

Making the Most of EU Funds for Roma (MtM)

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Making the Most of EU Funds for Roma (Making the Most) is an instrument to connect the Roma Decade objectives to EU financial resources, and thus support European, national, and local governments in realizing the targets of the Decade of Roma Inclusion. Through project development assistance, financial and human capacity-building, and advocacy, MtM seeks to create a critical mass of concerned governmental actors at all levels to keep Roma inclusion high on the policy agenda. MtM is concerned with problems such as the weak visibility of Roma issues in the implementation of EU cohesion policies at the national and local levels; resource and expertise disadvantages; and overly bureaucratic funding procedures, which block access of the most deprived to rights and opportunities.

Connecting Roma inclusion objectives to funding resources

Tools

Project Generating Facility

The Project Generating Facility is one intervention of the Making the Most which is aimed at building capacity of stakeholders at the local level to articulate Roma concerns as part of the local development agenda and to access EU funding in order to address these concerns. Started in 2008-2009 and continued in 2010-2011, the PGF is operating in EU member states participating in the Decade of Roma Inclusion – Bulgaria, Czech Republic, Hungary, Romania and Slovakia. Through project development assistance, training, and advocacy, PGF seeks solutions to problems such as weak visibility of Roma issues at local level, resource and expertise disadvantage, and overly bureaucratic funding procedures, which block access of the most deprived to rights and opportunities. The good practice and the problems identified in this process, feed into national advocacy action to promote favorable conditions for sustainable Roma inclusion action.

PGF is complemented by the Mentoring intervention which offers to beneficiaries of Structural Funds services to enhance their competence for the delivery of inclusion targets and programs; to promote participation of Roma in local partnerships as well as to develop technical skills for project management. Through the Non-Eligible Costs/Supplementary funds intervention, OSI provides supplementary funding to cover costs which are central to achieving the goals of a project but are not covered from EU funds, with the goal of promoting innovative and cross-sectoral projects for Roma inclusion. Started in 2010 and continued in 2011 the Mentoring intervention is operating in Bulgaria, Hungary and will be launched in the other MtM targeted countries. The Non-Eligible Costs/ Supplementary funds is operating in Bulgaria since 2010 and will be launched in the other MtM targeted countries.

Capacity Building

The MtM program will address the following needed areas of intervention under the capacity building program: finance of and management for inclusion at the level of local governance, participatory governance, monitoring and evaluation by Roma and local authorities, involvement of Roma or experts on Roma in the management of inclusion programs at municipal levels, transparency and accountability of local governments on inclusion. In some cases, we will support capacity requests by Roma organizations as they relate to inclusion and governance. Through a European network Mayors Making the Most, we will connect the Decade countries to other EU counterparts in an attempt to raise the learning options for our partners. Also through MERI, we would like to identify field practices that will feed into the policy debates coming from the field and raise the profile of these debates to the EC levels.

Policy analysis and advocacy

MtM advocacy activities aim to draw policy level conclusions and recommendations from the field level experiences gathered mainly through project generation services. Furthermore, we analyze key national approaches and programs for using EU funds for Roma inclusion. Most of our activities support the best use of the funds in the 2014-20 period.

Making the Most in figures

Since its beginning, the Making the Most of EU funds for Roma:

- Raised over Euro 16 million for projects which fall mainly in two priority areas of the Decade – education and employment;
- Assisted the preparation and submission of funding requests for Roma inclusion action for over Euro 60 million;
- Generated over 287 projects targeting approximately 56,000 beneficiaries, most of whom are Roma;
- Provided assistance to local governments and Roma organizations for the generation of structural funds projects in approximately 297 communities;
- Provided targeted training in EU projects design and management for over 700 persons, including Roma and non-Roma representatives of public administration, educational institutions, and nongovernmental organizations.

Making the Most Impact

The interventions of the Making the Most facilitate local consensus-building around initiatives to eliminate segregation and exclusion of Roma and build technical capacity of institutions and organizations to obtain funding from national and EU Structural Funds resources for the implementation of such initiatives. Their impact is realized through the combined effect of several outcomes: financial resources for Roma inclusion reaching communities; enhanced competence of local stakeholders to identify solutions to Roma issues; and technical skills for preparing projects for the Structural Funds. In 2009-2011, the activities of the Project Generating

Facility (PGF) in EU Member States fostered the following processes and outcomes:

Social inclusion planning with Roma

PGF provides assistance for the preparation of EU projects to institutions and communities which can develop partnership relations with Roma. With this, the PGF gives visibility to Roma concerns at the local level and also increases stakeholders' competence to seek solution to Roma issues within the broader local development agenda. PGF activities brought together Roma and non-Roma from local institutions and nongovernmental organisations, who never before discussed local development needs or deliberated development plans together. In Slovakia, comprehensive Roma inclusion strategies of local governments which were assisted by the PGF, involved in addition to local government, professional groups experts, and a broad consultation with Roma communities. In this process, local decision-makers were enabled to seek innovative solutions to persistent problems facing Roma. In Hungary, public works program employed Roma women as assistant teachers in a local school thus not only finding work for the women but also connecting Roma families to the local school.

Roma and non-Roma received technical skills training

Developing skills to enable Roma and others working on Roma issues to apply for EU funds and manage them, is PGF's main tool of supporting the sustainability of actions for Roma inclusion. In 2009-2011, PGF trained total over 700 persons in Bulgaria, Hungary and Romania, including Roma and non-Roma representatives of public administration, educational institutions, and nongovernmental organizations. In addition to the participants in targeted training and beneficiaries who were trained by doing, i.e. in the project development process, in each of the countries, PGF activities reached out to persons who benefitted from information about opportunities offered by EU funds, learned about requirements of EU projects, and about project development.

Roma needs mainstreamed in general social inclusion programs

PGF assists projects which offer equal opportunity for Roma, among others, to benefit from public services. Participatory project-generation organized by the PGF, helped mainstream Roma needs in development programs and projects which are not Roma-targeted. In Hungary, the Sure Start early childhood development program involved Roma in the planning and execution of the projects in six locations throughout the country. Involvement of Roma strengthened the outreach of the program to beneficiaries from the Roma communities. In Bulgaria, seven rural municipalities involved Roma experts in Local Action Groups (LAGs) which work on rural development strategies. Participation of Roma in this process is a prerequisite for addressing Roma issues within the general rural development strategy of a given location.

Most deprived communities accessed EU funds

Grassroots outreach activities by PGF national teams made the information about funding sources available to potential beneficiaries who were not previously aware of these possibilities.

PGF provided assistance with priority to local institutions and nongovernmental organizations which had not received any funds from the Structural Funds to that moment because they had no capacity to prepare projects on their own, neither could they afford technical assistance available on the market. Such communities often experience multiple deprivation and they lack resources and expertise to access funding, especially when it is provided on competitive basis.

Roma policy issues brought up before national institutions

MtM core staff as well as PGF country teams work with European and national institutions to create more favorable policy and financial conditions for the funding of Roma inclusion projects from the Structural Funds. A set of common standards for national Roma inclusion strategies, a Vademecum for using ERDF for housing, and an assessment of territorial targeting in Hungary has been published. In Bulgaria, PGF team intervened to increase the budget of a funding scheme targeted on Roma education in order to enable more beneficiary schools and NGOs to access these funds. In Slovakia, consistent feedback from the country team to the government Office of the Plenipotentiary for Roma Communities concerning the comprehensive local strategies on Roma, led to simplification of the complex requirements for the strategies, thereby eliminating one disincentive for local governments to engage in the development of such strategies.

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