



INSTRUMENT FOR PRE-ACCESSION ASSISTANCE (IPA II) 2014-2020

MULTI-COUNTRY

EU support to fundamental rights of the Roma community, and reintegration of returnees

Action summary

The action will contribute to reducing the socio-economic gap between the Roma and the non-Roma population in the Western Balkans and Turkey; and contribute to ensuring the quality of life of returnees (including Roma) returning to the Western Balkans from the EU in particular.

The action consists of two components. The first component is a second phase of the regional ROMACTED Roma project implemented by the Council of Europe, which will consolidate and expand efforts to improve the integration of Roma populations in local communities through enhanced participation in local policymaking and implementation of local actions.

The second component will enhance the ability of Western Balkan's authorities at central and local level to implement effective reintegration policies and respond effectively to the needs of vulnerable returnees.

| Action Identification | | | |
|---|--|------------------------------|--------------------------|
| Action Programme Title | IPA II Multi-Country Action Programme 2019 | | |
| Action Title | EU support to fundamental rights of the Roma ¹ community, and reintegration of returnees | | |
| Action ID | IPA 2019/040-826.17/MC/Roma | | |
| Sector Information | | | |
| IPA II Sector | 9. Regional and territorial cooperation | | |
| DAC Sector | 15160 – Human rights | | |
| Budget | | | |
| Total cost | EUR 8.8 million | | |
| EU contribution | EUR 8 million | | |
| Budget line(s) | 22.020401 - Multi-country programmes, regional integration and territorial cooperation | | |
| Management and Implementation | | | |
| Management mode | Indirect management | | |
| <i>Indirect management: Entrusted entity</i> | Council of Europe (CoE) World Bank Group (WBG) United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) | | |
| Implementation responsibilities | Directorate-General for Neighbourhood and Enlargement Negotiations, Unit D.5 Western Balkans Regional Cooperation and Programmes | | |
| Location | | | |
| Zone benefiting from the action | Western Balkans (Albania, Bosnia Herzegovina, Kosovo*, Montenegro, North Macedonia, Serbia) and Turkey | | |
| Specific implementation area(s) | N/A | | |
| Timeline | | | |
| Final date for contracting including the conclusion of delegation agreements | At the latest by 31 December 2020 | | |
| Final date for operational implementation | 72 months from the adoption of the Financing Decision | | |
| Policy objectives / Markers (DAC form) | | | |
| General policy objective | Not targeted | Significant objective | Main objective |
| Participation development/good governance | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | x |
| Aid to environment | x | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |

¹ The term "Roma" is used as an umbrella term which also includes other groups of people who have more or less similar cultural characteristics, such as Sinti, Travellers, Kalé, Gens du voyage, etc., whether sedentary or not.

* This designation is without prejudice to positions on status, and is in line with UNSCR 1244/1999 and the ICJ Opinion on the Kosovo declaration of independence.

| | | | |
|---|--------------------------|------------------------------|--------------------------|
| Gender equality (including Women In Development) | <input type="checkbox"/> | x | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Trade Development | x | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Reproductive, Maternal, New born and child health | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| RIO Convention markers | Not targeted | Significant objective | Main objective |
| Biological diversity | x | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Combat desertification | x | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Climate change mitigation | x | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Climate change adaptation | x | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |

1. RATIONALE

PROBLEM AND STAKEHOLDER ANALYSIS

The conclusions from the 2017 *Regional Roma Survey*² indicate that there is still a very substantial gap between marginalised Roma and their neighbouring non-Roma in terms of human capacity and material well-being. This gap is a reality throughout the IPA region in the four societal pillars (education, health, housing and employment), as well in terms of possession of and access to personal documentation. The *Survey* and the World Bank's recent study on *Supporting Effective Reintegration of Roma Returnees in the Western Balkans* (2018)³ also bring evidence of the urgency of having efficient responses at central and local level to the reintegration into the Western Balkans of returnees, with special attention to those of the Roma community.

The **local level** is of critical importance for the effective implementation of policies and programmes for Roma inclusion. This is where exclusion is most visible, and where practical steps for inclusion are needed and will be effective. A major challenge for this is, however, the considerable gap of understanding, capacities and political commitment relating to these issues at municipal level. Growing these qualities of local administration and institutions and encouraging them to work for Roma inclusion in local development plans and budgets is an important priority. In parallel, practicing good governance and local democracy requires investment in the capacity of Roma communities to be active participants and equal partners in the process.

Bridges need to be developed between Roma communities and institutions, and between Roma communities and the non-Roma majorities. Facilitators are needed who can understand the cultural codes of all sides and who are able to communicate the needs and rights of the communities to the municipalities, and the ways to practice their rights to the communities.

These issues have been addressed since 2017 by the EU financed ROMACTED programme "*Promoting good governance and Roma empowerment at local level*", which has worked in more than 50 local communities to enhance democratic participation and empowerment of local Roma communities while also assisting local authorities in strengthening their capacity to design and implement projects and to access domestic and external funds.

The situation of Roma and efforts for their successful inclusion also has links to the issue of **migration**. Since the Western Balkans were declared "safe countries of origin" the region has seen an important number of returns from EU as well as possible secondary movements (**out-migration**) to the EU. Statistics are kept only for forced returns, which have averaged around 20,000 per year⁴ for the region as a whole during the past few years. When voluntary returns are taken into account, the numbers are much higher.

The Western Balkans either have or are currently developing **central reintegration strategies**. However, these frameworks do not offer practical reintegration solutions or, for several reasons, do not implement them effectively. This leaves returnees with inadequate and inconsistent support for their reintegration; reinforces their economic and social exclusion; and, in turn, increases the risk of secondary migration. For vulnerable returnees, like Roma for whom socio-economic problems are more pronounced, the reintegration challenge is even greater. Marginalised Roma are at a higher risk of either out-migration or re-migration to the EU, where the potential of earnings, no matter how low, far exceeds that in their communities.

² Regional Roma Survey 2017. Regional survey on socio-economic situation of marginalised Roma in the Western Balkans, commissioned by UNDP, with the support of the DG NEAR and in cooperation with the World Bank, 2017. Country factsheets (UNDP) More information at: <http://www.eurasia.undp.org/content/rbec/en/home/library/roma/regional-roma-survey-2017-country-fact-sheets.html>

³ World Bank Research (forthcoming, 2018); "Western Balkans: Supporting the Effective Reintegration of (Roma) Returnees in the Western Balkans."

⁴ Eurostat data on the percentage of persons refused asylum and percentage of these who are Roma in each of the Western Balkans. Aggregate these data for 2016 and 2017 indicate a 20 000 average over those two years.

One challenge in managing reintegration is the lack of the necessary data regarding the whereabouts and needs of returnees. Creating or improving the functionality and sustainability of **Management Information Systems (MIS)** relating to returnees and reintegration is one way of addressing this. Such systems can allow the ministry or agency responsible for returnees to create and maintain case file records of all returnees and ensure adequate access and exchange of relevant information to all social protection ministries and agencies and municipalities where returnees settle.

There is currently little coordination between the central and local levels in terms of ensuring a targeted and coordinated service delivery. Improving a case management approach, integrated into local municipality returnee strategies and action plans, would serve the most vulnerable populations by using all available resources from the labour market and the social service system, including employment mediation, skills development, social protection care services etc.

Municipalities who experience challenges in absorbing high numbers of returnees need to develop **local-level strategies or plans for returnee reintegration** ideally in conjunction with local stakeholders and local Roma integration strategies. The World Bank and UNDP research highlighted municipalities' capacity constraints to implement local-level strategies and action plans for the reintegration of returnees, as well as their inability to involve and solicit support from civil society and community representatives in a participatory manner. In addition to budget constraints, there is limited coordination between the central and local levels of government on several key issues, of which the main one being registration and information exchange related to returnees. Local strategies and action plans are needed to complement the adoption of a management information system. Building local authorities' capacity and that of inter-sectoral teams and civil society partners to implement such action plans would be integral in improving the return and reintegration process. Part of this process would be to build local municipalities' capacity to manage the forthcoming MIS

The Roma dimension is highly relevant in the context of returnees. For example, in 2016, 82.6% of asylum seekers from Serbia were Roma, whereas out of North Macedonia and Bosnia and Herzegovina, the share was 61.8% and 57.3% respectively⁵. One of the main reasons for that is the lack of **job opportunities** in the country of origin, as evidenced by the 1,175 stories that UNDP recently collected from Roma returnees⁶ with the help of EU funding. This is also confirmed by the findings of the Regional Roma Survey, which points to high unemployment and inactivity of marginalised Roma and their non-Roma neighbours as one of the main push factors to outward migration. Across the Western Balkans region, from 73% to 86% of young marginalised Roma (aged 18-24) are "not in education, employment, or training" (NEET). On average every third Roma is inactive, and more than half of the unemployed Roma in the region have never worked. Barely one in five marginalised Roma is employed in the region, yet almost two thirds of the employed Roma continue working informally. As regards the situation of the marginalised Roma women: 9 out of 10 young Roma women are NEETs. Roma women employment rates in the region are varying from no more than 13% to as low as 3-4% in some of the IPA II beneficiaries. On average 1 out of 2 Roma women who are employed do not have health care or pension insurance.

Labour inclusion remains a particular challenge and Roma communities face high barriers to integration. There is a need to improve the outreach towards these communities, as well as their access to activation measures. One of the proven concepts to do this is **case management**. Case management engages policy makers and professionals from Public Employment Services (PES) and Centres for Social Work (CSW) offices to approach employment and social welfare policy making holistically and to explore new models of service provision. Case management can bring together the social protection systems and the labour market which currently tend to work as separate entities, and instead offer tailor made and coordinated local services to individuals and families experiencing multiple barriers and forms of exclusion.

There is also a need to reinvigorate the promotion of **community-focused livelihoods projects** to address the systemic problems of unemployment, out-migration and exclusion from the market place. The focus

⁵ World Bank Research (forthcoming, 2018); "Western Balkans: Supporting the Effective Reintegration of (Roma) Returnees in the Western Balkans."

⁶ Roma Returnees to the Western Balkans: "No place for us, neither here nor there", UNDP, 2017.

should be on programmes enhancing livelihood and income-generating opportunities to improve economic conditions and social cohesion, but also to address some of the immediate challenges of Roma returnees and the push factors for migration. In addition, any livelihoods programme must include specific strands that target vulnerable groups, such as women, youth, disabled and aging. Targeting such groups will entail using innovating approaches whose likelihood of success has been tested and shown to work. A long term-objective would be strengthening livelihoods and community cohesion between Roma, ethnic minorities and mainstream inhabitants.

One specific challenge faced by returnees, particularly Roma returnees, relate to **absence of certificates and civil documentation** required to ensure adequate access to services. One example relates to children who have attended schools in the European Union and re-enrol at schools in their countries of origin. Enrolment and appropriate grade placement in Western Balkan schools depends on school certificates obtained from schools in the EU, which are sometimes not readily available to all returnees, particularly those who would have left in a hurry. Also, when available, they would have been issued in the language of an EU country and are not acceptable to education authorities in the Western Balkans. This results in children being placed at the level they were at when they migrated, leading to demotivation and gradual dissociation from their educational experience, further compounding an already high drop-out rate.

Furthermore, returnees who might have experienced life events such as marriages, children and deaths either did not always register these, or, if they did, were given documents in the language of the EU country or region where the event occurred. On their return, those without documents have difficulty retro-documenting these events or having their documents accepted by authorities because they were neither notified nor went through the apostil process as required within the EU and Western Balkans. This further compounds the already existing problem of Roma not recording and documenting life events. The study found that a 'catch-up' programme would be a good way of redressing outstanding cases and a support programme for future returnees would mean that that these issues are dealt with as soon as possible and not impact negatively the reintegration experience of returnees.

In the medium term, support to Roma and returnees need to be streamlined and integrated into IPA II beneficiaries' social protection and social services systems. The Roma and returnees' agendas should be considered in the context of a broader inclusion agenda that promotes the socioeconomic wellbeing of vulnerable populations overall. Promoting such a broader inclusion policy of the vulnerable population would also help addressing push factors that encourage (re-) migration, specifically out-migration to the EU.

OUTLINE OF IPA II ASSISTANCE

The action consists of **two components**.

Component 1 - ROMACTED phase II: The first component is a second phase of the ROMACTED project implemented by the Council of Europe, which will serve to consolidate and expand efforts to improve the integration of Roma populations in local communities through enhanced participation in local policymaking and implementation of local actions. ROMACTED II will continue to assist the local authorities to integrate Roma specific dimensions/measures into the mainstream local policies, action plans related to these policies, budgets and public service delivery, thereby enhancing democratic participation and empowerment of local Roma communities. The programme will also participate in component II below, relating to returnees (including Roma) coming back to the region from the EU in particular.

Component 2 - Reintegration of returnees: The second component will be a series of activities to enhance the ability of Western Balkan's authorities at central and local level to implement effective returnee reintegration policies and respond effectively to the needs of vulnerable returnees. This will address systemic challenges at both central and local level, and offer concrete support actions for returnees through activities targeting:

- Review, fine-tuning and follow up of central level reintegration strategies and other relevant policy documents and action plans.
- Promotion of integrated case management for returnees, following a review of the implementation of MIS into central level data systems.

- Development of local returnee reintegration strategies and action plans with selected municipalities. Improvement of Management Information Systems regarding returnees, and roll out to users/feeders at municipal level.
- Implementation of elements of local returnee integration strategies in selected municipalities, including relating to livelihoods etc.
- Addressing administrative issues faced by returnees, particularly around missing documentation.

RELEVANCE WITH THE IPA II MULTI-COUNTRY STRATEGY PAPER AND OTHER KEY REFERENCES

The Roma action relates directly to the key policies of the European Union on the issue of Roma integration and returnees in the enlargement region. The "EU Framework for National Roma Integration Strategies up to 2020"⁷ recognises the enlargement region as area of support by the European Commission for Roma integration, and the Roma action contributes to the fulfilment of the stipulated commitments. The importance for Roma integration and return policies as a particular criterion for EU integration is highlighted in the key documents of the European Union regarding the enlargement process. The action is formulated around the European Commission's Enlargement Strategy of 2016 and its overview of the state of affairs regarding integration of Roma and migration in the enlargement region. The Strategy stipulates: "Decisive efforts are needed to protect minorities and fight discrimination, notably against the Roma - for whom social inclusion should be more robustly promoted..."; further the Strategy states: "It is essential to further step up strategic and operational cooperation with the Western Balkans on migration and border management, ensuring the effective implementation of readmission and return policies and the fight against irregular migration."

A similar assessment is provided within the revised Multi-country Indicative Strategy Paper (2014-2020)⁸, which states that "the challenges in the area of democracy and the rule of law include the functioning and independence of institutions guaranteeing ... rights of persons belonging to minorities as well as vulnerable groups, notably Roma and LGBTI." The integration of Roma and returnees should be seen as part of relevant objectives primarily within the framework of democracy and rule of law, including strengthening democratic institutions and public financial management, support to civil society, and investing in employment, education and social policies. The Roma action contributes to these objectives.

As regards returnees, the European Parliament, in their deliberations relating to the adoption of the 2019 budget, underlined the importance of *paying particular attention to challenges faced by the Western Balkans returnees* by including special language on this matter in the budgetary comments.

LESSONS LEARNED AND LINK TO PREVIOUS FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE

Both components represent a continuation or follow-up of actions developed under previous EU IPA II assistance: ROMACTED implemented in cooperation with the Council of Europe, and the Regional Roma Survey and Returnee and Reintegration research and pilot work implemented by the UNDP and the World Bank⁹. In addition, ROMACTED II is drawing on experience gained from similar programmes implemented in the EU: ROMED and ROMACT.

Stakeholders involved in ROMACTED, ROMED and ROMACT consider that empowerment of Roma communities for democratic participation is one of the most critical needs for Roma inclusion. According to all respondents from the Western Balkans and Turkey, the most unique part of the programme is the support for organising the Community Action Groups (CAGs), providing for direct involvement of the Roma community in the design and implementation of local policies.

⁷ COM(2011) 173/4 COMMUNICATION FROM THE COMMISSION TO THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT, THE COUNCIL, THE EUROPEAN ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL COMMITTEE AND THE COMMITTEE OF THE REGIONS *An EU Framework for National Roma Integration Strategies up to 2020*

⁸ C(2018) 3442, 31.05.2018.

⁹ Technical Assistance for Roma Integration at the Community Level, IPA II Annual Multi-Country Action Programme 2016

The first year of implementation could confirm that whilst community mobilisation can sometimes be extremely challenging, it also generates great potential (i.e. for Roma youth and women). The empowerment of youth has been of specific importance in certain beneficiaries that had seen very little progress regarding the promotion of Roma youth participation (i.e. Montenegro).

The first year of ROMACTED implementation, and the experience from ROMED and ROMACT, indicate that the local authorities very often do not have the capacity to design projects, apply for available funds and make the most of their municipal development plans. Gaps were also noticed in linking Local Action Plans (LAPs) to short-term and long-term priorities in terms of pinpointing relevant needs, action and measures, responsible institutions and actors to address them. ROMACTED II will continue bridging these and other gaps that will be identified through capacity assessments.

Central and local authorities often rely on recommendations prepared by external experts. This approach can be limiting for the participation of the Roma community in the decision-making process, preventing them to voice their real needs. Moreover, it can lead to increased mistrust between the stakeholders and beneficiaries. It is thus necessary to include Roma directly in consultations regarding the priorities that concern them.

Supporting coordination between central institutions and local municipalities/governments in the implementation of Roma-related policies and in mainstreaming Roma issues in other central policies is also crucial for sustaining the initiated actions. Herein, synchronizing central and local level strategies and action plans, as well implementing an MIS can play an essential role.

It is anticipated that the following features will need to be further prioritised in the next phase of ROMACTED to enhance development of the capacities of local municipalities to cooperate with Roma communities:

- Consolidation of Institutional Working Groups¹⁰ established within ROMACTED 1 - development of skills and knowledge on multi-sectorial planning, monitoring and reporting, facilitation in problem solving (multi-party mediation);
- Consolidation of Municipal Task Forces¹¹ developed within ROMACTED 1 for developing participatory skills, upgrading mutual understanding between local government and local communities and cooperation in the process of drafting, revising and implementing local returnee, social inclusion and cohesion and job creation strategies and action plans;
- Creation or upgrading of existing municipal infrastructure for cooperation with Roma (for example, the ROMACTED contact persons in municipalities) to the level of Roma offices/officers;
- Support for municipal financial offices and IPA focal points/offices to develop knowledge and skills for budgetary planning (Roma sensitive budgeting and gender sensitive budgeting), as well as in fundraising, coordination of donors' assistance;
- Cooperation among municipalities through exchange of best practices and strengthening of the role of Unions/Associations of Municipalities in coordination of local Roma sensitive policies;
- Build on the sustainability of the participation in CAGs established within ROMACTED 1¹²;
- Development of knowledge and skills of local communities to participate in local policies;
- Support the establishment of youth groups and women's groups – both for social cohesions and livelihoods purposes;

¹⁰ Institutional Working Group (IWG) consists of representatives of local municipality, local branches of institutions at central level, local institutions, etc.

¹¹ Municipal Task Force consists of representatives of IWG and CAGs (Community Action Groups, consisting of representatives of local Roma communities)

¹² The sustainability of the CAGs and other participatory processes involving the local Roma community can happen through different strategies and formats: formalisation as associations, informal civic groups, creation of municipal platforms of cooperation with other minority groups and/or other local stakeholders. It is important that the practice learned through the implementation of the programme and the participatory principals in the composition of CAGs are carried out. The 2nd phase intends to build upon the experience from the pilot phase and reinforce action in this direction, giving the CAGs the necessary tools to remain active or adjust the participatory format even when the programme fades away. More on the sustainability of the CAGs can be found in "Experiencing ROMED: A legacy for improved participation of Roma Communities." (31-33), accessible at: <http://www.coe-romed.org/sites/default/files/experiencing-romed.pdf>

- Through small grant schemes, develop opportunities aimed at boosting leadership skills, creativity, entrepreneurial skills and innovation of youth and women, development of role models, visibility initiatives, etc.

Given the high level of vulnerability of Roma communities to environmental hazards (chemical pollution and air pollution, etc.) and the negative consequences of natural disasters (floods, droughts, extreme temperatures, etc.), it is also considered important to develop community-based disaster risk reduction (DRR) mechanisms; community networks for early warning systems; and coordination of support to families at risk and victims of environmental hazards and climate change. More structured coordination between central institutions and local governments is also necessary in areas of environmental and climate change policies (development of analyses of existing institutional infrastructure for DRR, plans for adaptation to climate change, etc.). Recommendations for the integration of Roma-related goals and measures within DRR and adaptation policies should be developed.

As regards returnees, the main findings of the UNDP and World Bank research have been outlined in the problem analysis above.

2. INTERVENTION LOGIC

LOGICAL FRAMEWORK MATRIX

| OVERALL OBJECTIVE | OBJECTIVELY VERIFIABLE INDICATORS (*) | SOURCES OF VERIFICATION | |
|---|---|---|---|
| To contribute to reducing the socio-economic gap between Roma and non-Roma populations and the discrimination of Roma women, men and children in the Western Balkans and Turkey; and contribute to support effective reintegration of vulnerable returnees from the EU with particular attention to Roma. | Socio-economic gap between Roma and non-Roma decreased in the five priority areas by 2024 in the IPA II Beneficiaries, reflected in concrete improvements in the living conditions of Roma communities and an access to public services equal to that of other citizens | Annual government reports on progress; Independent assessment by civil society organisations and international organisations, such as the Roma Inclusion Index; EU Progress Reports and revised regional survey if available. | |
| SPECIFIC OBJECTIVES | OBJECTIVELY VERIFIABLE INDICATORS (*) | SOURCES OF VERIFICATION | ASSUMPTIONS |
| <p>Component 1 – ROMACTED phase II</p> <p>1. To enhance effective participation of local Roma communities in the design and implementation of local policies</p> <p>Component 2 - Reintegration of returnees</p> <p>2. To enhance the capacity of Western Balkan authorities at central and local level to implement successful returnee reintegration policies and respond effectively to the needs of vulnerable returnees</p> | <p>Chosen municipalities adopting and implementing local Roma strategies and action plans with clear objectives and the necessary budgetary allocations</p> <p>Local level action plans for the reintegration of returnees adopted and successfully implemented in a selected number of localities.</p> | <p>Surveys and data assessment from the same action</p> <p>Independent assessment by civil society and international organisations</p> <p>Budgetary commitments, statistics Reports, Minutes of Municipal decisions.</p> | <p>Interest of significant number of municipalities to continue improve Roma integration policies and to actively participate in the action</p> <p>Support from central governments in the implementation of the action</p> |
| RESULTS | OBJECTIVELY VERIFIABLE INDICATORS (*) | SOURCES OF VERIFICATION | ASSUMPTIONS |
| <p>Component 1 – ROMACTED phase II</p> <p>1.1 Local authorities have increased their institutional commitment to inclusion of Roma concerns in local plans and budgets</p> <p>1.2. Roma populations in local municipalities covered by the programme have enhanced their participation in local policy and decision making</p> <p>1.3 Successful local development actions have contributed to improve the quality of life for Roma and to reduce the gap between Roma and non-Roma</p> <p>Component 2 - Reintegration of returnees</p> <p>2.1 Central level reintegration strategies and other relevant policy documents are reviewed, and fine-tuned and concrete follow up action plans are developed and agreed.</p> <p>2.2 Information regarding returnees is better managed and shared, in particular through the roll out of a Management Information Systems relating to returnees, in particular to users/feeders at municipal level.</p> <p>2.3 Local returnee integration strategies are developed with selected municipalities</p> <p>2.4 Elements of local returnee integration strategies are implemented in selected municipalities, including innovative activities on livelihoods, skills building, etc.</p> | <p>1.1a Number and quality of local development plans integrating Roma concerns (actions plans at municipal level elaborated in consultation with the Roma communities)</p> <p>1.1.b Increase in the number and size of budgets available to municipalities that target social inclusion and job creation for Roma</p> <p>1.2 Number of local actions implemented with the presence, contribution and support of Roma</p> <p>1.3 Number of innovative measures adopted/practices established for Roma integration and their impact on closing the gap in quality of life and access to the jobs and livelihoods between Roma and non-Roma communities.</p> <p>2.1 Quality of central reintegration strategies in place</p> <p>2.2a Number relevant institutions using Management Information Systems covering returnees;</p> <p>2.2b Amount of data encoded into the MISs</p> <p>2.2c Number of registered returnees having access to social services</p> <p>2.3 Number of local reintegration strategies in place in proportion to selected municipalities</p> <p>2.4. Number and quality of local returnee strategies components/activities implemented (including number of returnees involved in activities aimed at improving their livelihoods; number of returnees accessing mental health support, number of kids reintegrating in the education system, number of activities carried out to break social barriers etc.).</p> <p>2.5 Number and relevance of such cases addressed (for example translation of education diplomas obtained abroad)</p> | <p>Reports produced during the action implementation including government reports and shadow reporting by NGOs</p> <p>Municipalities and local council reports and minutes</p> <p>Roma integration index</p> <p>Mass media coverage</p> <p>Local Development Plans, facilitators reports, MTF minutes</p> <p>Data in official registers and schools</p> <p>MISs</p> | <p>Interest and political will of municipalities and participation of Roma activists in the activities of the action</p> <p>Existence of funding opportunities during the implementation period</p> <p>Relevant projects approved for funding and implementation</p> <p>Governmental support and willingness of authorities to address Roma issues and continuous commitment to Roma inclusion in the region on a more systematic level</p> |

| | | | |
|--|--|--|--|
| 2.5 Significant number of urgent administrative issues faced by returnees are addressed. | | | |
|--|--|--|--|

DESCRIPTION OF ACTIVITIES

Component 1 - ROMACTED – Phase II

Results:

1.1 Local authorities have increased their institutional commitment to inclusion of Roma concerns in local plans and budgets

1.2. Roma populations in local municipalities covered by the programme have enhanced their participation in local policy and decision making

1.3 Successful local development actions have contributed to improve the quality of life for Roma and to reduce the gap between Roma and non-Roma

The above-mentioned results will be pursued through the following types of activities adapted to whether municipalities have already participated in ROMACTED phase 1 or whether they are joining the programme in Phase 2:

1. Activities relating to ensuring the commitment and contact points of municipalities included in the Action during the phase I, and creating/reviving of project implementation structures such as Institutional Working Groups, Community Action Groups (CAGs) etc.
2. Community needs and capacity assessments / baseline surveys / priorities' lists.
3. Updating where necessary and monitoring implementation of relevant local development plans
4. Training for members of the Roma community, paying specific attention to youth groups and women's groups.
5. Introducing Roma sensitive budgeting for municipalities.
6. Financial support to municipalities and CSOs to implement Roma related elements of the local development plan through (bringing together non Roma and Roma as possible).Roma-sensitive input provided to central level disaster management and climate adaption strategies and programmes.
7. Exchange of information, experiences and best practice between municipalities and other stakeholders.

The ROMACTED team helps local authorities in identifying the roots of the marginalization of the local Roma community and assess what needs to be done to address them. This process, which is carried out in partnership with the CAG, feeds into the Local Action Plan for Roma inclusion, and then into the Local Development Strategy/Plan. Once the Joint Action Plan is agreed by the Municipal working group, it is submitted to approval by the Mayor and the Local Council.

The ROMACTED team then assists local authorities in translating the Local Development Action Plan into concrete measures, or developing local action plans and projects which are inclusive of all, including Roma. Where necessary the ROMACTED team provides expertise and working tools in policy and project design. If needed, a specific programme of training sessions and other capacity building services, including coaching and mentoring, is organised. The ROMACTED team also helps local authorities identify available resources and capacities, and prepare concrete actions.

Around 60 municipalities engaged with the programme within the first phase and most will continue to be supported in order to secure successful results and build-up on the sustainability of the process. A small number of additional municipalities will be added to the programme.

Component 2: Reintegration of returnees

Results:

2.1 Central level reintegration strategies and other relevant policy documents are reviewed, and fine-tuned and concrete follow up action plans are developed and agreed.

2.2 Information regarding returnees is better managed and shared, in particular through the roll out of a Management Information Systems relating to returnees, in particular to users/feeders at municipal level.

2.3 Local returnee integration strategies are developed with selected municipalities.

2.4 Elements of local returnee integration strategies are implemented in selected municipalities, including innovative activities on livelihoods, skills building, etc..

2.5 Significant number of urgent administrative issues faced by returnees are addressed.

These results will be pursued through the following indicative types of activities:

2.1 Central level reintegration strategies and other relevant policy documents are reviewed and fine-tuned and concrete follow-up action plans are developed and agreed.

- Technical Assistance (TA) at central governments to
 - fine-tune strategies and action plans as needed, and to develop multiyear program budgets for the reintegration of returnees, commensurate with the number and needs of the people returned. This will include identification of the inclusion system reform priorities needed to mainstream the process of reintegration in all its main elements.
 - work with line ministries relevant to components of the strategies to ensure that service provision is available and that in as far as possible is part of mainstream services.
 - map existing elements of inclusion systems characteristics and identify priorities needed to address pitfalls, performance and sustainability for socio-economic vulnerable groups, including returnees and Roma.
- Organisation of regional working meetings to exchange experiences, innovative tools etc., relating to reintegration strategies, including on how existing social programmes and services (including employment programmes) are effective in addressing the vulnerabilities and needs of marginalised population groups, including returnees

2.2 Information regarding returnees is better managed and shared, in particular through the roll out of a Management Information Systems relating to returnees, in particular to users/feeders at municipal level.

- Building on the development of case management systems promoting targeted and coordinated provision of local services to individuals and families experiencing exclusion, through the use of electronic data recording to share at the local level, by ensuring synergies with social protection services, availability of jobs and livelihood opportunities for Roma communities.
- Initiating municipal level programs relating to rolling out the MIS application developed by the World Bank during phase 1 of its EU-financed work on returnees.
- Awareness and information campaigns to increase returnees self-reporting to local authorities and to provide accessible and accurate information regarding the IPA II beneficiary's social services.
- Training of outreach workers to use an online mobile application, linked to the MIS to go out to vulnerable returnees homes to collect information.
- Capacity-building and financial support to Roma and other relevant NGOs working with Roma to enable them to contribute to reintegration of returnees.

2.3 Local returnee integration strategies are developed with selected municipalities

- Development of templates for local reintegration strategies in cooperation with municipalities

- Development of local-level strategies and action plans for the reintegration of returnees, involving services providers and community representatives. These plans should include mechanisms for coordinating with central-level government, budgeting, and pathways for capacity building at the local level, and have feedback loops into targeted central-level policies.

2.4 Elements of local returnee integration strategies are implemented in selected municipalities, including pilots on livelihood, skills building etc.

- Promoting social cohesion by organising community-based activities using the competencies of the returnees, i.e. language courses for the local population (led by returnees), cultural events where returnees could speak about the places where they resided, etc.
- Work within selected municipalities to initiate livelihood initiatives for all returnees, including a specific focus on vulnerable returnees, such as youth, women, aged, medically disadvantaged, etc., that would enhance economic opportunities. This may include:
 - Clustering livelihood projects, which increases the chances of creating backward and forward linkages, which could also act to boost other sectors of the local economy.
 - Cooperatives or social enterprise programmes for returnees and other vulnerable non-migrants in the communities to enhance livelihoods and promote social cohesion among groups.
 - Piloting social enterprise programmes aimed at addressing some of the local needs for care services, local public procurements, local value chains.
 - TA to local governments and municipalities for their active participation in such programmes.
 - Building linkages with the private sector businesses, to link upstream and downstream activities and to provide mentorship support.
 - Supporting capacities of local communities to identify and motivate individuals with propensity to entrepreneurship and set up a system of local mentors and coaches, including through local NGOs, to develop and incubate their business ideas, set up social cooperatives, etc.
 - Identification and development of practical and efficient solutions for removal of the formal and informal barriers (including stereotypes and prejudices) for employment and social integration of vulnerable returnees in the local communities. This can include early identification of the skills that returnees bring with them and matching them with local employers, facilitating access to available training programmes and re-entry into formal education processes, coordination with institutions responsible for recognition and certification of skills gained abroad, provision of care and other social services for the family members etc.
 - Supporting systems for holistic assessment/profiling of the capacities, skills and vulnerabilities of returnees, that will enable local stakeholders i.e. service providers or civil society organizations to develop individualised itineraries for reintegration of returnees, which would include education, training and livelihood opportunities.

2.5 Significant number of urgent administrative issues faced by returnees are addressed

- A programme to retrofit documents such as marriage, birth and death certificates and have these registered by the necessary authorities, and a similar process for school certificates and completion of grades that would still be relevant to the education of the students. This could involve engaging a civil society partner to provide translation and completion of documents to meet government requirements.
- Advocacy towards governments to simplify access to ID cards by acknowledging the fact that many Roma will be unable to provide the proof of residence or address necessary to obtain an ID card under current legislation.

RISKS

The main risk associated to the action is lack of willingness from the side of local authorities and central authorities to participate in the activities in a meaningful way. The lack of political will is a critical risk which may not necessarily impact the willingness of local governments to engage in the process developed by the programme per se, but will impact how local authorities engage domestically on these issues. Strong Roma integration and returnees related policies, the leverage of international organisations and the enlargement negotiations with central authorities should contribute to mitigate the lack of willingness of local governments. The involvement of (Roma) civil society can ensure greater political engagement.

Government turnover can help or hinder Roma integration efforts, depending on the attitude of those in power. The risk can only be mitigated by the non-partisan nature of the programme: the team of the programme attempts to engage constructively with the officials in power in the municipalities' part of the programme, and will maintain contacts with the public institutions. In case of the local government turnover in some of the localities, the programme will need to put additional effort in order to continue its implementation and build upon the achieved progress.

Specific risks relating to the returnees activities include:

1. Central governments might choose not to prioritise the returnee strategy at the local level through a lack of budgetary support to local authorities. This would mean, not being able to implement that action plans developed for the returnee strategies.
2. Central governments might choose not to prioritise action plans linked to their returnee strategy, thus diminishing their potential to deliver services to returnees. In addition, governments might refuse further TA and to establish cooperation with this project, thus again limiting the potential to ensure a functioning returnee programme owned by the governments and sustainable beyond the current available funding.
3. In the event of local authorities being funded and tasked to deliver on reintegration strategies, they might choose not to invest and therefore not utilise MIS. The result would be that there would be no tracking mechanism to measure and evaluate changes to the lives of returnees.
4. Local municipalities might choose to either not collaborate or financially assist Roma or other NGOs working with the Roma community. This severely limits any potential success and sustainability in terms of returnee reintegration.

Mitigating risks 1, 2 and 3: the project would need to incorporate an awareness campaign that is coordinated with EU Delegation offices to emphasise the importance of prioritising readmission strategies, operationalising action plans, fund and work with local municipalities, which are part of Readmission Strategies, which are a compliance condition of their Visa Liberalization regime with the European Union.

Mitigating risks 3 and 4: the project will work with local municipalities to create the necessary awareness not only related to EU compliances, but also that such strategies and action plans contribute directly towards greater social inclusion and cohesion and improvements in job and livelihood creation strategies.

CONDITIONS FOR IMPLEMENTATION

There are no specific legal or policy considerations required for the implementation of the action.

3. IMPLEMENTATION ARRANGEMENTS

ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

The key stakeholders to the action are central and local authorities, local Roma communities and vulnerable returnees.

For component 1, focus will be placed on strengthening the role of Roma local communities in order to empower them to actively contribute to shaping policies at the local level and to contribute to the process of implementing Roma integration measures. Local authorities on the other hand are the principle responsible actors to ensure full integration of Roma in all aspects of public life, both at policy level and in practice also as regards reintegration of returnees. A close involvement in the action will therefore be ensured from the side of local authorities.

Beside the local authorities, for component 2, involvement of returnees, as well as of central authorities will be ensured.

IMPLEMENTATION METHOD(S) AND TYPE(S) OF FINANCING

Component 1, being an extension of the ROMACTED 1, will be implemented through indirect management with the Council of Europe. Component 2 will be implemented through indirect management with the World Bank Group (WBG) and United Nations Development Programme (UNDP).

The indicative duration of the agreements will be between 30 to 42 months.

4. PERFORMANCE MEASUREMENT

METHODOLOGY FOR MONITORING (AND EVALUATION)

The European Commission may carry out a mid-term, a final or an ex-post evaluation for this action or its components via independent consultants, through a joint mission or via an implementing partner. In case a mid-term or final evaluation is not foreseen, the European Commission may, during implementation, decide to undertake such an evaluation for duly justified reasons either on its own decision or on the initiative of the partner. The evaluations will be carried out as prescribed by the Directorate-General for Neighbourhood and Enlargement Negotiations Guidelines on linking planning/programming, monitoring and evaluations. In addition, the action might be subject to external monitoring in line with the European Commission rules.

The first grant agreement signed between the EU and the CoE to carry out the ROMACTED Programme foresees some funds to conduct an evaluation of the programme. This evaluation will be held at a later stage of implementation of the programme. The analysis of the ROMACTED online reporting system and the meetings with stakeholders such as the meetings of the advisory groups in the beneficiaries or the Steering Group meetings, are also important tools to monitor and systematise the feedback on the implementation of the programme.

A Steering Committee including the implementing organisations and chaired by DG NEAR will meet minimum once per year to ensure coordination among the envisaged actions and to steer the results of the projects towards the policy objectives identified with the project partners.

5. CROSS-CUTTING ISSUES

GENDER MAINSTREAMING

Women and men are differently affected by exclusion and access to all human rights. Women are, for example, at greater risk of harassment, sexual exploitation and lacking access to education; men face greater likelihood of discrimination when seeking to access justice on parental rights. In the case of Roma women, it is statistically proven that they are at greater risk of discrimination and exclusion. They have less access to education, in particular when it relates to secondary and tertiary education, but also housing and employment, than their males counterparts.

The methodology of the programme foresees a *gender dimension*, included as a *transversal component of the programme*. This is particularly relevant having in mind the particular vulnerability of Roma women and girls, as well as their specific potential as mediators, education agents and chance promoters in the Communities. ROMACTED II will pay particular attention to the mainstreaming of Roma women's participation (namely in the Community Action Groups, relevant Support Teams and in the expected outcomes of community empowerment).

Recognizing the importance of addressing gender inequalities in order to achieve the inclusion of Roma and non-Roma returnees, and being aware of the additional challenges faced by Roma women, all of the activities, analyses and assessments will be conducted using a gender-sensitive approach, with a particular focus on the greater participation of women in livelihood-related activities.

EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES

The action aims at reducing the impact of discrimination on Roma with a special attention to Roma women and youth, as well as all vulnerable returnees (Roma and non-Roma).

MINORITIES AND VULNERABLE GROUPS

The action focuses on Roma and vulnerable returnees, which are already vulnerable groups. Therefore, it directly contributes to improvement of conditions of their living conditions. In addition, special attention will be given to women, youth and the other vulnerable groups existing within these two target groups.

ENGAGEMENT WITH CIVIL SOCIETY (AND IF RELEVANT OTHER NON-STATE STAKEHOLDERS)

ROMACTED targets local formal and informal organisations of Roma as well as community action groups made out of active Roma citizens; they are the final beneficiaries of the action. The programme also recruits Roma civil society organisations as support organisations, implementing partners to assist in the operational running of the programme at local level. Civil society organisations will therefore also support the cooperation between local Roma communities and local authorities. As described above, component II on returnees is also expected to engage with CSOs for the implementation of activities.

In addition to the cooperation with the civil society, the action foresees strong ties with representatives of the private sector, but also community representatives.

ENVIRONMENT AND CLIMATE CHANGE (AND IF RELEVANT DISASTER RESILIENCE)

As indicated in the description of activities for the Component I – Romacted phase II, Roma-sensitive input will be provided to central level disaster management and climate adaption strategies and programmes.

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| Climate action relevant budget allocation: EUR 0. |
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6. SUSTAINABILITY

Component 1 is designed to empower and to strengthen the capacity of local Roma communities. It is expected that through the action the involved actors (local Roma communities) will in the future be in the position to more actively participate in policy making at the local level. As such, the sustainability of the results will be ensured. With modest self or external funding, civil society organisation could continue to function and to influence policy making beyond the support provided under the action.

Component 2 includes a systemic approach to returnees and reintegration at central and local level that will enable sustainability of the action through development/improvement of central and local returnees' strategies, rolling out MIS and building capacities of all relevant stakeholders and mainstreaming.

7. COMMUNICATION AND VISIBILITY

Communication and visibility will be given high importance during the implementation of the action. The implementation of the communication activities shall be funded from the amounts allocated to the action.

All necessary measures will be taken to publicise the fact that the action has received funding from the EU in line with the EU communication and visibility requirements in force. All stakeholders and implementing partners shall ensure the visibility of EU Financial assistance provided through IPA II throughout all phases of the programme cycle.

Visibility and communication actions shall demonstrate how the intervention contributes to the agreed programme objectives and the accession process as well as the benefits of the action for the general public.. Actions shall be aimed at strengthening general public awareness and support of interventions financed and the objectives pursued. The actions shall aim at highlighting to the relevant target audiences the added value and impact of the EU's interventions and will promote transparency and accountability on the use of funds.

Visibility and communication aspects shall be complementary to the activities implemented by the Directorate-General for Neighbourhood and Enlargement Negotiations and the EU Delegations in the field. The European Commission and the EU Delegations shall be fully informed of the planning and implementation of the specific visibility and communication activities.

When relevant for a specific intervention envisaged under the action, the communication and visibility plan will be based on an agreed communication narrative and master messages customised for the different target audiences (stakeholders, business community, civil society, general public, etc.).