Next EURoma meeting, kindly hosted by the Portuguese partners, will be the second one since the launch of the network activities in the 2014-2020 programming period, last June in Madrid.

The first day we will will start by reviewing relevant EU developments as regards ESI Funds and Roma inclusion in order to better understand and be up-to-date on the general EU framework for action. We will then focus on two of the practical aspects identified as key for the implementation of ESI Funds for Roma inclusion: 1) the coordination mechanisms between the bodies managing ESI Funds and the bodies responsible for Roma policies at different levels and 2) the targeting of Roma inclusion under ESI Funds in practice, both under Investment Priority (IP) 9.2. or other IPs and Investment Priorities (TO). In order to facilitate the exchange of mutual knowledge/experiences and a fruitful discussions among network partners, the sessions will be structured with an active participatory methodology. Finally, we will look at the ongoing and future Network activities and products.

The second day, we will learn about the Portuguese context regarding the situation of Roma and how the main policies and ESI Funds address Roma social inclusion. We will also have the chance to know about some ESI Funds-funded initiatives with a view to identifying relevant elements for successful investments.

Meeting venue:
Santa Casa da Misericórdia do Porto – Serviços Corporativos
Rua Joaquim de Vasconcelos, 55 (4050-311 Porto)

Twitter: #EURomanet @gitanos_org_INT

Wednesday 22 November

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>9.00-9.30</th>
<th>Welcome and opening remarks by host country representatives</th>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Mr. António Tavares, Director of Santa Casa de Misericórdia do Porto</td>
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<td>Mr. António Dieb, President of Agency for Development and Cohesion</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Mrs. Ana Sampaio, Executive Committee of Employment and Social Inclusion Operational Programme</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Mr. Pedro Calado, High Commissioner for Migration</td>
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| 9.30-9.45 | Presentation of meeting’s agenda and round of presentation of participants |
### Setting the context for action: EU Framework regarding ESI Funds and Roma inclusion

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Time</th>
<th>Activity</th>
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| 9.45-10.45 | **What is happening in the EU framework as regards Roma inclusion and ESI Funds?**  
**Relevant current developments**  
- Implementation of 2014-2020 ESI Funds for Roma inclusion: follow-up  
- EC Communication on the mid-term review and evaluation of the EU Framework of National Roma Integration Strategies (NRIS)  
- Cohesion policy- 7th Cohesion Report on Roma-related aspects  
- Experiences on the ground with ESI Funds for Roma Inclusion  
  - experience of local authorities in BG and RO regarding Roma inclusion, ESI Funds and NRIS  
  - experience of NGOs with ESF-funded Roma projects in the 5 Roma countries  
  - experience in transition of Roma youth from education to employment  
- Other relevant information:  
  - European Pillar of Social Rights: state of play  
  - Report on protecting fundamental rights of Roma people in the EU, European Parliament (MEP Soraya Post)
| 10.45-11.15 | Coffee break |

### Looking at key aspects of the implementation of ESI Funds for Roma inclusion

<table>
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<th>Time</th>
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| 11.15-13.15 | **Coordination mechanisms between the bodies managing ESI Funds and the bodies responsible for Roma policies at different levels (national, regional and local)**  
- Discussions in small groups and in plenary:  
  - What is being done in terms of coordination?  
  - What could be improved?  
  
**Background information: Annex 1, Concept Note** |
| 13.15-14.15 | Lunch break |
| 14.15-16.15 | **Targeting Roma inclusion under ESI Funds (IP 9.2. and other IPs and TOs)**  
- Discussions in small groups and in plenary:  
  - What are the key elements contributing to achieve an effective targeting of Roma?  
  - What could be improved?  
  
**Background information: Annex 2, Concept Note**  
Coffee break in between |
EURoma Network activities and products

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Time</th>
<th>Activity</th>
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| 16.15-17.15 | o Presentation of new website and logo  
          | o Network products  
          | o First Network thematic activity                                       |
| 17.15-17.30 | Closing: Summary of main agreements and upcoming activities            |
| 20.00   | Dinner                                                                    |

Thursday, 23 November

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Time</th>
<th>Activity</th>
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| 9.00-10.00 | **Country monograph: Looking at the Portuguese case**  
                          Presentation of the Portuguese context as regards Roma inclusion and ESI Funds, including concrete experiences |
| 10.00-13.15 | **ESI Funds funded initiatives: identifying elements for successful investments**  
                          o Past and Future: Municipal Mediators Project (POPH) and Intercultural Mediation Programme (ESF Social Inclusion and Employment OP- POISE)  
                          o Creating Chances for Youth (Choices Programme) (ESF Social Inclusion and Employment Operational Programme-POISE)  
                          o Other practices at national level:  
                            ▪ National Strategy Support Fund- Roma Communities Support Unit, High Commission for Migration  
                            ▪ OPRE Programme, Letras Nomadas Associations |
| 13.15-13.30 | **Closing of the meeting**                                                                                                                                     |
| 13.30-14.30 | **Lunch and departure of participants**                                                                                                                    |
Annex 1

Coordination mechanisms between the bodies managing ESI Funds and the bodies responsible for Roma policies at different levels (national, regional and local levels)

Concept Note

Background

Appropriate coordination between the bodies responsible for ESI Funds on the one hand and those responsible for Roma policies on the other is a prerequisite for ensuring the alignment and complementarity between Roma policies and ESI Funds and, as a result, increasing the efficiency and impact of these funds for Roma inclusion. In fact, the implementation and success of Roma policies will very much depend on the effective and sufficient allocation of financial resources is needed; and for these financial resources to be effective, they need to be allocated according to policy targets and social inclusion goals.

The current EU frameworks for National Roma Integration Strategies (NRIS) and for European Structural and Investment Funds (ESI Funds) clearly link these two areas. The EU Framework for NRIS specifically identifies the ESI Funds as a crucial instrument for the implementation of the NRIS and as a result the European Commission regularly calls for an increased connection between these funds and Roma inclusion and a close coordination of National Roma Contact Points (NRCPs) and ESI Funds Managing Authorities to ensure that the funds reach Roma. Furthermore, the ESI Funds Regulations for the 2014-2020 programming period clearly bet for the promotion of the inclusion of marginalised groups, including Roma, with the incorporation of a wide range of opportunities: the specific ESF Investment Priority 9.2 on ‘Socio-economic integration of marginalised communities such as the Roma’, the ex-ante conditionality under ESF/ERDF Thematic Objective 9 requiring that ‘A national Roma inclusion strategic policy framework is in place’ and the stronger linkages with the political priorities identified in the country-specific recommendations. In addition, the ESF Regulation makes explicit reference to the NRIS.

Despite this positive framework and the progress made over the last years, coordination between the bodies responsible for Roma issues on the one hand and for ESI Funds on the other is still one of the most challenging areas, where many weaknesses remain and further progress is needed. Crucial elements for this progress relate to the setting up of adequate structures and mechanisms as well as to the quality and content of the structures and working processes.

To contribute to advancing in this area, coordination has been regularly addressed within the EURoma Network both as one of the elements of general initiatives/meetings or within specific sessions of discussion/initiatives. Already in 2009, it was reviewed in the context of a Network Management Committee and a discussion note was drafted gathering the main outcomes of a survey among Network partners on existing coordination mechanisms in their countries. Coordination mechanisms were also analysed within the ESF Learning Network ‘Reinforcing policy learning for Roma inclusion’.¹

¹ See ‘Joint report on the use of Structural Funds for Roma inclusion based on country-by-country meetings’, April 2014
https://www.gitanos.org/centro_documentacion/publicaciones/fichas/121227.html.en
Overview at national level

In recent years, most countries have set up institutional mechanisms for addressing Roma issues, including administrative departments/secretariats/offices; specialised bodies or agencies; interdepartmental coordination mechanism and/or consultative mechanisms (with mixed representation of line ministries and Roma representatives); ad hoc working groups...

On the other hand, countries count on clear structures responsible for the management of the ESI Funds and in particular the specific Operational Programmes, including general/national coordination units(authorities/agencies (for one or several funds), managing authorities, certifying authorities, audit authorities and intermediate bodies

The challenge now is to find ways to better link the mechanisms addressing Roma issues and the structures responsible for ESI Funds. Aware of the need to improve the connection between these two areas, countries are making efforts to develop mechanisms, whether informal or formal, which could contribute to this process. While efforts started in the previous programming periods, notably in the 2007-2013 period, in the 2014-2020 a more general trend is observed to reinforce and formalise cooperation in the 2014-2020 programming period.

In general terms while progress is more evident in the coordination at horizontal level (between departments working in the different areas at the same level, whether national or local), there are still remaining challenges and areas for improvement, notably as regards vertical cooperation (between central, regional and local levels).

While mechanisms vary from country to country, most common forms include:

⇒ At horizontal level

- Informal contacts and cooperation, whenever considered necessary by the parties involved
- Setting up of specific cooperation structures or mechanisms (both in the context of existing ones or through the creation of new ones)
- Involvement of ESI Funds-related bodies in mechanisms/structures dealing with Roma issues/National Roma Integration Strategies (e.g. national Roma platforms...)
- Involvement of Roma issues-related bodies/National Roma Contact Points in the management bodies of ESI Funds (e.g. OPs monitoring committees...)
- Increased role given to National Roma Contact Points in the management of ESI Funds.
- Inclusion of ESI Funds-related issues in structures related to Roma inclusion
- Inclusion of Roma issues in ESI-Funds related structures

⇒ At vertical level

- Informal contacts and cooperation, whenever considered necessary by the parties involved
- Specific mechanisms to promote or strengthen the involvement of local and regional authorities in the use of ESI Funds for Roma inclusion
- Wider mechanisms (not specifically focused on Roma) aimed to reinforce the link between ESI Funds and the regional/local level.
- Inclusion of ESI Funds-related issues in structures related to Roma inclusion.
- Inclusion of Roma issues in ESI-Funds related structures
**Aim of the session**

This working session will have a three-fold objective:

- Review current mechanisms/processes of coordination between the bodies responsible for ESI Funds and the bodies in charge of Roma policies in the partner countries, including at horizontal and vertical level.
- Identify positive mechanisms/processes and changes/advances in relation to previous programming periods.
- Launch a reflection, based on the exchange between partners, on options for further progress in this area.

**Key questions to address**

1. **Reviewing the state-of-play**

   - What are the existing mechanisms of coordination between the bodies responsible for ESI Funds on the one hand and for Roma policies on the other in each country?
     - At horizontal level (between departments working in the different areas at the same level, whether national or local)
     - At vertical level (between central, regional and local levels)

   - What are the main changes/advances in relation to previous programming periods?

2. **Assessing functioning and impact of existing mechanisms**

   - What is your assessment of existing mechanisms/processes?
     
     Aspects that could be considered include structure, working methods/processes, impact in the implementation and monitoring of ESI Funds, impact in the implementation and monitoring of Roma policies/NRIS, etc.

   - What could be done for coordination to be improved?
Annex 2
Targeting Roma inclusion under ESI Funds (IP 9.2. and other IPs and TOs)

The implementation of the Investment Priority 9.2 (IP 9.2. ‘Socioeconomic integration of marginalised communities such as the Roma’) and other targeted interventions towards Roma inclusion

Concept Note

Background

European Structural and Investment Funds (ESI Funds) Regulations for the 2014-2020 programming period imply substantial progress in relation to the 2007-2013 programming period and offer a broad range of opportunities to promote the inclusion of marginalised groups, including Roma. One of the main advances is the establishment, for the first time, of a specific Investment Priority (IP) focused on the ‘Socio-economic integration of marginalised communities such as the Roma’ under the European Social Fund: IP 9.2. under Thematic Objective (TO) 9 ‘Promoting social inclusion and combating poverty’.

In addition, other European Social Fund (ESF) and European Regional Development Fund (ERDF) thematic objectives and investment priorities could be of relevance for Roma inclusion, such as those within ESF and ERDF Thematic Objectives (TO) 8 (Promoting sustainable and quality employment and supporting labour mobility) and 10 (Investing in education, training and vocational training for skills and lifelong learning). The ex-ante conditionality under ESF/ERDF Thematic Objective 9 requiring that ‘A national Roma inclusion strategic policy framework is in place’, together with the inclusion of Country Specific Recommendations related to Roma under the European Semester process for some Member states are other elements of progress.

It is therefore clear how the current 2014-2020 cohesion policy framework gives Member States (MS) wider scope to address marginalised communities, particularly Roma. Indeed, having a specific Investment Priority for Roma inclusion in this programming period is a great opportunity offered by the ESF not to be missed; it is a clear political signal for Member states to concentrate efforts to tackle, once for all, the lack of equal opportunities, the social exclusion and the discrimination faced by Roma in EU Member states.

Overview at national level

Today, the Roma population is more present in Operational Programmes (OPs) than in previous programming periods: Roma are targeted largely and in a broad number of OPs and there has been a convergence in terms of approaches and methodologies to make a more efficient use of the funds. Indeed, the growing alignment between the EU funding mechanisms for 2014-2020 and the EU framework on National Strategies for Roma Inclusion 2011-2020 and its application at national level is an essential factor to achieve real change in the lives of many Roma across the EU.

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2 Bulgaria, Czech Republic, Hungary, Romania and Slovakia.
As stated in last EURoma report on Promoting the Use of ESI Funds for Roma inclusion. A glance at EURoma’s eight years of work and how Roma inclusion is considered in the 2014-2020 programming period:

- The most commonly used investment priority by Member states is the 9.2.
- Although the most targeted actions are found in the OPs under IP 9.2. (including dedicated priority axes, specific objectives and actions/types of interventions), a number of OPs under other IPs and TOs also pay particular attention to Roma, even with dedicated actions targeting Roma. It is mainly under IP 9.1. and TO 10. In addition to existing targeted actions, there are also mentions to Roma by using ‘explicit but not exclusive’ or ‘no explicit’ mentions.
- In the remaining IPs (9.3., 9.4., 9.5. and 9.6.) it is less common to find specific interventions targeting Roma/Roma communities, although there are some exceptions.

Alongside with the specific investments either by using the IP 9.2 or other IPs/TOs, Roma issues also need to be mainstreamed across all policy areas in order to achieve long-term structural change. This complementarity approach can be the subject of future discussions within EURoma network.

**Aims of the session**

With the aim of improving the use of ESI funds for Roma inclusion, this working sessions among EURoma partners will start reflecting on the specific added value that targeting Roma inclusion is having at this moment of implementation of OPs in the different Member States in the current programming period 2014-2020. The reflexion will focus both on the specific contribution of ESF IP 9.2. and of other targeted interventions outside the IP 9.2.

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3 Based on the analysis of 14 Member States: Austria, Belgium, Bulgaria, Croatia, Czech Republic, Greece, Hungary, Italy, Poland, Portugal, Romania, Slovakia, Spain and Sweden.
The discussion is promoted in a moment where most OPs have already started being implemented (in some countries with more delay than in others): there is already some experience to be able to identify the progress made so far, the main difficulties encountered and the challenges ahead of us for the coming years.

**Key questions to address**

- What is considered to be the added value of having a specific Investment Priority/targeted interventions for Roma inclusion?
  - At the planning level
  - At the implementation level
  - At the monitoring and evaluation level

- What are the key elements contributing to achieve effective targeting?
- What could be improved?