**REPORT ON THE METHODOLOGY OF CONSULTATION WITH ROMA COMMUNITIES**

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# Introduction

As reported by the European Commission in the progress report for Albania, the Roma community continues to face a range of significant socio-economic challenges even in 2023. These challenges include limited access to healthcare services, housing shortages, gender-based violence, and inadequate social inclusion. Properly addressing these challenges is a condition for the sustainable security of the Roma community in the country.

In this context, a well-coordinated strategy for communication and consultation with Roma communities is essential to identify and address issues more effectively. This type of communication and consultation would facilitate access and assist in addressing the challenges faced by the community, providing a platform for participation and contribution from them in solving the issues that affect them.

The aim of this report is the development of a communication methodology to assist Amaro Drom in leading the consultation process with Roma communities. This process aims to identify economic and social problems within the community and guide them towards effective solutions, including referring to local authorities or directing the implementation of their projects. The methodology will serve as a tool for structuring participatory decision-making processes, offering a sustainable mechanism for addressing and resolving the issues faced by the Roma community in specific project localities (Morava, Golem/Plug, Grabian, and Levan). This methodology also aims to enhance the sustainability and effectiveness of interventions to address the challenges faced by communities and strengthen the organizational capacity of Amaro Drom to provide more effective services and support to particular Roma communities in more appropriate ways.

Development of an in-depth analysis of the Roma community in specific areas such as Morava, Golem/Plug, Grabian, and Levan began with the identification of the Roma population in each of these zones, creating an overall picture of their structure and the significance of the issues that affect them. Data on Roma population/families were sourced from the UNDP 2017 report and confirmed during meetings held in November 2023 with focused groups in each zone.

Before diving into details, major stakeholders in these zones were identified, including social services in municipalities, local authorities, and representatives, as well as organizations involved in supporting the Roma community. Following this, attention was given to identifying strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats (SWOT analysis) that emerged from this process.

The SWOT analysis revealed several strengths within these communities. For instance, the existence of periodic social plans in four municipalities, community centers in some areas, and good cooperation between organizations such as Amaro Drom and Roma communities has been crucial. Additionally, the Roma population in these areas has proximity to public services and land.

However, the analysis also identified some critical weaknesses. For example, lack of identification documentation, difficulties in accessing and completing all levels of the education system, lack of information and investments, and a lack of coordination among local institutions for collaboration are specific aspects that require particular attention.

Looking at the aspect of opportunities, there is potential in good road infrastructure, orientation towards agriculture, and proximity to tourist centers to create new development opportunities for Roma communities. On the other hand, risks such as massive youth emigration, lack of investments, and lack of coordination among institutions may have a negative impact on their current situation.

The analysis aimed to provide a clear overview of the situation of the Roma community in these specific areas, including challenges, needs, and development potentials. This analysis will serve as a basis for a deeper understanding of their needs and to develop strategies to improve their lives and conditions.

# Methodology

The methodology used in this study has focused on a comprehensive network of appropriate tools to fully and thoroughly understand the needs and challenges faced by the Roma community in the targeted areas such as Morava, Golem/Plug, Grabian, and Levan in Albania. It encompasses four fundamental phases, each of which includes preparatory processes, assessment and prioritization of needs, identification of recommendations, and their presentation to decision-makers and relevant stakeholders. A concise summary of activities conducted for each phase is described below.

**First Step: Preparation of the Process**

* Identification of responsible stakeholders for intervention areas: (Morava, Golem/Plug, Grabian, and Levan)
* Agreement for engagement: (meetings and contracting of experts; meetings with social services in municipalities, meetings with local authorities, and members of the Roma community in respective areas)
* Establishment of working groups: (experts, representatives from municipalities, Amaro Drom team)

**Second Step: Assessment and Prioritization of Needs**

* Determination of data sources, data types, and quantitative/qualitative indicators
* Analysis of documents including the legal framework, national and local policies, and progress reports
* Questionnaires, interviews, and meetings with stakeholder groups
* Identification and prioritization of problems and needs through surveys based on the fields of the National Plan and SWOT analysis
* Assessment of capacities through 'actor analysis' – who can do what to address the identified problems/needs.

**Third Step: Drafting of 'Thematic Recommendations' (policy briefs) for responsible institutions**

* Findings from Surveys and SWOT Analysis: What is known about strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats regarding the specific thematic issue/problem according to categories of local social plans/national plan for Roma.
* Findings from Actor Analysis: What is known about the capacities of responsible and engaged actors to address the thematic issue.
* Identification of appropriate local strategies and approaches: Which possible local methods, tools, or practices are most promising and/or effective.
* Determination of result indicators at the activity, objective, and impact levels at the local level.

**Fourth Step: Presentation and Implementation of Recommendations**

* Measures to implement recommendations regarding the consultation methodology
* Measures to address issues according to respective fields

# ANALYSIS

Consultations with legal documents and local policies have provided a more comprehensive assessment regarding the legal and institutional context related to the rights and needs of the Roma community. This assessment has been carried out through the examination of laws concerning the rights of national minorities, legislation pertaining to education, social housing, healthcare, employment, and human rights, encompassing social plans at local levels. This analysis of policies and laws has helped address constraints and opportunities that may impact the Roma community in these areas.

## Legal and Institutional Framework

Constitution of the Republic of Albania (1998) - Guarantees individuals belonging to national minorities the full exercise of recognized rights, including the right to equality and non-discrimination based on ethnic or linguistic affiliation, among others.

Law No. 10221/2010 'On Protection from Discrimination' - Prohibits various forms of discrimination and acts that encourage such discrimination, including direct discrimination, sectorial discrimination, multiple discrimination, structural discrimination, hate speech, denial of reasonable accommodation, incitement or aid for discrimination, harassment, sexual harassment, incitement to discriminate, segregation, victimization.

Law No. 96/2017 'On the Protection of National Minorities' - Recognizes Roma as one of the 9 national minorities and guarantees, among other things, the right to preserve and develop their cultural identity without prohibition or coercion. The law establishes the Committee for National Minorities, where Roma are represented by a member appointed by the Prime Minister upon the proposal of Roma organizations.

Law No. 121/2016 'On Social Care Services' - Specifies all social services available to citizens in need, including Roma.

Other specific laws covering areas of education, employment, social housing, healthcare, civil registration, legal aid, personal data protection, population census, and housing, etc.

## National and Local Policy Framework

National Plan for Equality, Participation, and Inclusion of Roma and Egyptians (2021-2025) - Guided by fundamental principles including cooperation between central and local institutions, cross-sectoral interventions, involvement of civil society organizations, and sufficient budgeting for interventions. It includes 7 goals encompassing access to justice and civil status, housing conditions and housing legalization, healthcare services, inclusion and quality in education, creation of opportunities for dignified and sustainable employment, access to social protection programs, and prevention and addressing of discriminatory attitudes and practices towards Roma.

Social Plan of Fier Municipality 2019 - 2023; Local Plan for the Integration of Roma and Egyptian Minorities 2019 -2022, Fier Municipality (Education, Employment and Economic Security, Housing, Healthcare, Migration, and returned emigrants)

Social Plan of Lushnje Municipality 2022 – 2025 (Child Protection, Economy and Social Protection, Education, Employment and vocational training, participation and individual rights, and healthcare)

Local Action Plan of Berat Municipality for the Integration of Roma and Egyptian Minorities as well as Returnees from Migration and Asylum (2022-2025). (Berat Municipality has undertaken the obligation to ensure the social, economic, and cultural inclusion of Roma and Egyptian minorities and returnees from migration or asylum in this municipality through setting strategic priorities and implementing long-term and medium-term integrated policies in the areas of access to justice, education and culture, employment, housing, social protection, and anti-discrimination, in line with international standards and within the framework of implementing conventions and legal frameworks for respecting human and minority rights.

Social Plan of Divjake Municipality 2020 -2022 aimed at establishing a community-based social care service system addressing the needs of individuals in need of protection and care in this Municipality.

## Roma Issues identified according to main pillar of action Plans

Quality and Inclusive Education Roma children and youth face various obstacles in their educational journey, such as lack of civil registration documents, low awareness of the importance of education, especially for girls, economic difficulties within their families, and sometimes the distance of schools from residential areas, needing transportation. Discrimination and bullying from classmates and sometimes teachers make access to education more challenging. These barriers force some children to drop out of school due to economic and social reasons or, in the best-case scenario, complete school with very low results.

Encouragement through scholarships and school support programs to increase their participation and academic performance. Particular focus is needed on enhancing support for transportation and school infrastructure, including heating, water, and electricity. Awareness-raising activities to combat gender discrimination within the Roma community and promote positive models of educated Roma girls and boys. A closer collaboration among institutions, organizations, and the community is needed to increase awareness and participation in the education system for Roma children.

Inclusion in the Labor Market and Entrepreneurship There's a lack of accessible information and employment opportunities in rural communities. Also, there's a lack of skill matching among young Roma in sectors according to local or even regional labor market demands. Racial prejudice and discriminatory attitudes in the job market hinder employment in both the public and private sectors. Self-employment or private entrepreneurship are the only options for income generation among Roma.

Support with skill-oriented training based on local/regional job market needs, accompanied by supportive programs for entrepreneurial skill development and project creation encouraging self-employment or employment. Promotion of social enterprises in collaboration with local and central organizations, based on strengths and opportunities in each respective area. Partnerships with governmental and non-governmental organizations to provide training, counseling, financial support, and information distribution to increase access for trained individuals and/or Roma entrepreneurs to the job market and entrepreneurship.

Access to Healthcare Services Lack of equipment and resources: Health centers near Roma communities lack essential equipment for health measurement and monitoring, such as various analysis devices, laptops/computers for online recommendations, and qualitative disease diagnostic devices. Lack of contributions to health insurance schemes and weak economic status limit many families' access to healthcare services. Low access to services for children, including children with disabilities, and pregnant women creates difficulties in receiving healthcare.

Provision of basic health equipment in health centers in Roma-inhabited areas by responsible institutions. Development of awareness and education programs regarding healthcare, including vaccination and maternal care. Assistance in addressing application procedures for healthcare and support in obtaining necessary documentation for children and pregnant women. Mediation and collaboration with local organizations and authorities to ensure sensitization and easier access to healthcare services for the Roma and Egyptian communities.

Housing and Social Housing Programs There are still dilapidated houses needing reconstruction. In Morava, damages in dwellings are caused by the explosive activity of a quarry located near residential areas. Lack of documentation on home ownership and complex application procedures for property certificates, exacerbated by the digitalization of services in e-Albania, along with the financial cost for legal services, are challenging.

Coordination with local authorities and donors for the reconstruction of damaged or dilapidated homes. Identification of families lacking documentation for home ownership. Legal aid support in preparing applications for property division, legalization, provision of property certificates, etc. Detailed and clear information regarding procedures and criteria for inclusion in social programs and support for application to social housing programs. Mediation and close collaboration with non-governmental organizations and local businesses (including mediating between residents and quarry owners to find a solution accepted by both parties) to address long-term housing issues.

Emigration and Return of Roma Families A considerable number of Roma families have left the country, often seeking asylum in Germany and France for better economic and social opportunities. Families returning face significant challenges in registering children born abroad, vaccinating them, and reintegrating them into the education system after periods of migration. A trend towards seasonal migration in countries like Italy and Greece, while positive for income, creates uncertainty in employment and disconnects from local markets and networks that require sustainable engagement.

Adaptation of social and employment programs to migration dynamics: Social programs and support schemes need flexibility to adapt to people's lifestyles, including appropriate support for returnees from emigration. Seasonal workers and returning Roma should be the focus of programs supporting entrepreneurship or regular employment. Information and support for returnees in areas such as voluntary social insurance for pension benefits, provision of necessary documentation, and registration and integration of children into the school environment.

### Protection against Hate Speech and Discriminatory Attitudes

Negative stereotypes and prejudiced attitudes towards Roma children based on their physical appearance or difficulties in communication, often in the Albanian language, frequently lead to their bullying and discouragement from continuing education. Schools and teachers are not adequately trained or oriented to deal with bullying against Roma and antigypsyism. The general public (especially employers, landlords, professions such as police officers, teachers, journalists, local administrative staff) remains unaware of the 'language of hatred,' often conveyed through insults, unintentional jokes, or expressions that carry dismissive, exclusionary, and discriminatory language towards Roma.

Preparation of training curricula against hate speech and discrimination tailored to the profiles of participants in the aforementioned roles (employers, landlords, various professions). Collaboration with responsible authorities, including regular training sessions aiming to combat hate speech and racial discrimination, fostering understanding, peaceful coexistence, and respectful diversity.

## Data secured from SWOT Analysis, Stakeholder Analysis, Surveys, and Focus Groups

The SWOT Analysis is a method used to assess strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats affecting this community. Through this analysis, key problems affecting the community within the context of the National Plan for Equality, Inclusion, and Participation of Roma and Egyptians 2021-2025 have been identified.

To ensure comprehensive coverage, surveys were designed based on the needs and perspectives of the Roma community, ranging from housing conditions, education, health, to access to social services and justice. Gathering data from respondents aims to measure the extent of one or more issues based on a representative sample with at least 100 questionnaires, 25 in each zone, with an almost equal gender balance.

Furthermore, to fulfill the need for a more comprehensive and in-depth perspective, other methods such as individual interviews and field observations were used. Individual interviews provided insights into the experiences and needs of the interviewees, while field observations offered a clearer and deeper context regarding housing conditions, infrastructure, and service availability in the respective areas.

Meetings with focus groups consisting of 20-25 individuals with shared characteristics or

interests (particularly considering gender equality and different age groups) were conducted in groups to gather primarily qualitative data, but also quantitative information (such as assessing the number of families), and to initiate or supplement the SWOT analysis and stakeholder analysis that could contribute to addressing the issues.

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **The data about the Roma population/families** | | |
| **Area, Municipality** | **Rome**  **Population** | **Nr. Of Roma Families** |
| Golem (Plug), LU | 331 | 86 |
| Grabian, DV | 380 | 96 |
| Moravë, BR | 434 | 92 |
| Levan, FR | 1,000 | 270 |
| **TOTAL** | **2,145** | **544** |

**Analiza SWOT**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| STRENGTHS | WEAKNESSES |
| * Municipality approves Periodic Social Plans (in four Municipalities) * There exists a community center in the area (Moravë, Levan) * There are community leaders with experience from both genders (in four areas) * Experience and qualifications of the members/staff of the organization Amaro Drom in direct work with Roma communities and experience in protecting and advocating for the rights of the Roma minority. * Very good relationships of the Amaro Drom Organization with members of Roma communities as well as other civil society organizations, both Roma and non-Roma. * Good and cooperative relationship with local government authorities. * The Roma population in the targeted areas generally owns land. * The villages where the Roma population resides generally have proximity to public services (schools, kindergartens, health centers, etc.) - Roma communities in the targeted areas are mainly inhabited by both Roma and majority populations. | * Massive youth emigration * Lack of sustainable activities at the community center in the village * Absence of data to measure the indicators of interventions carried out in areas inhabited by Roma according to the Local Social Plan * Lack of services for persons with disabilities * Insufficient information on public and social services (social housing programs, employment programs, etc.), exacerbated by the digitalization of services * Lack of identity documents * Agricultural products come out at high costs and are not competitive in the market * Inadequate budget allocation from local authorities for the implementation of local social plans for Roma * Absence of irrigation canals (Morave) * Lack of street lighting (Morave, Plug) * Lack of coordination between business and agricultural producers * Unaffordable cost of living compared to income levels * Low educational level * Lack of information about social and legal services * Absence of networking/coordination among institutions that provide services * Instability of development projects in favor of the Roma community. |
| OPPORTUNITIES | RISKS |
| * Good road infrastructure connectivity * Geographical position and favorable infrastructure for agricultural development * Proximity to tourist centers, part of UNESCO World Heritage sites (Morava), enhancing tourism * Opportunities stemming from our country's international engagements and the EU accession process, as well as alignment with legal frameworks. | * Abandonment of basic education and high school non-attendance among young generations * Massive emigration of young people * Low number of returnees from emigration * Exclusionary attitudes or hate speech, mainly on social networks, but sporadic cases also within public administration employees towards Roma people * Lack or weak willingness of some local institutions for cooperation/consideration * Lack of proportional investments in Roma areas/communities |

Analysis of Actors

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Actors** | **Possible strategies for inclusion:** |
| Community (elderly, prominent figures, youth, young women) | Proper communication on project objectives/approach; when possible, engagement with payment as experts/resource persons |
| Community (elderly, prominent figures, youth, young women)  Institutions (Municipality, Regional Education Directorate, Prefecture, Social Services, etc.) | Collaboration/Coordination Agreements with central institutions |
| Chamber of Commerce (specific businesses in the area) | Thematic Collaboration Agreements |
| CSOs (expertise, resources, assistance) | Mapping of responsibilities in each area |
| Other experts (agronomists, engineers, psychologists, social workers, etc.) | List of experienced professionals |
| Donors (local, foreign) | Mapping, who funds/can fund in which area/topic |

# RECOMMENDATIONS

## Recommendations for the methodology of consultations:

* Standardizing data gathering formats for each Intervention Zone based on outcome indicators in national/local plans for the Roma.
* Combining data from the census, civil registry, unofficial assessments of OSHCs in data collection tables.
* Regular or periodic updating of quantitative and qualitative data, involving community leaders in each Zone. Budgeting necessary funds in AmaroDrom projects for focus groups, interviews, or surveys that can be conducted for this purpose.

## Recommendations for addressing issues:

* Coordinating work with the state social service and municipalities to update local social plans, local plans for Roma inclusion, and local plans for Romani returns.
* Organizing thematic roundtables and listening sessions with local stakeholders to identify appropriate responses to specific problems, including those related to retail products, agricultural production, agricultural product storage, and marketing.
* Presenting presentations and/or open letters addressed to responsible institutions (Municipal Council, Regional Directorates, Prefectures, Social Services Directorate, Chamber of Commerce, etc.) with thematic recommendations. Including thematic recommendations in decision-making processes, including those related to drafting local social plans.
* Developing project proposals formulated by Amaro Drom and partner organizations that reflect the respective issues and recommendations.

# Annex\_1

Questionnaire

The following questionnaire was conducted in 4 Zones (Morave, Levan, Plug, and Grabian) with the aim of identifying specific issues in each identified field, giving particular importance to the experiences and thoughts of the Roma community. Around 100 members of the Roma community responded to the questionnaire, with 60% of them being men and 40% being women. Their answers help determine specific needs and develop recommendations to improve their lives in priority areas.

Quality and Inclusive Education:

1- Have you encountered difficulties in accessing quality and inclusive education? Can you mention some of these difficulties?

2- How do you think the quality of education and access to schools for better inclusion of the Roma community can be improved?

3- What challenges do you face in ensuring equal opportunities in education for children and youth in your community?

4- What forms of collaboration would you be interested in organizations using to increase your awareness and access to the education system?

Employment Inclusion and Entrepreneurship:

1- Have you faced difficulties in finding employment or participating in entrepreneurial activities? What are these difficulties?

2- How do you think the inclusion of the Roma community in the labor market and entrepreneurship can be improved?

3- What initiatives would you like to see to increase employment opportunities and business creation for members of your community?

4- What forms of collaboration would you be interested in organizations using to increase your awareness and access to the job market and entrepreneurship?

Access to Healthcare Services:

1- What difficulties do you face in accessing healthcare services? Can you mention some specific examples?

2- How do you think the accessibility and quality of healthcare for the Roma community can be improved?

3- What steps can be taken to ensure that the healthcare needs of your community are addressed more effectively and directly?

4- What forms of collaboration would you be interested in organizations using to increase your awareness and access to healthcare services?

Housing Documentation and Social Housing Programs:

1- How does the lack of necessary documentation affect obtaining housing and accessing social programs for the Roma community?

2- Have you faced difficulties in accessing social housing programs? What are the main obstacles you face in using these programs?

3- How do you think the application process and access to social programs can be improved to provide better housing assistance for your community?

4- What forms of collaboration would you be interested in organizations using to increase your awareness and access to housing?

Protection from Hate Speech and Racial Discrimination:

1- What experiences have you had with hate speech and racial discrimination in your daily life? How have these experiences affected your life and safety?

2- Have you experienced discrimination in accessing public services or social interactions? What measures do you think should be taken to combat this issue?

3- How can society and authorities contribute to promoting a common culture that prevents hate speech and racial discrimination in general?

4- What forms of collaboration would you be interested in organizations using to increase your awareness and approach in the fight against hate speech?

# 

# References

Laws:

* Constitution of the Republic of Albania (1998)
* Law No. 10221/2010 'On Protection against Discrimination'
* Law No. 96/2017 'On the Protection of National Minorities'
* Law No. 121/2016 'On Social Care Services'

Plans:

* National Plan for Equality, Participation, and Inclusion of Roma and Egyptians (2021-2025)
* Social Plan of Fier Municipality 2019 – 2023
* Social Plan of Lushnje Municipality 2022 – 2025
* Social Plan of Berat Municipality; Local Plan for the Integration of Roma and Egyptian Minorities and Returnees (2022 – 2025)
* Social Plan of Divjake Municipality 2022 - 2025

Reports:

* EU Progress Report
* Latest Progress Report on the National Plan
* Analytical Report by UNDP 2017