European Roma Information Office

REPORT

ERIO's training

"Advocacy for Roma Inclusion"

19-20 December 2018

Utrecht, the Netherlands

Introduction

On 19-20 December 2018, ERIO organised a training entitled "Advocacy for Roma inclusion" in cooperation with our network member Stichting Arq. The training took place in Utrecht, the Netherlands. It gathered ERIO network members as well as Roma and Sinti activists that wanted to further their knowledge on advocacy at the national and local levels.

The training consisted of theoretical and practical sessions. The trainers presented their knowledge on what advocacy entails and practical methods to target different audiences. During the group exercises the participants put into practice what they learnt during the training and tackled major issues facing the Roma and Sinti communities.

The aims of the training were to:

- Improve the advocacy skills of Roma to enable them to be involved in the implementation of the National Roma Integration Strategies (NRIS) as well as in anti-discrimination and social inclusion policies at national and local level;
- Inform Roma organisations and representatives about the different types of EU funds, how to apply and how to effectively use them for the successful integration of Roma and project management;
- Inform about EU anti-discrimination legislation (including practical tools such as how to file a complaint), relevant EU policies (e.g. Racial Equality Directive, the National Roma Integration Strategies, the EU Framework and the Council recommendation.

Welcoming and introduction of participants

Participants were welcomed and then presented themselves and what they do. The training session followed with four thematic sessions: 1) addressing discrimination, 2) advocating for Roma inclusion, 3) project development and EU funding, and 4) latest development in Roma policy making at national and EU level.

Session I: Addressing discrimination

The concept of discrimination was first addressed in this session. Trainees were asked to define "discrimination". Many had wrong definitions and some did not know how to define it. The training allowed them to reflect on this issue and come up with possible answers. Discrimination was defined as "when one person is less favourably treated than another person in the same situation based on different grounds" (i.e. race & ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation, religion, age or disability).

The difference between direct and indirect discrimination was addressed. **Direct discrimination** is when a person is less favourably treated than another person in the same situation. **Indirect discrimination** is when one person is less favourably treated as result of the disproportionate impact of a neutral criteria, practice or policy. Examples were given of direct and indirect discrimination in the field of public spaces and employment.

Trainees were also presented with the two **EU Equality directives** – the Racial Equality Directive 2000/43/EC protecting of discrimination on the basis of race and ethnicity and the Framework Directive 2000/78/EC protecting discrimination on the grounds of age, religion, sex, disability, and sexual orientation.

The final issue covered in this session, was how victims can **report discrimination**. Equality Bodies were given as an example as a responsible body to investigate discrimination cases which mandate is given by the Racial Equality Directive. The challenge of under-reporting was addressed and reasons for it given by trainees were lack of trust, lack of awareness of the

existence of the Equality Bodies, anti-discrimination legislation and lack of knowledge of how and where to present the case.

Session II: Advocating for Roma inclusion

Trainers presented independent advocacy as a tool to speak for and with people who are not being heard, helping them to express their views and make their own decisions. This is so that the disadvantages groups such as the Roma have the same opportunities as the majority groups, such as the non-Roma. The main focus of this session was on the **advocacy process**, which is flexible as the order of the stages might change depending on the situation.

The **first step** is to *identify the advocacy scope*. In this stage the activists need to identify whether they will advocate on the local, national or European level. The selection of the level depends on what the Roma organization or Roma activist wants to achieve. The **second step** is to *identify the issue or initiative*. In this stage, what and who needs to change and why the change is needed, needs to be identified. The **third step** is to *identify audiences*, the group that the message should be directed towards. In this stage there are two types of audiences. The primary audience is the authority that has the power to directly affect the outcome. The secondary audience is able to influence the decision-makers, but they do not have direct power. For example, the minister of education is part of the primary audience, while an advisor to the minister is part of the secondary audience.

The **fourth step** is to *identify the target areas of influence*, whether they are legislative, policy, executive or administrative. The **fifth step** is to *develop the key messages*. The messages need to be persuasive, short and clear. To formulate the messages, firstly what the activists want to achieve and the description of the problem needs to be presented. Then why the issue is both important and urgent needs to be conveyed. Lastly, how the issue needs to be solved should be addressed; here suggestions and recommendations should be presented. The **sixth step** is to *take action*. In this step (a) communication method(s) needs to be selected, such as writing emails or using social media. The **seventh step** is *fundraising*.

To find funding the Roma organization or activist can organize fundraising events, apply for grants/projects and look for donations. Some examples were given of available funds at local, national and European level. The **eighth step** is to *evaluate your efforts*. This is an important step so that there can be an improvement in the Roma organization's future campaigns. It is probable that some efforts will not be successful and so it is important to identify what does not work, so that the probability of success increases in the future. Participants were then given examples of possible advocacy activities.

During the training, it was stressed that to effectively **advocate at the national and local level**, it is important to find partnerships with similar organizations. Even organizations that do not work on Roma issues could have similar goals. For example, partnering with Jewish organizations on projects related to the Holocaust or women's rights NGOs could provide a mutual gain for both organizations. As well, when lobbying at the national and local level it is important to speak in a language that would make the authorities see that bringing change to the Roma community could also benefit society as a whole. For example, if a Roma community does not have access to water and healthcare, and also there are high levels of illness in the community, then improving the situation is beneficial to the community as a whole. As if the Roma community is healthy then the society as a whole will benefit from them in the workforce, and their improved health will stop the spread of diseases that affect the society as a whole.

Furthermore, in the process of policy implementation the Roma need to be included. An example given was that of a town in Bulgaria where many pregnant women were having pregnancy complications. To solve the issue the authorities set up a clinic. The clinic was not visited by any of the Roma community. The reason behind it was the gynaecologist being a man, and in that community the women were not comfortable in being attended by a male doctor. Once the authorities understood this, changes were made and a female gynaecologist attended the patients. This case shows that if members of the Roma community participated in the implementation process of this project, this crucial mistake of the gynaecologist's gender could have been avoided.

Practical exercise with participants

In small groups, the participants took part in an exercise which consisted in developing key advocacy messages using the What-Why-How approach. This was a good opportunity for trainees to put into practice what they have learned by choosing a relevant and important issue for them that needs to be addressed, changed or improved.

Session III: Project development and EU funding

This session provided participants with information on how to **develop and structure a project proposal**, how to formulate their objectives, goals and messages.

The **first step** to develop a project proposal is to *identify what the problem is*. The problem one would like to address should be within the problems and topics the relevant donor, program, institutions is planning to financially support. The **second step** is to *describe the general aim and specific objectives* of the project. The **third step** is to *describe the activities* relevant to the general and specific objectives; directly or indirectly linked to the solution of the problem described. The **fourth step** is to *describe the expectations* from the project. Expectations/indicators should show that you expect the situation to be improved, problems to be decreased or eliminated. The **fifth step** is to describe

how sustainability can be ensured for the activity/project. The **sixth step** is *developing a budget* strongly linked to the activities in the project. The final and **seventh step** is providing a clear and transparent *reporting* as well as attaching all project proofs.

The different **EU funds** were presented to the trainees. They were informed about the system of how these funds operate, who are the responsible authorities they could turn to in case they want to apply for support. Much of the focus was on the European Social Fund which is considered the primary resource for supporting Roma integration initiatives. However, trainees

also learned about the Regional Development Fund as well the IPA funds. The training also presented the possibilities of applying to direct funds on different calls the European Commission is issuing each year.

Session IV: Latest development in Roma policy making at national and EU level

Trainees were updated with the latest developments on **European Roma policy making** at both national and European levels. The main components of the EU Framework for National Roma Integration Strategies, urging member states to develop national strategies aimed at improving the situation of Roma by 2020 were explained. The EU Framework has the four pillars of education, employment, healthcare and housing, so as to reduce existing disparities with the rest of the population and fight discrimination. Moreover, trainers elaborated on the first ever EU legal instrument for Roma inclusion, that is the EU Council Recommendation on Effective Roma Integration measures, adopted in December 2013. This is the strongest EU instrument for Roma inclusion as it not only strengthens the EU Framework, but it also requires a higher degree of commitment and engagement from member states to end the exclusion and unequal treatment of Roma communities. The focus of this training session was to explain how these European policies could/should be transferred at national and local level. The discussion further continued on how these Strategies could be influenced by advocacy actions so that they are successfully implemented at national level and efficiently transferred at the local level.

Conclusion

ERIO's "Advocacy for Roma Inclusion" training designed to improve the advocacy skills of Roma to enable them to be involved in the implementation of the NRIS as well as in anti-discrimination and social inclusion policies at national and local level, managed to inform the participants on the different types of advocacy and what it entails. The advocacy training provided the opportunity for the attendees to learn from each other's experience and discuss solutions for major issues facing their Roma communities. The participants left the training with greater

knowledge on EU developments such as the EU Framework, the NRIS and the Council

recommendation. Using what they learnt at the training the participants could now use this practical information in their Roma related work and share it with members of their own communities.