

Funded
by the European Union
and the Council of Europe



Implemented
by the Council of Europe

EVALUATION OF THE COUNCIL OF EUROPE AND EUROPEAN UNION JOINT PROGRAMME 'ROMED'



COUNTRY FINDINGS PORTUGAL

creda consulting
Creative Development Alternative

bl & meyer
& sanz European value(s)



ROMED
Médiation pour les Roms
Mediation for Roma

ROMED in Portugal

Fernando Santos, country expert in Portugal

1.1 Introduction

The Roma population in Portugal is estimated at between 40,000 and 60,000, being distributed all over the national territory. Despite some improvements in past decades, their situation is still quite vulnerable and many families lack adequate access to basic services, facing social exclusion, discrimination, prejudice, poverty, high unemployment, loss of economic resources due to the decline of traditional occupations and low attendance at school, all together forming a complex barrier to integration.

From a policy and institutional perspective, several initiatives and interventions have emerged over the last twenty years: public departments (Office for Roma Communities in 2007 at the former ACIDI - High Commissioner for Immigration and Intercultural Dialogue, now known as the ACM – High Commission for Migrations), working groups, formal strategies, funded projects, training programmes, awareness-raising campaigns and the founding of Roma NGOs all represent a positive trend towards Roma empowerment and inclusion.

Previous to ROMED, there were other initiatives promoting the role and the capacities of the intercultural mediator, organised by different institutions. For example, in 2003, an institution related to the Catholic Church, *Obra Nacional para a Pastoral dos Ciganos*, promoted training sessions on intercultural mediation, delivering diplomas to mediators. In October 2009, ACIDI launched a pilot national programme directed at municipal mediation, engaging a group of 15 municipalities. In 2011, a second phase of the programme involved another group of seven municipalities. In 2013, ROMED1 was organised on a sequential and complementary perspective to the national programme, having a synergistic effect. ROMED2 followed and brought a more innovative approach based on participatory methods.

1.2 ROMED1 key findings

1.2.1 Relevance

ROMED1 in Portugal represented a step forward in terms of intercultural mediation focused on Roma inclusion, adding new perspectives and more resources to the efforts previously put in place by national initiatives. The ROMED1 training process brought an upgrade in terms of tools for municipal intercultural mediation, giving added value to the national programme of municipal mediators. The advancements brought by ROMED were positively recognised from the perspective of the several institutions involved, including mediators, municipalities and national institutions.

The ROMED1 training was especially relevant and valuable in five dimensions:

- **Conceptual:** a clearer definition of the role of the mediator according to a more neutral positioning in relation to the Roma community, the municipality and the other institutions.
- **Collaborative:** the work in tandem between the mediator and the municipal coordinator (technician) was approached from a collaborative team perspective, looking for a stronger commitment and engagement from the municipality.

- **Orientation:** adoption of a human rights perspective underlying the work of the mediator, reinforcing their civic consciousness. The European Code of Ethics was especially relevant.
- **Methodological:** the work cycle framework was very useful and well systematised, facilitating the work on the ground and the approach to the various situations.
- **Practical:** role-playing dynamics allowed a practical and positive interactive discussion, with a strong contribution to learning and sharing of perspectives.

1.2.2 Efficiency and effectiveness of the ROMED1 training process

The ROMED1 Programme in Portugal trained two groups with a total of 26 mediators (23 men and three women): Group 1 in 2011-12 with 17 mediators trained and Group 2 in 2012-2013 with nine mediators trained. The institutional and organisational context was already defined by the national programme. The municipalities engaged had to recruit the Roma mediators, looking for individuals with adequate characteristics (for example, interpersonal skills), connection to the local communities, formal education levels (where possible) and a professional interest in becoming mediators (in some cases, the recruited individuals already had experience in mediation).

The national programme co-funded the salary of the mediators (75% in the first two years, 50% in the last two years), assuming a perspective of on-the-job training. That incentive was crucial for having a high number of municipalities applying for participation. Each municipality had to provide institutional conditions to the mediator and designated internal coordinators from the social departments to work in tandem with them. In general, during four years of the national programme, the mediators had three and a half days of training per month, consisting of different modules and content, giving them a wide professional background. The training was provided to both Roma mediator and to the coordinator at certain moments (sometimes with training differentiation).

ROMED1 was viewed as a supplementary high quality module, being more insightful and practical, in relation to the national programme. The training was especially useful and valuable to the first group of trainees (2011/2012) from the national programme, coming after many months of training, helping to clarify and to consolidate concepts and instruments. The second group of trainees (2012/2013) received ROMED1 sessions at the beginning of the training period. They were less useful, sometimes even confusing, due to a lower level of preparation of the new mediators.

During the six-month period between training sessions, the mediators were engaged in the application of the concepts and instruments delivered by the ROMED1 training. In several cases there were significant difficulties in working in the field, due to insufficient employment conditions and lack of support at the municipal level.

The mediators needed greater institutional support and more permanent mentoring and advising. Several municipalities created adequate conditions for the mediator to be able to perform their role, but, in many other cases, the lack of support, resources and vision about Roma mediation contributed to poor results. During 2012, a number of complementary follow-up activities and coaching sessions of mediators were organised with the ROMED trainers and NGOs. The coaching model was considered as positive in increasing the confidence of the mediators, but still more intensive and proximal mentoring was required. The ROMED trainers also organised additional workshops for two large Roma communities using elements from ROMED, the pedagogical approach and its Trainer's Handbook, to make local stakeholders more aware of the mediation challenges.

The level of women's participation was low (three women) due to cultural factors. The number of men available for performing the role of mediator was significantly higher. Nevertheless, the performance and the capacity of the women involved in the training were highly recognised by all mediators, trainers and institutions.

The international design of the ROMED1 training was sufficiently adapted to the local situations and needs of the Portuguese mediators, providing a conceptual but also practical framework, reinforcing the national content that was transmitted to the trainees. The international trainers also brought an outside-in perspective, giving examples from other countries and experiences.

1.2.3 Outcomes and impacts

Contribution to the professional development of mediators and their recognition

The ROMED1 training had a positive contribution in increasing the capacities of mediators, but a very limited impact in terms of their employment in the municipalities.

The mediators recognise that the ROMED1 training and Council of Europe certificate were important in improving their knowledge and presenting formal evidence of their technical capacities as mediators, in theory granting more employment conditions. Yet in reality, ROMED1 had an insignificant impact on the employment of the majority of the trainees.

Of the 26 mediators trained under ROMED1, six maintained an activity related to mediation; of those, only three were working as municipal mediators and they were hired in the framework of the second phase of ROMED2. The specific reality in each municipality was very important for the results achieved. There were cases of mediators with a strong impact on their municipalities (for example, Barcelos, Beja and Moura), in part due to their skills, personalities and relations with the communities. Those municipalities understood the potential for having adequate intermediation and looked for solutions to maintain those human resources after the end of the national programme, although generally under precarious contracts (short-term, low wages and uncertain renewal). However, the majority of the municipalities did not have the conditions required to keep their mediators after the end of the national incentives (partial payment of salaries). The economic context explains part of the problem (for example, the recession had an impact on restraining municipal admissions), but there was also a lack of recognition about the relevance of adequate mediation.

Nevertheless, the ROMED1 training was useful for the municipal social departments to gain more knowledge about the Roma communities, their problems and cultural differences, acquiring a better understanding about the concept of mediation. In the beginning, there were different visions concerning the role of the mediator. Several municipalities looked at the mediator with a short-term perspective as problem solvers, employed to perform difficult tasks (for example, collecting house rental payments or calming Roma individuals in conflict situations). This corresponded to a more submissive vision of mediation (“Trojan Horse”). The ROMED1 training had a significant impact on the clarification of the role of the mediator, putting more attention on a human rights perspective and a more neutral position of the mediator in the relationship between the community and the municipalities. According to several mediators, that vision was not in line with the political perspective of several municipalities, having a harmful impact on the hiring of mediators.

Contribution to increased access to services in communities

In general, trained mediators had a positive but limited impact on their Roma communities. In the municipalities that were able to assume conditions for a stable and continued process of mediation, there are several examples of increased access of Roma to public services:

- **Employment:** the mediator collaborated in job search and building a CV, helping to identify and to recommend opportunities to community members.
- **Education:** the mediator contributed to improving relations between schools and families, to reducing conflicts, to keeping children in school (for example, when a child misses classes for

several days, the mediator looks for an explanation and tries to create conditions for return to school), to raising awareness about school attendance and to helping families with female children in order to keep them in class for longer.

- **Overcoming digital exclusion:** due to lack of computers and skills, the Roma have limited access to digital services. Mediators have an important role in the intermediation of the digital relationship between individuals and institutions (for example, digital forms, emails, fiscal issues, etc.).
- **Healthcare:** the mediator helped book appointments for specialised medical care.
- **Conflict prevention:** the mediator gave recommendations to municipalities when action was needed in complicated neighbourhoods (for example, housing interventions).
- **Culture:** the mediator promoted Roma identity and cultural values in collaboration with the municipality (for example, organisation of socio-cultural events).

Impact at the national level

As complementary training to the National Programme, ROMED1 had some influence at the level of policy and national institutions. The institutional learning (for example by ACIDI's team) and the wider recognition of mediation as a line of action for social integration and inclusion are all policy gains.

Mediation is becoming more important from a policy perspective. The National Strategy for the Inclusion of Roma Communities (2013-2020)¹ assumes mediation as the seventh strategic dimension to be followed, with three priorities to be considered: Priority 12 – To promote the training of socio-cultural Roma mediators; Priority 13 – To mainstream the programme of municipal mediators on a mid-term perspective; Priority 14 – To raise the awareness of public institutions of the role of intercultural mediation as a strategy for more inclusive services. From a financial perspective, the National Operational Programme for Social Inclusion and Employment (POISE 2020) on the investment priority (9i)² focused on active inclusion, will allocate structural funds for projects on municipal mediation, in line with the national strategy.

ROMED1 contributed to reinforcing the importance of intercultural mediation in Portugal, working also as a "programme certification" or as a "valuable brand", adding value to the national programme of municipal mediation and improving its potential for communication. ROMED1 was an international Programme, conducted in Portugal with the support of the Council of Europe, raising political and media awareness on the subject of intercultural mediation.

1.2.4 Sustainability

The sustainability of the results from ROMED1 was limited, especially at municipal level, where just a few trained mediators maintained their professional roles. This relates to the overall sustainability of the national training programme of mediators which gave a strong incentive (payment of a substantial part of the salaries for four years) for municipal recruitment of mediators, but once it was over, very few municipalities kept their mediators.

Nevertheless, there are some positive developments that have high sustainability potential:

- ***Mediation is a priority from the political and institutional perspective.*** There are expressions of interest in organising new training programmes for mediators, in line with the

¹ <http://www.acm.gov.pt/-/estrategia-nacional-para-as-comunidades-ciganas-enicc-concic>

² Page 105 of the Programme

https://www.portugal2020.pt/Portal2020/Media/Default/Docs/Programas%20Operacionais/TEXTOS%20INTEGRAIS%20DOS%20PO/PO_ISE_17Nov14.pdf

national strategy for Roma inclusion. According to the High Commission for Migrations (ACM), the ROMED1 content was valuable and could be used and adapted to the new training formats.

- ***The status of the mediator is gaining greater recognition and visibility.*** ROMED1 contributed to the introduction of additional capacities and a new institutional vision based on a modern concept of mediation, different from an older institutional vision that saw mediators as problem-solvers in the short term.
- ***Several ROMED1 mediators became associative leaders and gained the respect of national and international organisations.*** Two Roma NGOs were created upon the initiative of ROMED participants. In 2013, the Association Letras Nómadas started to work for the empowerment of Roma communities through the implementation of several projects and initiatives, sometimes in partnerships, becoming an important institutional player. The Council of Europe and the High Commission for Migrations (ACM) recognised their relevance and trusted their capacities to become the National Support Organisation for ROMED2 in Portugal on the ground, supporting the process in close connection with the municipalities. In 2014, the Association of Portuguese Roma Mediators was created, representing an institutional step forward in the consolidation of the status of the mediator, defending their rights and responsibilities.

1.3 ROMED2 key findings

1.3.1 Relevance

ROMED2 represented a relevant pioneer effort in terms of inclusion, democratic participation and social engagement in seven Portuguese municipalities. The Programme can be seen as a bottom-up participative approach built on the constitution of volunteer Community Action Groups (CAGs) at municipal level, complementing the role performed by the mediators.

Participatory planning and decision-making with a community-based perspective are long-term processes of organisational and social learning. If we consider the challenge of having Roma citizens' groups coming from a context of social exclusion, affected by prejudice, having low levels of formal education and no experience in community planning, more time is needed to build trust, ownership and working dynamics.

Many municipalities in Portugal were engaged in the Local Agenda 21, as community-based planning processes. There are some common elements with the participatory planning approach brought by ROMED2: a bottom-up perspective, citizens' volunteer participation, participatory methodologies, results on a long-term basis, sometimes the process (for example, group dynamics) is more important than the operational results (for example, organisation of a specific event). ROMED2 is more about building social capital, considering that many Roma communities are excluded from the rest of the local communities and are totally disconnected from democratic processes. ROMED2 may have an important role to play in the regeneration of social relations among communities at local level, if sustained in the long term.

1.3.2 Efficiency and effectiveness of assisted local processes

Selection of municipalities

Nine municipalities from different regions of the country and with very diverse Roma demographics initiated the ROMED2 approach: Abrantes, Barcelos, Beja, Coimbra, Elvas, Figueira da Foz, Moura,

Seixal and Torres Vedras. Two of those municipalities dropped out due to political changes after the municipal elections (Coimbra) and lack of conditions to sustain local mediation processes (Abrantes).

The Office for Roma Communities (Gabinete de apoio às Comunidades Ciganas - GACI within ACM) had a key role in the selection of the municipalities, in dialogue with local authorities and Letras Nómadas, considering the following criteria:

- Continuity of the investment made under ROMED1 (seven selected municipalities participated in ROMED1).
- Availability of experienced mediators with working contracts in the municipalities.
- Territorial diversity and country representation (municipalities from north and south; interior and coastal; rural and urban characteristics).

Development of the Community Action Groups

The members of the CAGs and the facilitators went through a continued process of organisational and social learning, based on the training provided by the National Support Team, in order to gain perspectives, methods and tools for conducting their work as a group. Project management skills were transmitted and a work cycle approach was established, helping to drive and focus the dynamic of the group. The ROMED2 framework was gradually integrated by the CAGs and several factors contributed to the process:

- **Leadership and active engagement of the National Support Team at the local level** in several dimensions – motivation, training, organisation, mentoring, reporting, institutional relations and communication of activities. The three members of the Team from Letras Nómadas – Bruno Gonçalves (National Project Officer), Olga Mariano and Luis Romão – were very dynamic and proactive in the relationship with the CAGs.
- **The political commitment and the operational support provided by the municipalities.** Considering the different characteristics and circumstances, the political and technical commitment of municipalities to the process was crucial for sustaining the CAG's work, especially by providing a salary for the local facilitator.
- **The dedication, stability and experience of the facilitators.** In several municipalities, the mediators were also acting as facilitators, becoming important in considering their contractual relationship for granting greater sustainability to the processes. The institutional stability of the facilitator/mediator was a very important driver. In periods of unemployment or uncertainty, the group dynamic was negatively affected. It is also important to highlight that there were significant differences of experience when comparing the seven facilitators, but in general they all had the characteristics needed to perform the role.
- **The CAGs' profile, composition and dynamics.** There are significant differences between the seven CAGs but, in general, they are composed of: 10-14 members; stronger presence of young men (age 25-35); reduced female presence (and in several cases married to a group member); trend towards more female participation (in Figueira da Foz, women already outnumber men); and significant presence of members from the evangelical church.

Interaction with local authorities

There were different degrees of effectiveness in the interaction between the CAGs and the local authorities, depending on the specificities of the relations established over time. Examples of successful interactions include:

- **Technical and organisational support:** most of the municipalities provided rooms for the meetings and/or allowed the use of public equipment for cultural events of the community.

- **Employment:** most of the municipalities provided local jobs to members of the community following the CAG's request; in seven municipalities, approximately 30 jobs were created over almost two years, generally on temporary contracts.
- **Municipal diagnosis of Roma community:** in Torres Vedras, the facilitator, with the support of the CAG, conducted a survey of the local community.
- **Conflict prevention:** the municipality of Elvas was planning an intervention in a complex neighbourhood and the mayor asked for advice from CAG members.
- **Housing improvement:** in Beja, several houses in a poor neighbourhood presented isolation problems; the CAG gathered materials for covering the ceilings and prepared the intervention with municipal support.
- **Local planning for Roma inclusion:** in Seixal, the municipality is preparing a local strategy for Roma inclusion, planning actions on several dimensions.
- **Institutional communication:** in Elvas, when a formal request from the CAG is made, there is always a formal answer with an explanation for accepting or refusing the proposal, representing good practice in terms of interaction.

Efficiency of provided support and resources

ROMED2 can be considered as a cost-effective process from the Portuguese perspective, meaning that, with reduced financial and human resources directly allocated, the results achieved in terms of community engagement were significantly positive. ROMED2 funded the work of the National Support Team, whose members were responsible for managing the process all over the country and for providing training, technical support and motivation to local facilitators. In some cases, municipalities covered the salary of the local mediators who worked as facilitators, as well as basic support (for example, meetings rooms) or other resources that were needed or solicited. The members of the CAGs were volunteers, working for the benefit of the community.

1.3.3 Outcomes and impacts

Impacts on empowerment of communities

Over time, CAG members increased their individual and organisational skills, for example, becoming more capable of formulating problems and proposing adequate solutions, considering the existing institutional channels and procedures. They are more capable of writing letters and reports with complaints, demands or proposals; they are more prepared as a group to organise meetings and events (for example, cultural festival); they have greater knowledge of the people and the institutions in charge of different situations (such as the maintenance of local equipment). The empowerment and capacity-building that is occurring, sometimes with practical results, is bringing a stronger recognition from different departments and institutions, as well as from the side of their Roma communities. CAG members are therefore gaining greater self-esteem and more trust, feeling a greater sense of municipal belonging, maintaining their Roma pride and community values. Some members expressed those ideas saying that "*we feel important!*". The CAGs also have an important role in terms of local democracy. Efforts were made to motivate the CAG members to vote, in some cases for the first time.

Concrete results and impacts towards social inclusion of communities

ROMED2 is achieving concrete impacts at local level but is still very symbolic and localised. There is a learning curve and a process of group development that takes time to produce more tangible results. A few rounds of proposals (three or four per CAG) have been pushed forward, in some cases with positive outcomes. For now, the direct benefits for the community, especially in terms of access to public services, are still very limited but they have value. The CAGs are becoming more skilled in the

preparation of proposals and are gaining the respect and the trust of the municipalities. There are also some differences between CAGs in terms of maturity, capacity to formulate proposals and results achieved, but in general the trend is positive and constructive. Some examples of concrete achievements include:

Employment – most of the municipalities created job opportunities for Roma individuals (an average of four or five per municipality) having an impact on the life and budget of their families, showing that they are trustworthy and that the municipality is willing to give them chances, representing an inclusive example. In total, about thirty jobs were created. It is still symbolic in the context of communities with high levels of unemployment, but it is very important as a sign and as a trend for active inclusion.

Health – CAGs discussed initiatives related to healthcare in the communities. For example, in Figueira da Foz, the CAG is preparing a campaign related to dental care.

Local democracy – several members of CAGs voted for the first time after the efforts made by facilitators, representing also a positive trend towards democratic inclusion.

Religion – proposals for improving the conditions of the evangelical church (for example, payment of debts related to energy), benefiting the general community.

Culture and identity – organisation of events (photographic exhibitions, gastronomy festivals) to promote Roma values and create more awareness in the local community.

Citizenship and solidarity - organisation of solidarity initiatives (collection of food to donate to social care institutions) with an important impact for the image and reputation of Roma communities, showing that they are also willing to give and to help, despite their own difficult circumstances.

Education – ROMED2 contributed to the creation of conditions that enabled a group of Roma students to gain access to university. From several CAGs there were active younger members that over time expressed their interest and motivation in accessing higher education, if they had the necessary economic support. Letras Nómadas identified several young men and women and prepared a project called “Opré Chavalé”, obtaining funding for university-level Roma scholarships under “Programme Escolhas” (a national programme that receives applications for inclusion projects). This innovative project gave eight scholarships to students from Roma communities, helping to improve the levels of formal education, working as an example of social inclusion. The Portuguese Government recognised the merit of the initiative and approved the funding of 25 additional scholarships for 2016-2017.

From the local perspective, looking at the priorities and the proposals made by the several CAGs, education was addressed more indirectly. There isn't significant evidence of increased access to school of children in the ROMED2 localities; the impacts are more relevant in terms of awareness and consciousness of the importance of children attending school in order to improve their future, especially for girls, with the message transmitted to the rest of the community. In several of the initiatives mentioned, efforts were made for women to engage in the process or to benefit from it.

Impacts on changes of policies at local and national level

ROMED2 had an impact on municipal awareness and action regarding the problems Roma face. The CAGs became a sign of change and brought a more positive vision about Roma individuals and communities. Municipalities reinforced their efforts in order to gain better knowledge of their problems (for example, organising surveys) and responded positively to several requests. ROMED2 can also be seen as a network of municipalities working under a common agenda for Roma inclusion.

Municipal communication instruments and initiatives (for example, webpages, press releases and local news) were important for the motivation and self-esteem of the CAG members, giving greater visibility and importance to their work. For example, the municipality of Torres Vedras sought out media attention for the project and used several instruments to promote ROMED2. The National Support Team also developed many positive efforts in terms of communication of the process and results achieved, using several instruments such as social media (Facebook), newsletters, production of a documentary, photographic exhibition, presence in the media, etc.

There was a significant effort made by the National Support Team to find synergies with other institutions and national initiatives. One example is the aforementioned project Opré Chavalé for education scholarships. Some municipalities also applied to national programmes (such as Programme Escolhas), collaborating with Letras Nómadas, in order to promote initiatives focused on Roma communities, with the idea being formulated in the context of ROMED (for example, Torres Vedras gained funding for a project related to the history of families living in the municipality).

1.3.4 Sustainability

The sustainability of the ROMED2 local participatory processes can be seen with moderate optimism, since there is a significant level of motivation and institutionalisation of the Community Action Groups. ROMED2 involved nine municipalities at the beginning of the Programme in 2014; two years later, in 2016, seven CAGs were still functioning, showing signs of maturity. Yet seven municipalities in the context of three hundred and eight Portuguese municipalities is still symbolic and pioneering from an institutional perspective, far from a mainstreaming perspective at national level. Nevertheless, they can be seen as a sign of change and social commitment towards Roma inclusion, complementing the efforts made in mediation.

In the future, the CAGs may assume a more institutionalised dimension, becoming local associations, with statutes and formal directions in charge. For example, in Elvas the CAG members established the association “Silaba Dinamica”, maintaining the ROMED2 orientation but assuming a stronger formal identity. In Figueira da Foz, the members of the CAG created the association “Ribaltambição” and are trying to grow and gain greater capacities and more projects. In the future, they can apply for projects and grants as associations, having a chance to sustain the group’s activities, even without ROMED2 support.

1.4 Lessons and recommendations

1.4.1 ROMED1

From an overall perspective, ROMED1 was a positive Programme in Portugal, adding new perspectives and more resources to the national initiatives, representing an evolution in terms of mediation concepts and capacities, despite the limited results for the hiring of mediators in the municipalities. Some of the lessons from ROMED1 that can be used in future applications in the country include:

- ***Better and more permanent monitoring and mentoring of the work of mediators during the process*** (on-the-job training), giving more advice and support to the mediators on the ground, but also reinforcing the connection and the capacities of the municipal team at the technical level. ROMED1 became considerably distant from what was happening at the local level and mediators often felt unsupported, sometimes in municipalities with little interest in effective mediation.

- **More formal commitment on behalf of municipalities** - also considering the hiring of the mediators, granting them stability to perform their tasks, on fair contracts.
- **Greater investment in the Programme's communication and partnerships** – a stronger effort in communication to promote the Programme, the role of mediation and the results achieved over time, would create greater political and social awareness. Partnerships with other institutions could also be important in generating new synergies and wider ownership of the Programme.
- **Programme innovation and international training** – it would be interesting to provide training modules abroad so that mediators could learn about the reality in different countries. A kind of "Roma Erasmus for Mediators" would be an interesting innovation for the Programme.

1.4.2 ROMED2

ROMED2 as a bottom-up participatory Programme has a relevant and encouraging impact on the empowerment of the Roma communities involved, representing an evolution in terms of inclusion processes and local democracy. There is a high level of satisfaction and recognition from the perspective of the municipalities and they would consider the continuity of the initiatives, even with changes and improvements, in order to gain more impact, efficiency and sustainability. There is an incremental recognition of the role of the CAGs, some small victories are achieved and in general there are steady communication channels with the municipalities. Facilitators are well known and recognised for their work, gaining credibility and support, but with uncertain and unstable contractual relationships which impact the motivation of the facilitator and consequently the group dynamic.

In terms of future recommendations for the Programme, there are five dimensions to be addressed:

- **To maintain or to renew the ROMED2 support to the municipalities already involved**, giving more time and conditions to allow the CAGs to gain more maturity and sustainability.
- **To enlarge the number of municipalities involved** taking into consideration the capacities and the resources allocated to the National Support Team, granting them conditions for adequate operational support. The Programme achieves a relevant level of visibility and several other municipalities might be interested, allowing the creation of a ROMED network of municipalities.
- **To ensure the hiring of the facilitator in each participating municipality in order to grant stability and sustainability for the CAG's working dynamic.** In some cases, the municipalities have difficulties in hiring mediators and/or facilitators due to poor formal education levels. In other situations, there are budget limitations. It would be important to identify solutions (such as a ROMED incentive or a ROMED mandatory rule) to avoid unclear situations regarding the role and conditions of the facilitators.
- **To consider the formal transition of CAGs into local Roma NGOs** and to design incentives which enable them to apply and to look for solutions for their projects.

To innovate in terms of participatory instruments - for example, a national participatory forum could be promoted annually, bringing the members of several CAGs to a location in order to share and to discuss perspectives about the Programme. The Local Agenda 21 framework and the diversity of processes conducted can be used for inspiration.