



Spain 2006

Municipal programme of shanty towns eradication in Avilés (Asturias)

Synthesis Report

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Executive Summary

The issue and its European context

The continuing marginalisation of Roma (or Gypsy) communities throughout Europe is still evident from their spatial, social, economic and educational exclusion from mainstream society. In 2002 the UNDP compared the situation of Roma in five Central and Eastern European (CEE) states to conditions in sub-Saharan Africa. This was in spite of earlier efforts by the previous Communist regimes to assimilate their Roma minorities by drawing them into the mainstream labour force and rehousing them. Spain resembles CEE countries in important ways for, though Roma have remained economically marginal, in 1988 the government adopted a national plan aimed at integrating the largely settled Roma population. During the late 1990s, CEE candidate countries had been required to demonstrate respect for their minorities as a condition of EU entry but it was only in 2000, with the adoption of the Lisbon strategy and its call for greater cohesion, that all existing EU members and entrants were required to produce national plans for social inclusion and greater attention was focused on Roma throughout Europe.

The Good Practice example

Starting in 1989, the northern municipality of Avilés decided to eradicate its five Roma shanty towns as part of its vision for a post-industrial future. As in the national plan, the Avilés project recognised that successful inclusion needed an integrated approach, addressing not only housing but employment, education and health. The original intention was to relocate Roma families to an isolated, purpose-built village as an intermediate stage towards their inclusion in wider society but this plan was abandoned within a few years when it was recognised that segregated housing perpetuated exclusion. Instead, the families were resettled in standard accommodation among non-Roma. This bold decision by a newly established working group, comprising representatives of all political parties and other key stakeholders including Roma NGOs and beneficiaries, was upheld by the political will and leadership of the municipality. Little opposition was encountered and now all shanty town sites have been redeveloped and their former inhabitants are helped by employment, education, health and inter-communal initiatives. Financial support has been provided by municipal, regional, national and EU sources.

Relevance and transferability to other national contexts and elsewhere in Spain

Since regime change after 1989, the restructured economies of the five CEE peer review partners had little need of Roma labour power and these mainly unskilled people were a low priority for post-Communist governments, resulting in widespread and rapid impoverishment of most Roma communities. In spite of EU-supported projects and the eventual establishment of long-term national plans for Roma integration, living conditions for Roma steadily deteriorated. Consequently, recent EU emphasis on social inclusion is a belated opportunity for improvement. As in Spain, Roma have remained marginal in the two other partner countries, but while Greece adopted a national plan for Roma in 1996, no such steps have been taken in Portugal.

The approach of peer review partners towards their Roma populations varied considerably. **Hungary** was the first among CEE countries to address their plight systematically by offering

representation through minority self-governments, and sustained research and substantial use of EU funding. A pilot integrated, inclusion project is now operating. As in Avilés, municipalities take the lead, relocation to integrated housing is based on individualised family needs' assessments and employment is prioritised. However, an earlier project proved disappointing. **Slovakia**, too, was a major recipient of EU funding, including a sizeable infrastructure project. Unlike in Avilés, neither this activity nor subsequent provision of social housing attempted to combat segregation but instead accepted the status quo. Meanwhile devolution has made it difficult to implement national Roma policies, particularly in education, reinforcing the importance of the Avilés example, in a decentralised system, of building effective partnerships. Nevertheless, an inspiring, Avilés-style, NGO project was presented at the review and Slovakia has now developed housing plans, including low-cost housing for marginalised people. The **Czech Republic**, in contrast, made sparing use of EU support. Since 1991 poorer people, including the largely urbanised Roma population, have experienced a rapid erosion of the existing system of protected accommodation but until recently little effort had been made to provide social housing. Although a central coordinating council was established, as in Spain this has limited powers due to decentralisation, leaving initiatives led by municipalities in cooperation with higher administrative bodies and Roma NGOs, as the only viable model.

A 2006 survey provided, for the first time, a reliable picture of excluded Roma localities.

Bulgaria, Slovenia and Greece have all established national programmes for their Roma communities. While these appear comprehensive, slow progress has been reported. Bulgaria has adopted an inclusive approach, taking into account other disadvantaged minorities, while Slovenia denies Roma national minority status, though a Roma Community Act is forthcoming. Roma councillors have been elected in all municipalities with Roma inhabitants. In **Greece**, the successor to the 1996 policy appears similar to the Spanish model in adopting a multi-sectorial approach but proposed new settlements in place of shanty towns remain segregated, resembling the rejected second phase of the Avilés project. Municipal leadership and political will are lacking and party consensus has not been reached. **Portugal** resembles Spain more than other peer review participants as regards characteristics and history of Roma communities but the policy context is the least favourable of all. Not only is there no national strategy but also little information, while few initiatives for Roma currently exist.

Stakeholder (**ERRC/ENAR**) criticism was directed mainly at national governments for failing to confront processes that deepen social exclusion by challenging regional or local authorities frequently implicated in such actions, which are illegal or at least contravene government policy. Steps ensuring a legally binding obligation to promote equality for disadvantaged groups were urged in place of inaction and lack of political will. Like the ERRC/ENAR, Spanish stakeholders (**EAPN/UR/FSG**) saw good practice as exceptional, warning of worsening conditions in Spain. This last point was echoed by the National Expert, who foresaw increasing ethnicisation of some neighbourhoods, deterioration of amenities and housing stock in neighbourhoods with Roma and immigrant populations and shortages of affordable housing for young Roma families.

Conclusions and lessons learnt

The successful Avilés project emerged from an extended process of learning from experience, where the turning point was the formation of a working group of key players and the joint decision to demolish the recently completed transitional village. Important factors in its success were identified as the collaborative institutional framework, the socio-political consensus achieved, the municipal resolve and leadership, pursuit of permanent not temporary solutions, adoption of an

integrated strategy addressing multiple factors affecting exclusion, commitment to a long-term approach, client-centred services treating families individually, and monitoring and evaluation of progress while preventing the repopulation of shanty towns. Equally vital were the eager participation and involvement of Roma organisations and beneficiaries and high expectations and enthusiasm on the part of non-Roma personnel contributing to the project.

1. The Issue

Roma¹ have maintained a continuous presence throughout Europe for over five hundred years and yet during this extended period they have never been accepted as full members of the wider societies amongst which they lived. Contrary to common belief the vast majority are not nomadic but sedentary and in many locations there is evidence that they have been settled for centuries. This is particularly true of the formerly Communist-ruled states of Central and Eastern Europe (CEE), where in feudal times the need to use Roma as a labour force had mostly led to the eradication of nomadism and the growth of Roma settlements.² It is in these countries that an estimated three-quarters of Europe's Roma are to be found.³

The marginality of Europe's Roma found expression in their social exclusion, most strikingly in the spatial separation of their dwelling places from majority populations from which they made their livelihood by the provision of craft goods and services. These dwelling places are as varied as the Roma groups⁴ who inhabit them, including tent encampments in Greece, long-established urban quarters in the Balkans (e.g. the *mahala* of Bulgaria), isolated rural settlements (called *osady* in Slovakia and *kolonia* in Hungary) and clusters of dilapidated inner-city flats in the Czech Republic and Hungary.⁵ Nevertheless, of whatever form, and whether long-standing or recent in origin, most of these wholly or partially segregated dwelling places are still characterised by poor living conditions, including severe overcrowding, inadequate shelter and deficient infrastructure with limited or non-existent access to public utilities such as clean drinking water, sewage, electricity, gas, and refuse collection, as well as approach roads. By accepted norms these Roma dwelling places are, or should be, classified as uninhabitable because of the constant danger to health they pose. Yet authorities frequently refrain from taking this step since the consequence would generally be a requirement to take action to eliminate the unsafe dwelling place and provide alternative, adequate accommodation for its former inhabitants.

Meanwhile, Roma families forced to endure such life-threatening surroundings are unable to escape, mainly because of impoverishment caused by unemployment or underemployment,⁶

¹ In this report, as in the peer review Discussion Paper (Guy 2006), the term 'Roma' is used to refer to the very diverse communities generally perceived by others as 'Gypsies' and including those identifying themselves as Roma, Gypsies or by other names. The term 'Roma' is used as a singular and collective noun as well as an adjective in accordance with current widespread usage, although some prefer 'Romani' as an adjective.

² Mirga and Gheorghe 1997: 5, Guy 1975: 204.

³ Liégeois and Gheorghe 1995: 7.

⁴ The multiplicity of Roma groupings and dynamic change within them is conveyed by Marushiakova and Popov (2001a), while an eminent Roma sociologist describes Roma as an 'archipelago' of communities, characterised by 'multiculturalism and multi-territoriality' (Gheorghe and Acton 2001: 55-6).

⁵ The variety is exemplified by the typology of six different kinds of 'segregated or similar settlements' within a single country, given in the Comments Paper for Hungary (Kadét 2006: 84-5, §2). For the range throughout CEE countries, see Marushiakova and Popov 2001a: 42-3.

⁶ Whereas most Roma in CEE countries had lost their former mainly unskilled jobs following economic restructuring after regime change, those elsewhere in Europe, including Spain, Portugal and Greece, had seen

although discrimination, restricting access to any cheap housing that might exist, plays a role in confining them to these extremely hostile environments – commonly described as ‘ghettos’. In addition to their sub-standard living conditions and lack of jobs, Roma also suffer from low educational attainment – negatively affecting their employment potential – and poor health, while their life expectancy is generally believed to be ten years shorter than that of non-Roma.⁷

The UNDP recently compared the situation of Roma communities in five CEE countries to conditions in sub-Saharan Africa.⁸ This report and other major surveys⁹ provided in-depth, comparative evidence of the extent of Roma deprivation in CEE countries seeking to become EU members. Yet while the enlargement accession process and subsequent Decade of Roma Inclusion has drawn attention to the plight of CEE Roma, smaller scale research in existing EU member states has continued to demonstrate that often the circumstances of Roma living there are not much better. Likewise governments in non-CEE countries have paid little heed to Roma. However the adoption by the European Council of the Lisbon Strategy in 2000 and in particular its emphasis on social inclusion presented EU governments and policy makers with both a challenge and an opportunity to remedy at last the situation of Roma communities suffering multiple deprivation and widespread exclusion.

The post-Franco governments of Spain have proved an exception among non-CEE states in attempting to address the problems of a substantial Roma population in a planned and systematic way starting with a National Plan for the Development of Roma in 1988. Aspects of this initiative anticipated policy goals and also structural developments in post-Communist CEE countries and elsewhere. The programme aimed at diminishing the social exclusion of Roma through an integrated strategy which simultaneously tackled needs of Roma in the key areas of housing, employment, education and health, while seeking to respect and maintain their distinct cultural identity. At the same time a central administrative group was set up to manage and coordinate implementation of the plan and important guiding principles were established that central funding should be supplemented by regional and local authorities and that participation by Roma should be ensured by their representation on official bodies and through financial and technical assistance to Roma organisations.¹⁰

Twelve years after the adoption of the National Plan an evaluation of its performance by a leading Spanish Roma NGO¹¹ found that the results had ‘fallen far short of stated goals’.¹² Nevertheless some positive outcomes have been achieved¹³ and foremost among these is the Municipal Programme of Shanty Towns Eradication in Avilés in the Principality of Asturias, commencing in

the scope for their ‘traditional’ occupations shrink as national economies developed and modernised (See below).

⁷ Hajioff & McKee 2000: 864.

⁸ UNDP 2003.

⁹ Ringold 2000, World Bank *et al.* 2002, UNDP 2002, Ringold *et al.* 2003.

¹⁰ A brief outline of the Spanish National Plan (*Plan Nacional de Desarrollo Gitano*) is given in the 2003 World Bank report on Roma (Ringold *et al.* 2003: 114-7) and a fuller account in Villarreal 2001.

¹¹ *Asociación Secretariado General Gitano*, now the *Fundación Secretariado Gitano* (FSG).

¹² Villarreal 2001: 2.

¹³ Although funding remained static throughout the 1990s, there were around 50,000 direct beneficiaries of Roma projects annually (*ibid.*: 4, 6) and improved planning and monitoring methods encouraged mainstreaming of Roma issues. ‘The most meaningful example to date has been in the field of employment policy. Both the European Social Fund in Spain and the National Employment Plan have mentioned the Romani population in Spain as a specific priority’ (*ibid.*: 7). By 2004 the FSG-managed *Acceder* programme, targeted at improving Roma access to employment within a broader ESF Multi-Regional Operational Programme to Fight against Discrimination, had been implemented in 44 locations in 14 Autonomous Communities (FSG 2006).

1989 and selected as an example of good practice for this peer review. As a result of Roma migration to this industrial city, mainly in the 1950s and 1960s, five shanty towns had sprung up and this project sought to integrate their inhabitants by relocating them, while at the same time attempting to improve their employment opportunities, educational enrolment and retention, registration in the health system and access to public services. After slow progress at the start Roma families were moved to a separate model village, intended as an intermediate stage, but in a bold step this was progressively demolished only a few years after completion when it was recognised that segregation in an isolated enclave only perpetuated the social exclusion of its residents. Instead Roma families have been successfully rehoused among non-Roma in normal accommodation and the shanty towns no longer exist.¹⁴

The Avilés project, therefore, provides an example for peer review participants, and others, of how a clearly conceived and integrated policy, implemented under firm municipal leadership with broad-based political support and close cooperation of administrative bodies at all levels, together with involved NGO partners and Roma beneficiaries, can offer a way forward in solving the seemingly intractable problem of Roma exclusion from wider society. The project poses searching questions, especially for countries where continued segregated housing for Roma communities is accepted as almost inevitable for the foreseeable future.

2. European Context

2.1 Growing recognition of Roma exclusion

Involvement of international bodies and European institutions with the situation of Roma dates from the late 1960s when the Council of Europe (CoE), UN and EU all made pronouncements concerning the disadvantaged position of Roma, particularly as regards the discrimination they suffered and their children's damaged education.¹⁵ In 1984, the European Parliament urged a coordinated approach by the governments of member states and 'called on the [European] Commission [EC] to develop Community-funded programmes aimed at improving the Roma/Gypsies' situation without negating their cultural values'.¹⁶ While much of this attention was prompted by concerns arising from nomadism in Western Europe, the UN and NGOs like the Minority Rights Group addressed problems of these people throughout Europe, including those of the much larger numbers of Roma in CEE countries. However, it was not until the fall of CEE Communist regimes from 1989 onwards that a new impetus was generated by the prospect of EU enlargement eastwards.

2.2 EU enlargement and CEE Roma minorities

As early as 1990 and 1991 the Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe (CSCE)¹⁷ emphasised the destabilising potential of withholding human rights and discriminating against minorities and highlighted the markedly unequal treatment and underprivileged status of Roma. Thereafter, the deprivation of sizeable Roma communities in former Communist countries seeking to join the EU became a troublesome and contentious issue since what are known as the

¹⁴ See Host Country Report (Fresno 2006).

¹⁵ Liégeois and Gheorghe 1995: 22-25.

¹⁶ Ibid: 22.

¹⁷ This later became the Organisation for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE).

1993 Copenhagen criteria, outlining the requirements for membership, include 'stability of institutions guaranteeing democracy, the rule of law, human rights and respect for minorities'. To help applicants for membership adapt their laws and administrative structures to EU norms (the *acquis*), financial and technical aid was offered by the EU to candidate countries, mainly through the Phare programme which included a number of projects targeted specifically at promoting the greater integration of Roma populations since these were undoubtedly their most marginalised minorities. Such EU support increased as the accession negotiations with the first batch of candidates gathered pace from 1997 onwards.

While aid and expertise supplied through Phare and other instruments provided valuable assistance to applicants and helped enable their entry to the EU, this main form of support was not without its drawbacks. An independent evaluation of all Phare programmes over a five-year period shortly before accession found that a third of all projects had been rated unsatisfactory, especially those in the Economic and Social Cohesion (ESC) sector.¹⁸ A further thematic review of projects targeted directly or indirectly at Roma communities in five applicant countries over the same period found similar shortcomings. In spite of the positive effect of Phare as the main 'lever of change', problems were identified in the absence 'of a clear policy framework for social inclusion of Roma', inadequate capacity and experience in central coordinating bodies and consequently ineffective top-down initiatives.¹⁹ Although loss of their former jobs has been identified as the principal cause of the impoverishment of CEE Roma,²⁰ less than 10% of Phare Roma funding addressed this fundamental problem.²¹ Also, while the largest proportion of such financial support, a third, was devoted to education, subsequent research revealed that in significant ways Phare aid had been used in schools to perpetuate previous practices including segregated education.²² Overall, as in the case of the earlier Spanish scheme, ambitious national plans were found to have had only a limited impact as 'many projects fell short of their high expectation'.²³

This disappointing performance partly stemmed from conceptual and structural weaknesses inherent in the design of the accession process. Chief priorities were for candidates to establish a viable market economy and to ensure the stability of institutions guaranteeing democracy, the rule of law and preservation of individual human rights, but 'the fight against social exclusion did not form an integral part of the Copenhagen criteria reform agendas'.²⁴ Meanwhile another instrument, the CoE's 1995 *Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities*, offered much stronger proposals for social inclusion²⁵ but, as a CoE convention, could only be recommended to present and future EU members and not demanded as a condition of entry.²⁶ The vague terminology of 'respect for minorities' was not clarified during the accession process

¹⁸ EMS 2004a: I.

¹⁹ EMS 2004b: 9, II, III.

²⁰ Ringold *et al.* 2003: 1.

²¹ EMS 2004b: 3.

²² For example in Hungary (EMS 2004b: 13-14) and Slovakia (Guy and Kovats 2006: 12-13).

²³ For a fuller discussion of Phare and the thematic review of Roma programmes, including more detailed references, see the associated Discussion Paper for Peer Review (Guy 2006).

²⁴ Potůček 2006: 2.

²⁵ This explicitly required states to adopt 'adequate measures in order to promote, in all areas of economic, social, political and cultural life, full and effective equality' for their national minorities (CoE 1995, Art. 4 §2).

²⁶ Most CEE applicants, apart from Slovenia, had acknowledged their Roma populations as national minorities and had also signed and ratified the Framework Convention, producing reports describing their compliance. Nevertheless this instrument remained peripheral, particularly since others such as France and Greece ignored it maintaining they had no national minorities to protect.

and although EC Regular Reports repeatedly criticised slow progress in Roma integration, no systematic operationalisation took place in terms of targets with measurable indicators and linked to a precise time scale. From this omission the conclusion might be drawn that this Copenhagen criterion was more a well-intentioned hope than an enforceable requirement.

2.3 Social inclusion in the EU and the Lisbon strategy

Rather as the economic aspects of EU enlargement had predominated over social concerns, the same was largely true of the EU in general where there was an expectation that social progress in the EU would follow automatically from economic expansion arising from the Common Market. This assumption resulted in a relatively lower priority for social issues. Nevertheless, after the EU Council of Ministers had adopted a resolution on social action in 1974, specific programmes were established in order to target poverty and social exclusion.²⁷ However it was not until 1999 that a more systematic approach was taken to EU cooperation in this area, leading to the Lisbon Strategy of 2000 with its call for 'greater social cohesion'. In spite of this new approach, insufficient attention was paid to the issue of housing and a 2004 EC-commissioned report on Roma noted that 'housing is considerably less developed as an area of ... [EU] policy than other fields of relevance to social exclusion'.²⁸ To achieve the Lisbon goals and given the great variety of national systems, progress in social protection was sought through the Open Method of Coordination (OMC), 'a mutual process of planning, monitoring, examination and comparison ... on the basis of common objectives' making use of peer review exercises to share experience and good practice.²⁹ From 2005 increased effectiveness was to be aided by simplification and streamlining of reporting mechanisms.

As a political condition of membership, the Copenhagen criteria had already required CEE candidates to promote the integration of their Roma citizens but in 2002 these countries were encouraged to take this process further with the invitation to join Lisbon Strategy discussions, although full participation would only come with their accession starting in 2004. On the basis of Joint Inclusion Memoranda, identifying problems and suggesting policies to tackle them, National Action Plans of Social Inclusion 2004-2006 (NAPSI) were prepared by new entrants and approved in 2004. Corresponding plans were also produced by existing EU member states, which had been able to benefit from EU programmes to combat poverty and social exclusion long before the emergence of the Lisbon Strategy.

3. The Good Practice example: Shanty town eradication and social integration of Roma in Avilés

The Spanish Roma population has undergone an unprecedented transformation process in recent decades. In general terms, with the exception of a few subgroups, there is no doubt that Roma in Spain have changed and advanced more over the last 30 years than during the previous five centuries. This progress is attributable to a number of different factors. Among these the most important are the dawn of democracy, overall improvement in living standards, implementation of

²⁷ Atkinson *et al.* 2005: 29-30.

²⁸ Focus *et al.* 2004: 25.

²⁹ Atkinson *et al.* 2005: 33, 36-38.

social protection policies, specially tailored measures and programmes specifically targeting the Roma population and mobilisation to assist Roma communities.

The advancement and progress of Roma in Spain rests upon four main pillars: education (access to and remaining in school), housing (access to decent housing on an equal footing with the rest of the population), employment (access to vocational training and normalisation of the labour situation) and health (access to the health-care system). Housing, in particular, has proved to be essential as a springboard and a 'point of no return' for the social incorporation of the Roma population.

Over the last forty years a number of very different types of action programmes targeting Roma have been implemented throughout Spain in the field of housing. There are a large number of cases where, despite the best of intentions, the measures undertaken led to spectacular failure and should never be repeated. Many others have gone only half-way in terms of the initial intentions and what was actually achieved while further cases, a significant number, are good examples of the way things should be done. The Municipal Programme for the Eradication of Shanty towns in Avilés is specifically one of those examples of best practice. Moreover, owing to its location, the characteristics of the target Roma population, the role of local leadership, its conception and underlying philosophy of action, the moment at which it was undertaken, its subsequent evolution and the results obtained, this case can provide useful information and experience applicable in other contexts, not only throughout Spain but also internationally, especially in CEE countries and other EU member states.

3.1 Roma in the Principality of Asturias and in Avilés

Asturias, with a population of 1,076,635,³⁰ is one of Spain's 17 Autonomous Communities and is situated on the Cantabrian coast in northwest Spain (see map in Annex 1). Like other regions in the north of Spain, Asturias experienced heavy industrial development in the 20th century, especially in mining and steel-making. There was also a thriving livestock industry in rural areas. Industrial transformation in the 80s and 90s led to structural changes in the economy, resulting in decreased production in these areas which were replaced by a flourishing services and tourism sector. Per capita GDP in Asturias currently stands at 85% of the Spanish average.

The population of Asturias is mostly concentrated in the triangle formed by the cities of Oviedo (the capital), Avilés and Gijón and their basins and outlying areas. The Roma population in Asturias is estimated at between 7,000 and 10,000 people, accounting for approximately 0.6% of the region's population, and is also concentrated around these three cities and their outlying areas. As in the rest of Spain, the presence of Roma in Asturias extends far back in history. According to information provided by Social Services and work carried out with 925 Roma families in Asturias (around 5,600 people), at the end of 2005 98 families, comprising 374 people, still lived in shacks. Between the years 2001 and 2005, 120 Roma families were enabled to move into publicly subsidised housing. Furthermore, 82 shacks were eliminated and emergency programmes have been implemented to assist 113 families.

In 1950, Avilés was at the centre of a farming and livestock district with a population of 21,000. In the 60s it became an industrial, steel-making city attracting unprecedented migration, which gave rise to hasty urban development in response to the pressing needs of industry. By the 70s, the population of Avilés had swelled to 82,000, a three-fold increase over a 20-year period. The steel crisis, which struck at the end of the 80s and continued into the early 90s, led to the closure of

³⁰ Figures as of 01.01.05 (National Statistics Institute).

ENSIDESA, the principal firm operating in the district. This serious blow to the region's economy caused rapid depopulation in Avilés, which today has 83,800 inhabitants.

The 50s and 60s were also years of important migratory movements for the Roma population, both within the region and from other parts of Spain. The Asturian Roma, who traditionally worked in the livestock trade, as seasonal field hands, in basket weaving and other subsistence activities, settled in the region's developing areas in urban centres such as Oviedo, Gijón and Avilés, as well as in the Nalón and Cauda basins. These groups were joined by other Roma families, mostly from neighbouring areas such as León, La Coruña, Santander and the Basque Country. Roma migrants settled on the outskirts of expanding cities, building shacks grouped together in different locations. These Roma communities lived in a state of marginalisation, characterised by the virtual absence of regular and stable employment, shanty town dwellings, unhealthy living conditions, urgent sanitation problems, low school-enrolment rates, etc. and the situation grew even worse over time due, *inter alia*, to natural population growth. It was only at the end of the 80s that the first serious initiatives emerged to address the problem.

(See Annex 2 for the distribution of the Roma population in Avilés by shanty town in 1989.)

3.2 Shanty town Eradication Programme (Spanish acronym PECH)

The Spanish central government took a series of initiatives at the end of the 80s which had repercussions for how the situation of the Roma population would be addressed. In 1989 a Plan for the Development of Roma People was created under the auspices of the Ministry of Social Affairs and budgetary funds were earmarked for the co-financing of programmes with autonomous communities and municipalities. In 1988 the Co-ordinated Scheme for the Implementation of Basic Benefits was put in place to bolster the role played by social services agencies in cities and towns. Beginning in 1989, funds were channelled from the 0.52% of personal income tax which citizens may set aside, if they wish, for social initiatives targeting excluded groups (Roma among them) through programmes managed by NGOs.

In 1989 the City of Avilés launched what was known as the Ethnic Minority Integration Scheme (Spanish acronym PIME), focused on registration, school enrolment, health-care and labour market integration. Based on the recognition that solving the Roma community's housing problems was essential for their integration, the Avilés Shanty Town Eradication Programme (Spanish acronym PECH) was launched within the framework of this scheme.

3.2.1 Objectives of the PECH

The overarching objective of the PECH is to eradicate shanty towns in Avilés by enabling shack-dwellers to move into standard housing, with measures supporting socio-labour market integration of the Roma population and fostering intercultural co-existence.

This major objective calls for integrated intervention in different areas of action with operational objectives and definition of responsibilities and resources. These comprise:

- **Housing:** Provide access to decent housing, aiding co-existence and social integration; refurbish the urban environment formerly occupied by eradicated settlements.
- **Training and employment:** Improve personal and social employability of Roma.

- **Education:** Enrol all minors in school and raise awareness of the importance of formal education both as a right and as a means of providing access to mainstream society on an equal footing.
- **Health-care:** Encourage practices to raise living standards.
- **Social participation:** Stimulate communication processes, both internally (within the Roma community itself) and externally (with mainstream society), with a view to enhancing mutual awareness and improving intercultural co-existence.

3.2.2 Phases of the PECH

The first phase from 1989 until 1996 started with the launch of the programme. Soon after, in 1990, a study was conducted to analyse the situation. The initiative was carried out mainly by the Social Services working with 770 Roma, 60% of whom were living in shacks. Action focused mainly on Villalegre, the largest shanty town. An agreement was signed with the San Martín Charitable Construction firm which took responsibility for acquiring and refurbishing homes intended for the resettlement of shanty town families. However agencies responsible for implementing the programme were obliged to limit their areas of action and to reschedule deadlines due to insufficient human and economic resources for achieving planned objectives. Meanwhile a certain, though inadequate, number of Roma families were resettled in standard housing (urban flats) during this period.

During the second phase, from 1996 until 2000, more families were relocated to standard urban housing but this phase was particularly characterised by the establishment of Valliniello, a temporary, purpose-built village in an isolated area of the city on the opposite bank of the estuary. The purpose of this transitional arrangement, comprising 36 two-storey homes, was to help Roma families from shanty town settlements adapt to their new situation in preparation for a further move into standard housing within a five-year period. This adaptation process entailed integrated programmes focusing on social intervention, co-existence, home and neighbourhood upkeep, monitoring of children's education, health education, employment, etc.

The third phase, from 2000 onwards, was marked by the approval of a new shanty town eradication programme and the rejection of the transitional housing model, which had been acknowledged as a failure. A work methodology was adopted featuring new objectives and a significant budget increase. The Social Welfare Committee took the decision to create an Ethnic Minority Working Group, consisting of a variety of different social players (including Roma families), who agreed a new plan. The San Martín Charitable Construction firm was turned into a foundation with the participation of several different public bodies. The goal was the permanent eradication of all shanty towns and by 2003 the towns of Villalegre, Divina Pastora, Fuente Santos, Superchas and Gaxín had all disappeared. Relocation initiatives were encouraged with the support of the San Martín Foundation in which the municipality purchased and refurbished standard flats and rented them to Roma families. Simultaneously with these developments a new home rental programme was introduced.

3.2.3 Players and work methodology

Concerning Municipal leadership in the project, the most important characteristic of the PECH is that both the initiative and leadership have come from the city government throughout the entire process. The initiative has always come from the local authorities in accordance with

administrative decentralisation right down to municipal level and the principle of subsidiarity between governmental bodies. Hence, it is the city government which decides to implement the plans, coordinates them, exercises leadership and establishes the structures it deems most suitable to carry them out.

As regards Partnership as a work methodology, the experience gained during phases one and two of the programme and lessons learned from mistakes made, motivated the city to come up with a new work strategy beginning in 2000. This was possible thanks to a change in government, growing social awareness of the problems, the increasingly important role played by professionals and the good will and understanding of all involved.

The decision taken by the Social Welfare Council - the advisory body for social policy - to create the Ethnic Minority Working Group consisting of different stakeholders, and especially the way discussions were conducted, enabling consensus to be reached on the fundamental pillars of action and the 28 key measures, were all extremely important factors in the results obtained during the last phase. The working group consisted of political parties represented in the Municipal Plenum (1999-2003); collaborating social entities; Roma groups and representatives; trade unions and municipal services. The very fact that this group comprised technical experts, politicians from different parts of the spectrum, social entities and Roma associations marked the beginning of a social consensus process providing strong citizen-based enthusiasm for the development of the project.

As regards the mobilisation of resources and creation of synergies, the different public and private entities forming the network became involved in addressing the priority areas of action thus making possible the execution of the Second Municipal Shanty town Eradication Scheme. This scheme benefited from the financial support of the Town Hall, the Principality of Asturias and the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs and from the technical and social support of the different municipal services involved and of bodies such as the Fundación Secretariado Gitano (FSG), the San Martín Foundation, the Red Cross, UNGA, Cáritas, Roma associations and trade unions.

A crucial feature of the scheme is that it comprises an integrated plan for, in addition to putting the major focus on housing, i.e. the eradication of shanty towns and the transition village called the Promotional City of Valliniello, the other key aspects of education, health, employment and co-existence are also addressed. The municipal social services take the initiative in the coordination of actions and approach each person and family on an individual basis in accordance with their personal insertion itinerary which leads to the creation of common information tools. This emphasis on coordination prioritises operational understanding in everyday work thus preventing the creation of burdensome, inter-departmental structures between municipal and regional governments, which could delay decision-making and create inefficiencies.

Resettlement of families was undertaken by a specialist agency - the San Martín Charitable Construction firm - which, in 2001, was reconstituted into the San Martín Foundation with members from different agencies and social bodies on its board of trustees. This has given it renewed impetus in seeking solutions to the housing problems endured by excluded persons. Its long and considerable experience, the support it receives from different bodies, its specialisation and flexibility have made this organisation an ideal instrument for undertaking the sensitive processes of relocation, which would proceed much more slowly if they were managed directly by the municipality.

The San Martín Foundation is in charge of finding suitable homes and, in accordance with municipal social services and based on the criteria of the PECH, takes the decision whether or not to acquire them. It subsequently renovates them as required and, based on established

criteria, chooses the family to which the home will be allocated. An agreement is reached with the family, a rental contract is signed, and a price suited to the family's socio-economic conditions is established. Social support for the family continues after the relocation process has been concluded and consists of monitoring their integration into the new neighbourhood.

3.2.4 Resources, economic investment and financial backers

Mobilised resources: One of the characteristics of the programme is that throughout its recent development it has taken advantage of all available opportunities to attract economic resources, establish synergies with the different bodies involved and, in short, make the best of available means in an efficient manner. Resources have been mobilised from different public bodies and various private initiatives and many collaborative schemes have been established with other partners. This has allowed the emergence of complementary activities to the programme, the achievement of updated monitoring of the Roma community and, to sum up, the acquisition of fuller knowledge, with improved possibilities for following up and better utilisation of resources.

Economic investment and financial backers: The table in Annex 3 shows budget investment in the programme throughout its implementation. Programme expenditure over the past 18 years has totalled €8,691,610.05 with contributions being: 45.3% from the Town Hall, 46% from the Principality of Asturias (regional government) and 8.4% from the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs. The table shows that, with the exception of just a few years, central government funding remained steady over time and rose during the last few years thanks to the Programme for the Eradication of Poverty. The Autonomous Community has participated every year as a co-funder but the amounts have fluctuated. 1996 was particularly significant, since the transition village of Valliniello was built in that year, but also the years 2000, 2001 and 2002 when there was an increase in the number of homes purchased. The Town Hall has steadily increased its funding, especially in 1996 and 2001-2002.

3.3 Main results of the programme

The most relevant data relating to housing and the current situation (2003 data) of the shanty town families participating in the PECH are given here.³¹

It is important to point out that one of the criteria considered when resettling families was the distribution of the Roma population throughout the municipality. The table in Annex 3 shows that housing purchases and rentals took place in four different parts of the city. There were also 12 relocations outside of the municipal district (to neighbouring municipalities). This initiative was taken in the case of families considered to need a home with special characteristics which was not available within the municipality. These were found with the help of the social services of the towns hosting the relocated families. For a Map of distribution of flats used for resettlement in Avilés, see Annex 4. When distributing families throughout the city's different zones, an effort was made not to relocate more than one family in the same block of flats. For Current type of housing of the surveyed population by zone, see Annex 5.

The main quantitative results show that 112 shanty town families were resettled in standard housing in line with geographical dispersion criteria and tailoring homes to the characteristics of each family; 14 families obtained a house for rent in the regular market and; 17 Roma families

³¹ More detailed socio-demographic information can be found in the book entitled *Eradicación del Chabolismo e Integración Social de los Gitanos en Avilés* (Agulló et al: 113-160).

taking part in the Experimental Programme for Access to Rental Housing, initiated in 2005, were provided with housing from the mainstream rental market. But there have also been other qualitative impacts such as the eradication of all shanty town settlements in Aviles; high 'standardisation' rates in areas such as health, registration and school enrolment; improved urban environments at the sites of the previous shanty town settlements through different urban planning initiatives; encouragement of specific civic associations, especially those focusing on youth and women (NGOs such as *Mulheres Divina Pastora*, *L'quel de los Chaborros*, *Mujeres Bambani*, *Mujeres Chachipen*); increased interaction and intercultural co-existence between the Roma and non-Roma populations. The Programme has transformed the political and social approach of working with minority groups. Evidence for this can be seen in the following results: Contribution to mainstreaming and progress in Roma community access to the labour market; individualised insertion itineraries, minimum income, current basic social salary, local employment schemes, access to vocational training resources such as workshop schools, FIP schemes (professional insertion training), social support, employment workshops, etc. Minimal social conflict during the relocation process; wide-ranging political and social consensus in respect of the integration of ethnic minorities in the municipality and; progressive integral intervention on exclusion through networking which facilitates action on complex social vulnerability processes leading to exclusion.

4. Relevance and transferability to other national contexts

4.1 Peer review partner countries

Of the seven peer review partners, the greatest similarities are to be found in the situation of the five CEE states (**Bulgaria**, the **Czech Republic**, **Hungary**, **Slovakia** and to a lesser extent **Slovenia**). All except the first of these countries³² eventually became EU members in 2004 and all had previously lived under Communist regimes for forty years or more. While Communist rule is generally regarded as repressive, for Roma too in some ways, this period represented a profound transformation in their lives for the vast majority of CEE Roma.

After the Second World War, their overall situation throughout the region changed from that of impoverished and marginalised outcasts, dependent on minimal payments from patrons, to one where for the first time in history many became part of the mainstream labour force, albeit overwhelmingly as unskilled workers. While some have sharply criticised this process as 'proletarianisation',³³ leaving unqualified Roma unemployable in the new market economies, many older Roma reflect benignly on the years when the insatiable demand of state socialist command economies for unskilled labour offered them the opportunity of reasonably paid jobs, access to low-cost public housing and mainstream services. While Communist regimes were unable to eliminate completely the segregated, shanty town settlements, they did nevertheless manage to rehouse large numbers of Roma.

This relative integration was in sharp contrast to the post-1990 situation when Roma suffered severe unemployment, an upsurge of racist attacks and overt discrimination, growing evictions from urban dwellings and increasing residential and educational segregation.³⁴ For post-

³² Bulgaria, together with Romania, became a member in January 2007.

³³ PER 1992: 8.

³⁴ Guy 2001: 8-15. While the broad policy thrust of Communist governments was on the whole insistently assimilatory, regarding the preservation of a distinct Roma ethnic identity as a barrier to the eventual integration of Roma into wider society, Roma were nevertheless offered a considerable measure of protection against

Communist administrations, grappling with the political and economic problems of transition, the rapidly worsening conditions of Roma were understandably not high on their agenda. Consequently, in contrast to the experience of their elders, far fewer young Roma nowadays have had non-Roma school friends or normal jobs with non-Roma workmates. It was this critical and mounting social exclusion that EU sought to reverse through its Phare Roma programmes, working together with governments, national coordinating bodies concerned with Roma issues and involved NGOs in candidate countries.³⁵

The remaining peer group partners, **Portugal** and **Greece**, differ from CEE countries in that their Roma have not shared in the experience of Communist rule and earlier state-driven, mainstream employment and rehousing initiatives. Instead, they more closely resemble the developmental pattern of Western Europe where Roma have sought a precarious livelihood in marginal economic niches,³⁶ although some have managed to achieve greater integration.

Hungary

Relevance - The national situation

Of all peer group participants it is the experience of Hungary that most resembles the example of Spain in general and Avilés in particular. In the confusion of the post-Communist transition process, Hungary was the first among CEE candidate countries to address systematically the predicament of its Roma population by first offering them the opportunity of representation by forming Roma Minority Self-Governments (RMSG)³⁷ following the 1993 Minorities Law and then producing medium and long-term plans for Roma integration in advance of comparable policies in neighbouring states. These plans retained the support of successive governments, even though led by parties of opposing political viewpoints.³⁸

During the EU accession process a centralised Phare office was established and Hungary was a major utiliser of Phare funds for Roma projects, matching these with substantial co-financing.³⁹ These positive initiatives were grounded on sustained and systematic sociological research that

direct discrimination. At the same time it should be recognised that certain segregatory trends amounting to institutionalised racism, emerged during the declining years of state socialist societies, most notably in the areas of education and housing.

³⁵ By 2000, all CEE peer review partners, as well as Greece, had adopted some form of strategic plan for integrating their Roma populations. The only exception was Portugal which still has no such overall strategy. These plans comprised - Bulgaria: the 1999 Framework Programme for Equal Integration of Roma and 2003 Action Plan for Implementation of the Strategy; Czech Republic: the 2000 Roma Integration Policy Concept; Hungary: the 1997 medium term package of measures aiming to improve the living conditions and social situation of Roma, amended in 1999; Slovakia: the 2001 Strategy for Improving the Situation of the Roma and 2003 Basic Thesis of the Government Policy Concept for Integration of Roma; Slovenia: the 1995 Programme of Measures to Assist Roma; Greece: the 1996 National Policy Framework in Favour of Greek Gypsies and 2002 Integrated Action Plan for the Social Integration of Greek Roma.

³⁶ Mirga and Gheorghe 1997: 5.

³⁷ These Roma Minority Self-Governments have also been criticised for their very limited powers (mainly concerned with cultural and educational matters), their separate status discouraging mainstreaming of Roma concerns and the democratic deficit of their electoral processes. Nevertheless a valuable by-product has been the resulting capacity-building of Roma organisations (Kovats 1998).

³⁸ Both leading political parties have appealed to Roma voters by including Roma politicians in their electoral lists. The only current Roma representation in the European Parliament is two Roma women MEPs from Hungary.

³⁹ In the 2004 five-country comparison of EU-supported Roma programmes, Hungary took the greatest share of Phare funding and matched this with the highest level of national co-financing (EMS 2004b: 4, table 1).

has continued from Communist times, including pioneering surveys of Roma.⁴⁰ Furthermore, since the early 1990s, Budapest has been a focal point for prominent Roma-related organisations.⁴¹

Potential for transferability

On a more detailed level the Hungarian peer review comments describe a Hungarian 'complex model programme' to improve the quality of life of Roma living in 'segregated settlements or city colonies', which appears very similar to the Avilés project in important respects.⁴² As with Avilés, this 2005 initiative addresses multiple factors of social exclusion in an integrated way, simultaneously tackling closely interrelated problems of segregated housing and education, unemployment, unequal access to services including health and also environmental issues. Likewise the administrative structure of this national programme involves various agencies at different levels, ranging from the coordinating Government Agency for Equal Opportunities supported by an Inter-ministerial Committee, to local municipalities as implementing agencies in cooperation with NGOs, RMSGs and other Roma organisations. Other features in common are that relocation to integrated housing is based on individualised family needs' assessments and that work is prioritised (participating municipalities must even 'ensure employment'), while decreasing educational segregation is a criterion for the selection of municipal bids.⁴³ Although this programme might appear targeted at Roma rather than a general initiative, the choice of coordinating body effectively serves to mainstream it under the broader rubric of inequality.

While appearing a comprehensive pilot project, queries arise about the extent of its impact,⁴⁴ since it depends on municipalities taking the initiative, and about whether employment offered will, in practice, often amount to more than short-term engagement on public works schemes – a poor guarantee of more permanent employment.⁴⁵ This was the discouraging experience with an earlier, ambitious Phare programme and it is to be hoped that appropriate lessons have been learnt.⁴⁶ However this is a first step towards a wider housing project also involving non-Roma and 'focusing on the 25-30 most disadvantaged micro-regions of Hungary', which will draw on the European Social Fund and European Regional Development Fund (2007-2013).⁴⁷

⁴⁰ Kemény 1974 & 1999, Havas *et al.* 1995, Szilágyi and Heizer 1996, Puporka and Zádori 1999, Ladányi and Szelényi 2002.

⁴¹ The influential European Roma Rights Centre (ERRC) is based there as is the regional office of the Open Society Institute (OSI) and more recently the office of OSI and World Bank-supported Decade of Roma Inclusion.

⁴² Kadét 2006.

⁴³ The Hungarian MoE Phare Office commissioned by an impact study of a 2000 Phare programme, aimed at the Social Integration of Disadvantaged Youth but targeted especially at Roma, which found that 'schools used the extra resources to finance their old and fixed practices', including segregation (EMS 2004b: 13-14). These 'shocking findings' were a stimulus for a 2003 law, prohibiting segregation in Hungarian schools (*ibid.*). Nevertheless, in Hungary, educational 'desegregation policy has been made operative primarily through financial incentive mechanisms, with few or no sanctions applied to schools refusing to implement or otherwise opting out of the integration policy' (ERRC/ENAR 2006: 3).

⁴⁴ Launched in 2005 with 9 municipalities, a further 16 will participate by the end of 2006 (Graham 2006: 11).

⁴⁵ Guy and Kovats 2006: 16, Focus *et al.* 2004: 24-25.

⁴⁶ This 2000 Phare programme (Roma Social Integration HU-0002-01), which ran until 2003, was evaluated at least twice by the independent European Monitoring Service (EMS 2002, 2003a) and in 2005-6, in part, by the Minority Rights Group with aid of a Roma NGO (Guy and Kovats 2006: 9-11).

⁴⁷ The 'complex model programme' is to be financed mainly from 'central and regional funding ... [and] other resources' (Kadét 2006: 93). However the requirement in the 2000 Phare programme for limited municipal co-funding did not increase (or diminish) local commitment but instead was found to have a damaging effect on the inadequate finances of already impoverished local communities (Guy and Kovats 2006: 10).

Slovakia

Relevance - The national situation

Slovakia, like Hungary, has elaborated a number of long term plans aimed at integrating its Roma population from the late 1990s onwards. Likewise, it has drawn heavily on Phare funding to support Roma programmes and also contributed a substantial share of co-financing during the period of EU accession and after.⁴⁸ Although such initiatives have been co-ordinated by a Government Office, under the Deputy Prime Minister, and encouraged by a Government Plenipotentiary for Roma Communities,⁴⁹ the political will required at the highest level to press for Roma social inclusion has occasionally appeared to waver following electoral changes. This situation is not helped by the fact that Slovakia currently has the highest unemployment rate⁵⁰ in the EU after Poland, and these rates are even higher in parts of central and eastern Slovakia where the majority of Roma live – mostly in segregated settlements or urban slums.⁵¹

A 1998 integrated, pilot programme in the Spiš district of eastern Slovakia was the precursor to a more comprehensive 2000 national Phare programme, which tackled inter-ethnic relations, vocational training and employment as well as education. These initiatives were further developed in following years including a major infrastructure project improving access roads, water supply and sewage for thirty segregated settlements.⁵² However, unlike in Avilés, neither this activity nor subsequent provision of social housing, as noted in peer comments, made any attempt to combat the segregation of Roma but instead preserved it.⁵³ Nevertheless Slovakia has now developed comprehensive housing plans, including low-cost housing for marginalised people, which express state commitment and offer potential for change.⁵⁴

Meanwhile the process of devolving formerly centralised powers has sometimes made it hard to implement national Roma policies,⁵⁵ particularly in education.⁵⁶ This only serves to stress the importance of the Avilés example, in a devolved system, of building effective partnerships and

⁴⁸ Slovakia was comparable to Hungary in its Phare involvement, lying in second place both for comparative share of Phare funding and level of co-financing (EMS 2004b: 4, table 1).

⁴⁹ The position of a separate Plenipotentiary for Roma-related issues, not matched for any other minority, could be seen as a barrier to mainstreaming Roma issues. However, in a situation of political uncertainty the continuing presence of this office has helped ensure that the situation of Roma has remained high on the national agenda.

⁵⁰ 16.3% in 2005 (Eurostat 2006).

⁵¹ In 2004, shortly before EU accession, the sudden introduction of a cap on social benefits sparked Roma food riots in thirteen Slovak towns leading the government to call on 2,000 police and soldiers to restore order (Pisárová 2004, *Sme* 2004).

⁵² All Roma-related Phare programmes from 2000, 2001 and 2002 referred to here were evaluated as 'unsatisfactory' in December 2003 with that providing infrastructure rated as the worst (EMS 2003b: IV). Infrastructure programmes accounted for 27% of all Phare resources in the 1998-2002 period with this particular project accounting for over half of them (EMS 2004b: 16, 17).

⁵³ Mačáková 2006: 108. See peer review comments for a detailed discussion of the Slovak situation.

⁵⁴ Housing initiatives include the State Housing Development Fund, offering municipalities or non-profit organisations subsidies of 80% for basic (lower quality) accommodation, with the remaining 20% contributed by the labour of future tenants, and the Housing Development Programme, providing state subsidies for infrastructure and the construction and repair of standard and basic accommodation. These are supplemented by the Plenipotentiary's Long-term Housing Plan for Marginalised Groups of People (Mačáková 2006: 106-7).

⁵⁵ EMS 2003b: 6. One of the thirty municipalities in the infrastructure programme withdrew from it completely.

⁵⁶ In the view of peer review stakeholders, little or no progress had been made towards educational desegregation in Slovakia (ERRC/ENAR 2006: 3). The emphasis in Slovak Phare education programmes had been on 'increased access to education' and it was not until 2004 that the government explicitly approved the concept of integrated education (Guy and Kovats 2006: 18, Slovak Government 2005b: 1).

winning local support. Initiatives to improve access to health services lagged behind other areas until an eventual 2003 Phare programme.⁵⁷ Whereas official estimates of Roma numbers had invariably been vague and inconsistent,⁵⁸ a breakthrough came in 2003/4 with the advent of sociographic mapping giving a reliable picture for the first time of the size and distribution of Roma communities since Roma censuses of the Communist era.⁵⁹ More accurate databases are advocated by the Decade of Roma Inclusion⁶⁰ to facilitate targeted and broader initiatives such as those supported by EU Social and Structural Funds to which Slovakia now recruits Roma.⁶¹ Databases are also needed for indicators to measure progress in social inclusion.

Potential for transferability

At national level the potential is high since the overall integrated approach corresponds closely to that adopted by the Plenipotentiary, prioritising employment as an essential part of the drive to rehouse disadvantaged Roma families. A major difference, however, is the acceptance in Slovakia of continuing residential segregation, albeit for pragmatic reasons, and the alternative strategy of providing community centres to promote better inter-ethnic relations and Roma 'socialisation'.⁶² There are clear parallels with the 'intermediate stage' scheme rejected in Avilés, meanwhile the issue of separated communities remains unresolved. The current practice of building new social housing on the margins on non-Roma towns and villages is simply prolonging the problem for future generations.⁶³

At local level an impressive initiative in Nálepkovo, a village in the Spiš district of eastern Slovakia, stands comparison with the case of Avilés.⁶⁴ This long-running, integrated project, combining employment, rehousing, counselling, social work and other activities, was not conceived in isolation but as part of a broader plan for municipal renewal, just as in Avilés, and is remarkable for various reasons. Not only does it target both Roma and non-Roma low income families but

⁵⁷ Health was not part of the *acquis* and this area accounted for only 3% of Phare funding in the 1998-2002 period (EMS 2004b: 3).

⁵⁸ Previously the Government Office and ministries had consistently maintained that to gather ethnic statistics, other than the misleading figures in the Census, would be in breach of data protection laws, although such statistics on Roma numbers were routinely compiled at more local levels.

⁵⁹ See Slovak Government (2005a) and Guy (2006: Annex 2). The official short report on the study stated that 'approximately half [of Roma people are now] integrated ... [and live] dispersed among the majority population'. Only 149 of the 1,575 Roma communities mapped were described as 'segregated'. However, to be classified as such, it was not sufficient to be located at a distance from non-Roma dwellings. In addition, two further criteria had to be satisfied by Roma communities – a piped water supply was not accessible (if available to the associated non-Roma community) and the proportion of illegal dwellings was higher than 20 percent (Slovak Government 2005a).

⁶⁰ An example is the UNDP database for Roma in Decade partner countries (UNDP 2005a).

⁶¹ Some of these appear problematic such as ESF activation programmes in Slovakia. Research has revealed cases of overt discrimination where 'the worst and lowest status positions are given to Roma', while there is often little likelihood of participation resulting in employment as is the goal of the ESF (Oravec and Bošelová 2006). Also see Mačáková (2006: 107, 109) for shortcomings in the ESF-funded Social Development Fund in Slovakia.

⁶² Both of these goals are potentially problematic. While some Phare-funded community centres associated with the follow-up to the infrastructure project did help improve inter-ethnic relations, others were used quite separately by Roma and non-Roma for their own purposes (EMS 2005a: 10-12). Likewise counselling, courses and other activities are often appreciated by Roma (Guy and Kovats 2006: 11, 13, 15) but might serve as a patronising substitute for meaningful inclusion, as in the Roma shantytowns in Madrid (Gay y Blasco 2003: 208).
⁶³ Mačáková 2006: 111. World Bank research in Slovakia found, unsurprisingly, that social integration of Roma, including employment rates, increases as the distance between Roma housing and the majority population decreases (World Bank *et al.* 2002: 13-14, cited Mačáková 2006: 106).

⁶⁴ This project, included as an example of good practice in the 2004-2006 NAPS I for Slovakia, was part-funded by a 1996 Phare labour market programme and pre-dates the Spiš pilot experiment (Slovak Government 2004).

appears exceptionally successful in finding jobs for participants in an area of very high unemployment.⁶⁵ As an NGO-led rather than government-promoted scheme it is supported by an international NGO and based on partnership with local employers, the local council and Roma organisations in the vicinity. The latter are involved in selection of families for rehousing, which includes an individualised needs assessment. Municipalities and others in Slovakia should take Nálepkovo as an example as well as drawing lessons from Avilés.

Czech Republic

Relevance - The national situation

Almost all the previous Roma inhabitants of the Czech lands perished in the Holocaust and consequently today's Roma population are mostly Roma from Slovakia or their descendants. The post-war Communist regime's adoption of a Soviet-style command economy, prioritising heavy industry and requiring high numbers of workers, led to large-scale migration of Roma to Czech industrial areas, particularly from rural, eastern Slovakia.⁶⁶ These migrant workers and their families were often allocated dilapidated state housing near town centres or factory accommodation, which explains the predominantly urban location of Czech Roma today.⁶⁷ Regime-change and consequent economic restructuring led to widespread unemployment and impoverishment of families of these largely unskilled workers, who also suffered racist attacks.

Although the post-Communist government was quick to provide some cultural support and to recognise Roma as a national minority, a 1993 Czech citizenship law sent Roma a clear message that they were unwanted and during the EU accession process the Czech Republic made significantly less use of Phare funds for Roma communities than its neighbours.⁶⁸ Only after official acceptance of a contested 1997 report⁶⁹ on the situation of Roma and a change of government was a coherent national strategy for Roma integration finally adopted in 2000 and subsequently reaffirmed annually.⁷⁰ The new approach included the establishment of a central coordinating council with a brief including research.⁷¹ Following the lead of Slovakia, a 2006 survey provided for the first time a reliable yet complex picture of excluded Roma localities.⁷²

⁶⁵ Almost half of Nálepkovo's inhabitants are Roma and in 2003 the general unemployment rate there reached 40% (Mačáková 2006: 52).

⁶⁶ Expulsion of the German minority of up to 3 million at the end of the Second World War exacerbated the shortage of workers and many Slovaks from poorer regions also migrated for work. Another post-war measure was the forcible relocation of large numbers of ethnic Hungarians to the Czech lands (Plichtová (1993: 14-15).

⁶⁷ Jamnická- Šmerglová 1955: 89. A systematic attempt in the 1960s to disperse Roma from rural Slovak shantytown settlements throughout the Czech lands collapsed as Roma continued to migrate to industrial areas where they could earn higher wages and already had relatives for support (Guy 1975).

⁶⁸ In the 2004 five-country comparison of EU-supported Roma programmes, the Czech Republic had by far the smallest share of Phare Roma funding (8%), even allowing for its smaller Roma population, in comparison with the countries with the largest shares (Hungary 28% and Slovakia 26%), the smallest average project size and lowest level of co-financing. The report commented that 'the variance in the levels of finance for each country ... may be an indication of the political commitment' (EMS 2004b: 4, table 1).

⁶⁹ Czech Government 1997.

⁷⁰ This prioritised improvements for Roma in social standing, housing conditions, employment, education and health levels, as well as 'halting the spread of ghettoisation'. The Concepts's goal was a significant, overall reduction in the social exclusion of Roma communities (Czech Government 2005, also see Abu Ghosh 2006: 74).

⁷¹ Research includes an annual report on the situation of Roma communities (Czech Government Council 2005).

⁷² This research, commissioned by the Czech Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs (MoLSA 2006) and Czech Government Council for Roma Community Affairs, identified more than 330 marginalised locations with a predominantly Roma population inhabited by more than 80,000 Roma. Housing conditions were very poor with

The low priority given by the EU to combating social exclusion until the late 1990s was reflected in the candidate countries' neglect of social issues, particularly housing.⁷³ In the Czech Republic poorer people, including many Roma, experienced a rapid erosion of the existing system of protected accommodation from 1991 onwards, due to policies of restitution of property to former owners, transfer of low-rental housing from the state to municipalities and privatisation and gentrification of previously neglected buildings near historic urban centres.⁷⁴ These processes were sometimes accelerated by evictions and removal of high-risk tenants to basic accommodation, often on the fringes of towns and remote from public services.⁷⁵

Potential for transferability

Roma had migrated to Czech industrial areas for work, as had Spanish Roma to Avilés, but unlike them had in the past experienced certain levels of integration through reasonably-paid mainstream employment and accommodation, which though generally sub-standard was far removed from shanty towns. Subsequent pressures on Roma to relocate have created new excluded areas. Although a central coordinating body has been established, as in Spain this possesses strictly limited authority due to the decentralisation of powers,⁷⁶ making Avilés-type initiatives, led by municipalities in cooperation with higher administrative structures and Roma organisations, as the only viable model. However, formal adoption of a goal of inclusion by municipalities does not, in itself, guarantee success since broad-based political will and committed partnership are essential,⁷⁷ as is adequate support for families to be rehoused among non-Roma.⁷⁸ This entails fully assisting integration in every aspect, particularly in employment⁷⁹

more than 50% of accommodation without hot water or heating. Among Roma living in these urban and rural 'ghettos', educational qualifications were 'minimal' and the unemployment rate was more than 90% (Walek in Graham 2006: 11, Abu Ghosh 2006: 71). See peer comments from the Czech Republic for fuller details (Abu Ghosh 2006: 71-3) and Annex 6.

⁷³ For example, 'housing has not been considered a political priority in Slovakia during the transition' (UNECE 1999, cited Mačáková 2006: 106).

⁷⁴ See Baršová 2003: 21-24 and Víšek 2003: 39-40. Even where Roma tenants caused no problems whatsoever, their mere presence was found to lower the value of both buildings and their associated apartments, increasing the incentive to remove them (Frištenská 2000: 29).

⁷⁵ Municipalities often deliberately shed their responsibilities by privatising properties with problem tenants – a strategy openly advocated in a Prague housing policy document. Their new isolated locations also cause problems with education and make access to job opportunities far more difficult (Baršová 2003: 23).

⁷⁶ The Government Council acknowledged its impotence, complaining that 'representatives and employees of local authorities have little information about the content of the government Concept [for Roma integration] and most of them are not too interested in it' (Czech Government Council: 2005: 12). This inability to direct regions and municipalities undermined funded programmes to promote Roma inclusion. Among the most serious shortcomings identified by evaluation research were poor targeting of funds, short-term and piecemeal projects and particularly the absence of coordination (ibid: 9, citing Šimíková et al. 2003).

⁷⁷ Brno Central municipality commissioned the design of a highly-regarded strategy for social inclusion of Roma but which an evaluation found 'declaratory in nature ... [and] did not lead to fulfilment [of the policies] in practice' (Navrátil and Šimíková 2003: 25). This report concluded 'the main reason for the lack of communication and co-operation [between administration, official agencies and Roma NGOs] is ... unwillingness and mistrust on the part of state [i.e. official] institutions' (ibid: 28). Also see Guy and Kovats (2006: 15).

⁷⁸ In the absence of effective support, there is a strong risk that integrated housing will be abandoned, leading to the re-emergence of pockets of exclusion where mutual assistance can be found.

⁷⁹ A principal Roma NGO partner in the Brno initiative is currently running an ESF EQUAL project to increase Roma employment. The 2002 UNDP comparative survey of five CEE countries found the lowest level of Roma seeing themselves as unemployed among Roma to be in the Czech Republic with the highest share of those in work engaged in the formal economy (80%) (UNDP 2002: 33, 35). In 2005 overall unemployment rate for the Czech Republic (7.9%) was less than half that for Slovakia (16.3%) (Eurostat 2006).

and education.⁸⁰ Recent Czech social housing for Roma has been similar to the 'intermediate stage' of Avilés⁸¹ and underpinned by a discredited 'culture of poverty' discourse. The rejection of this avenue as a failure should offer a valuable lesson to Czech local municipalities thinking to move the problem 'out of sight'.⁸²

Bulgaria

Relevance - The national situation

The largest Roma metagroup in Bulgaria was already settled in distinctive quarters (mahala) of Bulgarian towns and villages from Ottoman times but subsequently Roma numbers swelled following migrations from neighbouring Romania and elsewhere of two smaller metagroups, many of whose members were nomadic until fifty years ago.⁸³ As in Czechoslovakia an anti-nomadism law was passed in Bulgaria in 1958. These two Communist regimes were the most vigorous of all CEE countries in pursuing the goal of assimilation for Roma⁸⁴ by denying them a distinct identity while dispersing them amongst the majority population, recruiting them to the mainstream workforce and integrating their children to standard schools.⁸⁵ Reportedly former nomads welcomed their new housing⁸⁶ and the Communist period saw the share of urban-dwelling Roma increase to over half by 1972 from less than a fifth in 1945.⁸⁷ As mostly unskilled workers, Bulgarian Roma were hard-hit by the effects of regime change and since the economy was relatively slow to adapt, many Bulgarians, including Roma, migrated abroad.⁸⁸

After years of relative inaction by post-Communist governments, an inter-departmental council was recast in 1997. Dissatisfaction spurred Roma organisations to take the lead in formulating the 1998 Framework Policy,⁸⁹ an integrated and dynamic approach to Roma inclusion.⁹⁰ Although subsequent government initiatives have been aimed at implementing this concept, change has

⁸⁰ Consignment of Roma to 'special schools' for the 'mentally handicapped' was probably more widespread in the Czech Republic than elsewhere in the CEE region. By 1999 the proportion of all Roma children in such schools was officially estimated at 'roughly three quarters' and this was 'subject to growing criticism from abroad where such schools are seen as tools of enforced segregation and ominous signs of a slide to apartheid' (Czech Government 1999: 7,8). For Czech special schools, see ERRC (1999) and for educational segregation, see ERRC 2004. There is little evidence of progress towards desegregation (ERRC/ENAR 2006: 3).

⁸¹ Meanwhile a social inclusion programme - Construction of Rental Flats for Low-Income Persons, which could benefit Roma, has not been used in this way. Instead, local authorities 'apply for projects that do not affect the Roma communities in any way whatsoever' (Czech Government 2005: 25, cited Abu Ghosh 2006: 74).

⁸² This option was among those also rejected by the 2006 Czech research as leading to 'deepening ... exclusion and even to segregation' (MoLSA 2006: 112, Annex 3).

⁸³ Amongst these heterogeneous groupings, which are still in flux, a variety of languages are spoken. For a more detailed picture of the complexities of Roma groupings in Bulgaria, see Marushiakova and Popov (2001b).

⁸⁴ Until the early 1950s, however, a distinct Roma identity was acknowledged (ibid: 375). Later, Turkish-speaking Roma were also affected by anti-Turkish assimilatory measures (Crowe 1994: 24-27).

⁸⁵ Crowe 1994: 22-23. From 1979, however, a move towards educational segregation was initiated (ibid: 25-26).

⁸⁶ Helsinki Watch 1991: 20-21.

⁸⁷ Marushiakova and Popov 1997: 98-99.

⁸⁸ See Marushiakova *et al.* (2004) for an account of the ingenuity of migrating Bulgarian Roma. A comparative study found that while Roma are the most deprived group in every country, poverty levels among non-Roma in Bulgaria were equivalent to those of Roma in Hungary (Ladány and Szelényi 2002: 29).

⁸⁹ The *Framework Policy for Equal Participation of Roma in the Public Life of Bulgaria*. See Marushiakova and Popov (2001b: 378-387) for post-Communist developments in Bulgarian Roma policy and Roma activism.

⁹⁰ The Framework Policy called for 'a state body to fight discrimination, desegregation of "Gypsy schools", legalisation of existing Gypsy neighbourhoods' and many other measures (Marushiakova and Popov: 2001b 380).

been slow.⁹¹ The 2004 EC Regular Report on Bulgaria's progress to accession concluded: 'Efforts have been made in the past years to develop a framework to tackle the problems faced by minorities, but the situation on the ground has not developed much. Sustained efforts including allocation of appropriate financial resources will be necessary to effectively implement the intentions'.⁹² Bulgaria has now reorganised its coordinating committee⁹³ and has assumed the presidency of the Decade of Roma Inclusion. Furthermore it has introduced new legislation and national action plans (NAP), as detailed in the peer comments. Phare and other programmes are targeted at key areas of housing, infrastructure, employment, vocational training, education and health⁹⁴ in an integrated and inclusive manner, taking into account other disadvantaged minorities (e.g. Turkish).

Potential for transferability

Bulgarian peer review participants have identified as 'the most relevant aspect' of the Avilés example the overall conception of the project, which envisages a 'deep and complete process of social inclusion'. This necessarily requires 'an integrated and multi-sectorial approach', recognising the need for 'continuing support in key areas'.⁹⁵ The multi-annual Phare-supported programme and NAP for the Decade of Roma Inclusion both address 'a wide range of sectors' but capacity for effective coordination is crucial.⁹⁶ Employment and education are both seen as crucial components, although desegregated education is not emphasised.⁹⁷ Another feature in common is the involvement of Roma in projects, particularly as assistant teachers and health mediators.⁹⁸ A major difference, however, is the common CEE approach of seeking to improve living conditions and promoting inclusion while leaving Roma in segregated surroundings.⁹⁹

⁹¹ Prominent Bulgarian ethnological researchers of Roma wrote in 2001 that: 'the Bulgarian state ... still prefers to simulate activity instead of making use of the existing potential for change' (Marushiakova and Popov 2001b: 380).

⁹² Cited EMS 2004b: 5. In the 2004 five-country comparison of Phare Roma funding, only the Czech Republic had a lower share than Bulgaria, though Bulgaria is estimated to have the second largest Roma population in Europe at around 750,000 (EMS 2004b: 4, Liégeois and Gheorghe (1995: 7).

⁹³ Now the National Council for Cooperation on Ethnic and Data Issues (NCCEDI) with an attached implementing agency, the Directorate 'Ethnic and Data Issues' (DEDI). Identified deficiencies in the status and capacity of the previous body were perpetuated in its successor and its role has been queried (EMS 2005b, UNDP 2005b: 132).

⁹⁴ Many of the poorest Roma in Bulgaria are excluded from social health insurance, since this is dependent on eligibility for social benefits (EMS 2005b, ERRC/ENAR 2006: 5).

⁹⁵ Bojilov 2006: 5.

⁹⁶ UNDP 2005b: 131-2. However decentralisation makes municipal involvement, if not leadership, essential.

⁹⁷ In Bulgaria, initiatives to desegregate education have been pioneered by NGOs (ERRC/ENAR 2006: 3), as in Vidin, rather than by the state and 'government policy on desegregation, though determined on paper, is in fact indecisive' (Kanev and Vassileva 2004: 221-2). Although ministry instructions for integration were issued in 2002, school enrolment is in the hands of municipalities and by the start of 2004 'no government or local authority ha[d] made any effort to begin the desegregation of schools anywhere in Bulgaria' (ibid: 227-9). Residential segregation is often accompanied by educational segregation in ghetto schools (ERRC 2004: 67-70).

⁹⁸ The use of Roma assistant teachers has been controversial for if they have only received basic training, this makes them dubious role models for Roma students as *de facto* 'second class teachers'. These assistant teachers now have fuller education and a proper career structure. Similar problems of a legitimate and recognised place within the institutional structure also dogged health mediators but this issue remained problematic.

⁹⁹ Plans include road repairs to Roma quarters, infrastructure projects and legal registration of Roma dwellings and examples of the indicative national programme in action, including involvement of local Roma NGOs, are cited by the UNDP (2005b:78-87).

Slovenia

Relevance - The national situation

As in Bulgaria, some Roma have been long-settled in urban quarters in former Yugoslavia but this population is also extremely varied, including nomadic groups. Unlike Bulgaria, however, post-1945 Yugoslavia was the most tolerant Communist state towards Roma and many were able to integrate while publicly affirming their Roma identity. Like other Yugoslavs in the 1970s, some Roma migrated for work, mainly to Germany, to where many would later return as refugees when the federation disintegrated in the bloody struggles of the 1990s in which Roma were sometimes manipulated by warring ethnic groups. Other Roma migrated to Slovenia.¹⁰⁰ This smallest, most homogeneous and relatively prosperous, successor state managed to escape serious fighting but did receive its share of refugees, including Roma, who experienced severe difficulties in obtaining either Slovene residency or citizenship.¹⁰¹

Although Slovenia was a candidate country with a significant Roma minority and a limited number of Phare-funded projects,¹⁰² it was not criticised for slow progress in EC reports,¹⁰³ as were other CEE countries, probably due to its relatively low numbers of Roma., probably due to its relatively low numbers of Roma. This was in spite of the fact that they were not recognised as a national minority.¹⁰⁴ Other reports¹⁰⁵ suggest that the situation of Roma in Slovenia, with very high unemployment¹⁰⁶ and poor living conditions including shanty towns, is not dissimilar from elsewhere in CEE countries.

In 1995 the government adopted a Programme of Measures to Assist Roma, asking ministries and municipalities to help deprived Roma communities in problems of housing, work, education and health, but an official review of its impact was only published in 1999. Following the 1995 initiative, some progress was made on legalisation of settlements¹⁰⁷ and provision of social housing but the 1999 report described government funding for municipalities as 'merely symbolic'

¹⁰⁰ As in the case of Avilés, this migration northwards and westwards was largely for employment (Perić 2001: 1).

¹⁰¹ Not only refugees had problems but also much earlier migrants. Like the Czech Republic in 1993, Slovenia passed a 1991 law denying citizenship to non-Slovene Yugoslavs, including many Roma, classing them as 'foreigners' even if they had lived for many years in Slovenia. The Helsinki Monitor of Slovenia estimated that 130,000 non-Slovenes were affected. 'Foreign' Roma among them were termed 'non autochthonous' (ibid). As in the case of the Czech Republic, once more, pressure from local and international human rights organisations led to a 1999 act, enabling those trapped in this way to apply for permanent residence – but only during a brief, three-month period. Many Roma were unaware of this provision and remain in their previous situation (Perić 2001: 1-2). Legal changes in 2002 still left 'non autochthonous' Roma without access to citizenship (ERRC/ENAR 2006: 5).

¹⁰² EC 2002: 30.

¹⁰³ Ibid: 5-6.

¹⁰⁴ Unlike the smaller Hungarian (6,243) and Italian minorities (2,258), which they outnumber (Census 2002). The Roma population is estimated at between 7,000 and 10,000, although the 2002 census figure was 3,246, and is recognised as 'a special community with special ethnic characteristics'. Article 65 of the 1991 Slovene Constitution states that 'the status and special rights of the Roma Community living in Slovenia shall be regulated by law' (Baluh 2006: 1-2). Fifteen years after being enshrined in the Constitution, a Roma Community Act is nearing completion (ibid: 4).

¹⁰⁵ Kenrick (2001: 407-9), Perić (2001), Baluh (2006).

¹⁰⁶ In spite of Slovenia's relative prosperity and a general unemployment rate of 6.5% for 2005 (Eurostat 2006), Roma unemployment is estimated at 98% (Baluh 2006: 3).

¹⁰⁷ A 1997 internal government report noted 'progress on the legalisation of Romani settlements had failed to meet expectations, and warned of insufficient cooperation between state organs and municipalities' (Perić 2001: 14).

and predicted a worsening of inter-ethnic relations unless this was increased.¹⁰⁸ Contrary to expectations, the employment situation for Roma worsened after 1995 and a new Roma employment plan was launched in 2000 involving vocational training, subsidised employment, public works schemes and Roma cooperatives.¹⁰⁹ To improve education levels, the 1995 programme envisaged two years of pre-school training but since poor people were not exempted from kindergarten fees, Roma were deterred from sending their children.¹¹⁰ A new 'Strategy for Education of Roma' was adopted in 2004, comprising kindergartens, Roma assistant teachers, teacher training, *Romanes* language lessons as well as other measures.¹¹¹

Potential for transferability

Earlier initiatives were praised for recognising key problems but also criticised for being too vague and consequently for not leading to effective implementation of recommended strategies to achieve the desired goals. Lack of cooperation between ministries and municipalities was also identified as a fundamental weakness.¹¹² Peer review comments stress the need for Roma involvement and a forthcoming Roma Community Act¹¹³ is said to support active involvement of Roma in the preparation and implementation of policies.¹¹⁴ The encouragement of Roma organisations,¹¹⁵ linked together in the Roma Union of Slovenia, with a Forum of Roma Women, should increase Roma participation, as should the election in 2002 of Roma councillors in all municipalities with Roma inhabitants.¹¹⁶

Greece

Relevance - The national situation

Roma in Greece represent the extreme differences that can be found among this population.¹¹⁷ Present-day communities range from tent dwellers, paradoxically the longest established yet most marginalised group, to integrated Roma who can nevertheless suffer discrimination.¹¹⁸ Historically, Greece was an important stopover for Roma before dispersing throughout Europe and there were no expulsions or legislative action taken against them as elsewhere. Due to their

¹⁰⁸ Two years later this had not happened and it was reported that 'the authorities' methods of addressing housing issues have involved coercion, forcible removal and segregation' (ibid: 13-14).

¹⁰⁹ Ibid.

¹¹⁰ Ibid: 17. Another common problem was segregated education in kindergartens and primary schools or the assignment of Roma to 'special schools'. Although Roma children achieve better results in integrated classes, 'it is reportedly up to the schools themselves, and not the Ministry, to decide whether classes are segregated' (ibid: 18).

¹¹¹ Baluh 2006: 3.

¹¹² Perić 2001: 19.

¹¹³ This is the long-awaited legislation promised in the 1991 Constitution.

¹¹⁴ Communication and interchange of information is helped by two Roma radio and TV stations and coverage of Roma-related issues in national media outlets (Baluh 2006: 4).

¹¹⁵ Reported as currently 23 organisations (Baluh in Graham 2006: 13).

¹¹⁶ Baluh 2006: 3-4. An unpublished 2004 survey of municipalities with Roma councillors, including interviews with municipal officials and Roma councillors, reveals predictable teething problems that hopefully will be resolved in time. It was reported that '20 new Roma councillors' had been returned in the most recent local elections on 22 October 2006 (Baluh in Graham 2006: 13).

¹¹⁷ Estimates of the size of the Roma population in Greece vary widely from 70,000 to 300,000 (see Abdikeeva 2005: 6). The latest 2002-8 Integrated Action Plan (see below) gives a figure of 250,000 to 300,000 (Alexandridis 2001: 7), which corresponds to the estimate of 200,000 to 300,000 in the peer review comments (Ioannis 2006: 2).

¹¹⁸ There is also a substantial community of Albanian Roma in Greece, who like many others migrated for work after the ending of Communist rule in Albania. Although mostly living legally in Greece, few have Greek citizenship and are not covered by state initiatives for Roma (Abdikeeva 2005: 6).

long-standing presence in Byzantium, Roma were among the population groups drawn into the formation of the modern Greek nation, resulting in a multi-layered sense of identity.¹¹⁹ One important segment of Greek Roma is the mostly settled grouping, expelled from Asia Minor along with other Greeks as part of the 1922 population exchange of Greeks and Turks.¹²⁰ Many benefited from resettlement measure for refugees and some also from a later 1955 law when Greece first attempted to provide Roma with citizenship.¹²¹

As in Spain, economic development from an agricultural to a more urban economy in the 1970s and 1980s impacted on Roma, making their former occupations less viable.¹²² These changes resulted in unemployment, greater impoverishment and a growth of shanty towns or camps on the periphery of towns and villages.¹²³ Greece joined the EU in 1981 but it was not until 1996 that the first attempt to tackle the situation of Roma came with the adoption of a National Policy Framework.¹²⁴ Although the planned measures included the construction of five new temporary settlements within a year and assessments of Roma housing and educational needs, a 1999 study reported on the continuing, appalling conditions in shanty towns,¹²⁵ while a year later the official implementation review found only minimal progress.¹²⁶ The successor Integrated Action Plan (2002-8),¹²⁷ coordinated by an inter-ministerial committee, appears similar to the Spanish model in adopting a multi-sectorial approach. This focuses on two main areas, 'structures' (including housing)¹²⁸ and 'services' (employment, vocational training, education and health).

¹¹⁹ Ioannis 2006: 1-2. 'In Serres, Roma residents reportedly signed a petition against all designations, whether *yiftoi* ("gyps"), *tsigganoi* ("Gypsies") or Roma, insisting they were Greeks' (Abdikeeva 2005: 13, endnote 66).

¹²⁰ Ibid., Alexandridis 2001: 1.

¹²¹ Nevertheless the majority of Greek Roma remained stateless and this law was followed by further decrees in 1978 and 1979 to extend Greek citizenship to Roma (Alexandridis 2001: 1). Although Greek Roma are encouraged to obtain citizenship, they are not acknowledged as a national minority since Greece, like France, does not recognise this concept as applying to it. However Greece has signed, though not ratified, the CoE Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities (Abdikeeva 2005: 13, endnote 59).

¹²² Employment patterns were similar to those in Spain and mostly in the informal economy without insurance or social protection. Rural occupations included seasonal agricultural work, while common urban livelihoods were the collection of waste materials, particularly scrap metal, and trading wares in markets (Abdikeeva 2005: 7).

¹²³ Ioannis 2006: 2. Possibly as many as half the Roma in Greece were living in shacks, huts and tents, but even more permanent accommodation was often in need of repairs and basic infrastructure, while nomadic groups had problems in finding temporary stopping places (ibid., Alexandridis 2001: 1).

¹²⁴ This 8-page document envisaged measures to make improvements in housing, employment, education and health under the supervision of a coordinating Policy Council. As well as advising government, the Council was expected to formulate a fuller national policy and consult with international organisations concerned with Roma rights (Alexandridis 2001: 4).

¹²⁵ Abdikeeva 2005: 7.

¹²⁶ None of the planned settlements had been built and the first Roma relocation in 2000, of 'Greece's largest destitute community', was not in the 1996 plan but was only built in response to NGO pressure, supported by the Greek ombudsman. The co-ordinating Council was not established until 2000 (Alexandridis 2001: 5).

¹²⁷ The 1996 Framework had funding of around €8.8 million from the state budget for the years 1996-1997 (ibid: 4). The more ambitious 2002-8 Action Plan has a budget of cca. €300 million, of which 57% is allocated for structures and 43% for services (Abdikeeva 2005: 8). This draws on both the state budget and the third EU Structural Fund (Alexandridis 2001: 6).

¹²⁸ The Action Plan includes provision for 100 new settlements, 4,000 new houses, repairs to 1,100-1,200 existing houses and 60 camping sites for itinerant Roma (ibid.). Subsidised loans of around €60,000 are available for house purchases and some Roma families have used these to buy or build houses in non-Roma communities (Ioannis in Graham 2006: 12).

Potential for transferability

As in Spain, the current Greek Action Plan addresses inter-related aspects of deprivation in an integrated way, although there seem lessons that might be learnt. For example, concerns have been raised about effectiveness in coordination, implementation and monitoring of projects,¹²⁹ while funding has not always materialised.¹³⁰ Also working groups have not been set up.¹³¹ As noted in peer comments, the proposed new settlements in place of shanty towns resemble the rejected second phase of the Avilés project in that they remain segregated.¹³²

At local level, the integration of Roma families into non-Roma surroundings is seen as viable for Greece, with flexibility allowing for varied identities.¹³³ Careful selection of these families on an individual basis would be required, as would be provision of adequate support.¹³⁴ Given the diversity of Roma communities in Greece, in many cases the improvement of conditions and services in existing settlements is envisaged in a 'step-by-step approach'.¹³⁵ Here the worry is that although families may be suitable and willing to be integrated, the resistance and power of local authorities might make this unrealisable,¹³⁶ although successful cooperation between local government and Roma organisations sometimes occurs.¹³⁷ However municipal leadership and political will are often lacking and party consensus has not been achieved,¹³⁸ while partnerships often exist only on paper.¹³⁹

PortugalRelevance - The national situation

Portugal, as part of the Iberian peninsula, resembles Spain more than any other peer review participant as regards the characteristics¹⁴⁰ and history of Roma communities but their situation is very different since the general context is far less favourable for positive policy development. In Portugal, the economy is not as buoyant as in Spain,¹⁴¹ governments tend to be short-lived,¹⁴²

¹²⁹ 'The IAP does not contain clear information on monitoring and evaluation ... Even the Greek authorities acknowledge that the IAP's implementation has suffered from a lack of information, transparency and coordination' (Abdikeeva 2005: 8). 'Overall many efforts have been made in Greece but they were done in a fragmentary manner thus failing to respond in an integrate way'. The 'inter-ministerial committee ... has not developed mechanisms to monitor and evaluate the implementation of projects' (Ioannis 2006: 3).

¹³⁰ Ioannis 2006: 3.

¹³¹ Ibid.

¹³² Ibid.

¹³³ Identity, in the context of hybridity, is conceptualised as multi-layered and far more complex than the simple 'polarity of Gadjó and Rom'. 'We should understand our lives as "a migration through different social worlds and as the successive realisation of a number of possible cross-cutting identities"' (ibid: 1).

¹³⁴ Client-centred services are recognised as particularly appropriate (ibid: 4).

¹³⁵ Ibid: 3-4.

¹³⁶ Abdikeeva 2005: 9, Alexandridis 2001: 8.

¹³⁷ Ioannis 2006: 3.

¹³⁸ Clientism as a feature of Greek political life is a negative factor in moving forward, as is the tendency to regard Roma 'as a source of votes' which 'promotes political patronage rather than a sense of civic duty' (Ioannis in Graham 2006: 12, Ioannis 2006: 3-4).

¹³⁹ Ioannis 2006: 3.

¹⁴⁰ Some families live in both countries and there is frequent intermarriage between Portuguese and Spanish Roma, who speak the same dialect, leading to a 'close community feeling' between these populations (Aires 2006: 1-2).

¹⁴¹ 20% of the Portuguese population is below the poverty threshold, including almost all Roma (Aires in Graham 2006: 12).

¹⁴² With 17 governments in the past 30 years, continuity of policy is made very difficult (Aires 2006: 2).

public attitudes to Roma are more negative¹⁴³ and, crucially, no overall government strategy for Roma inclusion exists as yet. Roma have been established in Portugal since the fifteenth century but there is a lack of reliable information about their numbers since state agencies claim that to collect ethnically disaggregated data would violate the constitution.¹⁴⁴

As elsewhere, Roma constitute one of the most marginalised and deprived population groups¹⁴⁵ and NGO studies reveal most Roma living in segregated settlements, often located on the outskirts of towns and cities with poor access to services in environmentally health-threatening surroundings, and inhabiting dilapidated housing without adequate infrastructure. Educational levels are invariably low and the most usual form of employment is market trading in the informal economy, although some have found jobs in the mainstream labour market. Health problems abound due to insanitary living conditions, poor nutrition, low awareness of disease prevention and other factors commonly associated with poverty.¹⁴⁶

In a highly centralised state such as Portugal, the absence of a government body¹⁴⁷ or policy to combat Roma exclusion,¹⁴⁸ or even a serious place for this issue on the political agenda, leaves NGOs to take the initiative. Nevertheless the NAPSI (2003-2005) does include some Roma-related initiatives, such as one aimed at improving educational qualifications, another to publish research and an unspecified proposal to develop a plan for Roma inclusion.¹⁴⁹ Peer comments call for more projects targeted at Roma, making use of EU Structural Funds.¹⁵⁰

Potential for transferability

The similarities between Portuguese and Spanish Roma suggest that transfer of experience might well be fruitful. The most obvious lessons from the Spanish example are the requirement for an overall Roma strategy with a multi-sectoral approach, the advisability of building working partnerships between various administrative levels and other actors, including Roma, to counter the prevalent top-down system¹⁵¹ and the need for a higher profile for Roma issues both in political and public debate.¹⁵² Mobilisation and participation of Roma organisations is much weaker in Portugal than in Spain and promotion of and support for Roma NGOs, including training, would strengthen the likelihood of successful outcomes in future initiatives. While

¹⁴³ While much of Spanish public opinion is hostile to Roma, aspects of Roma culture are also valued positively such as their close association with flamenco – a significant element of broader Spanish identity (ibid: 2).

¹⁴⁴ As in Greece, there is not even the possibility of affirming ethnicity in the Census. Estimates of the total Roma population vary between 30,000 and 90,000, although Liégeois and Gheorghe (1995: 7) prefer a narrower band of 40,000-50,000 towards the middle of this wide range, as does ECRI (2002) suggesting 50,000-60,000. However, Roma in Portugal form a smaller proportion of the general population (Aires 2006: 2). An NGO study found most Portuguese Roma communities near the coast or the Spanish border with significant numbers in the districts of Lisbon, Oporto and others (ibid: 6).

¹⁴⁵ Portugal, unlike Spain – particularly in Andalucía, lacks a more prosperous ‘middle class’ Roma population segment (Aires 2006: 2).

¹⁴⁶ Ibid 7-8. Drug abuse and HIV are more recent problems.

¹⁴⁷ One body which could take a lead, the High Commission for Migrants and Ethnic Minorities, is wholly preoccupied with the problem of immigrants (ibid: 3).

¹⁴⁸ However, great efforts have been made to integrate social policy in general over the past decade (ibid: 1).

¹⁴⁹ One project seeks to make contact with 1,000 Romanian Roma immigrants to Portugal (ibid: 9).

¹⁵⁰ Ibid: 4.

¹⁵¹ A more decentralised administrative model is currently being devised and tested within the Portuguese Social Network Programme for Development (ibid: 3).

¹⁵² In this context a national campaign to combat discrimination is urged (ibid: 4).

commissioning research is sometimes seen as a substitute for action, the lack of any adequate assessment of the needs of Portuguese Roma makes this a necessity.¹⁵³

4.2 Stakeholders

European Roma Rights Centre (ERRC) / European Network against Racism (ENAR)¹⁵⁴

Potential for transferability

Stakeholders identified key problem issues in relation to the potential transferability of Avilés practice to peer review partners and elsewhere.¹⁵⁵ Particular criticism was directed at national governments for failing to confront processes that deepen social exclusion by challenging regional or local authorities frequently implicated in such actions, which are either illegal or at least contravene government policy. Lack of legal protection of the right to adequate housing, erosion of housing rights during the period of transition, forced evictions, failure to implement educational desegregation and employment discrimination were all cited as prime examples.¹⁵⁶

Forced evictions of Roma, some very recent, had occurred in Slovenia, the Czech Republic and Romania, but also in Spain, Britain, France and Italy, while slum clearance and urban regeneration schemes, such as those planned for Sofia, Bucharest and Istanbul would require 'large-scale destruction of Roma housing'.¹⁵⁷ A bleak picture was given of lack of progress in educational desegregation in CEE countries, where 'school desegregation actions are non-existent or close to non-existent (Czech Republic, Slovakia); or such actions are abandoned by the state to the domain of the civil society (Bulgaria); or the effective implementation of such actions is blocked by resistance at the local level and lack of accountability (Hungary)'.¹⁵⁸ A recent ERRC study¹⁵⁹ of employment discrimination against Roma in CEE countries was cited, where 'many countries appear unconcerned and take no positive measures to ensure that they comply with ... [equality] legislation' or that the principle of equality is applied effectively in their hiring and employment practices.¹⁶⁰

Steps ensuring a legally binding obligation to promote equality for disadvantaged groups are urged in place of inaction and lack of political will. Anti-discrimination legislation is seen as valuable but, in itself, insufficient to counter systemic discrimination. Negative impacts on Roma of legislation and policies¹⁶¹ were illustrated by examples of growing segregation in housing,

¹⁵³ Ibid: 3. For a fuller discussion of possible transferability of experience, see Aires 2006: 3.

¹⁵⁴ The European Roma Rights Centre is an international public interest law organisation which monitors the rights of Roma and provides legal defence in cases of human rights abuse. For more information, visit <http://www.errc.org>. The European Network against Racism is a network of European NGOs working to combat racism in all EU member states. ENAR aims to fight racism, xenophobia, anti-Semitism and Islamophobia, to promote equality of treatment between EU citizens and third country nationals, and to link local/regional/national initiatives with European initiatives. For more information, visit <http://www.enar-eu.org>.

¹⁵⁵ For a full account, see their peer review paper - *Challenges to Roma Integration Policies in the European Union and among Candidate Countries* (ERRC/ENAR 2006).

¹⁵⁶ Ibid: 5.

¹⁵⁷ ERRC quoted in Traynor 2006.

¹⁵⁸ ERRC/ENAR 2006: 3.

¹⁵⁹ Hyde 2006.

¹⁶⁰ Ibid: 3. This new research echoes earlier findings in Hungary that Roma job-seekers, with similar qualifications to non-Roma applicants, were liable to suffer significant discrimination (Ladányi and Szelényi 2002).

¹⁶¹ These can also take the form of economic trends but all such developments raise issues of both direct and indirect discrimination, which need to be reviewed and addressed in the context of social rights (ibid: 4-5).

absence of health insurance and withholding of citizenship.¹⁶² Widespread anti-Roma racism compounds these problems and jeopardises the outcome of inclusion initiatives and should be countered not only by awareness-raising campaigns but also by firm action where necessary.¹⁶³ A further precondition for progress is accurate information about Roma communities in order to assess needs and monitor compliance, as required in the Lisbon strategy as well as the Decade of Roma Inclusion. In spite of official assertions to the contrary, disaggregated data about groups is not in violation of data protection principles. In conclusion, it was emphasised that Roma suffer multiple forms of discrimination yet few measures take this fact into account recognising the vulnerability of particular groups, e.g. blindness in legislation, etc. to issues of gender, age and disability.¹⁶⁴ All discussion was accompanied by targeted recommendations.

European Anti-Poverty Network-ES / Unión Romani / Fundación Secretariado Gitano¹⁶⁵

Relevance - The national situation

Spanish stakeholders emphasised at the outset that decent housing is not just a necessity but also a fundamental human right, playing a crucial role in inclusion/exclusion processes that affect disadvantaged people. Access to normal housing during the 1970s and 1980s had been one of the key factors improving the life of Roma¹⁶⁶ in Spain, helping their social inclusion in multiple ways. However latecomers who were unable to benefit remained excluded and shanty towns contributed to a negative image which acted as a barrier to their progress. However the absence of continuing integration policies and unfavourable developments in the property market are creating a deteriorating situation where young Roma couples will be unable to find accommodation. There is the risk that overcrowding, shanty towns and squatting will reappear and new excluded ghettos will emerge, reversing the previous process of integration. Consequently, in spite of progress, access to housing remains problematic for Spanish Roma. It is a deeply unjust paradox that in a country where, with EU aid, urban development has been the principal motor of the economy, 8% of Roma families remain in shantytowns and slums.¹⁶⁷

Potential for transferability

The project to eradicate shanty towns in Avilés is well-known to Roma organisations, which recommend it as a model to many others facing similar situations, believing its principles can be generalized and applied to other municipalities, regions and countries. Extending over two decades it is regarded by them as a paradigm of the implementation (or lack of it) in Spain of

¹⁶² Growing housing segregation is widespread but Roma without health insurance is specific to Bulgaria, Romania and Slovenia, while the Czech Republic and Slovenia have denied access to citizenship (ibid: 4-5).

¹⁶³ Successfully confronting parental opposition to integrated kindergarten classes in Slovakia is one example (ibid: 6, also see Guy and Kovats 2006: 12-13) but the resolute stance by Avilés municipality on relocating Roma families to normal housing in the face of resistance by non-Roma tenants is another.

¹⁶⁴ ERRC/ENAR 2006: 7, Abdikeeva 2005: 8.

¹⁶⁵ The European Anti-Poverty Network links national, regional and local NGOs combating poverty and social exclusion in the EU. For more information, visit <http://www.eapn.org>. The Unión Romani is a federation of associations of gypsies throughout Spain. For more information, see <http://www.unionromani.org>. The mission of the *Fundación Secretariado Gitano* (FSG) is the comprehensive promotion of the gypsy community on the basis of respect for its cultural identity. For more information, see <http://www.fsgg.org>.

¹⁶⁶ In Spain the term used for Roma is *gitano*. This used in official documents, by the Roma themselves and also by their organisations (spelt with a lower case 'g' and also in English translation). However 'Roma' is used in peer review documents to stress similarities with other Roma communities elsewhere.

¹⁶⁷ The gulf between the massive supply of accommodation at high prices and the lack of public resources devoted to housing for the most vulnerable bears witness to the weakness of a housing policy which should act to compensate for social inequalities. In 2002, public resources for housing in Spain amounted to 0.5% of the budget, compared to an EU average of 2% (EAPN *et al.* 2006: 2).

relocating Roma and the hope is that it can continue as an exemplar of the future evolution of ways of achieving social inclusion. What is significant is that this good practice derives from a process marred by previous bad practice which still continues elsewhere in Spain and in other European countries. This bad practice consists of:

- Retaining degraded environments, segregated from the majority population
- Using measures to relocate people to 'special townships' which turn into ghettos
- Concentrating Roma families and other vulnerable groups in neighbourhoods without adequate facilities
- Seeking temporary solutions which postpone a definitive resolution of the problem

In the stakeholders' opinion the beneficial outcome of the last phase of the project – the good practice – resulted from political will to solve the problem, tenacity to achieve involvement of different actors, resources made available for the project and clarity of vision about the desired objective. The effects of empowerment on participants should be particularly emphasised, as well as the concept of an integrated project where the success of relocating families relied on experiment and social support. In addition, NGOs played an important role in employment and education initiatives, as well as in health promotion. The courage and commitment of the project leadership in countering opposition and creating alliances should be acknowledged.

Nevertheless, some of the issues identified in the programme are also a source of concern:

- The initiative depends on the political will and resolve of a municipality rather than resulting from clear [national] policies to combat the social exclusion and discrimination experienced by Roma.
- In spite of the Avilés example it is hard for municipalities to undertake such initiatives on their own. Indeed it is dangerous to leave the decision in their hands since although Avilés eradicates shanty towns, other municipalities may prioritise golf courses.
- The devolution of powers including housing to municipalities cannot serve as an excuse for ignoring clear national guidelines and the policy to eradicate shanty towns.
- It is essential that national plans relating to inclusion should include the eradication of shanty towns and access to housing for Roma among their goals.¹⁶⁸ In a devolved state the central administration still has a key role in formulating national policy.

4.3 Peer country discussion of transferability

Relevance - The national situation

In the opening discussion peer review partners briefly stated their initial views and identified problem areas in their own national situations, as in their comments papers - sometimes developing these points further. The different national situations are outlined in §4.1 above.

Potential for transferability

Following the site visit and the chance to hear from and question host country participants, including Roma beneficiaries as former shanty town residents, peer review partners and Spanish representatives discussed the relevance and the key lessons from the Avilés project. One

¹⁶⁸ Current inclusion plans, e.g. for housing, are criticised for listing eradication of shanty towns as a goal but without specifying concrete aims or financial means to achieve this (ibid: 3).

working group focused on policies and actions promoting social inclusion while a second concentrated on institutional aspects.¹⁶⁹

Accepting that the four policy elements of employment, housing, education and health were all indissolubly interrelated,¹⁷⁰ the first group questioned whether a project could be considered a success until satisfactory employment levels had been reached. Difficulties in finding work for Roma, due to factors such as widespread discrimination and low skills levels, were widely acknowledged. One participant said that even two years after the launch in Hungary of a similar project to that in Avilés, it was impossible to say how much employment had been achieved,¹⁷¹ while another said that 90% of jobs found by Roma in a Slovak project were in the public sector. However, a Social Fund (ESF) EQUAL project in Avilés, aimed at Roma and non-Roma, had been successful in finding jobs for many Roma.¹⁷² An earlier query whether Roma beneficiaries in Avilés were only in sheltered employment was answered firmly by a Roma mediator, pointing out that Roma in similar posts had been dismissed if found incapable of fulfilling their duties.

In relation to possible isolation experienced in integrated housing, it was acknowledged this had been a problem for Portuguese Roma but a Roma women's NGO had provided support.¹⁷³ Also important was the firm but diplomatic handling of non-Roma opposition to relocating Roma from shanty towns to integrated housing.¹⁷⁴ Precise information on education enrolment in Avilés was not available – also a problem elsewhere. But Roma children in the Czech Republic were said to perform well after being moved from special schools to mainstream primary schools and Avilés officials and parents reported better results in integrated schools.¹⁷⁵ Issues of kindergarten availability, commitment of municipalities to integrated education, retention of Roma children in primary education and adequate support for Roma families were also raised.

The second group emphasized the importance of a national strategy, developed by a national body, which was continuously monitored and evaluated with full Roma involvement in decision-making at every stage. Equally crucial was political will. Coordination between governmental bodies was identified as a main problem, as was horizontal coordination of bodies at local level, particularly given the variety of interrelated policy areas involved.¹⁷⁶

Differing approaches to the European Social Fund emerged with new EU members regarding this as 'a huge opportunity to use ESF funding for targeted projects', while older EU members saw this as 'the last opportunity'. There was general agreement that although most National Action Programmes (NAPSI) had adopted a mainstreaming approach with some targeted programmes, there should be targeted projects for Roma within the ESF structure.¹⁷⁷ Peer review partners had

¹⁶⁹ One of the two representatives from each country was assigned to each working group. For details of the group discussions, see Graham 2006: 23-24. This section also makes reference to earlier questions put by peer group participants to Spanish representatives (ibid: 16-20).

¹⁷⁰ Scrap metal collectors, for example, could not operate from standard flats and so were liable to return to shanty towns in order to continue making a living (ibid: 17-18).

¹⁷¹ Although projects often generate public sector jobs, these often finish at the end of the project (ibid: 23). This had been the case in the Phare 2000 social integration project in Hungary (Guy and Kovats 2006: 11).

¹⁷² 45% of participants in this project were women (Graham 2006: 23). The value of seeing subsidised jobs as part of a series of steps towards labour market integration was emphasised by an Avilés Roma mediator (ibid: 19).

¹⁷³ Ibid: 16.

¹⁷⁴ Ibid: 18.

¹⁷⁵ Ibid: 16, 18, 23.

¹⁷⁶ Unless indicate otherwise, these sentences are based on the approved minutes (see ibid: 24).

¹⁷⁷ The other group supported the use of ESF funding for education, housing and health but was unclear whether structural funds could be used for housing refurbishment in rural as well as urban areas (ibid: 23).

differing priorities, depending on their national situation. For Portugal, targeting was seen as crucial to remove the danger of Roma being overlooked in an entirely mainstreamed approach and it was suggested that NAPSI should be required by the EC to contain a Roma strategy.¹⁷⁸ The Czech Republic and Slovakia highlighted the need for legal and financial definitions relating to social housing, while education was the main priority for Greece. The role of NGOs was seen as vital, both in capacity-building and in linking the various levels of decision-making, particularly in the decentralised environment that is becoming the norm. All participants confirmed the significance of NGO activity in processes aimed at Roma inclusion and for Slovenia, greater NGO input to the NAPSI was a main priority. This view was shared by a Spanish participant and the importance of Roma involvement was confirmed by the recent establishment in Spain of a State Council for Roma People. The Spanish stakeholder stated that similarities in the situation of Roma throughout Europe could lead to a fruitful exchange of experience between governments and NGOs. However, reflecting on experience to date, the other NGO stakeholder observed that examples of good practice had been the exception and significant progress would only be achieved if public institutions were positively required to take proactive measures to integrate Roma.

4.4. Reflections on transferability in host country

Relevance - The national situation

In spite of the considerable progress that has been made in Spain in regard to housing and the Roma community in recent years, some problems persist. 7 to 10 % of the Roma population still live in segregated settlements in totally unacceptable conditions. Furthermore, families living in these shanty towns are people with the lowest educational levels and who experience the greatest difficulties in gaining access to the labour market or in relation to social inclusion. In many Spanish cases, there has been little follow-up to housing initiatives. A permanent and comprehensive approach is essential in order to prevent new problems emerging related to:

- a) An excessive concentration in certain neighbourhoods of Roma and immigrant populations (birth rates among Roma communities are still double that of the rest of the Spanish population). Spanish inhabitants of those neighbourhoods aspire to live in better surroundings and their exodus, together with a massive influx of Roma and immigrants, contributes to a growing ethnicisation of those areas.
- b) The deterioration of neighbourhoods with Roma inhabitants. Many Spanish cities, like most European cities, evolve at different rates and although most of them have modernised, this process has been only partial. Consequently neighbourhoods with Roma settlements usually possess fewer amenities, are less accessible and have lower levels of economic dynamism. Their characteristic housing units, frequently built in the 60s and 70s, are often of poor quality and display signs of progressive deterioration.
- c) The difficulties encountered by young families in finding their own flats once they try to leave the parental home. This problem is closely connected to the shortage of affordable housing that has developed in Spain in recent years.

During the past few years in Spain housing policies seeking to improve the housing conditions of the most disadvantaged communities have been impeded by a number of negative factors. These

¹⁷⁸ A different but not unrelated suggestion from the EC representative was that the Irish practice of 'poverty-proofing' (assessing poverty dimensions within all policies) could be applied in the case of ethnic minorities in general and of Roma in particular (ibid: 25).

include the facts that housing has become a means of obtaining better economic returns and that the transfer of competences from state to autonomous regions and municipalities in relation to housing has generated a certain ambiguity and avoidance of responsibilities, so that no-one has taken the lead in matters of housing and excluded groups. The traditional provision of social housing has been reduced to minimal levels and no alternatives have emerged. Currently, however, certain initiatives by various public administrations seem to have restored the priority of housing policies, supported with increased budgets.

Potential for transferability

In general the methodology that has been followed in Avilés is valid for many other regions in Spain as regards the working criteria and approach adopted. Nevertheless, this could have its limitations in the context of large cities or where the Roma population is highly concentrated. Aspects of the Avilés experience which are revealed as truly valid and particularly relevant in many other cases are those emphasised in this report. These include: municipal leadership, maximum use of all resources and synergy between those resources, close involvement of all relevant actors, long term planning, etc.

Avilés has a citizenship model for the Roma population, which is not only based on improving living conditions but also in promoting full social inclusion so that the Roma may become complete and active citizens. At the same time equal opportunities are guaranteed for all and the necessary resources to make this possible are allocated. It is precisely this model of full Roma participation that is most transferable to many other Spanish localities where Roma communities are still considered a problem.

For Avilés, the importance of the decentralisation principle was evident, meaning that decisions were made at local level. In this case it was very important that the Town Hall took the initiative and the leadership of the PECH in collaboration with the rest of the administration. Equally vital were the grass roots nature of the municipal administration, first hand knowledge of families, the ability to respond to needs, as well as other factors. However, this is not always the case. In many other Spanish instances, it has been the autonomous community which has proved most effective in taking the initiative and control, given that municipal officials - as has been said by the other participant countries, may be subjected to political, social and economic pressures such as urban development, making it harder for them to take the lead. To go even further, in many other cases a supra-municipal approach can be effective in resolving shanty town problems simultaneously in several different towns by redistributing the Roma population.

5. Conclusions and lessons learnt

5.1 Conclusions

The successful Avilés project did not come about from a short-term solution based on expediency - a 'quick fix' - but emerged gradually from an extended process of learning from experience, as host country Roma NGOs and other partners explained. From the start it had been recognised that rehousing Roma was insufficient to bring about their inclusion. It was also necessary to make significant improvements in their employment, education and health. Careful and on-going evaluation of past practice revealed the serious shortcomings of an earlier plan to relocate Roma from shanty towns to temporary, segregated housing as an intermediate stage in their social inclusion. Rather than helping reduce exclusion, this strategy was recognised as counter-

productive in prolonging Roma marginality. The head of Avilés social services pointed out that the expectation that the transitory housing 'would give people a chance to adjust and learn to live in normal society ... failed for the simple reason that there was no normal society there with which they could interact'.¹⁷⁹ This damning indictment was emphatically confirmed by the testimony of Roma participants from Avilés. Although this was seen as better than living in a shanty town, 'it was still not a normal living situation, because it was a ghetto'.¹⁸⁰ Moving from segregated housing was decisive in widening opportunities, especially for Roma women.¹⁸¹

The turning point of the whole project was the formation of a working group, consisting of all key players, and the joint decision with the agreement of all political parties to take the bold step to demolish the transitional village - only recently completed at considerable expense - and press ahead with rehousing Roma families in standard accommodation among non-Roma. In implementing this policy reversal, in spite of opposition from some non-Roma residents, the leadership and determined political will of the Avilés municipality were crucial but equally vital were the support of regional and national partners and the involvement of local agencies, particularly the housing foundation and Roma organisations, as well as Roma beneficiaries.

An important difference between the situation in Avilés and that in peer countries might seem to be the buoyant state of the Spanish economy. Yet while economic progress in Spain earlier underpinned more inclusive social policies at national level, the host country Roma NGOs and National Expert both drew attention to the current difficult housing situation. Lack of investment in social housing nowadays threatens a growth of shanty towns, which still exist in Spain, and a widening of inequalities. This situation resembles that in other European countries where the low priority given to social housing has been noted. EU policies in general and the Lisbon Strategy in particular offer a corrective to such negative trends and Social and Structural Funds provide a means of financing initiatives to promote greater inclusion. The EC representative noted that in 2007, the Commission will be asking all EU governments to focus on child poverty and the generational transmission of poverty and report on their programmes to address these. Also, in 2007, an EU initiative will combine social inclusion with anti-discrimination, employment integration and gender issues.¹⁸²

Therefore the case of Avilés should serve as an example, not just for peer countries but for elsewhere - including Spain, of what can be achieved in a decentralised system by a resolute municipality, not only on behalf of its more disadvantaged inhabitants but for the entire community which benefits from the reduction of social inequality. In this context it should be remembered that the Avilés project did not start as an isolated, well-intentioned, charitable initiative to help impoverished Roma families but from the broader vision of a reconstructed, post-industrial city offering equal opportunities to all its citizens, now including immigrant communities as well as ethnic minorities and those suffering multiple disadvantages.¹⁸³

¹⁷⁹ Ibid: 20.

¹⁸⁰ The Roma continued: 'There were no shops nearby, to buy groceries, There were no non-Roma children to play with the Roma ones. There were no buses and no street lighting. Instead of moving forward, the Roma [there] ... were moving backward' (ibid: 17).

¹⁸¹ '[My] wife has a life of her own and is attending a training course. She no longer needs to depend on [me] ... for her contacts with the world about her' (ibid: 18).

¹⁸² Ibid: 25.

¹⁸³ The EC representative commented that only one third of EU member states prioritise the integration of migrants and ethnic minorities in their latest NAPSI (ibid: 25).

While smaller-scale initiatives with local involvement are essential in a decentralised system, the state is by no means absolved from responsibility since the problem remains of regional and municipal authorities with little or no interest in taking action. In such situations member states have a duty to enforce binding obligations such as the anti-discrimination legislation, rather than leaving individuals to take action. But they also need to take further steps to ensure meaningful equality of opportunity for disadvantaged groups, such as Roma, by adopting legal commitment to proactive measures aimed at redressing entrenched structural inequalities. In addition, state bodies have a responsibility to frame a coherent national strategy, develop networks and use them to disseminate examples of good practice, where communities can learn from each other with the aid of the Open method of Coordination. Although punitive action is required when necessary, a more fruitful path is to lead local authorities and their constituents to come to realise that inclusion of all inhabitants is in their own best interests, as was done in Avilés, since in the long run no viable alternative exists.

5.2 Lessons Learnt

There are a number of principles and key action criteria which can be deduced from the Avilés experience and others like it which should be borne in mind when implementing housing initiatives with the Roma community. The fact that these principles are shared and well-known does not guarantee that they are necessarily paid much heed in the implementation of programmes given that limited resources, the situation at a given moment, pressure and emergencies often render them impractical.

a) Institutional Framework

In light of the breadth of the work that needs to be undertaken and the economic, political and social implications, municipal governments are clearly unable to meet this challenge on their own (not only from an economic standpoint but also due to social and political repercussions). This makes collaboration between different administrations essential in order to gather the necessary resources. Avilés is an excellent example of consensus-seeking between the three administrative levels, each of which needed clearly defined notions of the competences of other partners in the project being undertaken. A prerequisite for the participation of different administrations is therefore political consensus – a basic underlying condition contributing to the reduction of social conflict and the prevention of biased media coverage. Institutional stability is essential for there to be political consensus. Not least this means the involvement of representative organisation of the beneficiary population as active subjects rather than passive objects of policy measures.

b) Broad-based participation and socio-political consensus

Experience has demonstrated that the most successful resettlement initiatives have been those characterised by activation, partnership and networking. When these plans involve people from disadvantaged groups (or groups stigmatised by a negative social image such as Roma), rejection is often the response but this reaction can be remedied or alleviated by encouraging participation and dialogue with the different stakeholders. This approach should always be based on a decision by the governing body to seek solutions and its firm resolve to maintain this course of action. The working group created in Avilés within the framework of the Council is an example of participation and involvement of different public and private

actors, enabling the pursuit of common objectives and the transmission of coherent messages. Participation and social consensus require the creation of a social and citizenship culture which is not always easy to achieve.

c) Clear leadership and responsibility sharing

Working in partnership arrangements does not mean that everyone does a little bit of everything but rather entails proper coordination, responsibility sharing, synergies and making efficient use of resources. Moreover, not all entities are able to operate on the same level and it is therefore important to identify a clear leader to empower, coordinate, organise and, in short, to be the driving force behind the project. In the case of Avilés, it was observed that the role of the municipal government was crucial but in many other instances the absence of a clear leader has rendered projects unviable. This has also happened a joint body is created with representation from different administrative bodies. This leadership must be endowed with functions, responsibilities, etc. and must be based on its acknowledged credibility, i.e. credit for good work in the past, which is recognised by the other participating parties. Municipal leadership without support at national and regional level does not succeed.

d) Permanent solutions leading to normalisation

Permanent solutions must be sought rather than transitory measures which simply shift the problem or postpone its solution, often making it worse. This was the case in Avilés with the transition village. Segregated settlements do nothing to promote the integration of their residents and, in most cases, are a source of social conflict. Provisional solutions tend to prolong the problem over time and end up being much more costly. Also, when relocating people to flats, the concentration of families in the same blocks, on the same street or even in the same neighbourhoods should be avoided. It can be seen how the Avilés programme made an effort to relocate the Roma population to four different zones throughout the city. Relocation which is exclusive to low-income districts tends to encourage the resettlement of other families, the ghettoisation of local schools and, in short, segregated urban environments. Efforts to encourage sustainability need to be made in the neighbourhoods and their surrounding areas. A desegregated approach in terms of housing and urban environment would be ideal, although hard to achieve where there is a high concentration of Roma inhabitants in one area. In such cases, more limited goals to improve the living conditions of the community should be sought. Ultimately, normalisation means the replacement of targeted initiatives for Roma communities by mainstream policies to combat aspects of social exclusion affecting the general population, including Roma. The Avilés programme took significant steps in this direction, particularly by employment and training initiatives in which disadvantaged non-Roma and Roma participated. Spanish stakeholders characterised the debate over targeted or mainstream policies as a 'false dichotomy'. In their view both strategies were valid but Roma should be prioritised.¹⁸⁴

¹⁸⁴ Roma should be explicitly identified as a target group both in inclusion and anti-discrimination policies and also in budgetary provision (EAPN *et al.* 2006: 4).

e) Global action schemes and integrated services

Relocation measures cannot be envisaged in isolation outside an urban development context. Instead, a more integrated perspective is required, taking account of the myriad of factors that have an impact on the situation of the most disadvantaged families and the socio-economic development of neighbourhoods. The aim is not limited to providing a decent home but also includes creating the conditions and environment that facilitate opportunities for social incorporation. That is why housing initiatives must go hand-in-hand with social support and must likewise link up with objectives such as socio-labour market integration, educational and health-care mainstreaming initiatives and the fostering and enhancing of intercultural co-existence, taking full advantage of (and adding to) existing local resources. In this way the PECH was implemented within the framework of the municipal Roma scheme. Although a comprehensive approach is always preferable, resources are inevitably restricted necessitating the prioritisation of one activity over the other. Given this limitation, housing is always the best springboard.

f) Commitment and long-term approach

It should be appreciated that, to a large extent, the process of Roma social incorporation will extend over generations. Consequently significant change will only be perceived over the long-term. That is why government administrative structures and projects cannot be linked to one single legislative period but must have continuity over time. Despite a mid-stream shift in philosophy, the PECH has been ongoing since 1989. Many other schemes are cut short, however, and not only fail to achieve their objectives but are also stigmatised with a sense of failure on the part of the administration, causing frustration among the Roma.

g) Client-centred services and pathway approach

It is important to devise a general 'model' to provide action guidelines in relocation processes and help prevent the application of piecemeal solutions based on idiosyncratic decisions. However, it must also be borne in mind that not all Roma share the same needs nor do they all require the same responses, i.e. treatment must be individualised. Owing to their activities or other circumstances, some persons or families should not be resettled using standard practice but solutions individually tailored to their conditions should be sought. This was the philosophy applied in the PECH.

h) Monitoring, control mechanism and evaluation

From the moment the decision is taken to undertake a resettlement scheme, it is important to conduct a swift but rigorous census of the dwellings and families affected and to establish a means of preventing the arrival of new families, people taking up residence in uninhabited dwellings and the re-emergence of shanty towns. If this precaution is not taken, the influx of new Roma groups to the area and the arrival of family members of existing residents will render the project unviable. The post of controller was a vital part of the success of the PECH. Furthermore, there should be continued follow-up monitoring, enabling swift measures to be

taken to head off potential problems. Given that results are limited and progress is relatively slow, evaluation is essential in order to detect and assess slight but crucial developments.

i) Participation, involvement and commitment of the relocated population

It is vital to encourage the participation of beneficiaries and seek their opinion as well as to ensure the commitment of families to the rehousing process and their subsequent social inclusion. Roma must be guaranteed their rights and they must also be educated in respect of their duties. This means that Roma families must make an economic contribution (e.g. mortgage or rental payment arranged with a bank) commensurate with their income level. In this context, a social incorporation agreement should be drawn up defining the commitments made by both families and social services in terms of inclusion (education, health-care, social benefits, access to employment, community co-existence, etc.). This commitment and educational effort should also be made at group level, especially in the neighbourhoods to which people are being relocated.

j) Positive expectations and ongoing checks

One reason underlying the failure of many relocation schemes is the lack of positive expectations about Roma and their willingness to change and scepticism about the commitment of government agencies. In the Avilés case, the enthusiasm of those involved in the project, especially the technical experts from the different government administrations and participating entities, was vital in providing the necessary impetus and continued monitoring and improvement. These positive expectations are closely linked with a desire to gather and evaluate further data to gain insights into new experience, all integral aspects of the programme's success.

ANNEXES

Annex 1

Map 1: Principality of Asturias



Annex 2

Table 1: Distribution of the Roma population in Avilés by shanty town in 1989

Shanty town	No of persons	No of shacks
Villalegre	268	42
Panavisa	38	9
Supercash	48	8
Fuente Santos	17	4
Los Canapés	10	2
Heros	2	1
Avda. de Gijón	1	1
Divina Pastora	49	12
El Reblinco	120	20
TOTAL	553	99

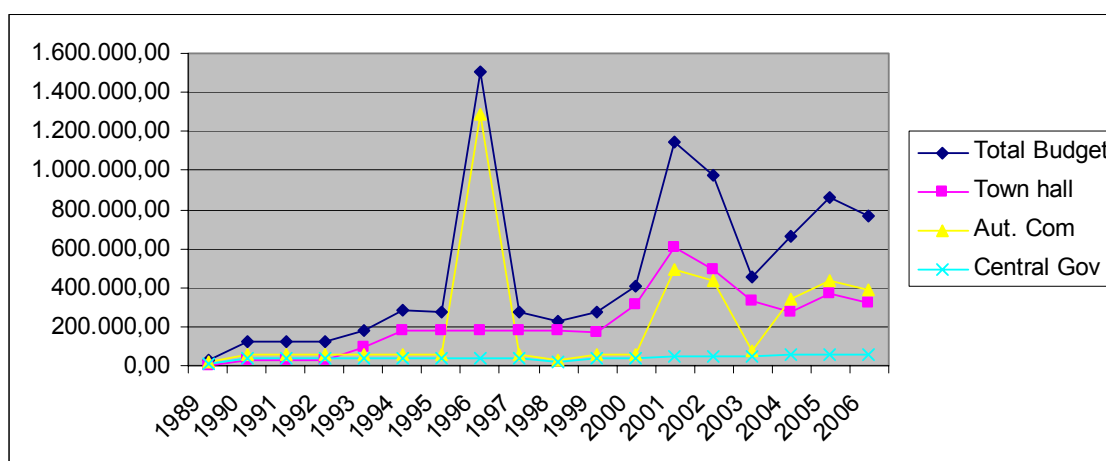
Annex 3

Table 2: PECH budget 1989-2006 (in euros)

Year	Total budget	Town Hall	Aut. Community	Central Adm.
1989	32,845.31	0.00	19,707.19	13,138.12
1990	120,202.42	24,040.48	57,697.16	38,464.74
1991	120,202.42	24,040.48	57,697.16	38,464.74
1992	124,512.36	24,040.48	60,283.13	40,188.75
1993	178,603.46	90,151.82	53,070.98	35,380.66
1994	281,505.21	180,303.63	60,720.95	40,480.63
1995	272,841.46	180,303.63	55,522.70	37,015.13
1996	1,506,998.04	180,303.63	1,289,679.28	37,015.13
1997	272,841.46	180,303.63	55,522.70	37,015.13
1998	226,633.87	180,303.63	27,798.14	18,532.10
1999	272,222.44	171,801.11	60,252.80	40,168.53
2000	410,228.81	308,525.22	61,022.15	40,681.44
2001	1,140,983.50	603,512.61	490,765.89	46,705.00
2002	977,123.29	496,029.16	432,899.37	48,194.76
2003	455,825.00	334,825.00	72,600.00	48,400.00
2004	666.354,00	272.677,00	338.491,00	55.186,00
2005	865.479,00	373.461,00	434.710,00	57.308,00
2006	766.208,00	319.538,00	387.849,00	58.821,00
TOTAL	8.691.610,05	3.944.160,51	4.016.289,60	731.159,86

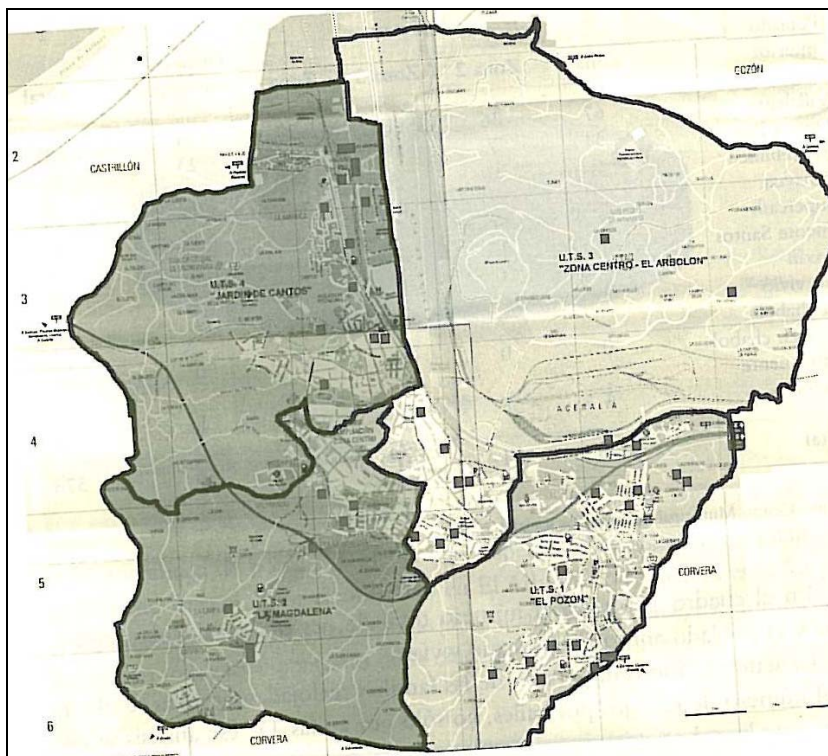
Source: Municipal Social Services Centre 2003

Chart 1: PECH budget 1989-2006 (in euros)



Annex 4

Map 2: Distribution of flats used for resettlement in Avilés



Annex 5

Table 3: Current type of housing of the surveyed population by zone; persons

	Zone 1	Zone 2	Zone 3	Zone 4	Outside municipality	Total	Share %
Shanty town	0	0	0	17	0	17	2.94%
Transition village	0	0	179	0	0	179	30.97%
San Martín Foundation	81	58	21	81	48	289	50.00%
Flat/individual home	7	0	5	0	0	12	2.08%
Public promotion home	39	13	9	0	0	61	10.55%
Municipal	0	0	7	0	0	7	1.21%
No address	1	0	0	0	0	1	0.17%
Don't know/no comment	0	0	0	4	8	12	2.08%
TOTAL	128	71	221	102	56	578	100%

Source: Municipal Social Services Centre

Annex 6

2006 study of socially excluded Roma localities in the Czech Republic¹⁸⁵

The immediate relevance of Avilés-type initiatives is underlined by the bleak findings of a detailed study of socially excluded Roma localities, which ended just two months before the Avilés peer review meeting.¹⁸⁶ The resulting report was intended not only as research analysis but also as a guide for future initiatives to bring about changes to increase Roma inclusion. Reviewing the situation in the Czech Republic, the study came to some highly significant and disturbing conclusions. Although this state can claim to be perhaps the most prosperous in the CEE region, the social exclusion of Roma was actually found to be a by-product of economic development. Main factors in this process were identified as the employment situation, the dynamics of the market economy and primary education.¹⁸⁷

In spite of a coherent and detailed national strategy having been agreed and in place since 2000, the fact of decentralisation had resulted in a situation where this was irrelevant at local level, since municipalities ignored it and pursued what they perceived as their own interests. This meant that if local authorities were inclined to take action, and few were, they adopted short-term measures 'to stabilise the socially excluded localities', which only 'leads to deepening of the exclusion and even to segregation'.¹⁸⁸ Such measures included concentrating Roma families seen as problematic in isolated and more basic accommodation, as in the second phase of the Avilés project. The operation of exclusionary processes, particularly at the age of primary education, simply extended the problem to future generations. Municipalities and primary schools¹⁸⁹ appeared unaware of or indifferent to the grim scenario in which they played a principal role and very rarely took any action whatsoever to limit or reverse exclusion of Roma communities.¹⁹⁰

To counteract these damaging trends the study recommended increased support for initiatives producing good results, dissemination of information about good practice and recruitment of municipalities willing to engage in the long-term¹⁹¹ with projects to reduce social exclusion. Because of the diversity of excluded localities,¹⁹² such 'intensive, systematic integration programmes' would have to be tailored to the particular needs of their inhabitants and would

¹⁸⁵ MoLSA (2006) *Analýza sociálně vyloučených romských lokalit a absorpční kapacita subjektů působících v této oblasti* (Analysis of Socially Excluded Roma Localities and Communities and the Absorption Capacity of Subjects Operating in the Field), Prague: Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs (MoLSA), August.

¹⁸⁶ The research was a joint project of the MoLSA and the Czech Government Council for Roma Community Affairs with funding from the Czech government and the European Social Fund. It was carried out by the Gabal Analysis and Consulting agency.

¹⁸⁷ 'It is not an accidental phenomenon on the contrary, it is influenced by the socio-economic development of the Czech Republic, to a large extent it derives predominantly from the problem of employment, market dynamics and from the state of elementary education (which at the moment contributes to the exclusion by transferring the social exclusion to new generations)' (MoLSA 2006: 111).

¹⁸⁸ Ibid: 112.

¹⁸⁹ Over three quarters (76%) of primary and special schools had no preparatory class (attended by Roma children only and often referred to as zero grade) but the report only considers 'pre-school clubs' (also all-Roma as an alternative and strangely does not mention kindergartens, whether integrated or not, as a means of pre-school preparation and social inclusion (ibid: 59-62).

¹⁹⁰ Ibid: 111.

¹⁹¹ Long-term meaning 'a period exceeding one or two electoral terms' (ibid: 112).

¹⁹² The report included a typology of different kinds of urban and rural excluded localities (ibid: 22-25).

address problems of housing, employment, education and health. However, any progress would require the adoption of centrally-agreed indicators of measures of improvement, certain administrative changes and not least a 'considerable increase in the activity of regions'.¹⁹³

Annex 7

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¹⁹³ Ibid: 112.

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