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DRAFT REPORT

on cohesion policy and marginalised communities
(2014/2247(INI))

Committee on Regional Development

Rapporteur: Terry Reintke

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MOTION FOR A EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT RESOLUTION

on cohesion policy and marginalised communities (2014/2247(INI))

The European Parliament,

- having regard to Articles 2 and 3 of the Treaty on European Union,
- having regard to Articles 151, 153, 162 and 174 to 176 of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union,
- having regard to the EU Charter of Fundamental Rights,
- having regard to European conventions protecting human rights and fundamental freedoms, notably the European Convention for the Protection of Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms (ECHR) and the related case law of the European Court of Human Rights, the European Social Charter and the related recommendations of the European Committee of Social Rights, and the Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities of the Council of Europe,
- having regard to Regulation (EU) No 1303/2013 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 17 December 2013 laying down common provisions on the European Regional Development Fund, the European Social Fund, the Cohesion Fund, the European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development and the European Maritime and Fisheries Fund and laying down general provisions on the European Regional Development Fund, the European Social Fund, the Cohesion Fund and the European Maritime and Fisheries Fund and repealing Council Regulation (EC) No 1083/2006 (hereinafter ‘the CPR’)¹,
- having regard to Regulation (EU) No 1301/2013 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 17 December 2013 on the European Regional Development Fund and on specific provisions concerning the Investment for growth and jobs goal and repealing Regulation (EC) No 1080/2006²,
- having regard to Regulation (EU) No 437/2010 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 19 May 2010 amending Regulation (EC) No 1080/2006 on the European Regional Development Fund as regards the eligibility of housing interventions in favour of marginalised communities³,
- having regard to Regulation (EU) No 1304/2013 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 17 December 2013 on the European Social Fund and repealing Council Regulation (EC) No 1081/2006⁴,

¹ OJ L 347, 20.12.2013, p. 320.

² OJ L 347, 20.12.2013, p. 289.

³ OJ L 132, 29.5.2010, p. 1.

⁴ OJ L 347, 20.12.2013, p. 470.

- having regard to Regulation (EU) No 1381/2013 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 17 December 2013 establishing a Rights, Equality and Citizenship Programme for the period 2014 to 2020¹,
- having regard to Regulation (EU) No 223/2014 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 11 March 2014 on the Fund for European Aid to the Most Deprived²,
- having regard to Commission Delegated Regulation (EU) No 240/ 2014 of 7 January 2014 on the European code of conduct on partnership in the framework of the European Structural and Investment Funds³,
- having regard to its resolution of 26 February 2014 on the European Commission’s 7th and 8th progress reports on the EU Cohesion Policy and the Strategic Report 2013 on programme implementation 2007-2013⁴,
- having regard to its resolution of 12 December 2013 on the progress made in the implementation of the National Roma Integration Strategies⁵,
- having regard to its resolution of 11 June 2013 on social housing in the European Union⁶,
- having regard to its resolution of 9 March 2011 on the EU strategy on Roma inclusion⁷,
- having regard to its resolution of 20 May 2010 on the contribution of the cohesion policy to the achievement of Lisbon and the EU2020 objectives⁸,
- having regard to its resolution of 11 March 2009 on the social situation of the Roma and their improved access to the labour market in the EU⁹,
- having regard to the Commission’s sixth report on economic, social and territorial cohesion of 23 July 2014 entitled ‘Investment for jobs and growth: promoting economic, social and territorial cohesion in the Union’,
- having regard to the Commission’s Thematic Guidance Fiche of 27 February 2014 on Roma and Marginalised Communities (Thematic objective 9 - Social Inclusion and Poverty),
- having regard to the Commission communication of 2 April 2014 entitled ‘Report on the implementation of the EU Framework for National Roma Integration Strategies’ (COM(2014)0209),

¹ OJ L 354, 28.12.2013, p. 62.

² OJ L 72, 12.3.2014, p. 1.

³ OJ L 74, 14.3.2014, p. 1.

⁴ Texts adopted, P7_TA(2014)0132.

⁵ Texts adopted, P7_TA(2013)0594.

⁶ Texts adopted, P7_TA(2013)0246.

⁷ Texts adopted, P7_TA(2011)0092.

⁸ OJ C 161 E, 31.5.2011, p. 120.

⁹ OJ C 87 E, 1.4.2010, p. 60.

- having regard to the Commission communication of 21 May 2012 entitled ‘National Roma integration Strategies: a first step in the implementation of the EU Framework’ (COM(2012)0226),
 - having regard to the Commission communication of 8 December 2010 entitled ‘European Union Strategy for Danube Region’ (COM(2010)0715),
 - having regard to the Commission communication of 12 December 2010 entitled ‘The European Platform against Poverty and Social Exclusion: A European framework for social and territorial cohesion’ (COM(2010)0758),
 - having regard to the Commission communication of 3 March 2010 entitled ‘Europe 2020 – A strategy for smart, sustainable and inclusive growth’ (COM(2010)2020),
 - having regard to Council recommendation of 9 December 2013 on effective Roma integration measures in the Member States¹,
 - having regard to the question for written answer to the Commission of 24 February 2015 on funding for marginalised communities (E-002782-15),
 - having regard to the Opinion of the Committee of the Regions on ‘Roma integration strategies’²,
 - having regard to Rule 52 of its Rules of Procedure,
 - having regard to the report of the Committee on Regional Development and the opinions of the Committee on Employment and Social Affairs and the Committee on Women’s Rights and Gender Equality (A8-0000/2015),
- A. whereas cohesion policy is aimed at enhancing economic, social and territorial cohesion, including the reduction and eradication of poverty and exclusion, which calls for the prevention of segregation and for the promotion of equal access and opportunities for all citizens, in particular for the most marginalised communities;
- B. whereas funding opportunities for marginalised communities were introduced into the ERDF in 2010; whereas the legislative framework for cohesion policy 2014-2020 offers a strategic approach to marginalised communities providing for broader funding opportunities;
- C. whereas the objective of social cohesion calls for a European role in policies for the inclusion of marginalised communities, and requires Member States to take responsibility for, and use their competences to change, the situation by implementing as much supportive action as possible;
- D. whereas heavy cuts to public services as a consequence of the crisis have led to numerous problems, often resulting in severe budgetary problems for municipalities, leading to a lack of options when dealing with marginalised groups and seeking to

¹ OJ C 378, 14.12.2013, p. 1.

² OJ C 114, 15.4.2014, p. 73.

improve their inclusion and prevent further segregation;

- E. whereas more actors at different levels and sectors as well as stakeholders and civil society representatives are involved and often play a determining role, which requires a coherent and well-coordinated approach;
- F. whereas there is no EU definition of marginalised communities; whereas understanding the report begins by specifying certain attributes and characteristics of marginalised groups, such as living and working conditions, limited access to education and health care systems, accompanied by structural and systemic exclusion;
- G. whereas the Roma people are Europe's largest ethnic minority and its most marginalised community;
- H. whereas the inclusion of marginalised communities in funding requires that efforts be made at all levels, a long-term approach, permanent solutions, empowerment, building on experience and capacity building in order to end segregation and reach normalisation;

General principles

1. Welcomes the Union's awareness of the urgent need to tackle the issue of marginalised communities; underlines the important role of cohesion policy in supporting their economic, social, cultural and territorial inclusion;
2. Welcomes the fact that the legislative framework for cohesion policy 2014-2020 introduced new elements which consolidate the initial approach by extending funding opportunities and inserting mechanisms to ensure that support for marginalised communities complies with European values and objectives and takes into account the need to involve those groups in the whole process;
3. Finds regrettable that the Commission failed to provide sufficient information about the take-up of funding opportunities for marginalised communities; asks for an analysis to be carried out that would allow appropriate conclusions to be drawn and the obstacles that are preventing further take-up or the best possible results to be identified;
4. Emphasises that the horizontal principle of equal opportunities and non-discrimination must be applied, as systemic causes of inequality need to be eradicated; emphasises that understanding and awareness-raising of systemic xenophobia and racism, such as anti-Gypsyism, should be a focal point when analysing the roots of exclusion;
5. Recalls that equality between women and men constitutes a funding principle that applies horizontally; considers that marginalised communities, particularly women, often face multiple forms of discrimination;
6. Points out that the 'explicit, but not exclusive' principle implies focusing on particular target groups while not excluding others in similar socio-economic circumstances nor triggering defensive reactions from the majority population because they feel their needs are not being addressed;

7. Stresses that accountable, transparent and democratic structures should be in place to fight corruption and the fraudulent use of funds to ensure the inclusion of marginalised communities;
8. Regards access to public services as one of the major goals in addressing the inclusion of marginalised groups; demands a shift from a demand-driven approach to a welcoming service approach in public administrations;
9. Calls for an alignment and stronger links between National Roma Inclusion Strategies and National Poverty Reduction Strategies with cohesion policy;
10. Calls on the Commission to ensure that Member States comply with these principles when adopting and supervising the implementation of operational programmes, including tackling the causes of structural inequalities;

Preparation of programmes

11. Stresses that the partnership principle must lead to involvement at all levels and needs to be applied by Member States on an obligatory basis; stresses the importance of the implementation of the code of conduct on partnership to ensure equal participation and representation of marginalised communities; is concerned about the poor compliance with the obligatory involvement of partners in accordance with Article 5 of the CPR; calls on the Commission not to authorise payments for programmes that disregard the involvement of partners, including those most concerned;
12. Finds regrettable that the Commission has accepted partnership agreements that do not include marginalised communities; asks the Commission to ensure inclusion of marginalised communities in the implementation of projects; suggests recommendations in the European Semester as a suitable tool to promote action to be taken by the Member States;
13. Calls on the Member States to make use of the funds; emphasises the need for a special focus on funding measures that go beyond targeted action under the thematic objective for social inclusion, combating poverty and any discrimination, thus providing for a more integrated and systematic approach;
14. Considers multi-level governance to play an important role; emphasises that involvement of local authorities is essential to reach the target group and requires the highest territorial proximity possible;

Implementation of programmes

15. Is of the opinion that funds should be used in a more integrated way, including by means of multi-fund programmes, community-led local development, integrated territorial investments and cross-financing as referred to in Article 98(2) of the CPR and achieve synergies with other EU and national funding instruments; calls on the administrations and authorities concerned to seek active cooperation;
16. Notes that marginalised communities often live in less favourable parts of cities;

emphasises the importance of urban regeneration programmes for deprived neighbourhoods, which tackle both economic and social challenges and improve the urban environment;

17. Underlines the need to build up the capacity of the stakeholders, including public services, administrations and civil society bodies; insists that targeted technical assistance and funding be used to this end;
18. Welcomes the approach that all strategic and operational policy arrangements including sufficient administrative or institutional capacity, are to be in place before the investment is made; encourages the Commission to monitor thoroughly the fulfilment of those conditions and to ensure that complementary actions are taken by the Member States, in particular in the field of promoting inclusion and combating poverty and discrimination;

Monitoring and recommendations

19. Points out that EU-funded projects must have a long-term perspective in order to be effective; warns that implementers may satisfy the criteria set for inclusion on paper, while not investing in the actual needs of beneficiaries and not reaching target groups; calls for qualitative evaluation and monitoring mechanisms; calls on the Commission to put in place proactive and participatory monitoring and supervision of Member States' actions in the planning and evaluation process of funds;
20. Emphasises that representatives of marginalised communities need to be actively involved and enabled to participate as full members in monitoring; points out that considerable experience could have been gathered at local, regional, national and transnational level; underlines the need to disseminate and capitalise on best practices; calls on the Commission and Member States to initiate networking activities, including among scientists;
21. Calls on all public stakeholders to carry out awareness-raising of the fact that xenophobia and racism, such as anti-Gypsyism, leading to systemic exclusion must be eliminated; suggests educational and anti-discriminatory measures to be considered;
22. Invites the Commission to analyse the limitations of the current allocation key for determining support from cohesion policy funds based on per capita GDP; believes that additional consideration should be given to indicators capable of identifying pockets of poverty and social fragility on the Union's territory in order to better target EU support for marginalised communities;
23. Calls on the Commission to issue a communication outlining its intention to ensure that marginalised communities are included in EU funds;
24. Instructs its President to forward this resolution to the Council and the Commission.

EXPLANATORY STATEMENT

Cohesion Policy is one of the strongest instruments the European Union has at its disposal with which to fight inequality and support territorial and social cohesion in its regions.

In all European societies there are groups and communities that face structural exclusion and segregation from the majority society and do not have access to even basic public infrastructure and services. Besides that, they are very often disproportionately affected by poverty, unemployment and bad health conditions.

Heavy reductions in public spending during the crisis have led to an aggravation of existing problems in the Member States, such as unemployment, absence of social security, a difficult housing situation and a lack of public health services. As a consequence, the crisis has had a direct negative impact on members of marginalised communities. Also, many municipalities continue to face severe budgetary constraints which prevent them from dealing adequately with marginalisation in society.

In spite of everything, the main responsibility for changing the situation of marginalised communities lies with the Member States. While specific national circumstances, needs and solutions vary greatly across Europe, the aim of social cohesion calls for a European role in policies for the inclusion of marginalised communities.

Marginalised communities and discriminatory structures

There is no uniform EU definition of marginalised communities; instead, the term covers a broad range of concepts, such as disadvantaged neighbourhoods, most deprived or materially deprived people, people at risk of poverty, and groups in society that are disadvantaged or discriminated against.

Nonetheless, the concept of marginalised communities was introduced into the regulation on the ERDF in 2013, with the clear aim of fighting the consequences of marginalisation. So it is now the responsibility of the EU to follow up and pursue this aim in a consistent fashion.

Also, there is a wide variety of discriminatory structures in place, including sexual orientation and gender identity as well as different cultural, religious or ethnic backgrounds. Many people face different forms of discrimination at the same time, especially within Roma communities, which are very often marginalised within European societies.

Cohesion policy is a powerful tool

Cohesion policy can play a powerful role in changing these realities. Not only when looking at challenges in housing or access to public infrastructure, as is already happening in the framework of the ERDF, but by providing an integrated approach to tackling all the different forms of discrimination that marginalised communities face.

However, very often marginalised communities do not benefit from European cohesion policy. They are included neither in decision-making structures nor in the processes of implementation and monitoring of projects. This can lead to EU exacerbating the problems of

vulnerable groups, and there are several examples of misuse of funds, especially with regard to marginalised communities.

Understanding and awareness-raising of systematic forms of discrimination such as anti-Gypsyism must be the focus when it comes to analysing the reasons for exclusion.

An integrated approach: explicit but not exclusive

When dealing with integration of marginalised groups, the principle of ‘explicit but not exclusive’ has been adopted by a number of stakeholders. This principle proposes that particular target groups be focused on, while not excluding other people in similar socio-economic circumstances. Still, the simple fact of mentioning marginalised communities, such as Roma, does not ensure that specific measures are adopted to address their situation.

To this end, proper implementation of the Code of Conduct on Partnerships, which strives to ensure equal participation and representation of stakeholders, is of key importance. Big differences between Member States are reported as regards their implementation of the partnership principle, ranging from regular consultation of social partners to total neglect and ignorance of the Code of Conduct.

Furthermore, evaluation of projects during the previous programming period has shown that funding does not always target the real needs of the beneficiaries. Implementers sometimes even satisfy the criteria by simply ‘ticking boxes’, for example by involving NGOs which allegedly represent Roma people or having pseudo-consultations without any real dialogue.

There is thus a clear demand for quality evaluation and monitoring mechanisms. We need a shift towards quality monitoring so that interventions lead to long-term and sustainable results. This is a complex and time-consuming process that requires targeted and effective capacity-building of civil society organisations at local and national level, as well as empowerment of marginalised communities so that they are capable of proactively participating in designing and implementing interventions. Budget for technical assistance often remains unused and should be allocated to capacity-building projects and training programmes for civil society.

This report gives recommendations on how to overcome the problems described above. In this way, using EU funds for the inclusion of marginalised communities can become a great opportunity for promoting and supporting greater cohesion in European societies.