**MtM portfolio review – April 2014**

**Selected portfolio: Advocacy in the EU, CEE and SEE**

**Background and assessment**

The document contains

1. a description of the wider policy environment and positioning of MtM,
2. a summary analysis of MtM’s advocacy portfolio, and
3. a detailed analysis of advocacy actions.

The latter covers the five groups of actions as included in the List of Items document (with identical numbering).

**1. The wider policy environment and positioning OF MtM**

**MtM’s mission is predicated on three interconnected convictions:**

1. The European Structural Funds are the main sources for social and economic development in CEE and the IPA Funds offer significant resources for SEE governments.[[1]](#footnote-1) Equally importantly, these funds appear as suitable instruments to press national governments to accept certain **norm setting policy tasks**, such as Roma inclusion targeting human, infrastructure, and economic development. This norm setting potential can be and should be taken advantage by non-governmental organizations, in particular the ones with human rights and social justice agendas. This potential shall not be overlooked by a need for maintaining critical position towards the EU’s bureaucratic and top-down practices and impacts. Engagement with and critical position towards European government structures can be pursued by OSF programs through wise coordination.

2. European societies have significant **state structures** and public institutions due to historical factors and their conjunctions. Even new forms of governance inspired by new public management concepts and neo-liberal paradigms leave major rooms for state regulations, interventions, and services in different domains of life. European states act as major redistributive agencies even at times of economic crisis. Therefore, noble political goals that require the transformation of the rules of the game and power sharing in society cannot be pursued without meaningful **engagement with state** **actors**, most importantly with governments.

3. To pursue key OSF objectives, such as the promotion of social inclusion, **local societal structures and policy domains** shall be addressed. The conditions of local policy development are tied to central state capacities and policies, and conversely, broader domestic policy goals, such as Roma inclusion, can only be implemented by substantial participation of municipal and community actors. The understanding of the local politics of development is also key to pursuing domestic and European advocacy goals. Brave, innovative, but even pragmatic local developments which promote social inclusions may have important demonstration effects for national governments and EU policy makers.

**MtM’s mission is understood as follows:**

- Help to further advance a policy language that combines developmental rationale with human rights objectives and principles; lace OSF experiences, insights, and outreach potentials in larger emerging policy coalition in Europe (and beyond)

- Contribute to smart and efficient use of EU Funds for social inclusion, within that for Roma inclusion; to refine capacities for crafting sharp policy diagnoses, devise smart policy actions to transform Roma and non-Roma social relations; to nurture the culture of equality mainstreaming

- Further experiment on the models of participation in policy making by non-governmental and experts group in equality matters; empower civil society groups in agenda setting, facilitating knowledge transfer, and monitoring governmental policies. Parallel to this, upgrade the knowledge of governments in building infrastructure for participation and handling benevolently the constituency’s voice, claims, and commentary.

- Continue to reflect upon local intervention as well as European policy debates and policy actions in order to shape the often stubborn structures of member states’ policy making and policy processes.

**Challenges and recent unfavorable changes in the wider political and policy environment:**

- As Europe navigates through an economic and political crisis, in which social inclusion, within that Roma inclusion, can take a back seat or be rendered secondary against sovereign debt, stability, and economic growth problems.

- The ambiguity or perceived weakening of the policies and public support for multicultural social cohesion and inclusion across Europe may foster further shifting to assimilation, securitization, or legitimized marginalization of ethnic /linguistic/religious diversity in several polities.

- Soft policy mechanisms in the EU offer a wide space for member states to prove commitment to pursuing growth and equality/equal opportunity for all in which it takes time and political courage to capture hypocrisy, non-action, and skewed allocation.

- Donors and technical assistance organizations are withdrawing from the middle income countries thus leaving a number of politically sensitive needs and long-term democracy investments at the mercy of the EU (and whoever remains).

- Equality issues understood on a particular ground/category are interconnected or intersecting with other ones; specialized knowledge and targeted policy action helps advancing in-depth expertise but creates some distance from other grounds (fragmentation of equality thinking). At times of economic crisis, vulnerable groups, and more importantly political forces referring to them, often compete with each other and deepen the divisions in society.

- A certain fatigue can be observed in European equality policy thinking and political commitments due to drawbacks in equality mainstreaming, welfare chauvinism, and increasing competition for shrinking resources.

**Potentials and recent favorable changes or continuities in the environment:**

- Europe still shares values and commitments to equality, human rights, minority protection, and participation, and most recently to fight against poverty and social exclusion as well.

- The EU continues to channel significant financial resources for development with procedural and substantive conditions. Furthermore, the planning and distribution mechanisms of the Funds can cut across electoral cycles and make longer term development interventions possible. [[2]](#footnote-2)

- The cohesion policy mechanisms that combine equality with growth show resilience to member states’ intention to use the European structural funds with loose conditions and for short term economic and political objectives.

- Europe is paying persistent attention to specific grounds of equality and growing sophistication in elaborating the policy methods of transformative interventions and equality mainstreaming. It is high time to tap the unused potentials of issue coalitions in policy agenda setting, in particular between policies addressing the integration of migrants (of all kinds, not only Roma) and the ones pursuing Roma inclusion in Europe.

- In spite of weakening trust in political institutions, Europe nurtures versatile civil societies, social movements, and citizens actions to shape public affairs (although the differences between the old and new MS is paramount in this respect) by traditional and unconventional methods.

- OSF has a highly acknowledged legacy, knowledge, and intervention potentials in Roma inclusion affairs (doors opening in Europe, at international organizations, etc.) which should be used as a springboard for actions and platform coalitions.

**2. MtM’s advocacy portfolio: summary analysis**

**Main domains, geographies, and target groups**

The program is active in two sub-regions of OSF’s ‘traditional region’. In CEE, governments have modest administrative capacities yet in most cases these are brought to a threshold level due to European accession process. The EU *acquis* requirements make certain policy norms and agendas mandatory yet in the multilevel governance structures national governments have major autonomy, including the planning of EU Funds. They have learnt to use their EU membership and connected resources for both progressive and dubious objectives. Civil society and independent expert voice have certain recognition, many times through the ‘boomerang effect’ of international advocacy coalitions. In SEE, governments are shaky and variably but are rather poorly capable policy actors. They directly depend on and are guided in many policy domains by EU Delegations, and other international organizations, technical assistance agencies. This region is divided along the differential status of states to the EU enlargement process (e.g. Croatia recently accessed, Macedonia and Serbia on the accession track). The main differences between the two sub-regions justify distinctive advocacy strategies by MtM.

Resonating with the composition of the field in the related sub-region, the CEE team has developed close ties to **EU bodies and senior officials in them**. These ties rely on mutual trust and recognition originating from previous and actively pursued professional encounters. The CEE team also mobilizes its differential access to national governments with numerous personal connections and overlapping professional networks. These insider allies serve as target audiences as well as ‘shadow advocates’, or in few cases Trojan horses. The SEE team is also developing professional relations with EU Delegations to SEE countries and important desk officers at DG Enlargement. Both the CEE and SEE teams nurture open approaches to **international development organizations** in spite of mixed experiences regarding these organizations’ cooperation potentials and incentives. In addition to MtM staff, board members, and the insider allies, both advocacy teams work with carefully selected and empowered **civil society advocacy partners** in each country concerned. The SEE team has invested the most in empowering and capacitating Roma CSOs to engage in EU accession discourses. See more on the selection of CSO partners below.

**Types of action according to patterns of policy change**

Our advocacy actions can be clustered in three major types of interventions based on the nature of policy change identified. First, advocacy actions **strategically exploit unique opportunities** in the political/policy environment that tend to emerge in a **predictable way**. A case in point is the new seven-year regulatory and planning cycle of the EU Structural Funds and the planning of the IPA funding. These opportunities are structured by forces outside of MtM remits, and both their immediate outcomes and long-term impacts are potentially high. Therefore, we believe, these opportunities shall not be missed. In these cases, the policy advocacy actions include the formulation of a policy position with inclusion specific agenda, offering implementation recommendations, finding key opinion makers and capable advocates, using formal and informal channels of communication, and in some cases preparing genuine products (position papers with concrete proposals, white papers, toolkits, briefs, etc.).

Second, possibilities for **incremental policy change** and **policy learning** are also a prevalent path for our advocacy actions. As these changes rarely go through linear processes, persistent attention should be paid to windows of opportunities, such as internal institutional realignments, newly appointed executives, or just accumulated fatigue of no action in a policy field. This path often emerges a follow-up to the first type of rare and large changes in the policy landscape. To take advantage of these windows, MtM advocacy teams and their national partners seek pro-active encounters with high and mid-level bureaucrats, offer services to develop missing policy capacities, and invite policy movers, in few cases champions, to experiment on policy developments. The housing development projects in CEE, the equality mainstreaming actions in CEE countries, and the promotion of the revision of NRISs in SEE are good examples. This path of policy change could be more efficiently facilitated if advocacy is combined with pilot projects of demonstration effects (e.g. generated by MtM support).

Third, **exceptional moments create unexpected policy openings** whenprevious policy tracks become discredited or significantly modified. In these cases, a quick reaction promoting ready-made agendas, knowledge, and tools for Roma inclusion interventions are needed. Credible and well positioned voice and expertise available in the short run is essential. For example, MtM team has acted upon a failure of an international project for setting the legal framework for legalizing Roma settlements in Serbia. The local Soros Foundation engaged MtM and a Roma CSO coalition to step in and help to elaborate proper legislative proposals. During the 2013 management and funding crisis in Romania, MtM assisted the managing authority responsible for European Social Fund. The assistance resulted in a progress in management which enabled the European Commission lifting the suspension of funds.

MtM has been able to respond to all three types of opportunities by various actions. The success rate of the distinctive interventions can be judged by the project specific information (section 3 in this document). It is obvious, however, that with a given budget and staff resources, actions can be more strategically planned in cluster one and two. Trade-off in terms of allocation of resources are grasped and considered from time to time. Nonetheless, balancing between the three types of actions in two regions may take place based on incomplete information which may reduce the maximum total benefit of the investment. Reflexive intelligence, internal brain storming, and occasional external advice are the main tools by which we contemplate on this puzzle.

**Capacities, network of ‘advocates’, tools**

Up until the end of last year, MtM had **seven senior staff members** with significant policy development, advocacy, and knowledge transfer capacities accumulated through ten-fifteen years of experience. The portfolio review items and the whole portfolio shall be viewed accordingly.

We lost three **senior staff members** by the beginning of the calendar year. In spite of this loss, MtM has four senior people with **complementary advocacy skills**: a director of a CEU research center and with 20 years of OSF engagement, a former director general of a public administration unit managing EU funds, a Roma activist who served as board member of RIO and serves as board member of REF, and a former acting director of ERRC. This capacity is enlarged by national partners (one or two partners in each country) that are coalitions of civil society actors of established CSOs. We have a network of mostly young, committed and energetic policy thinkers and doers who have already served as government officials, advisors, policy planners, but also supported civil society and independent think tanks. This network is growing step by step. We are confident that members of this network are outstanding equality thinkers with strategic advocacy mind. The network is maintained by professional visits, exchange of knowledge, and by grant giving. Grant giving is based on both one-time actions and strategic partnership contacts.

Our **network of ‘advocates’** is often identical with our PGF (project generation facility) partners but sometimes in different coalition arrangements. There are two outstanding challenges in this pattern for the core MtM staff. On the one hand, PGF activity outcomes can be more easily (although never fully) be identified and assessed than advocacy actions. Advocacy outcomes in terms of events, meetings, consultations, are measureable as opposed to agenda shift, frame alignment, strategic change. Second, for obvious reasons, national partners’ capacities are differently developed to advocacy actions. Some levelling of these capacities are necessary to which peer learning is used across these partners. But it is timely to consider if the learning by doing and peer learning is enough in this respect.

Reasons for including PGF partners in the network of advocates include that advocacy can pave the road for meaningful Structural Funds calls under which the generation of local projects can be most effective. In reverse, calls can be improved based on the field level experiences of project generation. Adding further partners to the network of advocates is legitimized by a consideration that the potentials of EU funds for promoting Roma inclusion are much wider than the calls for local projects: national schemes implemented by governmental bodies such as the national employment services often result in serious policy and societal impacts.

The advocacy action ‘item table’ highlights the repertoire of tools that MtM advocacy actions use. It is worth revealing one important lesson we learnt. To achieve persuasion among policy planners in national governments in both geographical regions, direct assistance (e.g. project generation support and PGF mechanism know-how) has proven to be conspicuously helpful. In other words, pioneer policy interventions with **demonstration effects** could efficiently support advocacy actions for larger policy change.

Another preferred path of actions that MtM has been experimenting on is addressing exclusion/inclusion issues that appear as the **hardest nuts to crack** on contemporary policy horizons. For example, employment is a field where the challenges for linking EU funding with legislation and institutional development is bigger, and results of interventions are more indirect (depending on trends of the economy and the labor market), compared to education or housing. However, the prolonged economic crisis puts pressure on policy makers to improve employment and income generation opportunities.

**Challenges**

1. There are obvious signs for that national governments can produce policy outputs that formally comply with European regulations and standards yet in the implementation they launch strategies and interventions that contradict to the principle of social inclusion. In CEE one can experience in particular that stubborn, obstructive, and hypocritical officials dominate the commanding heights in the authorities. These target audiences are the most difficult ones. By the same token, social exclusions could be pressing in these polities as much as they are elsewhere. Advocacy towards these actors raises important ethical, political and coordination questions that require internal coordination and reflections within OSF. In the pre-accession countries of SEE, it is relatively easier to establish direct cooperation with relevant governmental institutions, however, they have often weak capacities to implement policies.

2. There is vast experience on the limited advocacy capacities and weak positions of civil society in the ‘traditional’ region and on the enduring power gap between committed actors and decision makers in fragile democratic infrastructures. Roma organizations with substantial policy advocacy capacities are differently developed in the countries and it is rare that even the established ones have knowledge and skills that make them capable actors in participatory mechanisms of governance (as opposed to capacities to act as watchdogs). MtM advocacy actions wish to be exemplary in ensuring Roma participation in all major advocacy actions yet the opportunities for advocacy and the development of civil society capacity cannot follow the same timeline. There is much more to do in the field of trust building and cooperation between Roma and no-Roma CSOs to temporarily bridge this gap.

3. MtM advocacy actions often engage CSO actors who combine critical monitoring (close to watchdogging) and policy learning advocacy actions. Some of them can navigate through this combined field, but other ones experience major backlashes. It is to be on alert to this problem and trust the CSO actors to make the right tactical and strategic decisions. Nonetheless, we have to be prepared for remedial action if the backlash warrants to shift the balance. In some cases, we may have to give up MtM support for some organizations.

4. Against the daunting problem of slow progress in Roma inclusion, and the multiplicity of the stakeholders’ arena, MtM has limited resources. It adds to the problem that the dispersed and multi-layered impact mechanisms of advocacy actions can only be imperfectly understood. The portfolio review may show that even limited resources can deliver yet the puzzle of competition and multiplicity of legitimate advocacy action choices stay with us.

5. There are certain challenges generated by being an active policy advocacy agent addressing inclusion driven policy development related to the use of EU Funds. This seems to foster a perception that MtM is a simple machine to make the EU money flow to certain directions. This perception may remain blind to the broader equality mainstreaming mission and capacities of the program. Further, capacities of MtM may create appetite for direct technical assistance to governments who are interested in finding fast solutions to their failures.

**Forward looking considerations**

1. It is the first time that a seven-year budget period of the EU (2014-20) starts with Roma inclusion high on the European agenda. This creates opportunities for shaping EU funded programs and schemes, and using EU funds to support high impact structural reforms in education, employment, health, etc. favoring equal opportunities and Roma inclusion. MtM has created recognition for the whole OSF in this field with its advocacy, policy development, and innovative inclusion project generation activities. This can be further invested with reasonably high return.

2. The launching of the new seven-year budget period creates opportunities for advocating for using EU funds for co-financing and then fully financing some pioneer activities (such as project generation at least for better established NGOs and municipalities) sponsored by MtM at the moment. However, an interim period is needed to avoid that state involvement kills the credibility and effectiveness of these pioneer activities. It may happen that in some countries governments become more open to take over MtM activities than in other ones. Our forecast is that around two years of interim period is needed to have a clear picture on this. A smaller part of the activities (e.g. project generation for less established NGOs in areas where there are no well-established organizations willing and able to act for Roma inclusion) may justify longer involvement of OSF.

3. While there are strong efforts by the EU to ensure that member states deal with the governance challenges of Roma inclusion, current experiences show that cynical policy agendas and solutions often prevail. See the huge public works programs in Hungary and Slovakia that are said to help unemployed Roma but looking at the details they are designed to comfort middle class, or the Roma-led government agencies in Romania, Slovakia and Hungary that are powerless and corrupt but easy to blame for lack of results in Roma inclusion. Other governments in the CEE and SEE regions are far from being reasonably equipped to pursue Roma inclusion policies with and without EU funds. The assumption that the EU will deal with governance and OSF can focus on empowerment may pay a high price in Roma inclusion. This is an advocacy objective for MtM to pursue within the OSF network...

**3. Detailed analysis of advocacy actions**

**1. Using EU funds for housing**

This is a compact package of activities over 3 years which started to raise awareness on the legal and financial opportunities for investing by EU Funds in housing and de-segregation and thus motivate national and city governments to develop political will for inclusion interventions. The advocacy activities include a collection of field experiences, helping to develop a pilot call and pilot projects (the latter with advocacy linked project generation), and strengthening governmental commitment for investing in housing and de-segregation with site visits.

1. Assessment of the advocacy action: **success**

The quantitative target was that at least a few relevant countries launch pilot projects using European Regional Development Fund (ERDF) for housing from the 2007-13 budget (to be spent until 2015). An additional qualitative target was that de-segregation principle gets recognition.

The **quantitative target** has been met: a few pilot projects using ERDF have been launched, almost exclusively through projects with MtM support (this could not have happened without MtM, but some other key factors also mattered: see below). The **qualitative target** has also been achieved, however, with minor compromise: pilot projects include gradual approach to de-segregation.

The complex advocacy package included project generation elements for **feasibility demonstration** and good practice based persuasion. MtM invested for the package 0.5 million USD over 3 years. The amount of EU and other (Norway Grant) funds generated only in Pecs and Cluj-Napoca is already 4 million USD and is expected to be doubled or even tripled by approval of submitted projects soon. Equally importantly, the pilot interventions have proven that national and city governments took reasonable risk by using this policy tool and they have not lost their political/electoral support – at least in the short run.[[3]](#footnote-3)

2. Assessment of the quality of planning, adjustment, and reflection capacities of MtM

Factors of success include that MtM was able to mobilize **competent partners** to promote an inclusion driven policy tool with significant resources backing and exploited favorable opportunity structures. These two major factors allowed us in:

* defining an ambitious but realistic target (launching pilots);
* identifying committed decision makers at national and local level in Hungary, and local level in Romania;
* working together on the policy package with established professional partners and established relationship with them (Metropolitan Research Institute (MRI), UNDP, Maltese Charity Service (MCS)), and relying on their implementation assistance capacities in the field;
* selecting big cities that were open but lacked concrete commitment and know-how (Pecs, Cluj-Napoca) – big cities can have demonstration effect, although we must realize that their success cannot be replicated elsewhere easily; and
* mobilizing contacts in public administration (National Development Agency in Hungary, European Commission).

Adjustment was needed, e.g. when UNDP decided to exit the EU regions: MCS proved to be a good choice as it was able to take over UNDP's role smoothly. Interim critical assessment was needed several times, e.g. when some partners (UNDP, MCS, Pecs) were losing commitment to de-segregation: personal discussions and the site visit presenting the exemplary Spanish case helped. Some of the most progressive ideas had to be dropped. For example, Soros Foundation Romania tried to avoid eviction in Baia Mare with a pilot project but the mayor decided for eviction. This shows that even reasonably committed and capable executives may be unable to avoid that a mayor implements “inclusion alien” ideas based on ad-hoc political consideration.

3. Major lessons

* To **motivate governments** for launching policy innovations requires focused and consistent efforts over time. In this case, this embraced more than 3 years of MtM grant making and direct assistance to decision-makers and policy implementers.
* With careful selection, it is possible to achieve results in big cities that have great potentials of demonstration effects.
* Combination of advocacy and project generation may result in higher amounts of EU funds generated for social inclusion than project generation alone.
* **Feasibility evidence** helps various actors to break through the widespread feeling of “nothing can be done” for Roma inclusion in a confluence of massive unfavorable conditions.

**2. Shaping EU regulations on funds on the EU funds in 2014-20**

These are interlinked in-house activities with a common goal: making EU Funds regulations more supportive to inclusion by creating conditionalities and incentives for domestic policy makers.

1. Assessment of the advocacy action: **success with limited possibilities to assess the exact contribution effects of MtM (‘circumstantial evidence’)**

Critical assessments suggest that in the past period, EU funds may have contributed to increasing rather than decreasing inequalities within society in the member states (while decreasing inequalities between member states). The contribution of EU funds to inclusion was especially limited.

EU regulations for the next period adopted in December 2013 include a number of corrections compared to the previous period, enabling EU funds contribute to much more to inclusion, due to e.g. the following:

* higher amount has to be allocated on social inclusion, as well as for education and employment programs,
* inclusion is an explicit objective for education and employment programs too,
* EU funds are better linked to policies,
* specific attention needs to be paid to geographical areas of poverty and exclusion,
* entry thresholds will be lowered by simplification and capacity building services, etc.

All these ideas were articulated by MtM before the Commission prepared the first draft of the new EU regulations, and consistently promoted while the draft was negotiated by the Parliament and the Council. Still, it is impossible to exactly assess how much this is a success of MtM. What makes success uncertain is that the largest authority for using the EU funds remains with the national governments so it is to be seen how much they can formalize compliance with the EU regulations.

2. Assessment of the quality of planning, adjustment, and reflection capacities of MtM

Planning and carrying out the advocacy relied on MtM’s capacities for:

* gathering insightful proposals from the OSF network (REF, ECP, PHP were most active);
* formulating proposals for how inclusion policy target groups can be defined by broader vulnerability criteria (marginalized communities) rather than purely ethnic criteria (Roma);
* preparing concrete textual proposals with brief justification (tailored to desk officers’, EU policy makers’ styles of writing and reasoning);
* choosing partly public, partly personalized approach to directly targeting a small number of people with highest impact on the EU regulations: 3-4 policy champions in the Commission working on the first draft, and 3-4 MEPs (covering major political groups and committees) developing the position of the Parliament.

The targeted and direct approach was justified by MtM’s strengths and limitations:

* MtM had **trusted relationship** with targeted policy champions in the Commission and MEPs;
* MtM had no access to actors in the Council (known as the least accessible and most difficult advocacy target in the EU bureaucracy);
* technical proposals regarding draft regulations on funding are not issues around which one can easily and efficiently organize broad and powerful political and policy coalition.

The letter from Mr. Soros to four prime ministers (MtM drafted the content) in a critical moment was an immediate reaction to an ad-hoc political opportunity (letter from four Western EU nations’ ministers of interior on migration from Romania and Bulgaria). It did not generate concrete support for MtM proposals regarding the EU regulations. Still, it created opportunities for further high level interactions regarding other issues (e.g. the European Roma Institute).

3. Major lessons

* There are policy movers, **champions** in the Commission and MEPs who are **motivated to seek policy solutions** in ‘difficult’ issues and are hungry for professional, concrete proposals.
* In critical periods of the policy making cycle (preparation for a new seven-year budget cycle), these movers are often accessible.
* In the given multilayered political and institutional space, the influence/impact mechanism of MtM advocacy actions cannot be proven by neat explanatory schemes. Yet, fragmented but converging evidence shows that policy champions can find the power to push certain agendas through the European decision making bodies.

**3. Mainstreaming anti-discrimination and equality in national development programs on the use of the EU funds in 2014-20**

These are diverse activities with specific goals as well as a common goal: making national programs supportive to inclusion. These activities are eminently linked to the ones shaping EU regulations.

1. Assessment of the advocacy action: **mix of interim partial successes and some failures, whereas lasting impact to be assessed at later stage**

Lasting impact can be assessed only after national level development programs will be finalized by national governments and the Commission and schemes will be launched, expected in the second half of the year. It is important to note that the main target audience here is the national governments, nonetheless, as in various instances of EU funds usage, the route to national governments leads through some EU bureaucracies or multilevel governance processes.

Interim successes of this package of actions can be claimed by the following outcomes which mean knowledge and know-how input in development policy planning:

* The background study, prepared by highly acknowledged experts of EU equality legislation, offers strong conceptual and legal arguments for desegregation language in EU funds use which is expected to influence the negotiations with the national governments on implementing their seven-year plans.
* Most importantly, our **Toolkit** received unexpectedly good reputation and unprecedented **semi-official status from the Commission** (foreword by Commissioner Andor, presentation to member states at meetings organized by the Commission). This may open opportunities for us to generate national level discussions around most relevant issues. National governments and their planning experts tend to follow EU promoted policy know-how for either pragmatic reasons and/or out of genuine policy learning interest.
* The assessment reports on Europe’s largest labor market programs targeting Roma provided very useful information for designing similar programs in other countries, and is used e.g. by the World Bank too. Further efforts are needed for transforming the assessments into concrete recommendations.
* Our national partners had significant **impact on planning the programs** and even beyond on implementation issues e.g. in Slovakia (introducing simplified cost options, applying socially responsible procurement in EU funded large investment projects).

Partial successes can be claimed:

* In Bulgaria, Balint Magyar succeeded in building a consensus around some proposals; such as a genuine kindergarten development program, up to the deputy minister, but approval is pending at the minister’s level. This risk of ambiguous political backing of the proposal was known in advance and was judged as being worthwhile.

Failures shall be acknowledged in:

* Preparation of the assessment report on equality conditionality, an innovative approach to link municipalities’ access to EU funding to their actions for inclusion, piloted few years ago in Hungary, got caught in delays. Opportunities to transfer the approach to other countries during programming got limited with the delay (e.g. could not be included in the Toolkit).
* Our national partners had limited impact on planning the programs in Romania, mainly due to limited opportunities for serious discussions with national authorities, but partly also due to weaker capacities of national partners in Romania compared e.g. to Slovakia. Risks were identified in advance and were taken as Romania is the country with the largest Roma population.

2. Assessment of the quality of planning, adjustment, and reflection capacities of MtM

The major question was and is still to consider if MtM is in good position for being directly involved in policy assessments and programming, or other technical assistance actors, such as the World Bank or UNDP are in a better position to do so.

* The World Bank’s strength is in global knowledge transfer. MtM explored opportunities for cooperation with the Bank, e.g. regarding poverty mapping. However, experts of the Bank acknowledge that global knowledge transfer has limited room in high income (Czech Republic, Slovakia) and upper middle income (Hungary, Romania, Bulgaria) member states of the EU. In the latter, governance is weak compared to old member states but public administration capacities to collect and analyze data are available, so the added value of the Bank is less evident. This is among the reasons why the Bank has no relevant activities in Czech Republic, Slovakia and Hungary.
* UNDP’s major strength was generation of comparative data and analysis. MtM developed close cooperation with UNDP in this regard. However, they did not have capacities to formulate practical proposals themselves based on the generated data. Moreover, UNDP has recently exited the EU regions.

Adjustments in the advocacy implementation were needed several times.

* Regarding labor market programs, the original idea was to immediately support a team of experts for formulating concrete recommendations. But on discussing this idea, it became clear that as a first step assessing largest labor market programs targeting Roma is essential.
* Regarding national partners’ participation in planning the developmental programs, the original idea was to support the preparation of policy papers, but then a more flexible cooperation seemed justified.
* The most successful element, the Toolkit was not part of the original plans. However, a similar toolkit has been prepared for another field of social inclusion (people with disabilities), and previous work put MtM in the best position to prepare a toolkit for Roma inclusion.

3. Major lessons

* Knowledge transfer is an important tool for promoting Roma inclusion. National authorities in the EU are most open for knowledge transfer between EU member states. This demand is only partially served by the EU and even less so by other actors.
* There is major variation across the CEE countries in the endurance of political will and the administrative and policy capacities of governments. Yet, all these countries show some important **opportunities for civil society and independent expert backed agenda setting advocacy and know-how transfer** in regional cooperation but with country specific targeting. OSF is the best actor, and actually, the only actor, who can successfully and credibly back such an infrastructure or network.

**4. Connecting the Decade of Roma Inclusion and National Roma Integration Strategies with EU accession processes in SEE countries to improve the access to EU funding opportunities**

As the SEE portfolio started in 2010 it was obvious that MtM advocacy had limited opportunities to influence IPA regulations or improve annual Operational Plans at country level in the middle of the 2007-2013 financial cycle. Additionally, the European Commission and respective DGs at the beginning of IPA 1 cycle were reluctant to integrate Decade Action Plans to EU Enlargement priorities preferring to examine the progress of respective countries through Copenhagen criteria. Accordingly, it was seen that Roma issues could be assessed only through human and minority rights perspectives which was rather limiting factor as the development perspective was missing. Thus, we decided to collect evidence about the use and effects of IPA assistance and build regular communication with central authorities in SEE countries and EU Delegations about the gaps and barriers local actors were facing while applying EU funding opportunities.

1. Assessment of the advocacy action: **moderate and partial success: some advocacy actions took place as planned, some actions are ongoing and some activities are canceled**

* Public hearings are successfully organized and produced visible results such as attracting political and institutional attention on **Roma issues vis-à-vis enlargement processes**; on an average, the hearings had between 80 to 120 participants (Head of the State, President of the National Parliaments, ministers, ambassadors, head of EU Delegations, experts, CSOs and media); recommendations and conclusions are made as integral priority for IPA 2 financial period; more important Roma CSOs had opportunity to voice their concerns and interest to participate and benefit from EU accession policies. These are rather immediate outputs while we have to wait for outcomes and see how this will materialize in concrete programing (still ongoing).
* National Roma Integration Strategies (NRIS) 2020 developed through open participatory approach, adopted by Governments of Croatia and Montenegro. By mid-2014 NRIS should be adopted by the Governments of Serbia and Macedonia (delays due to early elections).
* No success is achieved in sensitizing DG Enlargement country desk officers on Roma inclusion issues. Successful bilateral meetings with high level officials are not translated into follow up cooperation with operational units. Cooperation with EU Delegations in the individual enlargement countries showed better results, e.g. the main call to support social inclusion of the most vulnerable groups including Roma in Serbia was consulted with MtM.
* Advocacy actions of Special Law for legalization of Roma settlements in Serbia are in progress. Team of experts commissioned by MtM highlighted the inappropriateness of the current legislation and drafted a special law responding to the housing needs of Roma. Adoption or rejection by the government is expected in the second half of 2014.

2. Assessment of the quality of planning, adjustment, and reflection capacities of MtM

* Plans for public hearings and conducted study on use of IPA 1 funds have been designed in cognizance of the political and policy opportunities based on multi-year engagement with the issues of MtM staff and experts. Adjustments were made regarding the timing and fit into national political context, EU Progress reporting and coordination of availability of high level authorities. In each country, we allied with Roma MPs (except in Montenegro), as host organizers. PGF partners, with developed **liaisons with major policy actors** ensured participation of ministers for EU integrations and diplomatic corps.
* Lex Specialis for legalization of Roma settlements in Serbia came as a conclusion from the conference we supported on this topic. The request for the conference came from FOS Belgrade and League of Decade which qualify it as a **demand driven advocacy action** which is still going on during this year.
* Grants for developing NRIS[[4]](#footnote-4) have a second important objective: to expand the mandate of Roma secretariats/agencies regarding EU accession policies. In each country, we face significant delays and problems mostly because of inadequate human capital or isolation of Roma units from the mainstream processes in given line ministry. Thus, MtM had to assist Roma units in finding experts for delivering tailored trainings and condition financially different levels of administration to respect the contract obligations with OSF.
* Regarding the high level authorities in Brussels and heads of EU Delegations, bilateral meetings were the easier parts of our advocacy actions. But we faced significant problems in organizing an inception seminar conceived as a start for workshops between desk officers and MtM partner organizations regarding the programing, absorption and monitoring of synergies between IPA funds and national budget support for Roma inclusion policies. This event was canceled by DG Enlargement coordinator on Roma issues at the very last moment despite both sides spending significant time for organizing the seminar.

3. Major lessons

* Through the involvement of PGF partners in rethinking advocacy activities, MtM managed to de-monopolize knowledge on EU accession and related EU policies, financial instruments and in general procedures and rules that have been often in the hands of only a small number of people in state institutions
* Political and institutional interdependencies of programing IPA funds demand consistent and coherent communication with EC and state institutions. Our advocacy messages need to be channeled through senior opinion makers and policy movers in the authorities as our key partners are non-governmental actors of limited power to influence decision-making.
* Public administration dealing with minority and Roma inclusion policies, and in this context, secretariats responsible for Roma policies, are slow in their responses, often have short-term visions, and in most of the cases are understaffed with limited consultative mandate. Institutionalization of Roma issues and connecting it to mainstream trends requires consistent and flexible/patient advocacy dialogue, setting step by step development goals and quite often communicate it to the broader audience through non-political rhetoric.
* Within the EU structures, there is an apparent discrepancy between the noble policy objectives and the actual mechanisms operated in the SEE countries. Representatives of the EU administration in this region are hardly intrigued by Roma policies and innovative use of available measures and tools in the pre-accession stage; EU public servants relate to the Roma policies in a technocratic way.
* Grants to state institutions have a high risk of failure and limited control on accountability. However, trust building and cooperation are inevitable factors for enabling the ‘entrance’ of Roma inclusion issues into the broader mainstream trends.
* In the SEE region, there is still a strong presence of international organizations with general strategic plans related to the social inclusion. MtM can use the integrity and authority of the World Bank, UNDP, OSCE in particular and build partnerships targeting national level strategic interventions.

**5. Knowledge building and monitoring initiatives lead by partners with important contribution from MtM**

1. Collaborative research on local conditions of exclusion and inclusion

The broad idea to generate in-depth community level data in addition to UNDP-FRA household survey resulted from a joint brain storming of RIO, MtM, and UNPD. MtM volunteered to coordinate a complex action in which funding resources from two OSF programs, implementing support from UNDP, academic lead from CEU, and field research from social research groups arrived. This complexity required an enormous coordination by a senior manager. The soon arriving background and comparative results will provide valuable and new knowledge to various CSO and policy actors, yet the staff investment in this cooperation was way higher than expected. Thus, the advocacy action can be assessed as high investment for (to be seen) high return but at the cost of reduced senior staff resources available for other actions.

2. Contribution to civil society monitoring of NRIS report scheme

MtM was part of the very early OSF discussions on this initiative and joined a coalition lead by the Decade Secretariat to build up a modest infrastructure and a loose international advocacy coalition with embedded local actors to produce good quality and substantive civil reports. MtM has a place among the professional support organizations with its knowledge on governance, finance, and equality mainstreaming experience. The cooperation with the coalition first was based on funding (grant) support as well as staff time on behalf of MtM which has recently shifted to contributing solely by staff time. MtM’s national partners, often combing PGF and advocacy roles, are part of several civil society coalitions authoring the civil society country reports. They import in the report writing their policy development and advocacy knowledge pursued through MtM related work thus creating important synergy between policy advocacy and independent monitoring. The senior staff time investment in this initiative is reasonably modest. Altogether, the civil society monitoring report support can be seen as a successful part of MtM’s advocacy portfolio.

1. The fact that EU Funds compose the main sources of development for social inclusion and the financial allocations designated to the National Roma Inclusion Strategies is a problematic state of affairs. All state resources should be planned and spent along mainstreamed inclusion agendas but this is a broader and distant policy goal at this point for MtM and its like-minded partners. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. Total cohesion policy resources for member states with largest Roma communities: BG 10,4 bn USD; CZ 30,2 bn USD; HU 30,0 bn USD; RO 31,5 bn USD; SK 19,2 bn USD; together 88,5 121,3 bn USD. According to EU regulations, over 3% of these amounts, cca. 4 bn USD total in the 5 member states should target social inclusion. One can assume that at least another 15%, 18 bn USD will target education and employment which are also directly relevant for Roma inclusion. [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. A recently started activity, which is therefore not included in the list of discussion items, may contribute to the generation of over 40 million USD for the continuation of the housing desegregation program in Madrid region. The program had been financed by national budgetary funds, but the crisis and the budgetary cuts would not allow continuation without EU funds. [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. Grants were contracted with Ministry for Labour and Social Policies in Macedonia, Ministry for Human and Minority Rights in Montenegro, and Government Office for National Minorities in Croatia. In Serbia funds for developing both NRIS and Lex Specialis are distributed through FOS Belgrade. [↑](#footnote-ref-4)