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EVALUATION OF THE COUNCIL OF EUROPE AND EUROPEAN UNION JOINT PROGRAMME 'ROMED'

COUNTRY FINDINGS HUNGARY

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European value(s)



ROMED
Médiation pour les Roms
Mediation for Roma

ROMED in Hungary

Anasztazia Nagy, country expert Hungary

1.1 Introduction

Roma people in Hungary are Hungarian citizens of Roma descent. According to the 2011 census¹, they comprise 3.18% of the total population, which alone makes them the largest minority in the country, although various estimates have put the number of Roma people as high as five to ten percent of the total population. The current demographic tendencies in the country may also lead to an increased percentage of the Roma population. The counties with the highest concentration of Roma are Borsod-Abaúj-Zemplén and Szabolcs-Szatmár-Bereg (officially 45,525 and 25,612 people in 2001 respectively), but there are other regions with a traditionally high Roma population, for example, parts of Baranya and the middle reaches of the Tisza valley.

Although Roma have lived in Hungary for centuries, they are facing ongoing problems related to social exclusion, with the very subject of Roma being a heated and disputed topic in the country. The majority of the Roma population is quite poor. Fair and equal access to quality education is limited which results in high unemployment and a perpetual cycle of poverty that further excludes Roma from mainstream society. Currently around 90% of Roma children complete primary education² but, at every subsequent level of education, the number of Roma children reduces. According to a survey from 2012, 8% of Roma do not continue their education; approximately 60% enrol in vocational school, 30% in vocational secondary school and some in secondary school³. The dropout rate among Roma is still almost twice as high as among non-Roma.

As the majority of Roma communities live in segregated areas, especially in the countryside, the national and local Roma strategies and programmes need to combine both projects directly dedicated to the development of these areas and mainstream policy interventions for Roma inclusion. However, today there are fewer national programmes directly aimed at improving the conditions of Roma communities at local level.⁴

Very few programmes provide support at local level. In the area of education, the “Sure Start”⁵ Programme was piloted in several municipalities, aiming to support the early education and pre-schooling of Roma children. The “Tanoda” after-school programme is still one of the core funding sources for NGOs and church organisations, the latter being the entities preferred by governmental programmes for working for Roma. In the area of housing, cities are required to prepare Local Equal Opportunity Plans as parts of the Integrated Urban Development Strategies. The Plans identify systemic interventions (relevant to the entire city) to stop or reduce segregation. Local Equal Opportunity Plans became a statutory requirement for local governments under the Equal Opportunity Act. ERDF funding supports integrated housing projects for Roma and other marginalised communities. Integrated programmes aimed at improving social, community, educational, healthcare, employment and housing conditions will be implemented using both ESF and ERDF resources. Alongside the establishment of community centres to provide hygienic and other services for Roma, their housing needs will be targeted as well, including social housing.

¹ https://www.ksh.hu/docs/hun/xftp/idoszaki/nepsz2011/nepsz_sajto_20130328.pdf

² <http://romagov.kormany.hu/hungarian-national-social-inclusion-strategy-deep-poverty-child-poverty-and-the-roma>

³ http://www.tarsadalomkutatas.hu/kkk.php?TPUBL-A-821/publikaciok/tpubl_a_821.pdf

⁴ http://ec.europa.eu/justice/discrimination/roma-integration/hungary/national-strategy/national_en.htm

⁵ http://www.gyerekesely.hu/index2.php?option=com_content&do_pdf=1&id=202

1.2 ROMED1 key findings

1.2.1 Relevance

The ROMED1 Programme demonstrated a new approach of working with Roma communities and local institutions in Hungary. Its relevance was confirmed by mayors, local public administrators, mediators and the Roma communities interviewed.

The Hungarian Roma communities face intercultural tension and a high level of anti-Roma attitudes at local and national level; therefore, effective intercultural mediation is very much needed. In Hungary, the Roma mediator is not recognised as a profession, but in the public administration system there are similar social professions which target families with social problems. However, they do not aim to mediate the relations between the affected communities and the respective municipalities. The lack of Roma mediators was a relevant reason for including the country in the Programme and placing intercultural mediation on the policy agenda of local and national government.

1.2.2 Efficiency and effectiveness of the ROMED1 training process

A total of 45 mediators were trained through ROMED1, the majority of them women. ROMED1 training reached two different target groups in Hungary. During the first training session in 2011, the Programme trained Roma practitioners who already had work experience related to community empowerment of Roma, mainly due to civil initiatives and NGO projects. The second session in 2012 trained Roma university students from Romaversitas, a development and scholarship programme. The aim was to prepare students for using intercultural mediation to support the empowerment process within their home communities. Both groups completed three days of initial training and then a period of six months' practice, followed by an additional three days of training. The selection criteria of the first group was developed in cooperation with the Government and included as basic conditions the following: the active working status of participants, Roma origin, support of the employee and work experience with the Roma community.

Based on the interviews with trainers and the focus group with trained mediators and students, the training was useful for both beginners and more experienced participants. It provided beginners with a good basic knowledge of mediation and conflict resolution, while for the more experienced ones, it helped to adjust and correct their practice. More specifically, the trainees reported increased self-esteem, improved communication and better negotiation skills. Furthermore, they gained knowledge on conflict resolution, as well as on the meaning of the role of the mediator as an impartial link between the community and the local institutions.

ROMED trainees also pointed out that the national training programmes and international meetings **improved their social capital** of links and collaboration with other civil organisations, which was a very important added value of the Programme for them.

When Romaversitas became the National Focal Point, ROMED targeted a completely new group of trainees who were Romaversitas students with different educational backgrounds. Few of them had previous experience in direct work with their Roma community. Not all of them applied the skills gained during the training in the six months' practice, because the majority of the students did not live in their home communities, as they were studying, mostly in Budapest.

During the six months' practice, the trainees mapped the local problems, introduced themselves as ROMED mediators to the Roma community and local institutions and collected letters of support. One

of the weaknesses of the practical component of the ROMED training was that, although the trainees introduced themselves as mediators, they did not really know if they would continue to work as mediators in the future. Some of them were already out of work and the ROMED training was not instrumental in helping ensure their employment. During these six months, they also lacked the professional support and opportunity for peer support or common meetings to share their experiences.

Most of the mediators started with high expectations and motivation when they applied, but reported dissatisfaction by the end of the Programme. Their employment status did not change and they did not receive any further support after the training. According to the trainees, being a mediator with a certificate from the Council of Europe and the European Union certainly provided prestige, but in practice it did not contribute to their career development.

Since the Government did not partner with the Programme after the selection of the first group of trainees, an additional challenge for ROMED1 was to ensure the participation of local institutions in the training. The ROMED national team managed to include some municipality representatives in the training thanks to their contacts. The municipalities which took part in the ROMED1 training recognised the importance of mediation and also became part of the ROMED2 phase (Nagyecsed and Nyirbator).

1.2.3 Outcomes and impacts

Impacts on mediators and communities

ROMED1 made a positive contribution in increasing the capacities of the 47 people trained as mediators, but had a very limited impact in terms of increasing their employment by the municipalities, institutions or NGOs.

Participants from the first group of trainees mapped the local needs and problems of their community and established cooperation with local institutions as part of the practice period, but they could not move onto direct mediation work due to lack of employment. Among the second group trained, only a few of the university students went through the six months of practice.

During this short six-month period, trained mediators could not generate change in communities. As the majority of trained mediators remained unemployed, this reduced the opportunity to apply the acquired skills and contribute to better services in the communities. The lack of officially-recognised Roma mediators blocked the potential impact of ROMED, therefore the direct benefit of ROMED was reduced to only improving capacities of the participating trainees and the two municipalities which continued to participate in ROMED2.

Impact at the national level

ROMED1 could not generate impact at national level for Roma, as it had limited influence on decision makers, due to the lack of governmental support.

At the beginning of the Programme, the Government took an active role in the development of the criteria system and the selection process. During the development of the National Strategy for Social Inclusion, it also recognised the importance of community workers and mediators to help Roma gain access to better services. However, this did not lead to any follow-up steps in the further official recognition of mediators as a profession.

The ROMED1 Programme ended without cooperation and support from the Government, as it was not under its control and management. In addition to that, the Government disliked the political affiliation of the ROMED National Focal Point which also contributed to unsuccessful cooperation.

As part of the implementation of the National Strategy for Social Inclusion, the Roma National Government, in partnership with the Hungarian Government, has trained more than 1,000 Roma in the field of social work and child protection in 2015 through EU Funds. The aim was to increase the employability of Roma in these fields, which are closely linked to working with Roma communities and families. Although the Programme targeted Roma participants, the aim was not to specifically train Roma mediators, but to place Roma in the field of social work and child protection, which differ from the objectives of the ROMED Programme.

Currently, the ROMED team, together with other civic organisations, is advocating for the recognition of the Roma or intercultural mediator as a profession. The current ROMED2 National Support Organisation, "Partners Hungary", is one of the only NGOs in Hungary working for the recognition and institutionalisation of Roma mediation as a profession. Partners Hungary has years of experience in intercultural mediation and is trying to support the adoption of this practice, not only through their involvement in ROMED but also through other programmes.

1.2.4 Sustainability

The sustainability of the results of ROMED1 depended on the structural, financial and political aspects.

The fact that ROMED1 was a Programme of the Council of Europe and the European Union mobilised different stakeholders: the Government at the initial stage followed by NGOs, Roma mediators and some local institutions. Municipalities were, and are, more open to working with Roma mediators, due to the official participation of EU institutions. This also ensured the recognition of the Programme by other donors and civil organisations but, unfortunately, ROMED1 did not succeed in becoming a national programme.

The national trainers of the Programme ensured collaboration with other initiatives in the country. One such initiative is the Public Health Focused Model Programme for Primary Care Development, implemented under the Swiss-Hungarian Cooperation Programme. The model is implemented in four disadvantaged micro-regions of Hungary with a high proportion of Roma people. As part of this programme, in 2013 the ROMED trainers of Partners Hungary trained 48 intercultural health mediators based on the ROMED1 Trainer's Handbook.

1.3 ROMED2 key findings

1.3.1 Relevance

Based on the interviews with national teams and all local stakeholders, ROMED2 is very relevant and necessary in the Hungarian context due to the anti-Roma attitude of society, as well as central and local administration officials. Intercultural mediation and community empowerment are ways of solving tensions in society and providing for equal access of Roma to development. Due to the lack of an officially-recognised Roma mediator status financed by the state in Hungary, the ROMED1 Programme has also high relevance in responding to the need to put mediation among the priorities of the Government in the field of Roma inclusion.

1.3.2 Efficiency and effectiveness of assisted local processes

Selection of municipalities

ROMED2 was launched in Hungary together with the ROMACT Programme in October 2013 in seven localities. The selection of localities was done by the Council of Europe and the European Union according to a developed criteria system, such as the share of Roma as part of the population within the locality, the commitment of the municipality towards Roma inclusion, and the presence of other programmes in the locality. Of the seven localities, two are bigger urban areas, two are rural areas and the rest are medium-sized towns with a relevant share of Roma inhabitants.

The majority of the selected municipalities had trained mediators under ROMED1; in only two were mediators trained afterwards by the ROMED1 trainers. In the course of implementation, two localities dropped out due to lack of political will of the local authorities (Bag, Szeged). Only five localities remained fully involved in the ROMED2/ROMACT Programme.

Development of the CAGs

In each location, a Community Action Group (CAG) was formed. It mapped the local problems, identified priorities and developed community action plans. The Programme ensured continuous education for the members of the CAGs through monthly training.

The national team had approximately four months to establish the groups. Participation in the CAGs was open to everyone and members were invited by the local mediators. In the beginning, the groups involved approximately 10-15 members. Later, the number of participants in the CAGs was reduced to a smaller core group. In most of the localities, the fluctuation of members was high. The dynamics of the groups varied during the implementation period depending on the motivation of the members, the identified or available funds in support of possible actions and the level of openness and cooperation of the municipality.

CAG members came directly from the Roma community and had differing educational backgrounds and previous experience. The dynamics in the groups can be characterised by high motivation and a fast learning process during the first part of the Programme. Later on, especially in 2015, the development of the CAGs slowed down or became dormant in some places due to the inability to move from problem mapping to local actions. A main reason for this as outlined in interviews with national teams and local stakeholders was the lack of financial resources in support of local action. In some locations, the national facilitator or local mediator managed to include the CAG in other programmes to ensure small-scale action implementation, which contributed to maintaining the motivation of the participants.

The members of the CAGs identified the main problems of their community and suggested possible solutions. There were some initiatives where the broader community was involved in the actions. However, based on the findings in the case study locations, the communication between the CAG and the broader community was more ad hoc than regular. The Programme did not ensure regular meetings with the community to provide information about the work of CAGs and mobilise broader support.

Interaction with local authorities

The ROMED2 Programme established a new communication channel in each locality between the Roma community and the local authorities in the form of joint meetings through an appointed municipal contact point. The main result was that important issues of the Roma community and the

most segregated areas of the municipality caught the attention of the local decision makers. Furthermore, this communication ensured the exchange of information between the community and institutions, which was a mutual learning process for both the Roma communities and the non-Roma institutional representatives.

However, the discussions and interactions between the CAGs and local authorities were mainly initiated and facilitated by the national ROMED team and the Programme has not yet managed to develop independent cooperation between the local community and the municipality through the CAGs. This was due to the lack of contractual status of the local mediators and local budgetary allocations resulting in high expectations towards the national facilitators.

Efficiency of provided support and resources

Although the Programme was launched in October 2013, it faced many administrative, financial and contractual delays, which resulted in approximately one and a half years of actual contractual implementation. Delayed contracts with experts, together with interrupted payments for local level interventions in the framework of the overall contractual delays due to the transition to ROMACT, resulted in reduced consistency of implementation of the Programme.

The lack of clarity and consistency of both the strategic and operational flow of the Programme placed staff in an unstable situation with the risk of losing their credibility in the localities. This has been outlined in the NPO's trimestral reports and was confirmed by the interviews with all members of the National Support Team. Reduced trust and questioning the consistent commitment of the Programme to support real change in communities was indicated in the interviews and discussions with both local authorities and community representatives in the case study locations.

A second challenge in Hungary was that the local mediators were without a job or had only short-term contracts in NGO projects. Following on from a request of the national team, the ROMED2 Programme introduced symbolic remuneration for the mediators in 2014. The mediators were also facing administrative difficulties during their work in terms of access to printing and copying services, as well as a lack of working equipment such as laptops. The mediators interviewed in the case study locations highlighted the imbalance between the low budgetary allocation at local level and the high expectation of the Programme for achieving impact.

1.3.3 Outcomes and impacts

Impacts on empowerment of communities

The Programme contributed a great deal to the **informal civic education of community members through regular training** of the CAGs in topics such as citizenship, structure of public administration, community work (door-to-door visits), needs assessment and problem identification. This knowledge was very much appreciated by the CAG members. Based on the focus groups with the CAGs in the two case study locations, the Programme increased motivation for continued involvement, self-esteem, communication and negotiation skills, and self- and community-representation. The Programme also contributed to improved community cohesion and representation of community interests.

In terms of recognition of the CAGs and adopting their suggestions at the political level of municipalities, the situation differed. The local specificities, relationships and political leadership seriously limited the opportunities of the Programme. Two localities dropped out during the implementation due to hostility towards the Programme (Szeged and Bag). In these locations, Joint Action Plans were not developed. In the rest of the localities (with the exception of Nagyecséd), the

Joint Action Plans were developed with the involvement of the local institutions, CAG members, mediators, National ROMED team and other local actors.

In three locations, the Joint Action Plans were included in the local policy or programmes of the municipality, including budgetary allocation for some of the implementation expenses. In Gyulaj, the Local Council approved the Joint Action Plan. In Pecs, the Joint Action Plan is incorporated into the Local Equal Opportunity Plan of the municipality, which is an obligatory document for each municipality. In Nyirbator, the Joint Action Plan was not approved as a separate document by the municipality, but some of its components were integrated into the plan of the municipality (for example, the local scholarship programme).

Based on the case studies, the Programme managed to reach out to the whole community through local actions such as organising the refuse collection and transport in Nyirbator and Nagyecséd. These were common initiatives of the CAG and municipalities. The CAG took the responsibility of informing the community about the means of transportation and payment obligations. Another good example of community mobilisation here is the celebration of International Roma Day on 8 April, organised together by the two Roma communities.

Concrete results and impacts in communities

The major challenge to implementing the developed plans and generating concrete results and impacts respectively concerns the limited resources for local action, namely limited national programmes accessible at local level and no provision of financial support for small initiatives from ROMED2. The search for synergy with other programmes became a focus of the national ROMED2 team in Hungary. The National Democratic Institute (NDI) and Partners Hungary ensured additional training for CAG members and a very small amount of financial resources for action implementation. The concrete results in the localities achieved by ROMED2 with the support of other local actors and programmes include:

- **Jaszfenyszaru:** The local municipality committed to renovating some houses in the Roma community from the local budget. A needs assessment and planning of costs is ongoing at the moment.
- **Nyirbator:** Following the request of the CAG, the municipality introduced a second school bus for the pupils from the segregated area. In addition, the local council approved a local scholarship programme for primary and secondary school students with multiple disadvantages, financed by the municipality and local companies. In collaboration with the municipality, the CAG also organised proper collection and transportation of refuse from one part of Roma settlement, an initiative financed by the National Democratic Institute.
- **Nagyecséd:** The Programme drew the focus of the municipality to the challenges faced by one of the most disadvantaged subgroups of the local Roma community (the Romungro community). The CAG successfully organised proper refuse collection and transportation in the Roma settlement and cancelled the illegitimate debts of the households to the refuse transportation company. The action was financed by the National Democratic Institute.
- **Pecs (Istvan –akna):** The Programme put into focus the problems of Istvan -akna, one of the most isolated and disadvantaged areas of Pecs. Due to the efforts of the ROMED2/ROMACT national team and other local actors, the municipality provided a community centre to be used by the local Roma community. Another achievement was the decision to have a bus stop near to Istvan –akna, which helps the community to access the services of the town. The team ensured the inclusion of this isolated area in the local settlement development plan, which also involves solid budgetary allocation for the development of the segregated area.

- **Bag:** The composition of local Roma self-government has been changed thanks to the mobilisation of Roma community members during the elections, with the support of the ROMED2/ROMACT team and other local actors.

All of the above initiatives are small but important successes of the local communities and the cooperation process with municipalities. However, there is still no considerable visible progress towards changing the local situation. The Programme had its main impact on the CAG members and representatives of institutions thanks to the training and the exchange of information, which contributed to raising awareness of the barriers facing the local Roma community and cooperative capacity-building on both sides. The Programme managed to include some priorities identified by the CAG into the local policies and programmes for Roma, which may bring an impact for the local Roma communities in the longer term; this however will depend on the consistent assistance of the national team in identifying resources for the implementation of planned initiatives.

1.3.4 Sustainability

Due to the lack of cooperation from the Government, there is no indication of sustainability or inclusion of the Programme in the planning of national programmes.

The five municipalities are open to collaboration and further continuity of the Programme. There is a clear demand for continuation of their participation in the Programme. The institutional meetings with the involvement of community members were considered to be useful, as they ensured the exchange of direct information and proposals from the community which were then reflected into the local action plans and programmes of the municipality.

Currently, the CAGs are not fully operational in most of the localities, but their core members are still active and motivated to continue. They need further support from the national facilitators to develop as independent community structures (informal or formal) and expand emerging good practices of community participation. Without such support, the investment of the past years will be lost.

1.4 Lessons and recommendations

In Hungary, the need for intercultural mediation is high due to the negative attitudes and rhetoric about Roma. The results achieved by the ROMED Programme in terms of community development and local advocacy are significant, taking into account the lack of both governmental support and formal mediator status. In terms of future continuation, some lessons and recommendation for both Programmes include:

1.4.1 Lessons from ROMED1

- Intercultural mediation could not become part of the governmental strategies or programmes due to the lack of commitment and proper communication among the national and international stakeholders regarding their objectives.
- Due to the lack of official recognition of the status of the Roma mediator, the ROMED1 training remained sporadic and fragmented with ad hoc or temporary presence of the mediators at local level. This reduced its direct and sustainable impact on the Roma community.
- There was no country-specific strategic plan, which would set the direction regarding advocacy for national recognition of the status of Roma mediator. Currently, the ROMED National Support

Organisation, Partners Hungary, is advocating for the recognition of intercultural mediation and development of accredited training, but this work will need support.

- The experiment with university students was reasonable due to the lack of official Roma mediators in Hungary. However, it did not support the long-term objectives of the Programme, since they were not employed as mediators.
- Adequate financial and continuous professional support was not ensured for trained local mediators in order to realise the application of the training at local level.
- The delayed financial and administrative process of the Programme was highlighted by stakeholders, trainers and mediators. This included the delayed sending of the certificates for the trained mediators, as well as payments of trainers.
- Collaboration with municipality representatives was limited. Due to the lack of government support, their participation in the training was ensured only partially.

1.4.2 Lessons from ROMED2

- Community empowerment and development are processes which require a longer timescale to reach a sufficient level of sustained practice and influence of decision makers. The capacities of the CAGs were developed due to the training and support of the ROMED team, however most of the members have a low educational background and the information provided by the trainers was new for them. It takes more time to internalise it and to use it in practice.
- The lack of continuity and constant presence of the Programme at the local level seriously affected its results and sustainability. The local members reported high expectations but very low financial allocation at local level. The delays and interruption of the Programme in the transition between ROMED2 and ROMACT, as well as the problematic contractual issues, reduced its actual implementation period to a year and a half.
- The involvement of women in the CAGs contributed to having education as one of the main priorities. Most of the CAGs identified different priorities, some of which included educational issues. The educational file was prioritised in Nyirbator, where the majority of the members of the CAG were women. Education was the highest priority for them because of their children.
- ROMED2 was aimed at community empowerment, skills development and problem identification, but had no support for local action implementation. The Programme had to rely on the mobilisation of other resources, which supported practically small initiatives of local people, contributing to the increased self-esteem and trust of the community.
- Strategic clarity of focus and expectations for impact was missing. Proper information flow between the three levels (international, national and local) concerning the main goal and especially the strategic link between the different focuses of ROMED2 and ROMACT, was not ensured
- There was no country-based or international exchange of positive and negative experiences among the localities and countries. This would have been very useful for the ROMED National Support Team and the CAGs in terms of learning from each other about effective negotiations with local government, approaches to mobilising community participation and identification of resources.
- The lack of initial provision for payment for local mediators was one of the main weaknesses of the Programme, which slowed down and narrowed the role of local facilitators of the CAGs and their interaction with institutions. This made the local process dependent on the ROMED national facilitators who initiated and facilitated the discussions between the Roma community and municipality.

Recommendations

The main recommendation is that the ROMED Programmes should continue but with a more strategic synergy between the support of mediators and support of local processes of Roma empowerment for participation in local decision-making.

- The support to mediators needs to be more strategically-focused on addressing the major problem of lack of official recognition of their profession. All possible follow-up interventions should be organised around the purpose of effective advocacy at national level. Potential approaches may include:
 - Support to advocacy efforts of the ROMED team and building a broader coalition of local actors around the promotion of intercultural mediation and its inclusion in national strategies.
 - Training for existing “semi-mediators” (social workers) employed in the social sphere, but not specifically as Roma mediators. The Programme can identify these people and train them according to the ROMED methodology.
 - Introducing the remuneration of Roma mediators as local facilitators in the locations of ROMED2, with the aim that they will be paid by public administration in the long run with the success of targeted advocacy efforts for recognition of the profession of mediation.
- ROMED2 support needs to continue with a more strategic focus on developing good models and clarity on how they will be mainstreamed to other localities. Some important aspects include:
 - Ensured continuity and constant presence at the local level to increase the probability of success in the initially-selected localities.
 - Transparent communication regarding the expectations and objectives of the ROMED2 and ROMACT Programmes at the local level where they are implemented, as well as at the national level.
 - Future expansion of the ROMED2 Programme should be based on a more strategic selection of municipalities. It will be important to target the towns with the highest number of Roma. By introducing the community participation and cooperative approach to local policy development in places with a high share of the Roma population, the Programme can expand the scope of its impact towards changes in Roma communities. In cases where local governments are not open to such cooperation, the Programme should give more time and focus to changing the attitude of local decision makers and their understanding of the benefits of Roma participation, developing CAGs which are more representative for the communities and consistent building of capacity and skills in advocacy.
 - Ensuring knowledge-sharing among the municipalities and countries which can support the creation of a network of municipalities open to Roma inclusion in the country for exchange and learning, as well as advocacy for allocation of more resources to the implementation of Roma inclusion strategies at the local level.
 - Entrusting greater financial responsibility to the National Support Organisation can assist the efficiency of contracting and paying the local facilitators. Local facilitators were paid based on contracts with the Council of Europe. They had to follow the same procedure as national facilitators, including providing reports on time and in English. Due to lack of knowledge of the language, reports were late and this led to delays in payments. If local contracts were handled by the national team, the process could become more efficient.

1.4.3 Specific recommendations for ROMED2:

- ***Introducing small seed resources for locally-based action:*** ROMED aimed to ensure community empowerment, skills development and problem identification, but had no tool for actions. Introducing small seed resources can ensure sustained motivation and will stimulate the

empowerment of local groups and trust in the community; it can also help as a stimulus for attracting other resources.

- ***Increasing proactive communication and outreach:*** Introducing regular public forums can ensure formal sharing of information between the CAG and the community. It will also increase the visibility of results among the non-Roma majority.
- ***Expanding the community links and constituency of the CAGs:*** The CAGs can form additional community interest groups specialised in different areas, for example, education, health, employment. This can also ensure higher involvement of different segments of the community. It can be perceived as a new development phase for the CAGs – from small groups of dedicated citizens to community-based structures representing the variety of interests in the community.
- ***Mediators acting as a focal point in the localities:*** The mediator can become the contact person for other actors to ensure the harmonisation of ongoing projects at community level. Organising regular meetings among the actors implementing initiatives locally can avoid overlapping and can ensure increased impact for the local community.
- ***Increasing local ownership of the process:*** More direct contact between the municipality and the CAGs through more common consultations and training to gradually grow shared understanding and planned actions.
- The developed and approved Joint Action Plans should be incorporated into the Equal Opportunity Plans, the official documents of each municipality which are required for being eligible to access EU or national funds for development.