

EUROPEAN ALLIANCE OF CITIES AND REGIONS FOR ROMA INCLUSION

Strategic Guidelines (2014/2020)

09.09.2014

1. Objectives

The main purpose of the European Alliance of Cities and Regions for Roma Inclusion is – through its participating cities and regions, in coordination with the respective national governments and while taking into account the specificities of each country – to **favour projects and policies for Roma¹ inclusion at local and regional level.**

The Alliance was set up in 2013 by the Council of Europe's Congress of Local and Regional Authorities with the support of Special Representative of the Secretary General for Roma Issues following the Summit of Mayors in 2011. More than 120 cities and regions from 27 countries are at present participating in the Alliance.

In line with the Strasbourg Declaration adopted by the Council of Europe's Committee of Ministers in 2010² and the Summit of Mayors in 2011³, the main objectives of the Alliance are the following:

- To enable the participating cities and regions to **speak with a common voice** against social exclusion of Roma and anti-Gypsyism, by providing a **platform for lobbying** with local and regional authorities on issues concerning Roma inclusion at local and regional level. The Alliance should become a **platform for political support, exchanges and mutual learning** focusing on lobbying, advocating, promoting and expanding Roma inclusion policies and projects. The Alliance should be fed in its work by Council of Europe programmes (such as ROMACT and ROMED EU-funded programmes, Dostal activities).
- To **support the development and later, subject to the availability of means, implementation of initiatives** that favour the exchange of know-how and experience on Roma inclusion between the cities and regions, which participate in the Alliance;
- To **improve dialogue and cooperation** between local and regional authorities and Roma communities and NGOs as well as civic participation in local and regional government decision-making.

¹ The term "Roma" used at the Council of Europe refers to Roma, Sinti, Kale and related groups in Europe, including Travellers and the Eastern groups (Dom and Lom), and covers the wide diversity of the groups concerned, including persons who identify themselves as Gypsies.

² <https://wcd.coe.int/ViewDoc.jsp?id=1691607>

³ http://www.coe.int/t/congress/sessions/20110922-roma-summit/default_en.asp

The Alliance is committed to awarding particular attention to the **role of Roma women and Roma youth** in promoting Roma inclusion at local and regional level. The Alliance also acts to promote Roma culture and history, in particular the **commemoration** of the Pharrajimos (genocide of Roma), including the International Remembrance Day on 2nd August.

2. Synergies

Since October 2013, the Alliance is **supporting the implementation of ROMACT**, a Council of Europe and European Commission initiative which aims to build the capacity of local and regional authorities (initially targeting both elected officials and senior civil servants, and possibly other stakeholders at a later stage) to develop and implement policies and projects for Roma inclusion. ROMACT is implemented by the Council of Europe together with another CoE/EC joint programme ROMED (for training of Roma mediators) launched in 2011. Both programmes are complementary and aim at building capacity for Roma inclusion at local level with active participation by Roma communities.

3. Foreseen activities

The Alliance activities correspond to four main lines of action:

3.1 Foster **political will** among cities and regions participating in the Alliance as well as other local, regional, national and European stakeholders to promote Roma inclusion through projects and policies at local and regional level:

- **Address current obstacles** to Roma inclusion and raising awareness for **good practices** and the **positive effects** of successful Roma inclusion;
- **Enhance the commitment** of local and regional councillors, mayors and staff of participating municipalities and regions through meetings, peer-to-peer exchanges and joint projects/initiatives and by making public statements on discrimination and hate speech against Roma;
- Use the large **network of the Congress** of Local and Regional Authorities within and outside the Council of Europe to raise awareness among key stakeholders at local, regional and national level for the need for action at local and regional level.

3.2 Offer a **forum for exchange** among participating local and regional authorities in order to promote mutual learning:

- Organise **biennial plenary conferences** for Alliance participants to discuss issues of Roma inclusion, the participants' needs and expectations and future Alliance activities;
- Organise **national and international conferences** to promote mutual learning among Alliance participants;
- Organise **national workshops and thematic roundtables** to identify the role of local and regional authorities on specific topics of Roma inclusion such as housing, education, health, employment;
- Provide a **web platform on the intranet of the Alliance website for Alliance participants** with information about cities and regions participating in the

- Alliance (political, geographic, demographic and economic profiles) and their projects and policies on Roma inclusion (activities, lessons learnt);
- Invite Alliance participants to use and contribute to the **European Database on Policies and Good Practices** set up by the Council of Europe in 2011, which includes local and regional projects;
 - Support local and regional authorities through the **dissemination of CoE reference texts, publications, handbooks, guidelines and tools** (e.g. Roma history factsheets, Dosta! toolkit on addressing prejudice and stereotypes, Romani language portfolio, Centre of Expertise for Local Government Reform tools for self-analysis, needs-assessment and the impact-evaluation of initiatives);
 - Disseminate **know-how and experience gained through ROMACT and ROMED** joint CoE/EU programmes, as well as through the thematic work of the Council of Europe's Ad Hoc Committee of Experts on Roma Issues (CAHRM);
 - **Facilitate access to EU and other funds and programmes** aimed at Roma inclusion (i.e. through a system of alert, technical advice and peer-to-peer exchange among Alliance participants);
 - Encourage and support **exchange among participants in order to facilitate peer-to-peer exchange, partnerships and joint initiatives**, also in the context of transfrontier cooperation;
 - Develop close cooperation with **other CoE sectors and initiatives** (CoE Commissioner for Human Rights, European Commission Against Racism and Intolerance, Intercultural Cities Network, Cultural Routes, the proposed European Roma Institute);
 - Establish contact with other **networks of cities and regions** promoting Roma inclusion and the fight against racism and xenophobia throughout Europe (EUROCITIES, European Coalition of Cities Against Racism (ECCAR), Mayors Making the Most of EU Funds for Roma Inclusion (MtM/MERI));
 - Establish contact with other **European organisations involving cities and regions** (EU Committee of the Regions, Assembly of European Regions, Council of European Municipalities and Regions (CEMR));
 - Establish close cooperation with other **international organisations** that aim to promote Roma inclusion at local and regional level (OSCE, EU, UNDP) and relevant **international networks** (such as the European Network of Equality Bodies (EQUINET)).

3.3 Increase the visibility of activities on Roma inclusion of cities and regions participating in the Alliance

- Promote the **Dosta! Campaign** among Alliance participants and non-participants so that local and regional efforts for Roma inclusion can be publicly recognised and stereotypes and prejudices against Roma, which are at the root of Roma discrimination, combatted;
- Explore further means of recognising cities and regions with successful projects for Roma inclusion at local and regional level (such as through the *12 Star Label* used in the framework of the European Local Democracy Week).

3.4 Promote the involvement of civil society, in particular of Roma communities and NGOs, in local and regional policies and projects on Roma inclusion;

- Encourage **regular consultation** with Roma and Roma NGOs on local and regional government affairs, Roma policies and community needs;

- Encourage Alliance cities and regions to pursue a **participatory budgeting approach** enabling Roma, among other local interests, to designate funds on Roma related priorities;
- **Invite NGOs to contribute** to specific parts of Alliance events for direct exchange with participants of Alliance cities and regions;
- **Develop closer links with and support NGOs** at European, national and local level, for example the European Roma Travellers Forum or the European Grassroots Antiracist Movement.
- Establish close contact with **local and regional media** in cities and regions participating in the Alliance so as to raise their awareness for the importance of Roma inclusion and establish a network of Alliance media supporters;
- Ensure that the importance of promoting **active citizenship** within Roma communities is recognised by local and regional authorities (European Charter of Active Citizenship).

4. Expected mid-term outcomes foreseen for the Alliance:

- A growing number of cities and regions making a difference in Roma inclusion at local and regional level;
- Dissemination of methods of cooperation, mutual learning and support among cities and regions in this field;
- Existing financial resources are used by cities and regions / Alliance participants in an improved manner;
- Improved political will of cities and regions and improved knowledge on how to use existing resources in the implementation of integrated policies;
- Identified and systematised working methods and tools on the inclusion of Roma at local and regional level;
- More favourable conditions for the creation of synergies with other cities and regions, for transferring know-how and mutual learning, including national networks of cities;
- Cases of successfully influencing policy processes at national level from a local and regional perspective;
- A decrease of social exclusion of Roma, as well as discriminatory attitudes and hate speech against Roma by using Alliance participating cities and regions as role-models;
- Improved dialogue between local and regional authorities and Roma communities and NGOs and improved civic participation by Roma communities.

5. Structure

The Alliance was set up by the Congress of Local and Regional Authorities and its political functioning operates in line with the general procedures of the Congress and is overseen by the Bureau of the Congress. The Alliance intends to be **light in structure** (no distinct legal personality, no complicated governance structure) and have a strong focus on strategic substantive activities and concrete actions with optimal impact. This means that it will be **demand driven** and **results-oriented** by supporting municipalities and regions in the process of implementing inclusive Roma policies through effective exchanges of good practices and funding possibilities, and strong political lobbying on Roma inclusion. It is funded by Congress ordinary budget and secondments in the first phase, and joint programmes, secondments and voluntary contributions later on.

5.1 Alliance participants

The participants of the Alliance are local and regional authorities in Council of Europe member states which are committed to promote Roma inclusion and support the Alliance. Aspirant Alliance participants are asked to express their commitment by means of a letter sent by the highest elected official to the Congress President. Full participation in the Alliance is carried out on the basis of specific criteria, including:

- a **clear commitment** to overcome existing problems regarding the situation of Roma (e.g. a declared policy commitment);
- demonstrated **previous activities/efforts in favour of Roma inclusion** or activities currently in process of implementation;
- existing **mechanisms for dialogue and cooperation** with local Roma communities.
- A Charter will be adopted and signed by Alliance participants during the first Plenary Conference. It will comprise the **guiding principles** regarding participation in the Alliance, which will recall **good governance and human rights standards** established by the Council of Europe. These principle will include the requirement to refrain from hate speech against Roma and to avoid (further) segregation.

5.2 Rotating Presidency

The Presidency of the Alliance is held by **one participating city or region for a period of 2 years** to be appointed at a biennial conference. The presidency is exercised in coordination with the Congress Rapporteur on Roma Inclusion and the Congress Secretariat (in particular the Alliance Taskforce). The Presidency is responsible for co-organising the biennial plenary conference, representing the Alliance, actively contributing to Alliance events and to the effective implementation of the Alliance Plan of Action for the given period. The period of two years is flexible and can be modified if needed.⁴

5.3 Taskforce

The Alliance is assisted by a Taskforce set up within the Congress of Local and Regional Authorities based in Strasbourg. The Taskforce is responsible for drafting and implementing Alliance activities in close consultation with the Congress leadership and participating cities and regions.

6. Functioning

6.1 Working language

The official languages of the Alliance are the official languages of the Council of Europe. Other working languages are used as resources permit to ensure effective communication with participants and partners.

6.2 Resources

The Alliance could draw upon the following possible sources of funding for future Alliance activities:

- Council of Europe ordinary budget;
- joint CoE/European Commission programmes;
- contributions from Alliance participants (e.g. when hosting specific activities);
- voluntary contributions from member states;
- Contributions from and joint projects with civil society and international financial institutions and donors.

⁴ Alternatively a High Representative of the CoE Secretary General could be appointed to head the Alliance.

The Alliance will also function as interface for participants willing to pool funds for projects in other countries.⁵

6.3 Congress members involved in Alliance activities

The Alliance is actively supported by Congress Vice-President and Rapporteur on Roma Issues John Warmisham. In addition, several Congress members have expressed interest to more actively support the Alliance, in particular by representing the Alliance at events if John Warmisham is unavailable. As of 10.06.2014, these Congress members are Gaye Doganoglu (Turkey), Inger Linge (Sweden), Guilherme Pinto (Portugal), Maruska Piredda (Italy), Viacheslav Rogov (Russian Federation), Tracey Simpson-Laing (UK), Ludmila Sfirloaga (Romania) and Barbara Toce (Italy).

⁵ Similar to or in cooperation with the Council of Europe Development Bank.

APPENDIX: Basic Questions and Answers on the Alliance

Why?

Policy measures at local and regional level are decisive for bringing about real improvement in the social inclusion of Roma, across the key areas of education, housing, employment and health.

This is why **the Strasbourg declaration** adopted in October 2010 insists on the need to develop action at the local and regional level and that alongside mediation it is equally important to create an environment for Roma representatives but also for local authorities representatives, whether elected officials or staff members, that will favour changes and improvements and help to solve complex situations.

It is also for those reasons that the Congress of Local and Regional Authorities, an important Council of Europe institution for reaching out/developing cooperation with local government stakeholders, decided to convey on September 2011 **the first European Summit of Mayors on Roma Inclusion**. The Mayors participating to the Summit adopted **a declaration** in which they not only recognized their responsibilities in promoting together with national governments and other key actors including NGOs, but also their needs for support; some of even feeling that they were left alone in facing their difficulties on their territory, and for working together.

Following the first European Summit of Mayors on Roma Inclusion, a call was launched to set up **a European Alliance of Cities and Regions for Roma Inclusion**.

What?

The main purpose of the Alliance is through its participating cities and regions to **promote projects and policies for Roma inclusion at local and regional level and to reduce discrimination**.

The Alliance should become a **platform for political peer support, exchanges and mutual learning** focusing on lobbying, advocating, promoting and expanding Roma inclusion policies and projects. The Alliance should be fed in his work by Council of Europe implemented projects and programmes (ROMACT and ROMED projects, Dosta! activities...). It should act as the **public relation body** of these programmes and policies, and use successes and failures of such policies and programmes to provide mayors and elected officials with ideas and lessons learnt.

In line with the Strasbourg Declaration and the Summit of Mayors, the main objectives of the Alliance are the following:

- To **assist the development of initiatives** that favour the exchange of know-how and experience on Roma inclusion between the cities and regions, which participate in the Alliance;
- To enable the participating cities and regions to **speak with a common voice** against social exclusion of Roma and anti-Gypsyism, by providing a **platform for lobbying** on the issues concerning Roma inclusion at local level.
- To **improve dialogue** between local authorities and Roma communities and NGOs and civic participation in local government decision-making

The Alliance is committed to awarding particular attention to the **role of Roma women and Roma youth** in promoting Roma inclusion at local and regional level. The Alliance also acts to promote Roma culture and history, in particular the **commemoration** of the Pharrajimos (genocide of Roma), including its International Remembrance Day (2nd August).

How?

The Alliance focuses on **fostering political will, improving capacity to act and providing a forum for exchange** between participating cities and regions willing to actively work towards Roma inclusion for mutual learning. In the framework or with support of the Alliance, specific programmes that aim to directly provide more intensive assistance in building the capacity of local and regional authorities to implemented projects and policies for Roma inclusion can be implemented. The Alliance is funded by Ordinary Budget and secondments in the first phase, and secondments and voluntary contributions later on.

When?

This concept papers aims at drafting Alliance purposes, objectives, activities and resources for the period 2014-2016. In this regard, some Alliance actions will be **permanent** if funding is provided for, whereas some will be **happening regularly** (Biennial Conference every 2 years, national seminars when needed, thematic workshops). Rhythm of activities will primarily depend on Alliance capacities.

Where?

Given the large number of Alliance participants, Alliance activities will be held in different participating cities or regions according to specific needs of the respective event:

- The **Biennial Conference** will be hosted by Alliance city or region which is assuming the Presidency of the ensuing period;
- **National seminars** will take place, when needed, in a city of the targeted country by the seminar;
- **Thematic seminars** held as and when needed, and take place in the most pertinent place;
- **Activities** can also be driven by NGOs demands.