure that the composition of the CAG involves members that have a genuine interest in educational initiatives.** One possibility is to develop a set of interest groups (of mothers, youth, women etc.) around education that work together with the CAGs on concrete initiatives related to education.
- Facilitate consultations and meetings with diverse local stakeholders to ensure broad support coalitions for educational initiatives. Some of the lessons from the case studies provide good practices that can be studied and further developed.

(8) **More specific initiatives and approaches to involvement of women and youth could increase the outreach of the CAGs to different parts of the community.** Including youth more proactively in activities will educate the next generation in active community citizenship. More specifically targeted initiatives involving Roma women could stimulate their involvement.

(9) **Continue the support to local processes and CAGs in the initial ROMED2 localities for at least two more years to enhance sustainability.** This includes also the four countries that were 'transferred' to ROMACT but without ensuring the sustainability of local empowerment processes. We suggest differentiated approaches:

- **Invest further in locations with the most successful processes.** The models used in these locations can be used for promotion and dissemination. Local governments and CAGs can serve as strategic partners for the national support teams in assisting other municipalities and communities in adopting the approach.
- **Assist locations that have already made a promising start, with a clear plan for enhancing the sustainability** of the local process, and monitoring of the process.
- **Identify locations where the process started but has since stalled** and identify the best phase-out strategy to minimise damage to the local community.

(10) **Dissemination and scale up of ROMED2 approach to other localities needs to be done strategically and ensuring sustainability of interventions.** ROMED2 has generated change processes that cannot be scaled up and implemented by the Council of Europe by itself. Scaling up pilot efforts to new municipalities needs to be based on clear strategies for alliances with key actors within each country, and internationally. At the same time alliances and synergies must be built around the core mission and vision of ROMED2 – empowerment of communities. Some concrete steps could include:

- Organise 'taking stock' conferences around ROMED2 with the participation of key national and international stakeholders and donors to share the experience and increase interest and matching support for promising locations;
- Look for synergies with existing or potential national programmes that can use the ROMED2 method in their work at community level;
- More targeted presentation and dissemination of the approach and its results in the framework of in-country networks of municipalities, as well as internationally.;
- Sharing experiences and providing capacity building for Roma NGOs to integrate some of the elements of the ROMED2 approach in their work;
- Strategic alliances with other donors and programmes supporting local level Roma inclusion processes.

(11) **Stimulating the dialogue between Roma and non-Roma is a new emphasis that needs to be introduced into the ROMED programme at the local level.** Investment in the awareness of the local majority population is also an investment in the sustainability of local Roma

inclusion processes. Overcoming the complete divide and hostility between the majority and Roma communities would help dissuade anti-Roma voters from electing local officials opposed or indifferent to inclusion processes. It will be very important to assist municipalities in developing new communication strategies addressing the majority population about the concrete benefits and results of Roma inclusion processes, thus gradually shifting negative perceptions and prejudice.

- (12) ***The capacity development of locally elected Roma representatives is another important area for consideration in the next phase of ROMED.*** As outlined in one of the interviews: *'There is a vicious circle in which recommendations and good practices are lost on the way between the European level and the local level where Roma live'*. Roma political representation in local councils is critical for sustaining the process of Roma participation and inclusion. A need was expressed for investment in capacity development for Roma representatives in a number of countries.

List of Annexes

The following annexes are provided as separate documents.

Annex 1: Case studies of the ROMED2 process applied in 15 municipalities in the seven focus countries covered by the evaluation

Annex 2: Summary country findings

Annex 3: Stakeholders interviewed for the evaluation

Annex 4: Question guides