



# ROMA-NeT

## The Housing 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.

Segregation and 'ghettoisation' of Roma communities is the reality that many regions and cities in Europe face. Segregation, camps and spatial concentrations of Roma populations are where the challenges lie for the ROMA-NeT partner cities.

Segregation often creates unmanageable problems that are a significant barrier to adequate provision of housing, healthcare, education and employment services. It also has an impact on how the community is policed, how the media reacts to the community and it compounds discrimination and stereotypical views from the majority population. It also generates a culture of 'out of sight, out of mind', where nothing changes, public investment is absent and little is done to tackle or change the situation on the ground.

Some of the residential segregation that exists today, although often

viewed as informal and even unlawful by the authorities, is not accidental but rather an outcome of deliberate and exclusionary public policies in the past. Segregation rather than integration causes more disengagement from the wider community. It leads to a 'them and us' culture, often perpetuated by the media, and can lead to negative, reactive policing policies such as 'zero tolerance' campaigns. It can also make communities susceptible to violent attacks.

Although not the same in all regions and cities, segregation is still prevalent and demands the attention and focus of city administrations, as they are best placed to lead the pathway towards positive and sustainable change.

## THE STORY SO FAR

## KEY ISSUES

Cities and regions with Roma communities will need to find ways to reduce the:

- Segregation, physical and social, of Roma and non-Roma populations.
- Overcrowding and sub-standard housing conditions.
- Exploitation of Roma by private landlords.
- Various forms of illegal and insecure housing situations.

and ways to:

- Improve access to adequate housing facilities.
- Ensure access to the full range of public utilities.
- Improve affordability of quality social housing and public utility services.

- Provide security of tenure for habitable and accessible housing.

- Ensure potable water, electricity, waste removal, public transportation and provision of other infrastructure.

- Easy access to the full range of public services afforded to other citizens such as education, employment and healthcare.

- Public policy that creates the opportunity for all of the above.

It is also important that the wider populations of cities and regions are given information to raise awareness that will reduce the discrimination against Roma people. Without changing attitudes of Roma and non-Roma populations, all improvements will be more difficult to achieve and sustain.



## POTENTIAL RESPONSES

The ROMA-NeT cities are all facing some kind of challenge in relation to housing and the living conditions of the Roma populations in their city. There is no short-term quick fix for such a complex and integrated set of problems. ROMA-NeT partners are now much more aware that the provision of integrated, quality living accommodation is a significant factor for Roma inclusion.

Public authorities tend to see Roma populations as transient and temporary communities and often fail to acknowledge that most Roma communities are now sedentary populations living in segregated sub-standard conditions and in poverty. Most Roma people want to be part of a legitimate economy and to contribute to the wider community of which they are part. The provision of integrated quality accommodation is a major factor in achieving this.

Almeria, Torrent and Budapest provide examples of positive

housing interventions and other partner cities like Udine and Bologna continue to work through the challenges of Roma families living in segregated camps. Glasgow and Karvina struggle with the issue of exploitative practices of housing companies and private landlords and Kosice has the challenge of a large urban ghetto.

- Almeria and Budapest have both used an integrated and area-based approach to housing regeneration and new build. Almeria in La Chanca and Budapest in the Magdolna area have involved both the Roma and non-Roma communities during the planning stages for area regeneration and in the actual building or refurbishment of properties. In La Chanca, Gitanos (Roma) now live side-by-side with non-Roma populations in decent and affordable social housing.

- Over the years, Torrent in Spain has taken a number of housing actions, for example

the dismantling of camps, into ghettoised segregated housing in apartment blocks. Now Torrent is experimenting with an inclusive dispersal programme where they offer intensive support to Roma families to help them move from segregated housing to high-quality integrated housing alongside non-Roma families.

- The Roma population in Udine live in a segregated camp, and through the cities involvement with ROMA-NeT, Udine has been working with the community to co-produce a plan for the improvement and legalisation of the living conditions.

The case study that follows shows how an integrated and inclusive approach to housing and regeneration, led by a regional public authority, can make a significant difference to the Roma populations and to social integration and community cohesion.



## Case Study: Re-housing and social integration programme in Madrid

Prepared by Eszter Somogyi, Thematic Expert

### Introduction

In Spain there has been a long history of slum clearance, some with controversial results in the early programmes. Now as a result of long-term effort the percentage of Roma living in sub-standard housing has been reduced from 31% to around 11% during the last two decades.

### Aim and structure of the programme

Following a series of slum clearance programmes, some of which worked better than others, a new initiative was launched in 1998 to eradicate the remaining slums in Madrid.

The aim of the new programme was to re-house the 2,900 socially excluded, mostly Roma families

into non-segregated areas of the city, while also facilitating their social integration into their new living environment. To avoid over concentration of re-housed families inside the city, and thus the generation of new problematic areas, a quota system was set up to define a balanced distribution across the districts. Social, education,

training and employment measures were offered in parallel to the families involved and a special emphasis was placed on mediation of any conflicts between the re-housed former slum dwellers and their new neighbours.

The Re-housing and Social Integration Institute (IRIS) was

set up by an act of the regional parliament of the Autonomous Community of Madrid in 1998, which was charged with the management and the implementation of the programme. To implement the social and other measures, IRIS set up 8 Community Development Centres (the first one in 1999) and one Job Centre.

To ensure the cooperation between stakeholders, IRIS made formal agreements with the relevant municipal authorities such as the Regional Government Department of Education, Department of Social Services, the Housing Institute, and the federation of Local Authorities. Involvement of these partners ensured political, financial and technical support for the programme. The majority of the 217.5 million Euro funding came from the Regional Government of Madrid between 1999–2008.

### Programme elements

The programme offered long-term support for beneficiary families by preparing them to participate in the programme, relocating them to their new living environment and then facilitating the adoption of their new circumstances. The programme provided families with public rental housing with subsidised rents, much below market price.

The target was to accommodate about 200 slum dweller families per year in public rental housing. To meet this target, the number of public rental accommodation had to be increased, as there was a lack of available housing. Therefore IRIS purchased units and renovated them before renting them out to the families participating in the programme. The process of relocation and integration consists of seven main activities:

1. Documenting the actual situation in the slum: the housing circumstances and basic data of families.

2. Preparing families to be re-housed through the interventions of social workers, educators and teachers.

3. Finding and renovating alternative housing for the beneficiaries of the programme.

4. Assigning properties through social workers according to the size of the families and their other needs such as the proximity of work place etc.

5. Re-housing families and demolishing their former housing in the slums immediately after they move out.

6. Providing follow up services for the beneficiaries after they were re-housed to ensure a smooth transition, through regular long-term visits from social workers as mediators and other community and development centre staff.

7. Regular checks on the rental flats to ensure appropriate occupancy

and maintenance.

There are certain eligibility criteria that the families living in slums have to meet: the family has no property in Spain; their household income is below a certain limit; and the head of household is over 25 or with children and has not been provided with any public property and is a resident of Madrid for at least two years (this condition is handled with some flexibility). Belonging to an ethnic minority was not a priority among the criteria.

The relocation is based on a formal agreement between IRIS and each beneficiary family. The rental contract concerning the provided rental unit in the non-segregated area also has a 'social' clause including responsibilities that the families have to take upon such as participation in training programmes in order to improve access to employment and school attendance of children.

## Results

Between 1999-2003 the programme re-housed 1256 families and eradicated 25 slums. By 2009 altogether about 2000 families (around 5000 persons) were re-housed.

The total budget was 217.5 million Euros of which 174.4 million Euros were spent on 1401 units (purchase and renewal) to be rented out for the beneficiaries.

An assessment of the programme in 2003 showed that 33 social workers facilitated the social integration of the families while another 17 supported labour market related programmes.

This assessment also showed that the majority of the beneficiary Roma families felt no social rejection in their new living environment while only 5 percent of their neighbours perceived many conflicts and 79 percent had experienced no or few conflicts.

## Problems

The main problems of the programme have been that the financial capacity of the re-housed families are not sufficient to pay housing costs (rent and utility and other service costs etc), therefore many of them accumulated debts relating to housing.

Those who have properties somewhere else in Spain cannot participate in the programme however they do not go back to their original settlement even when their slum dwelling is demolished. They rather move in to relatives' housing usually in another slum area.

The close relations of extended families are often broken up while they are not substituted with new ones, e.g. children used to play with their cousins every day while now they are quite far away from each other and it is difficult for them to find new friends.

## Key Messages

- Desegregation is not just about Roma communities - it is about the whole population and the improvement of regions and cities. Segregation, in whatever form, further isolates Roma from society and from the most basic services such as schools, health care, affordable and acceptable housing and access to employment.

- Housing is key to successful Roma integration and a gradual and integrated approach is the way forward to influence sustainable change. Successful Roma integration is also about creating successful new communities.

- Re-housing socially excluded people, including Roma, from slums to a non-segregated area of a city can provide sustainable social integration if it is accompanied by long-term preparation and follow-up programmes dealing with their multiple disadvantages.

- Successful housing programmes

require the cooperation of different partners such as public authorities, local service providers, institutions, private and non-governmental organisations. Strong, long-term political commitment is essential to carry out such a costly and complex programme. It is crucial to get policy makers and decision makers involved in all stages.

- Complex area-based integration projects require well organised planning, strong institutional knowledge and partnership working to harmonise activities across the different types of interventions. Education and employment is crucial as it helps people change their lifestyle situations and maintain higher quality housing.

- Providing low investment and low maintenance houses which use local materials and include energy and resource-efficient construction methods that actively involve the target group throughout the process is good practice.

## KEY RESOURCES



Improving Roma housing and eliminating slums, Spain, Case study, October 2009. Conference edition. Prepared for European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights.

[http://fra.europa.eu/fraWebsite/attachments/Roma-Housing-Case-Study-Spain\\_en.pdf](http://fra.europa.eu/fraWebsite/attachments/Roma-Housing-Case-Study-Spain_en.pdf)

ASkywithoutCardboard:Rehousing and Socially Integrating Madrid's slum dwellers.

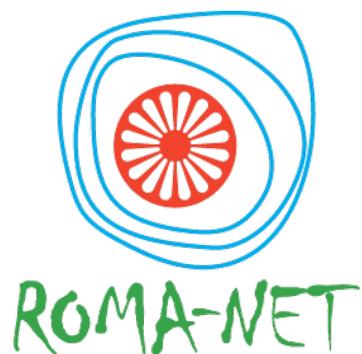
<http://www.unhabitat.org/bestpractices/2004/mainview.asp?BPID=2734>

*Baseline Report: ROMA-NeT a transnational partnership.* Morton Hyde, Ann, Published by URBACT and European Union, May 2010.

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

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

'The Situation of Roma in 11 EU Member States Survey results at a glance' (2012) Luxembourg *Vademecum: The Ten Common Basic Principles on Roma Inclusion*, Publications Office of the European Commission, 2009.



### **ROMA-NeT good practice guides**

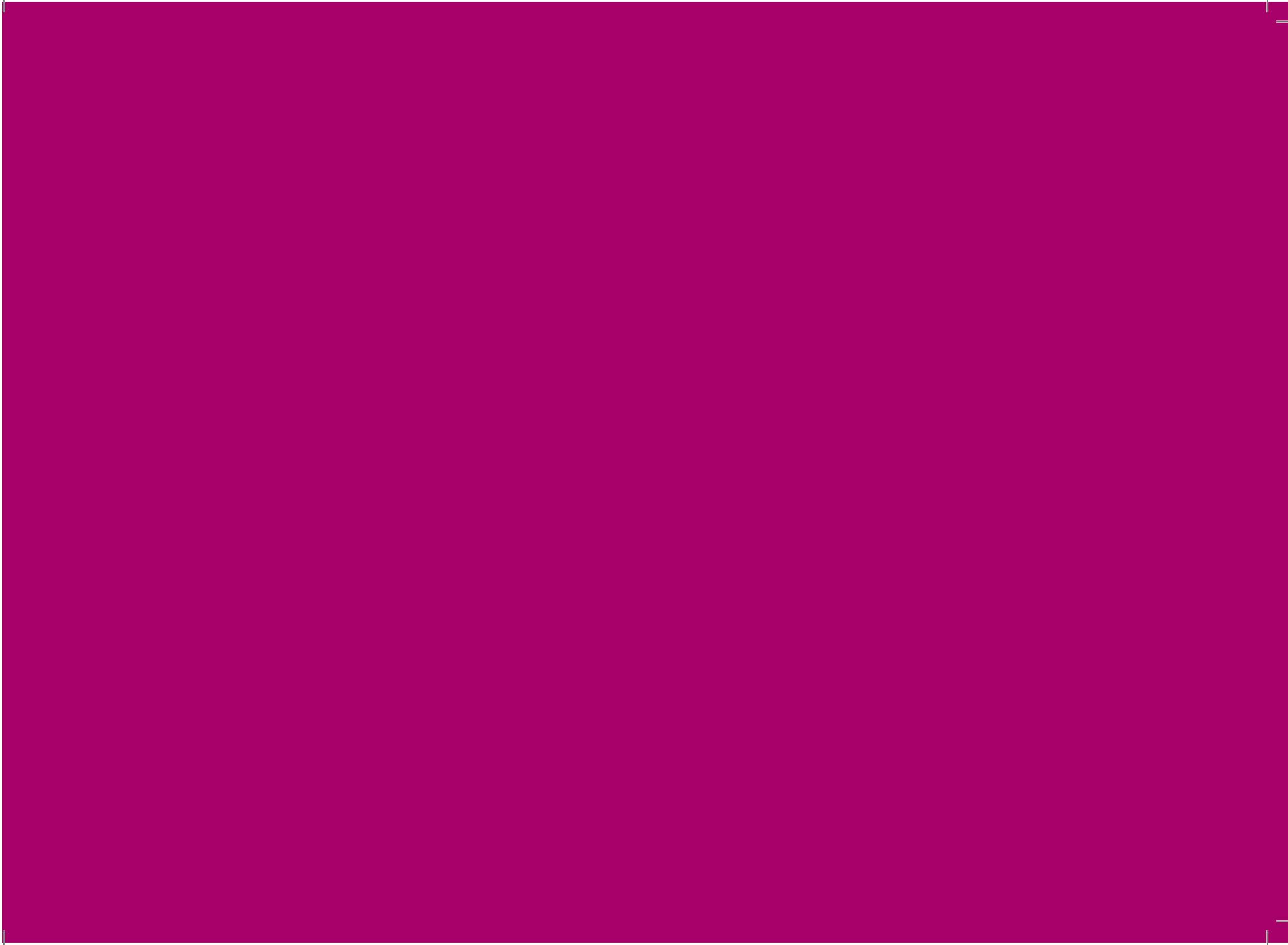
This guide to working with Roma communities forms the first part of a background overview of Roma communities across EU cities and countries and includes good practice ideas from a number of cities within the ROMA-NeT partnership.

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](mailto: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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