The Portuguese Roma Communities’ Integration Strategy

The role of intercultural mediation

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Roma integration: the Role of Local Authorities
Brussels, 24 October 2013
Contextualizing Portuguese Roma Population

- The majority of Roma living in Portugal is Portuguese

- Despite the lack of official data about the Portuguese Roma population, its number is estimated to be in a range of about 40,000 and 100,000

- The housing conditions are heterogeneous:
  - 25% of Roma live in shantytowns or in tents without an authorization of permanence, mostly in Rural aged areas and industrial urban territories
  - 75% of Roma lives in proper housing conditions, mostly in rural areas with demographic concentration and in urban consolidated areas. In these territories there has been a great public investment in social housing
The National Roma Communities’ Integration Strategy

- Portugal presented its National Roma Communities’ Integration Strategy and was approved by Resolution of the Ministries Council n.º 25/2013 of 17th April 2013.

- Like the majority of other Member-States, Portugal designed its strategy around the thematic fields recommended by the Commission, but added also a crosscutting pillar in order to articulate all areas.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Thematic Pillars of the Strategy</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Crosscuting Pillar</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>Dimension I – Knowledge of socioeconomic context of Roma communities and follow-up mechanism of National Strategy</td>
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<td>Dimension II – Discrimination</td>
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<td>Dimension III – Education for Citizenship</td>
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<td>Dimension IV – Roma history and culture</td>
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<td>Dimension V – Gender Equality</td>
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<td>Dimension VI – Justice and Security</td>
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<td>Dimension VII – Mediation</td>
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<td>Dimension VIII – Social Security</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Education Pillar</strong></td>
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<td><strong>Housing Pillar</strong></td>
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<td><strong>Employment and Training Pillar</strong></td>
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<td><strong>Healthcare Pillar</strong></td>
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</table>
### Strengths

- For the first time there is a planning tool with specific actions for the inclusion of the Roma population
- The Roma population begins to have more visibility among the political priorities of the Portuguese State
- Establishment of regular meetings by an advisory group for supervision and monitoring of the National Strategy

### Weaknesses

- Few consistent data or studies on the situation of the Roma population and their living conditions
- Few performance indicators which reflect the achieved objectives
- Weak involvement of the local authorities
- Dependence of structural funds to implement actions
Is the National Strategy having a local impact?

- Lack of knowledge
- Lack of assimilation of the objectives
- Different positions of the policymakers
- Lack of coordination mechanisms between national and local levels
- Lack of support and policy guidance from the national to the local level
Putting the "Gypsy issue" on the national political agenda equals to an improvement of living conditions?
Poverty and social exclusion between Roma

Characteristics
Extension on the population
Intensity of the poverty and social exclusion

How actors who are interested in public visibility of the problem mobilize and interact

Construction of a public problem
Inscription of the problem on the priorities of the institutional agenda
The position of policymakers at the local level

Those who want to do something and do it well

Those who want to do something but do not know how
Problems focused on individuals

- Difficulty in accepting rules, aggressive behaviors, vandalism in public spaces, conflicts
- Sense of self-protection and impunity due to the strong cohesion of Roma families
- Roma do not want to be integrated
- Lack of knowledge and trust in the institutions

Problems focused at the local context

- Lack of resources
- Weak dynamic of partnership
- The mutual ignorance between Roma and non-Roma contributes negatively to the local intervention
- The weight of stereotypes
- Inequality in covering basic needs
The drivers

- General policies that benefit the Roma population
- Policies targeting the Roma population that benefit all the citizens

The case of the Programme for Municipal Roma Mediators
Programme for Municipal Roma Mediators

Organization
ACIDI – High Commission for Immigration and Intercultural Dialogue (public institute belonging to the Presidency of the Council of Ministers)

Target
The Programme it’s addressed to all Portuguese municipalities, in partnership with local civil society organizations, with significant Roma population, interested in building bridges towards a constructive dialogue by hosting mediators in municipalities.

Objectives
The Roma mediators should:
- facilitate communication between Roma communities, local authorities and civil society organizations;
- promote consensus and mediate conflicts;
- promote intercultural dialogue as a strategic methodology of work and intervention;
- promote and facilitate Roma communities’ access to local services and organizations.

http://goodpracticeroma.ppa.coe.int/en/pdf/152
Roles of the Intercultural Mediator

- Agent of Change
- Empowerment Constructor
- Social Bond Promoter
- Diagnosis and Planning Facilitator
## Keys of success

1. **The need of a political consensus for intervention directed to the Roma**
2. **To recognize the existence of structural problems which cannot be solved only by the project**
3. **The diversity of areas of intervention of the mediator allows a systemic and a multidimensional approach of the social exclusion**
4. **To be acquainted with the basic principles of mediation by all the intervenients**
5. **To be aware of the need to establish relationships based on trust between all actors**
6. **Existence of inter-institutional cooperation**
7. **Valuing the cultural diversity as something positive, and building spaces of relationship (institutional, technical and social) between individuals and diversified groups.**
Difficulties

Few margin to negotiate: municipalities have scarce resources to answer to the needs and a very bureaucratic management.

Attributing a monitoring role to mediators puts them in a difficult position.

To consider the mediator as a panacea to solve structural problems.

Nonexistence of an intercultural political point of view.
POSITIV IMPACTS

- Education / Training
- Employment
- Healthcare
- Housing
## Education / Employment

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Goal Overcome</th>
<th>More Than Half the Goal Achieved</th>
<th>Less Than Half the Goal Achieved</th>
<th>Less Than Half the Goal Achieved</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>To put children in Preschool Education (2 municipalities)</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>67</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To fight absenteeism and dropout in youth under 18 (5 municipalities)</td>
<td></td>
<td>31</td>
<td>32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To promote literacy of adults (3 municipalities)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>To promote the integration into the labour market (4 municipalities)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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</tbody>
</table>

**Source:** Project Roma Municipal Mediators Assessment, Dinamia-Cet/ISCTE-IUL, 2013
GOAL OVERCOME

To ensure the execution of the National Vaccination Plan among adults (2 municipalities)

GOAL OVERCOME

To promote women's access to family planning (2 municipalities)

Source: Project Roma Municipal Mediators Assessment, Dinamia-Cet/ISCTE-IUL, 2013
Housing

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Goal Achieved</th>
<th>Municipalities</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>To promote household access to the private rental housing market (2 municipalities)</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To promote the regularization of the rental debts amongst families in public housing (3 municipalities)</td>
<td>56</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To ensure families access to social housing (1 municipality)</td>
<td>26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To ensure families with housing supports regarding requalification (2 municipalities)</td>
<td>50</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Project Roma Municipal Mediators Assessment, Dinamia-Cet/ISCTE-IUL, 2013
The intercultural mediator assumes an important role as a changing agent, but he/she can not be seen as a substitute for the intercultural dialogue or a panacea to solve the structural problems.
Obrigada!
(thank you)