



Vademecum The 10 Common Basic Principles on Roma Inclusion



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An initiative of the European Union

The 10 Common Basic Principles on Roma Inclusion are a tool for both policy-makers and practitioners managing programmes and projects. Distilled from the experience of successful policies, they provide a framework for the successful design and implementation of actions to support Roma inclusion.

The Common Basic Principles were presented for the first time at the meeting of the European Platform for Roma inclusion in Prague on 24 April 2009. On 8 June 2009 the Council of Ministers in charge of Social Affairs annexed the Principles to their conclusions and invited Member States and the Commission to take them into account.

This vademecum provides a practical check-list on how to implement each of the Principles.

- 1 Constructive, pragmatic and non-discriminatory policies
- 2 Explicit but not exclusive targeting
- 3 Inter-cultural approach
- 4 Aiming for the mainstream
- 5 Awareness of the gender dimension
- 6 Transfer of evidence-based policies
- 7 Use of European Union instruments
- 8 Involvement of regional and local authorities
- 9 Involvement of civil society
- 10 Active participation of the Roma

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Principle n° 1 Constructive, pragmatic and non-discriminatory policies

Policies aiming at the inclusion of Roma people respect and realise the core values of the European Union, which include human rights and dignity, non-discrimination and equality of opportunity as well as economic development. Roma inclusion policies are integrated with mainstream policies, particularly in the fields of education, employment, social affairs, housing, health and security. The aim of these policies is to provide the Roma with effective access to equal opportunities in Member State societies.

In other words...

The first Principle focuses on 'constructive and pragmatic' policies: policies that are appropriate to the situation on the ground. The design, implementation and evaluation of policies and projects should not be based on preconceptions, but on the actual situation of the Roma. In order to meet this requirement, attention should be paid to studies and other sources of factual information, visits should take place in situ and, ideally, Roma people should be involved in the design, implementation or evaluation of policies and projects.

The first Principle also requires the respect and promotion of the EU's core values of human rights, dignity and non-discrimination. It also rests on the promotion of the economic and social development of the Roma, as the basis for achieving equal opportunities for Roma people.

How can this be achieved in practice?

- Do not base policies on pre-conceptions but on the actual situation.
- For this purpose, make use of studies, surveys, visits, and the involvement of Roma people or experts, etc.
- Promote such an approach to all actors.
- Make sure that EU values (human rights, dignity, non-discrimination, etc.) are respected.
- Take into account the socio-economic inequalities experienced by the Roma and support equal opportunities/equal access of Roma people.

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Principle n° 2 Explicit but not exclusive targeting

Explicit but not exclusive targeting of the Roma is essential for inclusion policy initiatives. It implies focusing on Roma people as a target group but not to the exclusion of other people who share similar socio-economic circumstances. This approach does not separate Roma-focused interventions from broader policy initiatives. In addition, where relevant, consideration must be given to the likely impact of broader policies and decisions on the social inclusion of Roma people.

In other words...

There is an ongoing debate on how to best address the needs of ethnic minorities which includes two contrasting approaches: a specific approach (targeted at a specific minority) or a general approach (concerning everybody). The second Principle allows us to go beyond this debate with the introduction of the 'explicit but not exclusive approach'.

This approach implies focusing on Roma people as a target group without excluding others who live under similar socio-economic conditions. Policies and projects should be geared towards 'vulnerable groups', 'groups at the margins of the labour market', 'disadvantaged groups', or 'groups living in deprived areas', etc. with a clear mention that these groups include the Roma. This approach is particularly relevant for policies or projects taking place in areas populated by the Roma together with other ethnic minorities or marginalised members of society.

How can this be achieved in practice?

- Target policies on 'open' groups (e.g. vulnerable groups, people living in deprived areas, disadvantaged groups, etc.) with an explicit mention that this includes the Roma.
- Develop policies for socially disadvantaged neighbourhoods and not for distinct (ethnic) groups.
- Pay attention to the possible negative impact of broader policies to tackle the specific problems of the Roma, in particular their social inclusion.

Principle n° 3 Inter-cultural approach

There is a need for an inter-cultural approach which involves Roma people together with people from different ethnic backgrounds. Essential for effective communication and policy, inter-cultural learning and skills deserve to be promoted alongside combating prejudices and stereotypes.

In other words...

Taking measures to promote the inclusion of an ethnic minority often raises the fear that integration will lead to cultural assimilation. The third Principle addresses this dilemma and suggests that, instead of referring to cultural identities, policies and projects should focus on the promotion of inter-cultural learning and skills.

Through this approach, the majority population is provided with tools and competences to help them understand the Roma culture, and the Roma are provided with tools and competences to understand mainstream culture. As a result, promoting mutual understanding helps tackle prejudice on both sides. However, this approach does not imply that concessions should be made regarding fundamental human rights.

How can this be achieved in practice?

- Promote inter-cultural learning (e.g. training sessions, information materials, etc.) and mutual understanding.
- Highlight inter-cultural exchanges and the role of inter-cultural mediators.
- Involve people with different ethnic backgrounds in the design, implementation and evaluation of policies and activities.
- Take into account the cultural specificities of Roma communities when drawing up policies (e.g. be aware of taboos, etc.).
- Pay attention to possible cultural biases in communication, as well as in the process and substance of policies and activities.

Principle n° 4 Aiming for the mainstream

All inclusion policies aim to insert the Roma in the mainstream of society (mainstream educational institutions, mainstream jobs, and mainstream housing). Where partially or entirely segregated education or housing still exist, Roma inclusion policies must aim to overcome this legacy. The development of artificial and separate 'Roma' labour markets is to be avoided.

In other words...

The fourth Principle draws attention to the long-term impact of policies and projects as sometimes, despite aiming to support Roma inclusion, they can result in strengthening segregation. The fourth Principle emphasises that promoting the inclusion of the Roma in mainstream society should be the ultimate aim of all policies. Accordingly, all actions should be assessed to see if they risk causing segregation and adapted if necessary.

For example, supporting the renovation of houses for Roma people may on the surface contribute to fighting their social exclusion. However, if these houses are geographically isolated, such as being far away from public transport links, in reality they help maintain the segregation of the Roma from the majority society. Similarly, promoting Roma crafts as a source of income contributes to supporting the active participation of Roma in the labour market but also runs the risk of creating separate and artificial labour markets.

Finally, Roma segregation may also be exacerbated by measures that are apparently neutral but that ultimately create additional barriers for the Roma because of their situation: this is known as 'indirect discrimination.'

How can this be achieved in practice?

- Support actively de-segregation by promoting integrated approaches.
- Avoid measures that risk strengthening segregation or even creating new forms of segregation and pay attention to the long-term impact of policies and projects.
- Be aware of the risk of indirect discrimination (when apparently neutral measures ultimately create additional barriers for the Roma).
- Involve Roma communities.

5 Principle n° 5 Awareness of the gender dimension

Roma inclusion policy initiatives need to take account of the needs and circumstances of Roma women. They address issues such as multiple discrimination and problems of access to health care and child support, but also domestic violence and exploitation.

In other words...

Roma women are more likely to experience social exclusion than both Roma men and women in the majority community. Roma women are particularly vulnerable and suffer disadvantages such as limited access to employment, education, health and social services. They are often victims of double discrimination: discrimination on the grounds of gender and ethnic origin. Moreover, they run a higher risk of being victims of domestic violence, trafficking and exploitation than women in mainstream society.

However, Roma women also have a crucial role to play in promoting inclusion (e.g. as mediators for the integration of children into the education system).

How can this be achieved in practice?

- Address the specific needs of Roma women in the design, implementation and evaluation of policies and activities.
- Pay attention to related issues (e.g. multiple discrimination, domestic violence, exploitation, access to health/childcare).
- Ensure that Roma women participate and play a leading role in consultative bodies or monitoring committees.

6 Principle n° 6 Transfer of evidence-based policies

It is essential that Member States learn from their own experiences of developing Roma inclusion initiatives and share their experiences with other Member States. It is recognised that the development, implementation and monitoring of Roma inclusion policies requires a good base of regularly collected socio-economic data. Where relevant, the examples and experiences of social inclusion policies concerning other vulnerable groups, both from inside and from outside the EU, are also taken into account.

In other words...

The sixth Principle stresses the need to learn from your own experiences, as well as exchange experiences with other stakeholders or practitioners with the aim of drawing lessons from their work.

In order to benefit from experience, good practices should be highlighted and disseminated to others. Dialogue should take place among Member States and among Roma stakeholders, and also with other sectors (for example, concerning work with other vulnerable groups or developments taking place outside of the EU).

How can this be achieved in practice?

- Use and combine existing information and, where appropriate, collect data (in line with regulations protecting personal data) in order to monitor project and policy developments.
- Take into account the results achieved by various processes initiated (e.g. EU Roma Network, European Platform for Roma Inclusion, Roma Decade, etc.).
- Where relevant, get inspiration from and build on examples and experiences of work with other vulnerable groups.
- Use information from outside the EU.
- Promote information sharing and exchange of experience among Member States.

7 Principle n° 7 Use of European Union instruments

In the development and implementation of their policies aiming at Roma inclusion, it is crucial that the Member States make full use of European Union instruments, including legal instruments (Racial Equality Directive, Framework Decision on Racism and Xenophobia), financial instruments (European Social Fund, European Regional Development Fund, European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development, Instrument for Pre-Accession) and coordination instruments (Open Methods of Coordination). Member States must ensure that the use of financial instruments accords with these Common Basic Principles, and make use of the expertise within the European Commission, in respect of the evaluation of policies and projects. Peer review and the transfer of good practices are also facilitated on the expert level by EURoma (European Network on Social Inclusion and Roma under the Structural Funds).

In other words...

The seventh Principle draws attention to the EU's legal, financial and coordination instruments which can be promoted to Member States as tools for supporting Roma inclusion. It is connected to the sixth Principle as it refers to coordination and cooperation among stakeholders at European level.

How can this be achieved in practice?

- Use and promote EU legislation supporting Roma inclusion (e.g. Directives, Framework Decisions).
- Use and promote EU financial instruments supporting Roma inclusion (e.g. Structural Funds, etc.).
- Use and promote EU political instruments supporting Roma inclusion (e.g. coordination processes, political statements, etc.).
- Use the 10 Common Basic Principles as a scoreboard when evaluating the use of EU instruments.
- Benefit from feedback and expert information from the EURoma network on the use of the Structural Funds for the Roma.
- Take advantage of the possibility of peer reviews in order to learn from the most advanced practices.
- Cooperate with national governments in order to get their concrete commitments on the use of Structural Funds and other financial instruments for Roma inclusion.

8 Principle n° 8 Involvement of regional and local authorities

Member States need to design, develop, implement and evaluate Roma inclusion policy initiatives in close cooperation with regional and local authorities. These authorities play a key role in the practical implementation of policies.

In other words...

The eighth Principle focuses on regional and local governance as actors at local level are essential for Roma inclusion.

How can this be achieved in practice?

- Raise awareness of EU policies and instruments among regional and local authorities.
- Pay specific attention to the implementation of inclusion policies at regional and local level.
- Involve regional and local authorities in the design, monitoring and evaluation of Roma inclusion policies.
- Promote such an approach to national governments.

9 Principle n° 9 Involvement of civil society

Member States also need to design, develop, implement and evaluate Roma inclusion policy initiatives in close cooperation with civil society actors such as non-governmental organisations, social partners and academics/researchers. The involvement of civil society is recognised as vital both for the mobilisation of expertise and the dissemination of knowledge required to develop public debate and accountability throughout the policy process.

In other words...

The last two Principles concern cooperation with non-governmental organisations (NGOs), social partners, academics/researchers and Roma communities themselves. These actors should actively participate in the design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of policies and projects. Not only do Roma organisations and networks have valuable expertise to offer, but they can also be important relays for disseminating information to others.

How can this be achieved in practice?

- Consult and involve NGOs, academics and Roma representatives in all stages of policy development.
- Benefit from the expertise and dissemination networks of civil society.
- Organise public debates throughout the policy process.
- Reflect on measures concerning positive action to encourage Roma participation in public life and active citizenship.
- Promote employment opportunities for the Roma by including positive actions in human resources strategies, such as organising training courses, traineeships or company visits aimed at Roma communities.

10 Principle n° 10 Active participation of the Roma

The effectiveness of policies is enhanced with the involvement of Roma people at every stage of the process. Roma involvement must take place at both national and European levels through the input of expertise from Roma experts and civil servants, as well as by consultation with a range of Roma stakeholders in the design, implementation and evaluation of policy initiatives. It is of vital importance that inclusion policies are based on openness and transparency and tackle difficult or taboo subjects in an appropriate and effective manner. Support for the full participation of Roma people in public life, stimulation of their active citizenship and development of their human resources are also essential.



European Commission Roma Portal

<http://ec.europa.eu/roma>

'For Diversity. Against Discrimination.' information campaign

www.stop-discrimination.info

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