



Discrimination of Roma Communities

Portugal National Report

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Foreword

The Project *Net-Kard: Cooperation and Networking between Key Actors against Roma Discrimination* has as main aim prevent discrimination of the Roma community and to improve the assistance to victims by promoting cooperation and networking among key agents involved in the defence of the right to equality and by improving and transferring the already existing body of methodological experience in this connection to the different countries taking part in the project.

This project falls within the *Fundamental Rights and Citizenship Programme of the European Union* and involves the following partners: Fundación Secretariado Gitano (lead partner), Portuguese European Anti Poverty Network (EAPN Portugal); Alto Comissariado Para a Imigração e Diálogo Intercultural, I.P. (ACIDI, I.P.), Centrul de Resourse Juridice, Fundatia Secretariatul Romilor and Ufficio Nazionale Antidiscriminazioni Razziali.

The present report consists of a look into the situation of discrimination of the Roma communities in Portugal. Taking in consideration that the knowledge around this group is still scarce or in some cases not very deep, this reflection can be seen as an added value to improve this knowledge, but also to improve the debate about this group and on the social intervention that is developed.

In a first moment is presented a description of the context of the Roma community in Portugal in order to get a picture reliable as possible about this group. In a second moment is identified and described all the national legislation to combat discrimination and are presented some cases already solved.

In the third point are presented a set of information (reports, data, publications) on the situation of discrimination against Roma community. At this moment it was also developed a set of focus group with Roma people in order to debate this issue and gather directly their feelings and perspective about discrimination and gather some proposals to solve this problem.

In the end are identified all the public and private organisations that address discrimination against Roma community, as well as the type of work they develop.

National Partners:

EAPN Portugal

The European Anti-Poverty Network / Portugal is a network of groups (associations) and individuals whose main purpose is to fight poverty and social exclusion. EAPN Portugal has been established, in 1991, as a non-governmental organization, which privileges information, training and research as key areas of action.

Its mission is to contribute for the construction of a more just and fair society, in which all the citizens are co-responsible for a dignify life, based on the respect of Human Rights and a informed, participated and inclusive citizenship.

In 2010 EAPN Portugal was awarded with the *Human Rights Price* by the National Parliament.

In the development of its work, EAPN Portugal works to achieve the following objectives:

- Establish/encourage an interaction (network) between grassroots organizations, groups or individuals who work to poverty and social exclusion eradication;
- Contribute to the definition and implementation of social action programs and policies;
- Promote and enhance the effectiveness of policies to combat poverty and social exclusion;
- Promote and encourage innovative actions in order to fight poverty and social exclusion;
- Lobby for and with the most vulnerable groups or individuals;
- Promote social integration and cultural, economic, moral and physical development of those who experience poverty and social exclusion.
- Act, through projects and different actions, to promote equal opportunities for all.

In terms of Roma communities EAPN Portugal has a vast experience on this matter and on working with this minority group. The activities developed are related to projects (national and transnational) on different subjects for the social inclusion of Roma communities; training and awareness raising events with Roma communities and with some specific groups such teachers, social professionals and even children.

The High Commission for Immigration and Intercultural Dialogue (ACIDI)

The *High Commission for Immigration and Intercultural Dialogue* (ACIDI) is a Public Institute that was established in May 2007, replacing the High Commission for Immigration and Ethnic Minorities. This replacement consolidated and reinforced the role of this body. The functioning and work of the High Commission demonstrates the firm objective and action to prevent and forbid every discriminatory act and to discourage every discriminatory practice. It also represents an active engagement in improving the living conditions of persons belonging to minorities and immigrants.

ACIDI's mission is to collaborate in the conception, implementation and evaluation of public policies, relevant for the integration of immigrants and ethnic minorities, namely the Roma people, as well as promoting dialogue between cultures, ethnicities and religious.

The Support Office for Roma Communities (GACI)

The *Support Office for Roma Communities* (GACI) was created by the ACIDI in 2007. This Office has structured its mission in three main guidelines: (i) the strengthening of intercultural dialogue, (ii) promotion of education, culture and citizenship and (iii) support for capacity-building. GACI also developed a set of activities towards the promotion and social integration of Roma in conjunction with responsible entities, which contemplates a mechanism to monitor the degree of integration of these communities, with a special emphasis on education, health, employment and housing.

Initially, the GACI began as a multidisciplinary technical team of non-Roma. However, over the years, efforts have been made to implement training initiatives and to increase awareness about active citizenship amongst social and educational agents and members of the Roma communities in the most sensitive areas. Therefore, the Office has set up a Working Group with 6 elements (three women and three men) belonging to Roma communities, experienced in mediation and working in joint projects, that, until 2008, have been cooperating as consultants / mediators of the GACI. This process has been the role model that inspired the creation of the Pilot Project for Municipal Mediators.

Commission for Equality and Against Racial Discrimination (CEARD)

The Portuguese law foresees an administrative complaints procedure for cases of racial discrimination, which is dealt with by the Commission for Equality and Against Racial Discrimination (CICDR) that works within the High Commission for Immigration and Intercultural Dialogue. The CEARD is a specialized body dealing with racial discrimination. It was formally created by Law n. 134/99, 28th August, but was set up in 2000.

This Commission is presided by the High Commissioner for Immigration and Intercultural Dialogue and includes representatives elected by the Parliament, Government' appointed, as well as representatives from the employers' associations, trade unions, immigrants associations, NGOs and civil society.

1 - The Roma population in Portugal

1.1- Demographic data

Although the recognition of all the vulnerable factors that characterised these communities, there is a lack of official figures and indicators concerning the total size of the Roma population in Portugal. In fact, data on Roma population is difficult to obtain, since there aren't studies aiming at collecting data on the number of Portuguese inhabitants belonging to Roma communities. Moreover, the Portuguese Constitution doesn't allow any collection and publication of data disaggregated by ethnicity, race or colour (even in the census), meaning that the state agencies have no means to carry out this data collecting.

It is obvious the lack of information on these communities especially concerning reliable quantitative data. This situation favours the lack of knowledge on their lifestyles making it difficult to build bridges and social links with the Roma population which has specific features and remains apart from the majority society. All of this makes it difficult to obtain accurate information on the number of Roma in Portugal.

Historically, the first reference to the presence of Roma communities in Portugal goes back to the 15th century. Currently, and although the high degree of uncertainty and imprecision, the estimated number vary between 40.000 and 60.000¹. However, the SOS Racismo, through a survey carried out with Municipal Councils and other authorities (2001) only came closer to a total number of 21.831. The same study found out that the Portuguese Roma communities are mostly sited close to the coast and near the border, with significant representation in Lisbon, concluding that 31% of the Roma people live in a vulnerable situation (mainly in districts such as Viana do Castelo, Castelo Branco, Coimbra an Évora).²

According to Alexandra Castro³, there are approximately 33.940 Roma⁴ in the Portuguese mainland territory and the Setúbal district is the one that concentrates the highest absolute

¹ According to the European Commission against Racism and Intolerance there are between 50 000 and 60 000 Roma people in Portugal. *Second Report on Portugal, European Commission Against Racisms and Intolerance, adopted in 20 March 2002*, Strasburgo, 4 November 2002, p.21

² "Sastipen ta li = Saúde e Liberdade, Ciganos – Números, abordagens e realidades", SOS Racismo, Lisbon, 2001, p.22

³ The survey has been carried out in the framework of a research project financed by the Science and Technology Foundation in 2006 – Ciganos, Territórios e Itinerância: Análise de um questionário enviado aos postos da Guarda Nacional Republicana. Alexandra Castro, *Ciganos, Territórios e Itinerância. Análise de um questionário enviado aos postos da Guarda nacional Republicana*, Texto policopiado, Produto do projeto "Ciganos e Territórios: mobilidade e sedentarização no contexto urbano português", Lisboa, CET, 2006.

⁴ In regard to these data we should take into account that 96 municipalities didn't make any information available. For this reason we cannot consider these figures as being exhaustive.

number (5895), followed by the districts of Lisbon (2854), Oporto (2665), Faro (2647), and Santarém (2245).

It can be said that all the data found are an approximate number to reality, as it was already mentioned, the Roma people are by law considered as Portuguese citizens that cannot in any circumstance, be distinctively identified in regard to the rest of the citizens.

1.2- Current situation

According to the ECRI (European Commission against Racism and Intolerance) Report for Portugal the issues related to racism and intolerance is achieving some progress. However, we still can see some discriminatory practices towards Roma communities.

In Portugal Roma population is one of the most vulnerable groups to poverty and social exclusion and is the target of multiple prejudices and stereotypes. Thus, it is important in any intervention or action to take into account the cultural economic and social specificities of these communities. The poor housing conditions, low professional and school qualifications and the uneasy access to the main goods and health care services, employment, education and training, among other needs, mark the daily life of these communities where poverty tends to be persistent and to pass on from generation to generation. The current situation of the Portuguese Roma population can be summarised in the following items:

- **Education**

In Portugal, as in other European countries as well, Roma children have a high failure and dropout rate and have integration problem in the mainstream schools.

On the one hand, the pedagogical method, character and function of the mainstream schools are mainly adapted for the mainstream society. The school is the second socializing ambient, and after the family the first medium where the child get that knowledge or - following Bourdieu - the cultural capital, which helps to advance in the future; or have the first failure experiences, which can contribute to the further education dropout. So the school has an important role in the social mobility and social reproduction, which in the case of disadvantaged communities - because of their socio-economic and socio-cultural characteristics - reproduces even more difficulties in integration and academic success. It is very important to see these obstacles, and highlight the importance of the intercultural/alternative teaching methods for these pupils. Although in Portugal there are and there were several positive initiatives and projects⁵ in this area, the focus on teacher training for intercultural dialogue should be reinforced and continue.

⁵ Examples: Project *Educação Intercultural* developed by Entreculturas in the 90's; Project Nómada developed by ICE (Institute of Educational Communities) coordinated by Mirna Montenegro.

On the other hand, the Roma culture itself leads to isolation and resistance towards the school community at least for two reasons. First, due to the different habits (for example the different time schedule the school and the families), traditions, customs and cultural norms which do not facilitate to attend the school, especially in the case of female children. On the second place, the school do not have a considerate value in the Roma communities, as the social mobility is interpreted inside the community.

All of these facts generate big difficulties and low motivation to reach achievement, which is also an important obstacle for the school integration and increase discriminatory behaviours inside the class.

- **Employment**

In relation to employment there are some clear signals of the need and the emergency to adapt to the present and near future demands of the labour market, as well as to the reinforcement of acquired skills which should not be disregarded⁶ through vocational training.

We find communities who still live of the so called “traditional” activities and a minority that is moving into the mainstream labour market, leaving behind some of their traditional trades. The majority still lives from the market trading (known as street trading). This has various reasons: some members of Roma communities like what they do, mainly because of the aspects that characterised this activity and others because it is the only activity that they have access to due to the fact of their low school qualifications and, historically, it is an activity that corresponded to a certain way of nomadism normally associated to this ethnic minority.

Nevertheless, among the youngest generations, there is a rising will to have access to new professional areas and to a real integration in the labour market, only possible through incentives that let them obtain educational and professional skills, promoting this way the equality of opportunities.

There are in place several measures which deserve to be adjusted to these groups’ needs, in what comes to the knowledge acquisition, as well as the effective support which able them to generate the needed conditions to accede to new professional options.

Having in mind that there are, in fact, discriminatory behaviours among employers when it comes to Roma work appliances, we must also consider that a qualified applicant whether it is Roma or not it has more tools to compete in the labour market.

⁶ As we can see in the study *“O Jovem cigano e a formação - atitudes e perspectivas frente ao mundo do trabalho”*, published by the Secretariado Diocesano de Lisboa da Obra Nacional para a Pastoral dos Ciganos (December 1999)

- **Housing**

Although, many Roma families live in urban contexts in social/municipal quarters for social disadvantaged people, some Roma communities still live in poor housing conditions and sub-standard housing which worsen their social exclusion situation. According to available data⁷, 16%*⁸ of the Portuguese Roma live in precarious housing, most of them living in rural areas, facing several problems namely the lack of potable water for domestic use, the non-existence of a proper sewerage system, etc. In fact, there is still Roma people living in “Roma settlements”, in geographical segregated places or even located near dump sites or industrial areas in the cities’ outskirts. These situations may originate environmental and public health problems on one side, but also produce strong prejudices and stereotypes that tend to pose difficulties in the access to rights and services and, therefore maintain them in vulnerability and exclusion.

There are some good practices though, promoted mainly by municipalities and some of them in partnership with civil society organizations, that show us the importance of addressing the housing issues in an integrated way, which means addressing at the same time issues like education, employment, health, others, in order to minimize the negative factors that affect Roma communities.

- **Religion**

The evangelical churches, popularly referred by the Roma communities as “worship” have recently grown in importance within the Roma community and have become as an alternative in terms of group support and conflict resolution. In what concerns to health, these churches constitute a protection factor for the Roma population as they promote norms and behaviours related with taking care of personal health. Noteworthy examples are the rehabilitation and assistance in the treatment of drug dependency of the efforts made to keep Roma women out of tobacco and alcohol consumption.

- **Justice**

Due to its standardized operation, the justice system has difficulties in reaching these minority ethnic groups and between one and another there are wrong perceptions that increase mutual distrust⁹. Roma communities have their own cultural specificities that have to be respected. However, there must be a “pedagogy of law observance” so the Law is abide by all, respecting and preserving at the same time the rights of ethnic minorities. On the other hand, there are

⁷ These data come mostly from small studies and local diagnosis carried out in the framework of national and European projects and promoted by non governmental organizations.

⁸ Alexandra Castro, (2007) quoted in the “Report of the auditions about Portuguese Roma” of the Parliamentary Commission on Ethics, Society and Culture, 2009.

⁹ Parliamentary Commission on Ethics, Society and Culture, *op. cit.*, 2009, pp. 44/45.

some ethnic characteristics endorsed to the Roma population who, in most cases, are only related with the precariousness and social exclusion situations they live in.

- **Health**

Portuguese national health system is mainly free and accessible for all Portuguese citizens, nevertheless Roma communities search it not so often than would be necessary. Taking in consideration the study¹⁰ developed by EAPN Portugal in 2009 about Health status of the Roma community it can be underlined that deficient education, inadequate housing and exclusion from the labour market are important factors that influence the well-being and the quality of life of Roma populations. In this sense, and bearing in mind the indicators¹¹ scientifically set to identify health inequalities, it is obvious that the Roma community' health status is poor when compared to the majority Portuguese population. Summing up, we can point out five elements that stand out of this diagnosis:

- Roma Communities experience poverty and social exclusion that affect their health status. The diseases of the respiratory system have a high incidence amongst Roma communities because there is a close relationship between these and poor housing conditions. In this sense it is necessary to invest in an intervention at the previous¹² conditions level, so interventions will achieve the desirable success in the health area;
- Lack of preventive practices, basically in areas such as family planning, gynaecological illnesses, dental health, etc. Roma communities conceive health as the absence of disease, therefore, they only use health services in the presence of very dramatic symptoms and incapacitating consequences thus making it difficult to approach the concept of prevention;
- Lack of health education in order to modify behaviours and attitudes. Among Roma, there are predetermined ideas as regards to body, illness, health and sexuality. This situation could be related to the rooting of cultural customs and traditional habits which make difficult to change behaviours;
- Absence of healthy lifestyles, as for example in the field of nutrition (inadequate food consumption, unbalanced nutrition) and of the lack of regular physical activity which is reflected in the high percentage of individuals that are overweight and/or at risk of obesity. Thus, it is important to carry out training sessions on health education. These must be a

¹⁰ Maria José Vicente, *As Comunidades Ciganas e a Saúde: um primeiro retrato nacional*, Porto, REAPN, 2009. This report was developed at national level within the scope of the Project Health and the Roma Community: analysis of the situation in Europe (2007-2009) funded by the Public Health Programme (European Union).

¹¹ The indicators are as follows: mortality rate, morbidity rate, perceived health, health related behaviour, activity limitation and access to and use made of health-care services.

¹² The WHO defined in 1985 the previous health conditions such as peace preservation, adequate nutrition, sufficient housing conditions, participation in social life, etc.

process of information dissemination, to hold individuals' accountability in order to get the knowledge, habits and attitudes to contribute to health promotion and prevention.

Finally, it is worth to point out that there is a clear situation of inequality between the Roma population and the majority population. Therefore, in order to diminish the gap between Roma and non-Roma, in what comes to healthcare and access to health services, there is the need to promote awareness campaigns with the participation of health authorities and Roma communities, to promote the change of attitudes and behaviours among Roma into a more preventive-based health perception rather than an emergency-based one.

1.3 – Conclusions

Through this analysis we can see that these communities are exposed to severe poverty and social exclusion situations and many prejudices and stereotypes. Thus, any intervention or action targeting these communities has to consider their cultural, social and economic features, and it must, above all, identify the barriers to their social integration. These cover areas such as education, health, employment, justice and housing as well as cultural diversity. We cannot outline an efficient intervention strategy with the Roma population if we don't know before hand their *modus operandi*, their representations and perceptions in relation to their peer and to non Roma people, as well as the representations and the perceptions that the majority society (especially key social actors that work directly with these communities in areas like health, employment, education and social assistance) has about the Roma population.

2 – Legislation

The Portuguese Constitution embodies the principle of equality in Article 13 according to which “no one shall be privileged, favoured, prejudiced, deprived of any right or exempted from any duty on the basis of ancestry, sex, race, language, place of origin, religion, political or ideological beliefs, education, economic situation, social circumstances or sexual orientation”.

The Law n. 18/2004, 11th May (following the Racial Equality Directive 2000/43/EC – “Directive”), lays down a framework for combating discrimination on the grounds of racial or ethnic origin, with a view to putting into effect the principle of equal treatment.

Still regarding the Legal Framework:

a) Racial Discrimination is typified as a crime in the Portuguese Criminal Code. Article 240 states that whoever founds or sets up an organization, or develops activities of organized propaganda inciting or encouraging discrimination, hate or violence against a person or a group of persons on the grounds of their race; or takes part in such an organization or in its activities or gives support thereto – shall be punished by a prison term of 1 to 8 years.

Furthermore, according to article 246 of the Criminal Code, any person convicted for the offences established in article 240 may be temporarily deprived of his/her active and/or passive electoral capacity.

Also, in the cases of homicide and offences to physical integrity, the fact that the crime was committed on the grounds of racial hatred (including ethnical or national origin) is considered an aggravating circumstance implying more severe penalties. Racial motivation can also be taken into account when determining the measure of the penalty, as the court must consider, among other circumstances, the offence intentions revealed to the commission.

b) Apart from the Criminal procedure, allegations of racial discrimination can also be the basis of an administrative procedure. Administrative complaints of racial discrimination can be made by anyone against any public authority, service or individual person to the Commission for Equality and Against Racial Discrimination. The final decision may include the imposition of a fine that can go up to 5 minimum wages for individuals, and 10 minimum wages for public or private companies.

The main constraint faced by this process has been the difficulty to establish, in some situations, which is the competent Inspection authority to instruct the case.

c) Concerning work and access to work, both direct and indirect discrimination based on such grounds as race or ethnic origin, descent, genetic heritage, nationality and territory of origin, are prohibited also. The burden of proof of non discrimination lies with the employer that reverses the ordinary principles of Portuguese procedural law. Breach of these provisions constitutes a very serious misdemeanour and entitles the victim to compensation for patrimonial and non

patrimonial damages. Convictions can be published. Victims of discrimination, including harassment, are entitled to compensation.

The Authority for the Conditions of Work is responsible for analysing all complaints received concerning alleged cases of racial discrimination in employment or in access to employment.

d) There is always also the possibility of submitting complaints to the Portuguese Ombudsman, our NHRI.

3 - The discrimination against the Roma Community: Data and local Focus Group

Roma communities, as mentioned in the previous chapter, are one of the most ancient and vast minority living in Portugal. It's also one of the groups living in the most extreme poverty and social exclusion conditions. This situation, as well as their specific cultural and living practices always compared to the majority society and in contrast to it, led to the development of stereotypes and several conflict situations between them.

The conflict on these communities often arises from the generalization of their behaviours, particularly of negative behaviours. Maria Manuela Mendes¹³ quotes A. Memmi on this issue, since this author states that "racism has primarily an extensive nature, generalization is implicit, as well as the trend towards absolutism. The individual stops to be a person with their own individuality to be consider only as a member of a social group". In this idea is clearly presented some of the statements used to describe Roma communities – some of which referred also by Roma members in the focus group – and referring to the fact that these communities are involved with illegal activities, they are dangerous and problematic.

The author continues with his explanation referring that these kinds of generalizations are *unlimited in time*. The stereotypes resulting from the way that the majority society looks at Roma stays permanent in time and *increases the distance* between these groups: "these persons are perceived as human beings who do not adjust to social norms that everyone should have as normal".

In a different study developed also by Maria Manuela Mendes, she introduced a concept that has a strong connection with Roma communities. This concept is described as *institutional racism* (racismo institucional) that is related to *social practices* that reflect the *brand of racism*. These are "practices that assume diffuse outlines, barely visible, banal, subtle, covert; therefore, such practices are often undervalued and not recognized by the victims themselves, because they see it as socially legitimate"¹⁴. This way the author identifies a set of social spaces which the functioning leads to situations of institutional racism. Some of these sectors were already described in the 1st chapter but it's interesting to understand how some groups interact with Roma communities in these spaces and how these communities understand these behaviours towards them. It's also interesting to see how these social practices contribute for the social inclusion of Roma communities.

¹³ Maria Manuela Mendes, "Etnicidade cigana, exclusão social e racismos". *Sociologia n° 8*, Porto, FLUP, 1998, p. 236.

¹⁴ Maria Manuela Mendes, "Representações sociais face a práticas de discriminação: ciganos e imigrantes russos e ucranianos na AML", in *Actas do VI Congresso Português de Sociologia*, Lisboa, APS, 2008, p.3.

In the interviews developed by Maria M. Mendes she realized that in terms of the labour market Roma workers are usually rejected. According to them discrimination occurs in a 1st moment in the recruitment phase and when someone gets the job, usually he/she had to hide his/her ethnic origin. Of course rejection is always subtle because it is not referred to ethnic origin, but other excuses are used such as the fact that the vacancy has already been filled. However the author identifies a set of other barriers that explains the difficult access of these communities to the labour market and these are related to the low skills and low education level of this group.

Another sector is related to the integration of Roma children in school. According to the author the prejudices normally occur within the school environment and with the educational community. Roma children “carry” with themselves some stigmas usually related to poor hygiene and conflict that block all the learning process.

If on one hand there is a lot of work to do in terms of Roma communities accessing school, namely in what concerns the permanence of Roma girls at school, on the other hand there is an awareness raising work that must be done among the school environment. The interviews developed also allowed to highlight the existence of stereotypes between teachers and Roma families. For the interviewees remains the idea that “parents are considered as being hostile to school, [while] the operative codes and the language used by teachers and other staff seem to them as distant and incomprehensible”¹⁵.

In what concerns the housing sector it is highlighted the lack of adjustment of the housing policies to the needs of Roma communities which in some cases leads to situations where Roma communities have to live together or near other ethnic groups with “social and culture practices” quite different. According to these groups there is a tendency to “push” Roma communities to areas that no one wants to live in and that is often connoted in a negative way, therefore contributing to the strengthening of the negative social image related to these groups. For the interviewed this is clearly a way of discrimination that contributes for a deeper polarisation between Roma people and the majority society. Even here prejudices related to Roma communities extend to the place they live, i.e., there is a tendency to associate the alleged violent character of the Roma communities to its own spaces, which are seen as areas with bad reputation, dirty and conflicting. In this sense, these groups report the difficulty that they have when they want to rent a house as they feel discriminated because nobody wants to have as a tenant a Roma person. The only way to overcome this situation is to find mediators who undertake the renting contract and/or by hiding their identity.

One last sector analysed was related to the law forces. The relationships between the Roma communities and the police, in general, have always been surrounded by conflict. According to the author it seems to be *a kind of hostility almost natural* between these two groups. For Roma communities, the police is one of the groups that reproduces the most negative stereotypes attributed to these communities. In this sense the *Roma are always guilty, thieves, criminals, do*

¹⁵ Maria Manuela Mendes, *op. Cit.*, 2008, p.9.

damage, i. e., are a kind of parasites that colonize society. This kind of hostility spreads to their own housing and labour environments, always surrounded by suspicion and contributing for a negative image of each other.

The study developed by Maria Manuela Mendes gives a close look into the forms of discrimination towards Roma communities and the areas and groups that usually show more stereotypes of this minority.

Local Focus Group

In order to get a first and direct look and a deeper knowledge of discriminatory situations (contexts, emotions, stakeholders, and so on.) based on the experiences of Roma communities themselves, EAPN Portugal developed 2 focus groups in the cities of Beja (8th April) and Aveiro (16th April). Both focus groups were attended by 24 persons belonging to this minority and they were a moment to reflect on a set of questions:

- How do you think the majority society sees Roma?
- Do you think that the majority society has the sufficient knowledge about Roma communities? What can be done to provide that knowledge?
- What is for you to be discriminated?
- In general do you think that Roma people are discriminated? What are the main areas of discrimination? Why does this happen and who are the main responsible for these situations?
- Any of the participants ever felt discriminated? In what situations this happened and why?
- As a victim of discrimination what do you think that needs to be done to deal with this problem?
- Do you know where and to whom you can access in the case of discrimination? What are the main laws and structures?
- What can be done to avoid/prevent situations of discrimination? What would be the main laws and proposals to help Roma communities to overcome these situations?

Since the questions were the same in the 2 focus groups the conclusions will be presented together.

One of the first comments that can be made is related to the similarity of the responses in each one of the groups, and also with the results of the research presented before¹⁶.

¹⁶ It's important to highlight that the aim of this chapter is not to compare or update the research developed by Maria Manuela Mendes, because the data collected are the results of these 2 focus groups and not of a scientific research. However the conclusions and the observations about discrimination of Roma

Although we are talking about two communities that are territorially distant (one in the north and the other in the south) it was possible to realize that the situations of discrimination that Roma communities face and the way they deal with them are quite similar.



Beja, 8 April

According to the participants the majority society has a discriminatory behaviour towards Roma communities. In Aveiro the focus group said that the majority society doesn't have enough knowledge about this group, but also don't want to have it. Although the

meeting of Beja has been referred that this knowledge exists, the main perception is that society has a clear negative image, and deficient, of this minority and its culture. The use of terms such as "bichos do mato", racism, thief and murderer arise to describe how this minority feels/thinks that the rest of society sees and perceives them. As mentioned by Maria Manuela Mendes, *generalization* of bad examples to all Roma community was also referred here and noticed: "a gypsy¹⁷ sometimes does something wrong and then everyone pays equally. These ways of looking at Roma communities must have an end." Thinking about solutions to allow a greater knowledge of these communities was referred the organisation of leisure moments opened to the society in general¹⁸ in order to demonstrate that Roma people can be all together without conflict, that they have value and that it's important to promote the Roma community's participation.

The answers to the question "What is for you to be discriminated?" can be summarized in 2 words: be different and be apart. Being treated differently and be away from the community

communities presented in the study can be an added value for this report because it helps to qualify some of the information collected in the focus groups, since some of the answers are very similar to those obtained in the study.

¹⁷ We will use sometimes the term gipsy because the idea passed in both focus groups, where this term was used, was made in order to demonstrate the displeasure that these communities feel that society has of them.

¹⁸ This proposal was presented in Beja because the focus group was part of a major event to celebrate The Roma Day. This event had a Photo exhibition, music and dance shows, tradition Roma gastronomy. Since it has been quite participated by non-Roma it was perceived as a good practice that should be repeated at other levels and in other moments.

were presented during the two sessions when it was described the different situations where discrimination usually takes place.

Firstly the participants mentioned that Roma are discriminated in the labour market: "it is not the Roma that don't want to work. There is no work to give to Roma people". Following what was previously mentioned, the situations of discrimination occur right at the recruitment phase, "they usually say that the job is already filled." In the same sense, they realize that there is a suspicion and a fear towards this minority: "who is going to put a gypsy in front of a cash register? Nobody, because they think they will be stolen".

Maria Manuela Mendes said in her study that discrimination in the labour market is something *difficult to prove*, because nobody will say clearly that does not recruit a person for being Roma. However in the participants' experiences there were some cases in which this form of discrimination was visible: "he said to my husband, are you not Moroccan? And he said nothing, but he always continued to insist. Are you not Moroccan? Just because he has dark skin. After, my husband finally said that he was gypsy and the other ended by saying he had no work for him".



Aveiro, 16 April

Other situations have been described in relation to the access to housing. Again this area arises as essential for the social integration of Roma communities and is perceived by them as a key focus of discrimination. All participants mentioned the difficulty they have in

renting a house. It should be noted that in both focus groups participated people living in situations of vulnerable housing.

The Beja group lives in a Roma neighbourhood and the Aveiro group lives in a Roma Settlement, next to a dumpster. Even here was also referred the importance of having a mediator or have some acquaintance with the person who has a house to rent to get access to the different type of housing: "[measures] are more favourable for foreigners than for Roma." "It is very difficult to rent a house. The cases in which this happens are only possible with the help of intermediaries or when we know the person". It was reported a case where after successfully renting the house, the landlord, after a while, asked the tenant to explain how he could afford

the rent. As the person thought that he did not have to give that kind of explanation, the contract was terminated.

Participants generally said that the way government and society understand how Roma should live is wrong and inadequate. Roma communities are usually placed to live all together and this is perceived as a source of potential conflicts that only contributes to increase the bad image of Roma: "Roma do not want to live together. We want to be integrated into the urban area". For these participants this is a good strategy to facilitate the integration of Roma population and a greater acceptance of these people into the society.

Another focus of discrimination is related to the access to certain goods and services. In both meetings it was identified the problems they have to rent a space / room to make a party or a wedding. The answer is always no, and in the case of Beja participants the answer is positive only if they rent the space outside the city. It was also mentioned the difficulty in access to entertainment spaces such as nightclubs, bars, etc. Even here it's necessary to know the body guards or someone who works in the club in order to facilitate the access to these spaces.

Access to grocery stores was also indicated as moments in which discrimination is visible and is materialized in forms of harassment by security during shopping. This situation has already led to moments of conflict and discussion. Here it was introduced a new point in the debate, the gender dimension. Generally women feel they are more discriminated than men. This is mainly due, and according to their own perceptions, to their costumes (long skirt) and look (hair tied in ponytail or bun). The clothes represent, in some situations, reasons that lead to discrimination. This is visible in the grocery stores, because there are details that draw the attention of the security guards: "I went shopping and the security told me that I had to take off the apron. I'd take the apron? I had in it money and gold. And I answered him: Do you take the responsibility for what I have here? And then he let me go". These ways of dressing are also perceived by them as forms to increase the distance between them and the 'others'. For this reason when they have to deal with a more sensitive subject they choose the person/their representative taking into account if he/she looks more or less Roma: "I sometimes tell him: do not go because you look like a gypsy".

Another ground of discrimination is related to the police/law enforcements. On one hand they feel that the police has also a bad image of this ethnic minority and so they gave examples in which they feel persecuted by the police, namely GNR¹⁹. On the other hand, this relation of conflict between one group and another is a barrier for presenting complaints. There is a disbelief regarding the role of the police whenever they try to make a formal complaint. While some state that is a waste of time to make a written complain, others argue that everything remains unresolved when they have no proofs to present and therefore they don't receive the answer they needed from these structures.

¹⁹ Republican National Guard

The areas of discrimination are, as we can see, multiple and the responsibilities usually fall on the bad image that society has of this minority and on the scarce knowledge we have of it. In any case it was stated that Roma themselves should assume part on this responsibility, since quite frequently they don't know how to react to situations affecting them. Sometimes they react badly and by doing this they contribute to increase the bad image of Roma within society and to maintain and perpetuate discrimination.

In terms of proposals to prevent and deal with situations of discrimination were identified the following:

- Improve the knowledge of the structures / services where it's possible to present complains and solve discrimination cases. In both focus groups, participants showed to ignore the existence of these services and, in this sense, they have indicated that these services should be brought to the attention to the Roma community.
- Increase the knowledge of the culture and life style of the Roma communities in order to achieve a higher equality within the society.
- Disseminate good examples on the integration of Roma communities in order to raise awareness throughout society for this work and to raise awareness within the Roma communities for the importance of be open to changes and that this is possible without losing their culture.
- Outline measures to protect Roma from discrimination in the access to certain areas: employment, housing, health, education and leisure.
- Promote access to higher information on opportunities for the inclusion of Roma communities, such as self-employment.
- Promote a higher approach between certain local structures, as Parishes and Roma communities in order to get a better/closer answer to their needs.
- Promote opportunities for the participation of Roma communities and other entertainment events open to the entire society.

4 - Public and Private Organisations that address discrimination against the Roma community

Organisation Name:

SOS Racismo

Legal Status:

Non-profit association

Intervention area:

Education

Legal work

Public position

Participation in forums, conferences, Information campaigns

Documentation centre

Community intervention

Services and Projects developed in the area:

Project "Interligar" (4th generation of Programa Escolhas)

Actions in Schools, discussion forums about different themes (immigration, racism, human rights, discrimination, inequality, citizenship, etc)

"Valeur" Project (closed)

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Site: www.sosracismo.pt

Organisation Name:

Associação Olho Vivo – Associação para a Defesa do Património, Ambiente e Direitos Humanos

Legal Status:

Non-profit association

Intervention area:

- Cultural, historic and natural heritage.
- Environmental Education and Eco-citizenship
- Human Rights and Citizenship
- Vocational training

Services and Projects developed in the area:

- Project Meg@ctivo (Escolhas project) –a project for inclusion and combating absenteeism and school leaving aimed at young people aged between 11 and 25 years;
- Training certification;
- Social shop – a space which sells second hand items, at a symbolic prices, whose revenues accrue to the social support provided by the organisation to families in need;
- Project Casa dos Povos – Intercultural Centre – aims to contribute to the social integration of immigrant communities and the improvement their living conditions. This project is the result of an agreement between the Associação Olho Vivo and the ACIDI;
- Profession Integration Office - aims to support unemployed young people and adults in defining or developing their integration pathways or reintegration into the labour market in close cooperation with the Employment Centres;
- Local Support Centre to Immigrant Integration - is a welcoming, information and support centre for immigrants. It aims to answer to the problems and information needs of immigrant communities.
- Citizenship Support Office - is a local service aimed at different vulnerable groups, living in suburban areas (immigrants, ethnic minorities, unemployed, discriminated women and victims of domestic violence, young people looking for employment, etc.) who seek support for the achievement of their life goals or to solve their difficult and with no prospects lives.

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Organisation Name:

Amnistia Internacional Portugal

Legal Status:

Non-profit association

Intervention area:

- Human dignity
- Arms Control
- Discrimination
- Human rights
- Ending the death penalty
- End to violence against women
- Ending the female genital mutilation

Services and Projects developed in the area:

Campaigns and research

Public mobilization

Complaints receiving

Human Rights Education

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Site: www.amnistia-internacional.pt

Organisation Name:

UAVIDRE | The Support Unit for Migrant Victims and Victims and of Racial and Ethnical Discrimination. This body in turn is integrated into APAV - Portuguese Association for Victim Support.

Legal Status:

Non-profit organisation

Intervention area:

The Support Unit for Migrant Victims and Victims and of Racial and Ethnical Discrimination (Unidade de Apoio à Vítima Imigrante e de Discriminação Racial ou Étnica – UAVIDRE) is specialized in the support to immigrants who are victims of crime and persons who are victims of racial and ethnic discrimination. With the support of the High Commissioner for Immigration and Intercultural Dialogue (ACIDI) along with co-sponsorship from the European Foundation for the Integration of Nationals from Third Countries (FEINPT) UAVIDRE aims to answer the problems faced by this specific population segment, who is particularly vulnerable and an easy target of many types of crime and therefore lacking of expert victim support services. Some of the most common problems are sexual exploitation, labour exploitation, extortion or theft of documents, withholding of wages, threats, discrimination, among many others.

Areas of Intervention:

- Hate crimes;
- Racial or Ethnic Discrimination ;
- Human Trafficking;
- Female Genital Mutilation.

Services and Projects developed in the area:

UAVIDRE provides to victims of crime specialised support that focuses on the following areas:

- Emotional support
- Legal support (offering legal information, assisting with documentation of complaints, requesting legal aid by State, etc.)
- Psychological support
- Social support

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Site: http://apav.pt/apav_v2/index.php/pt/uavidre

Organisation Name:

Obra Nacional de Pastoral dos Ciganos and various secretariats

Legal Status:

Non-profit association

Intervention area:

- Training;
- Information;
- Support to associations of Roma Communities
- Etc.

Services and Projects developed in the area:

- Project Palavra - Training of Roma people to be evangelizers of other Roma people
- Project Dignidade - Influencing the State, local authorities and the authorities in general to end the housing of Roma in shacks, relocating them according to their culture;
- Journal A CARAVANA – aims to inform civil society in general about the Roma population, the features of their culture, the opportunities for social inclusion and the multiple expressions of exclusion;
- Support the association of Roma people to be themselves to ensure their development and defense of their rights;
- Work with all organisations and bodies that have initiatives aimed at the development of the Roma community in Portugal, namely by participating in conferences, seminars and cultural exhibitions, organized by them, among other activities;
- Assist the secretariats of the Pastoral dos Ciganos, contributing to initiatives and fostering the creation of secretariats in the dioceses where they do not exist.

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Site: www.ecclesia.pt/pnciganos

Organisation Name:

Cruz Vermelha Portuguesa – Portuguese Red Cross

Legal Status:

Non-profit association

Intervention area:

Social emergency

Seniors and dependent persons

Children

Training

Gender equality

Prevention of violence

Health care

Human development

Services and Projects developed in the area:

The delegations of the Red Cross have developed projects in this area under the Escolhas Programme developed by ACIDI that has as main objective the promotion of social inclusion of children and young people, including descendants of ethnic minorities, with a view to equal opportunities and strengthening social cohesion. Some of the projects are:

- *Agítana-te* – Ovar Delegation
- *Geração tecla* – Braga Delegation

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Site: <http://www.cruzvermelha.pt>

Organisation Name:

Caritas Portuguesa

Legal Status:

Non-profit association

Intervention area:

Training

Campaigns

Social Inclusion

Social emergency

Services and Projects developed in the area:

The delegations of Caritas Portuguesa have been developing projects in this area under the Escolhas Programme developed by ACIDI that has as main objective the promotion of social inclusion of children and young people, including descendants of ethnic minorities, with a view to equal opportunities and strengthening social cohesion. Some of the projects are:

- Escolhas Acertadas – Viseu
- EntreSendas – Aveiro

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Site: www.caritas.pt

Organisation Name:

Santa Casa de Misericórdia de Lisboa

Legal Status:

Legal body of private law and public administration

Intervention area:

Support of citizen

Social action

Health care

Education

Culture

Entrepreneurship and Cooperatives

Scientific and Applied Research Centre

Services and Projects developed in the area:

- Multicultural Training Centre – This project was originally designed for Roma communities where was also been integrated the Programme of Social Promotion for Roma Communities. However, this project was extended to other communities given the lack of responses from other institutions.

- Programme of Social Promotion for Roma Communities (Buraca) - People

In the very beginning of the eighties of the last century the Santa Casa da Misericórdia of Lisbon felt the need of creating a specific answer for the Roma community of Lisbon, seeing that her members looked regularly for their services, nonetheless they did not have a profound knowledge of the specificities of this ethnic group. The answer that the Santa Casa found was the Programme of Social Promotion for Roma Communities (PPSC) that has developed, during its existence, different work approaches in order to attend the expectations of this specific group. Activities developed by PPSC: professional training (carpentry, Dressmaking/ Modiste; Cooking) school; social intervention; and orders. Therefore, this program is aimed especially to young people aged between 12 and 18. The project aims to promote the integration of the Roma community through regular education.

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Organisation Name:

Numena - Centre for Research in Social and Human Sciences

Legal Status:

Non-profit research association

Intervention area:

Research
Publications

Services and Projects developed in the area:

Project "Ponte Margem" - Resource Center Anti-discrimination
Special Needs and Disability Training
Immigration Observatory Site
Portal RED - Combating racism and discrimination

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Tel./Fax.:+351 21 424 01 69
E-mail: direccao@numena.org.pt
Site: <http://www.numena.org.pt>

Organisation Name:

EAPN Portugal

Legal Status:

A EAPN Portugal/Rede Europeia Anti-Pobreza is a nationwide non governmental organisation which develops a multidimensional intervention in the fight against poverty and social exclusion since its creation in 1991.

Intervention area:

EAPN Portugal's mission is to contribute to build a more just and caring society, where all are jointly responsible in ensuring the citizens' access to a decent life based on the respect of the human rights and the full exercise of an informed, participative and inclusive citizenship. Therefore, the areas of intervention of the organization are: Research, Training, Information and Lobbying.

Services and Projects developed in the area:

- Awareness and information sessions on health and education aimed at the Roma communities;
- Training sessions targeted at Roma communities and social professionals from various areas of intervention;
- Creation of tools (documentaries, films and other materials) on Roma communities in order to

demystify the social representations that exist against these communities;

- Newsletter on Roma Communities (projects, actions, policies, among others, in Europe and Portugal) - *Ciganos.pt*;

- Publication of studies and other materials on this subject;

- Development of national and transnational projects on Roma communities in several areas, such as health, education and equal opportunities. Currently it is being developed the Project Romi (under POPH measure 7.3) that aims to contribute to the promotion of equal opportunities in Roma women, by promoting the exercise of an active citizenship by this population, as well as information and awareness raising of the local communities where they are located, on the specificities of the social and cultural reality in which these citizens live.

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Conclusion

The existing knowledge on Roma communities shows that they remain a minority group, very exposed to poverty, exclusion and discrimination. In general they live in poor housing, with low educational and professional qualifications and with limited access to most goods and services, health, employment, education and training. Consequently, the Roma communities face processes in which stereotypes, prejudices and discriminatory practices are developed. These processes are substantial barriers to inclusion in several areas of society, including education, housing, health, employment, access to justice, to goods and services from public and private organisations. This discrimination is a vicious cycle that is self-perpetuated and reinforces exclusion in its various forms. In the first instance, this exclusion means the denial of access to the main "tools" essential to inclusion.

Therefore, Roma Communities are victims of discrimination that affect their social and economic integration. This is because, in general, there is still a lack of knowledge of cultural traditions, habits, codes of conduct of Roma communities, making the inclusion of these communities in society in general very difficult.

Roma communities face difficulties in social integration that need an effective, coordinated and integrated intervention through the promotion of a set of actions to combat the multiple discriminations that this group has experienced over time. The inclusion of Roma communities should be seen as a shared responsibility and addressed in a systemic perspective, involving all the stakeholders (political, social professionals, Roma communities and associations). These actions are crucial and fundamental if we really want to have a society that accepts and respects the differences, an intercultural and multicultural society, a more just and inclusive society.

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