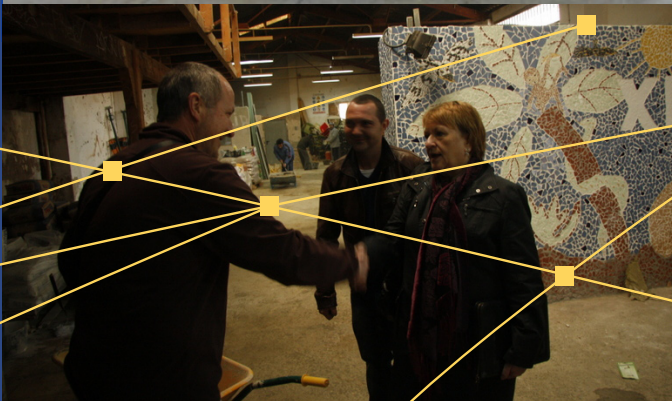




ROMA-NeT

The Employability Challenges of Roma Inclusion

AN URBACT II PROJECT





ROMA-NeT

The focus of the ROMA-NeT project is the integration of Roma populations in European cities. The nine ROMA-NeT partners came together to share expertise, to explore experiences and to spread good practice.

These good practices will influence and improve local policy development and deliver capabilities for stronger community cohesion between Roma and their neighbouring communities across a whole city.

Unemployment is systemic across Roma communities and ROMA-NeT partners are very well aware that regular work would make a significant difference to improve the quality of life of Roma individuals and families. Roma unemployment is complex and there are many very real barriers that exclude working age Roma from suitable, legitimate and sustainable work on the formal labour market.

Only one in three Roma are in paid employment. In many Roma communities, long term unemployment is at least double, in some places four or five times more than non-Roma communities. In some European countries an alarming statistic is that 1 in 10 Roma children, aged 7 to 15, are reported to be working outside the home.¹

Undoubtedly low or no education and out-of-date skills are significant factors that create the widespread 'unemployability'

of Roma that now exists. But it is not the whole story and there are other factors, such as employment discrimination and negative perceptions that impact on the employment potential of many Roma. The burden is more often placed on Roma individuals to adapt, in terms of their education and work skills, rather than tackling the wider issue of employment discrimination. New arrival Roma to EU cities are often portrayed as responsible for their labour market exclusion.²

The current unemployment levels in Roma communities are a burden that no country, region or city can afford to sustain and this is something that The World Bank supports³. Limited access to paid employment is not only critical for Roma individuals, it is also a drain on national, regional and local economies. A huge loss of productivity results from not finding ways to release the skills in this untapped labour force to

contribute to economic growth. Therefore greater investment is required in educational support, skill development and other employability measures to improve the position of Roma in the labour market.

The EU's response to the current economic crisis is to take coordinated action to prevent cyclical unemployment becoming structural. The EU recognises that additional help is required for all minority communities, particularly those that are segregated and not integrated with the wider communities. The EU also promotes an integrated approach to reduce unemployment and increase effort to capitalise on previously untapped labour market skills in communities.

THE STORY SO FAR

KEY ISSUES

Roma unemployment is complicated, and it is not simply about creating better skilled people, necessary as that is. Other factors such as where Roma live, the demands of living in severe poverty and the negative perceptions from the non-Roma population all make finding work difficult, even impossible for working age Roma. Cities and regions with Roma communities need to find innovative ways to tackle the systemic unemployment and address the big issues that prevent Roma from having access to work, including:

- Low levels of education, limited language skills and the absence of work relevant skills for many Roma.
- Direct and indirect discrimination which is widespread in many places, for example when education is required to carry out basic employment such as cleaners and labourers.

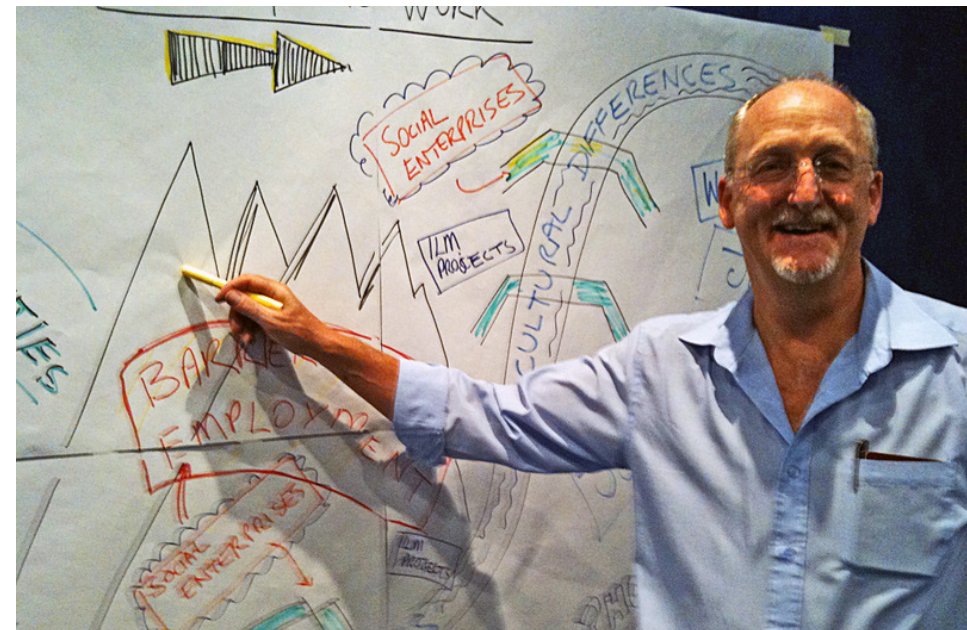
- Negative perceptions of many employers and from people already in work about the willingness, reliability and commitment of Roma people to work. Even well qualified Roma find their employment opportunities severely limited.

- Low aspirations and expectations about work, often a consequence of inter-generational unemployment and poverty.

- Poor health and home care responsibilities for other less able family members has an impact on people's ability and availability to work.

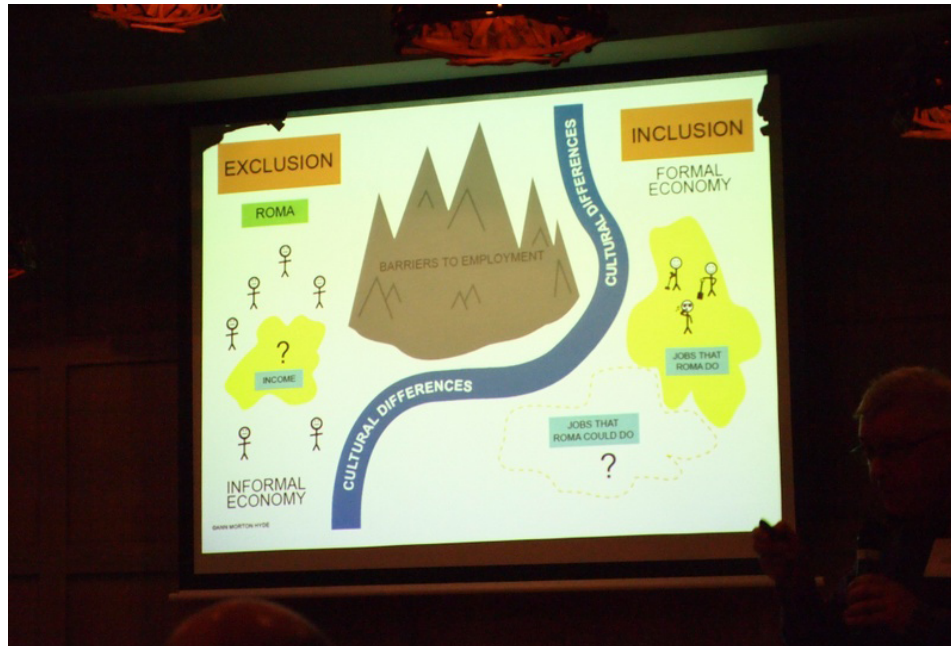
- Many Roma families live in extreme poverty, where subsistence living means no time or space to look for real work and often this means unofficial, unregulated work and activities like street selling and begging.

- Legalities and rights to work determined by some Member States to prevent new arrivals from working in other EU countries is a major obstacle to work, for example Romanian nationals being excluded from working legally in their countries.



POTENTIAL RESPONSES

5



Many Member States have set themselves ambitious targets to increase the levels of Roma employment over the next decade and as such have also created interesting and innovative interventions that are working across several areas such as housing, social care and employment.

Although an integrated approach is presented as the best way forward for Roma communities, unemployed Roma often require additional support to build a sustainable pathway into employment. This is mainly because of the effects of long term systemic unemployment and a general detachment from the labour market.

Roma people often display entrepreneurial skills, sometimes because they are forced to find ways to survive and to generate income. But there is no widespread investment in the development of this skill set, but additional support in self-employment and

entrepreneurship with the help of business support and start up grants and loans could assist more Roma into forms of self-employment.

It is impossible to tackle one of the key areas of concern (education, employment, housing, healthcare) without at least considering the effect of one on the other areas. There are no easy wins. Tackling these problems will be a long-term game and needs resources both from the EU and from Member States, in terms of money, know-how and capacity.

Roma people will need more assistance in areas such as job search, first work experience and on-the-job training and more support towards self-employment. But the bigger issue is around changing behaviours and attitudes from the wider public in each Member State that can often lead to extreme prejudice and discrimination against Roma looking for and carrying out paid work.



Case Study:

“START UP” Budapest Municipality Trainee Project for young Roma

BUDAPEST CHANCE NON-PROFIT LTD. –

THE EMPLOYMENT ASSISTANCE AND EQUAL OPPORTUNITY ORGANISATION OF THE MUNICIPALITY OF BUDAPEST

Background

For the Municipality of Budapest it is important that citizens earn a living from paid employment. For this reason, the Municipality made a commitment in 1996 to undertake an active role in assisting the unemployed of Budapest. By establishing the Budapest Chance Non-Profit Ltd, the Municipality extended a safety net for the

unemployed, who may not be able to negotiate the labyrinth of the institutional system, and consequently, often become ‘invisible’ to the administration.

Budapest Chance operates three types of service to create accessible employment opportunities for more Budapest citizens so they

don't have to rely on state aid: integration assisted by mentoring services, and job seeking advice. Particular attention is paid to Roma citizens.

“START UP” Roma Trainee Scholarship Project

The “Start Up” Roma trainee scholarship programme was created to start the career of young Roma graduates and starters working as trainees at various Municipality institutions to gain professional experience and operational understanding of public institutions. Roma were selected for the “Start Up” programme because they are significantly under-represented in public administration in the local government of Budapest.

Job opportunities for Roma people are very poor in Hungary and young people and women are especially disadvantaged. The situation of Roma entrants on the job market is made more difficult because of the discrimination that is present in many areas of life. But the committed graduates involved in the project successfully managed to challenge and decrease the prejudice and discrimination usually displayed towards Roma employees.

The project ran for two years from 1st January 2009 to 28th February 2010 and was implemented by BUDAPEST ESÉLY Nonprofit Ltd. and its partners: Studio Metropolitana Nonprofit Ltd., Association “Romassist”, Cromo Foundation. The positive results of the project were as follows:

- 150 young Roma people were reached and engaged to take part in the recruitment;
- There were 85 applicants, from which 72 fulfilled the criteria to participate in the project;
- 35 young Roma people were included in the project
 - 2 left the project right at the beginning (due to family circumstances).
 - 2 were successfully employed in the primary labour market before the end of the internship.
- 31 young Roma people finished the six-month internship

Their work and integration was guided by patrons and mentors trained by the project, and appointed by the employer who knew of the positions. In order to increase their competencies they participated in personality development training, English and IT courses.

In January 2010, 12 out of the 31 young people were employed through their former trainee place. Trainee places were the Mayor’s Office of Budapest (different departments), schools, hospitals maintained by the Municipality and other institutions founded by the Municipality.



Key Messages

- Improving employability for Roma is a huge problem that requires innovative responses; it must be a key component of all economic development plans for regions and cities.
- The landscape of Roma unemployment is complex and there are many barriers that prevent access to the labour market - some obvious and some less apparent. Understanding the situation and the needs of all sides is the key basis for good quality education, employment and training initiatives.
- Attitudinal change is needed to tackle discrimination and preconceived ideas from all sides, not only on the part of Roma looking for work but also on the part of employers and from individuals as potential work colleagues.
- Employment and training interventions for Roma cannot be short term - the most effective are longer term - one year or more - and people-centred focusing on developing individual skills and establishing relationships between Roma trainees and potential employers.
- The case study shows that a graduate recruitment initiative to engage young Roma in public administration is good practice that could be developed and replicated in other places. To build a more solid foundation, the internship should be extended from six months to one year. Such initiatives can challenge and decrease the prejudice and discrimination often displayed by public administration towards Roma employees.
- Matching interns or trainees into workplaces should be on the basis of competencies and compatibility, rather than on qualifications and certificates.
- In education, training and skills development interventions, a harmonised mixture of mentoring and professional coaching can be beneficial for the individual Roma trainees and also for employers.
- A 'patron' or 'champion' in the shape of a well-known entrepreneur can be a useful tool to encourage other businesses and employers to offer work based learning places for Roma individuals.
- Internships and training initiatives should be complemented by tailored training offering language and IT skills. They should also provide extra services such as housing support, travel support, child care and living expenses.

1. *European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights (FRA)* 'The Situation of Roma in 11 EU Member States Survey results at a glance' (2012) Luxembourg.

2. Communication from the Commission to the Council - Draft Joint Employment Report 2004/05 (SEC(2005)67).

3. World Bank, Roma in an expanding Europe: breaking the poverty cycle, 2005.

KEY RESOURCES

Additional resources:

• The European Roma Rights Centre, *The Glass Box, Exclusion of Roma from Employment*, <http://www.errc.org/cms/upload/media/02/14/m00000214.pdf>.

• European Roma Rights Centre, *Systemic Exclusion of Roma from Employment*, (March 2006) <http://www.errc.org/cikk.php?cikk=2535>.

• European Roma Rights Centre, *Tackling the Systemic Exclusion of Roma from Employment*, (2006) - <http://www.errc.org/article/tackling-the-systemic-exclusion-of-roma-from-employment/2534>.

• *European Union (2012), European Commission Directorate-General for Justice* 'National Roma Integration Strategies: a first step in the implementation of the EU Framework'. Belgium, pp. 8-9.

• Zimmerman K et al, *Study on the Social and labour market integration of ethnic minorities*, 2007, DG Employment.

• Ionescu M. and Cace S., *Employment policies for Roma (focus on Romania)*, 2006 Publishing House, Bucharest.



ROMA-NeT good practice guides

This guide to working with Roma communities forms the first part of a background overview of Roma communities across EU cities and countries and includes good practice ideas from a number of cities within the ROMA-NeT partnership.

These guides have been produced to help cities build a snapshot in their understanding of the issues facing Roma communities and therefore facing cities. By sharing good practice from across the EU, we hope to offer you some pathways to consider and a range of useful contacts and resources at your fingertips.

The other guides currently are:

- ROMA-NeT – An Introduction to the Challenges of Roma Inclusion
- ROMA-NeT – The Education Challenges of Roma Inclusion
- ROMA-NeT – The Health and Social Care Challenges of Roma Inclusion
- ROMA-NeT – The Housing Challenges of Roma Inclusion
- ROMA-NeT – The Employability Challenges of Roma Inclusion
- ROMA-NeT – The Policing Challenges of Roma Inclusion
- ROMA-NeT – Roma on the Move in Europe – the Challenges for Inclusion
- ROMA-NeT – The planning and governance for Roma Inclusion

Further guides may be available in the future. All of these guides are available from the ROMA-NeT team: info@roma-net.com



URBACT II

URBACT is a European exchange and learning programme promoting sustainable urban development.

It enables cities to work together to develop solutions to major urban challenges, reaffirming the key role they play in facing increasingly complex societal challenges. It helps them to develop pragmatic solutions that are new and sustainable, and that integrate economic, social and environmental dimensions. It enables cities to share good practices and lessons learned with all professionals involved in urban policy throughout Europe. URBACT is 181 cities, 29 countries, and 5,000 active participants.



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www.urbact.eu/

