

In Esztergom, Hungary, the Grants have funded school bus schemes enabling young Roma in deprived communities to attend school.

Promoting Roma inclusion

The Roma is Europe's largest minority, with an estimated population of 10-12 million. Socially and economically, Roma are also one of Europe's most vulnerable and disadvantaged groups and frequently face intolerance, discrimination and exclusion. Improving the situation of Roma is a priority for the EEA and Norway Grants.

A 2012 report by the EU Agency for Fundamental Rights (FRA), covering 11 EU countries, shows that Roma continue to experience high levels of deprivation and exclusion; of those surveyed, one in three is unemployed, 90% are living below the poverty line, and many are denied access to adequate healthcare, housing and education.

SHARED RESPONSIBILITY

European countries have a joint responsibility to address the exclusion and discrimination of Roma. In 2011, the Council of Europe adopted a joint strategy to promote Roma Inclusion and the European Commission introduced a Framework for national Roma integration strategies by 2020. This sets clear targets and engages EU member states, civil society and other stakeholders to address the exclusion experienced by Roma people.

STEPPING UP EFFORTS

Improving the situation of Roma is a horizontal priority for the EEA and Norway Grants. This is in line with and complementary to national Roma inclusion strategies. Targeted programmes are being established in countries with sizeable Roma minorities such as Bulgaria, Czech Republic, Hungary, Romania and Slovakia. Drawing on its long-standing expertise, the Council of Europe is engaged as a partner in several programmes targeting Roma inclusion, in particular in education.

BROAD SUPPORT

The EEA and Norway Grants promote Roma inclusion in several specific areas supported by the funding:

CIVIL SOCIETY

As well as engaging with public bodies and local authorities, the EEA and Norway Grants actively support the critical role of civil society in tackling inequalities and voicing concerns of the Roma population. Through specific NGO programmes, the Grants channel support to civil society organisations to develop innovative tools and concrete initiatives to address the violations of fundamental rights experienced by Roma. This includes tackling concerns related to social inequalities, access to services, discrimination and intolerance, including in the media.

HEALTH AND EDUCATION

According to the report from FRA, only 15% of young Roma adults complete upper-secondary education. Only 20% of Roma are covered by health insurance. Improving information on and access to healthcare and education is key to breaking the cycle of marginalisation and poverty. Several programmes address Roma inclusion in these fields, through support to centres for youth and children at risk, prevention of early school dropout, pre-school day care and establishing Roma health and education mediators.



JUSTICE AND HOME AFFAIRS

In the FRA survey around half of the Roma respondents said that they have experienced discrimination in the past 12 months because of their ethnic background. Roma also appear to face harsher treatment in the justice systems. Programmes addressing judicial reforms, organised crime and gender-based violence take into account the needs of vulnerable groups, such as Roma.

CULTURAL DIVERSITY

Roma are often perceived by the majority population through negative reporting. To ensure better dialogue and understanding the Grants also support the promotion of cultural diversity. This includes initiatives to foster inter-cultural dialogue and understanding within our societies.

EEA AND NORWAY GRANTS AT A GLANCE

Through the EEA and Norway Grants, Iceland, Liechtenstein and Norway contribute to reducing disparities in Europe and to strengthening bilateral relations with 15 countries in Central and Southern Europe. Funding worth €1.79 billion has been set aside for 2009 to 2014. Key areas of support include environment and climate change, civil society, human and social development, cultural heritage, research and scholarships, decent work and justice and home affairs.

COUNTRY OVERVIEW: PROGRAMMES WHICH INCLUDE FOCUS ON ROMA INCLUSION

Country	Programme	Total amount of programme (€ million)
Bulgaria	NGO Fund	11.8
	Children and youth at risk	7.9
	Public health initiatives	13.3
	Domestic and gender-based violence	2.0
	Judicial capacity building	3.0
Czech Republic	NGO Fund	9.8
	Children and youth at risk	4.3
	Local and regional initiatives	1.2
	Cultural heritage and diversity	21.5
	Schengen cooperation and cross-border crime	7.0
Greece	NGO fund	6.3
Hungary	NGO fund	12.6
	Children and youth at risk	11.2
	Public health initiatives	16.6
Poland	Cultural heritage (5% of allocation to document cultural history, also covering minorities)	60.0
Portugal	Public health initiatives	10.0
Romania	NGO Fund	30.0
	Children and youth at risk	22.0
	Gender equality and work-life balance	4.5
	Cultural heritage	14.0
	Diversity in culture and arts	6.8
	Research cooperation	20.0
	Scholarships	4.0
	Public health initiatives	8.1
	Domestic and gender-based violence	4.0
	Schengen and cross-border crime	5.0
	Judicial capacity building	8.0
	Correctional services	8.0
Slovakia	NGO Fund	6.9
	Local and regional initiatives	1.0
Slovenia	NGO Fund	1.9
	Public health initiatives	10.2
Spain	NGO Fund	4.6
	Gender equality and work-life balance	10.2