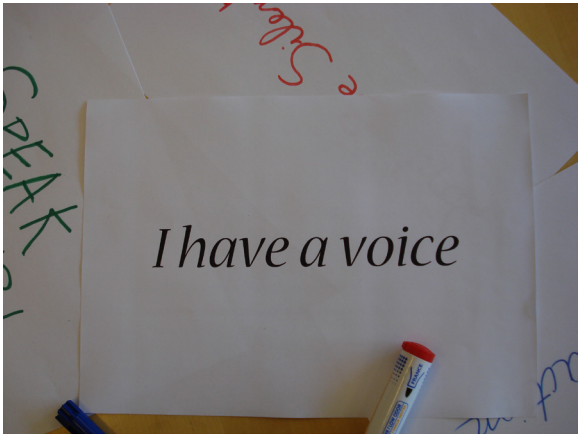
European Roma Information Office

Advocacy handbook for Roma activists



2014

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The European Roma Information Office (ERIO) is an international advocacy organisation which promotes political and public discussion on Roma issues by providing information to the EU institutions, civil society and governments. Through its wide network, it aims to combat racist discrimination against Roma through awareness raising, lobbying and policy development.

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Abbreviations

DG	Directorate-General
DGs	Directorate-Generals
EC	European Commission
EU	European Union
FRA	Fundamental Rights Agency
MEPs	Members of the European Parliament
NGOs	Non-governmental organisations
NRIS	National Roma Integration Strategies

Introduction

Why this handbook?

Securing the full participation of Roma is of the utmost importance to achieving their full social inclusion. The Council recommendation on effective Roma integration measures [1] states that member states should empower and *"support the active citizenship of Roma by promoting their social, economic, political and cultural participation in society, including at the local level, since the active involvement and participation of Roma themselves, including through their representatives and organisations, is crucial for the improvement of their living conditions, as well as for the advancement of their social inclusion"*. [2] Effective Roma participation is needed in order for polices to be successful and to have a positive impact on these communities. Roma's active participation in the design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of policies and projects is consistently referred to as a crucial element to improve the effectiveness of policies. For example, the tenth principle of the 10 Common Basic Principles on Roma Inclusion calls for an *"active participation of Roma"* [3] and the EU Framework for National Roma Integration Strategies up to 2020 [4] states that the National Roma Integration Strategies (NRIS) must *"be designed, implemented and monitored in close cooperation and continuous dialogue with Roma civil society"*.

Despite the European Commission's call to member states to actively and meaningfully involve Roma during the

[1] http://www.consilium.europa.eu/uedocs/cms_data/docs/pressdata/en/lsa/139979.pdf
[2] http://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/en/TXT/?uri=CELEX:32013H1224(01) - Point 2.8.
[3] http://www.coe.int/t/dg4/youth/Source/Resources/Documents/2011_10_Common_Basic_Principles_Roma_Inclusion.pdf
[4] http://ec.europa.eu/justice/policies/discrimination/docs/com_2011_173_en.pdf

implementation of the NRIS, these communities are still not effectively consulted. To change this situation, this handbook has been designed to empower and assist Roma civil society activists, as well as programme planners in conducting advocacy campaigns to fight discrimination and improving their advocacy skills to advance the implementation of the NRIS, as well as anti-discrimination and social inclusion policies at European, national and local levels. designed to empower and assist Roma civil society activists, as well as programme planners in conducting advocacy campaigns to fight discrimination and improving their advocacy skills to advance the implementation of the NRIS, as well as anti-discrimination and social inclusion policies at European, national and local levels.

This handbook provides guidelines on how to advocate for Roma inclusion at the local, national and European level. It has been developed with the view that Roma community-based advocacy needs to be better promoted, especially at the level of grassroots groups, networks, and organisations with the necessary information and advocacy skills to demand that Roma community needs and priorities need to be addressed. The aim of this handbook is to offer advice to Roma activists to plan and design effective and efficient advocacy actions, making their voice heard and ensuring the advancement of the integration of Roma across Europe.

Although this handbook is written primarily for use in advocacy actions for Roma inclusion, it can also be used by potential advocates as a tool to help them in their advocacy work in a different topic. Part 1 outlines the general principles of advocacy for Roma inclusion. This is followed by Part 2, a step-by-step of

the advocacy process and how to work with the media. Part 3 provides examples of advocacy activities. Part 4 includes frequent advocacy questions and challenges faced by Roma activists and possible solutions to overcome them.

Part 1

Introduction to advocacy

Part 1 – Introduction to advocacy

1.1 What is advocacy?

The aim of advocacy is to influence decision-making, policies and/or programmes at local, regional, national, European and/or international levels.

Advocacy is to…

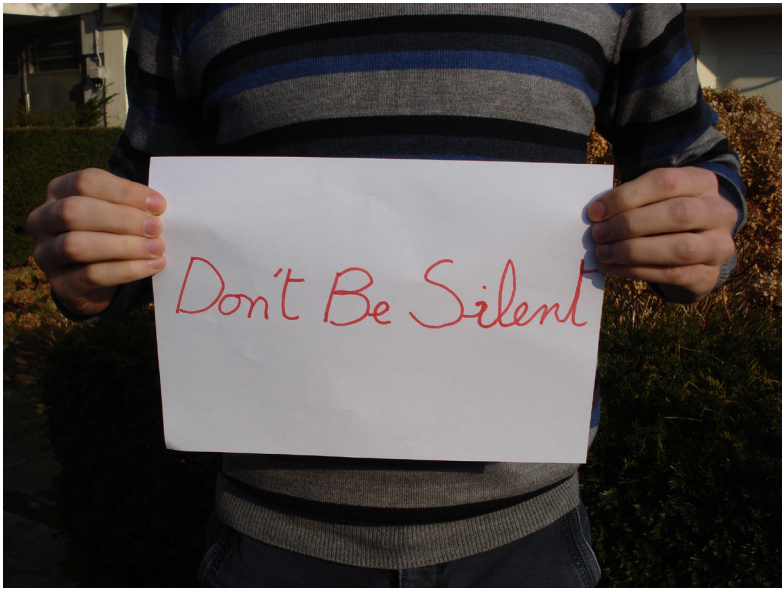
- speak up for someone
- support someone to speak up for themselves
- fight for your or someone else's rights
- provide a solution to a problem

Advocacy is a method to…

- change and/or influence policies and practices
- change and/or influence power relations
- change and/or influence attitudes and behaviours

Thus, for example, you might advocate when you want to:

- speak for and with people who are not being heard, helping them to express their own views and make their own decisions
- ensure that disadvantaged groups in society (e.g. Roma) have the same life opportunities as the majority population (e.g. Gadje)
- challenge social exclusion and discrimination experienced by many (e.g. Roma), that leads to abuse and loss of rights



1.2 Some advocacy principles on Roma inclusion

Although the socio-economic situation of Roma communities in individual member states sometimes may vary, there are some common basic principles that can be applied as common denominators which can be useful when developing your advocacy actions.

These include the 10 Common Basic Principles on Roma Inclusion[5] laid down by the Council of the EU:

1. Constructive, pragmatic and non-discriminatory policies

2. Explicit but not exclusive targeting

3. Inter-cultural approach

4. Aiming for the mainstream

5. Awareness of the gender dimension

6. Transfer of evidence-based policies

7. Use of Community instruments

8. Involvement of regional and local authorities

9. Involvement of civil society

10. Active participation of the Roma

[5] http://www.coe.int/t/dg4/youth/Source/Resources/Documents/2011_10_Common_Basic_Principles_Roma_Inclusion.pdf

Part 2

The advocacy process

Part 2 - The advocacy process

Advocacy is a dynamic process involving different stages. The advocacy stages should be considered as flexible because they may occur simultaneously or progressively or the process may stall or inverse itself. You will be guided through the steps needed to develop your own strategies. These steps are:



Figure 1: The advocacy process

1 - Identify the advocacy scope

► ***What is the level of my advocacy action: local, national and/or European?***

The first step when developing your advocacy action is to identify at what level you want to carry out your activities. You can act at local, national and/or European level.
Below are some issues that you should take into consideration when deciding on your advocacy scope.

Why local level?

- The practical implementation of your advocacy outcome is taking place at the local level.
- Local authorities are the least familiar with European policies.
- The local level is the last link of the administrative chain to implement projects and use relevant allocated funds.

Why national level?

- Most of the sensitising and awareness-raising activities around Roma related issues need to happen at this level.
- The distribution of structural funds and support for the policies we lobby for depend on national authorities.
- National level decisions, policies and regulations are transmitted at the local level.

Why European level?

- The issues you would like to promote are relevant at all levels. Roma issues are not an isolated local or national issue. They are an issue well-articulated at European level which is in the EU agenda. Use the momentum.
- European decisions are transmitted at national level. The EU requests member states to follow European policies and legislation.



2 - Identify the issue or initiative

► ***What is the real cause of the situation?***
► ***Why is it necessary to change things?***

It is important that you identify a policy issue that needs to be addressed. You should identify the issue or initiative you would like to advocate for. The more familiar with the situation you become, the more persuasive you can be. This step involves some examination of the situation you want to address. For example, by examining how the situation is now will help you identify how the situation should be. Once this analysis is done, you are then able to identify what and who needs to change and why the change is needed.

Some issues at the local level:

- Promote the idea of Roma integration through arts with the target group and different stakeholders and decision-makers.
- Lobby with local authorities to design educational and cultural programs and activities to be Roma art inclusive.
- Lobby for the transposition of the National Roma Integration Strategies to include sports as a tool for Roma integration process in the region.
- Pressure local authorities to effectively transpose the National Roma Integration Strategies at local level and to implement the Council Recommendation.

Some issues at the national level:

- Lobby with decision-makers to include Roma children integration through arts as a priority in their National Roma Integration Strategies.
- Create a national level coalition with Roma NGOs for stronger advocacy.
- Lobby to have Romani culture as part of the national curricula.
- Pressure national authorities to effectively transpose the National Roma Integration Strategies at national level and to implement the Council Recommendation.

Some issues at the European level:

- Lobby for the Roma and Sinti Holocaust to be recognised at European level.
- Platform to be accepted as key partner in promoting art education as tool for Roma inclusion and equal treatment.
- Promote the idea of art education for active citizenship as a way to link it to the 2013 European Year for Active Citizenship.

3 - Identify audiences

► ***Who do you want to target/influence?***

► ***Who are the people with decision-making power (e.g. EU, governments, local authorities)?***

► ***Who can influence decision-makers (e.g. media, advisors)?***

After you have identified the issue and the goals, you must select the people or group you want to direct your message to. Your advocacy message can be directed at different audiences: the general public, NGOs, politicians, governments or other decision-makers. In order to have effective advocacy actions, it is essential to determine who are the most influential people and groups related to your activity.

A distinction should be made between **primary** and **secondary** audiences.

- A **primary audience** includes decision-makers with the authority to directly affect the outcome for your objective.

- **Secondary audiences** are individuals and groups able to influence the decision-makers (primary audience). They may be allies (people supporting your advocacy objective), neutrals (people who neither support nor oppose your advocacy objective) and opponents (people not supporting your advocacy objective).

Table 1 shows some examples for both primary and secondary audiences.

Primary audiences	Minister of Education, the Prime Minister, Members of Parliament, Members of the European Parliament, EU Commissioners, Heads of European Commission DGs or Units, Mayors.
Secondary audiences	Key staff of Members of Parliament and Members of the European Parliament, advisors to the Minister of Education and Prime Minister, key NGOs, policy officers, parent organisations, teachers unions, newspapers and radio programs.

Table 1: Examples of primary and secondary audiences

TIP: Try to find out the characteristics of your audience. For example, find out their knowledge about and views/attitudes on Roma inclusion or similar topics, and their interests. This can easily be done by reading their opinions in interviews, speeches, etc. Researching your target audience will enable you to find out whether they will support your advocacy action (see table2).

Type of audience	Knowledge	Views / attitudes	Interests
Define your audience	*What does the audience know about Roma issues ?*	*What are the views and attitudes of the audience on Roma issues ?*	*What type of interests does the audience have (they can be unrelated to Roma issues) ?*

Table 2: Audience targeting

Below are some examples on how to identify a relevant body, institution or individual to address with your advocacy action.

At European level

- European Commission (Commissioners, DG & Unit directors):

  - DG Justice: if your advocacy action mainly aims to fight against discrimination of Roma and Roma social inclusion
  - DG Employment, Social Affairs & Inclusion: if your advocacy action mainly aims for Roma social inclusion
  - DG Education & Culture: if your advocacy action mainly aims for improving the educational situation of Roma and/or promote/raise awareness of Roma culture
  - DG Health & Consumers: if your advocacy action primarily aims for improving the health conditions of Roma
  - DG Enlargement: if your advocacy action mainly aims for Roma social inclusion in the enlargement countries

- European Parliament: MEPs involved in Roma issues or any relevant and related issue

- European Economic and Social Committee

- Committee of the Regions

- European level media

- Representations of EU members states

At national level

- National Roma Contact Point
- Governmental ministries
- Minister of Social Affairs
- National level media
- Trade unions
- Police

At local level

- Regional governors and local mayors
- Local level media
- School directors
- Parents and parent's associations
- Social workers
- School psychologists

4 - Target areas of influence

There are several areas that you might want to consider attempting to influence with your advocacy action(s). These areas are: legislative, policy, executive or administrative. You can decide to focus on one or more than one area. You might want to consider the following areas:

- National and local levels: policy, executive and administrative
- European level: policy

If you decide to target policies, some of them might be already adopted.

For example:

National level:

- National Roma Integration Strategies
- National school programs/curricula

EU level:

- The EU Framework for National Roma Integration Strategies
- National Roma Integration Strategies
- EU Strategy 2020
- EU Communications related to education and intercultural dialogue
- European Commission Recommendation *"Investing in Children: breaking the cycle of disadvantage"*

Otherwise, you might want to target currently pending or future Roma related initiatives and policies where lobby activities could take place.

For example:

National level:

- Transposition of the NRIS at regional and local level
- Transposition of the Council recommendation on effective Roma integration measures
- National Roma related key events

European Level:

- European Commission recommendations for an effective implementation of the NRIS (from the progress reports done by the European - Commission each year)
- Council recommendation on effective Roma integration measures
- Exploratory opinion drafted by the European Economic Social Committee
- Exploratory opinion drafted by the Council of the Regions
- Resolutions by the European Parliament
- European Roma Platform event
- European level key events

5 - Develop key messages

► Develop messages in an appropriate format

► Identify your audience and adapt your message accordingly

After identifying your target audiences, you need to develop specific messages for them. You might need to develop different messages for different audiences. If possible, your messages should be:

- clear, persuasive and short
- simple and direct
- supported with sources or key data (e.g. statistics or stories), when available



How to create your key message?

To develop your message, we suggest that you use persuasive statements by using the **"What/Why/How" approach**:

*** What?**

"What" refers to what you want to achieve and the description of the problem to be addressed in your advocacy activity. Here you can make use of research findings, if available, in order to illustrate and support your case.

*** Why?**

"Why" refers to the reason and the importance to address a certain issue. Here you can mention the positive result of taking your suggested action and/or the negative consequence of inaction.

*** How?**

"How" refers to the actual suggestions and recommendations on how a certain issue can be improved or changed. Here you can include some actions you want your audience to take.

Table 3: The "What/Why/How" approach

Example: Fight discrimination of Roma children and your people in education

What?

Discrimination towards Roma children and young people takes a variety of forms; it includes racist bullying, exclusionary practices and harassment on the part of teachers, school staff or fellow students. Discrimination of Roma children takes place when they are improperly and disproportionately placed in *"special schools"* for pupils with learning difficulties and mental disabilities simply because they are Roma. The 2014 FRA Roma survey on education[6] indicates that in Czech Republic, Hungary, Slovakia and Greece, 33% to 58% of Roma children in school attended a class where all or many of children were Roma.

Why?

Ending school discrimination of Roma children and young people will benefit not only the Roma but national economies and societies in general.

How?

- Raise awareness of mechanisms to prevent and address discrimination in education, particularly among minority communities need to be promoted.
- Promote diversity training for all school professionals, social workers and educational psychologists with the aim of creating a school environment that respects and embraces the diversity of its student population.

Table 4: Example of creating an advocacy message

[6] http://fra.europa.eu/en/publication/2014/education-situation-roma-11-eu-member-states

6 - Develop your advocacy plan and take action

After creating your advocacy message, you now need to deliver it to your target audience(s). You might have to deliver your message in different ways and use different communication tools for each audience you select. Choose a communication strategy on how you want to deliver your message. Different communication methods are available to achieve this including:

- letters
- e-mails
- telephone calls
- meetings
- events and campaigning

Many of the above communication methods can be used in combination.

a) Letters, e-mails and telephone calls

Direct communication with decision-makers is a powerful and cost-effective advocacy tool. This may be done through letters, emails and telephone calls. If you decide to write a letter, be aware that this might take longer to reach your target audience than writing an e-mail or making a telephone call. E-mails and telephone calls are faster options. Whatever method you chose, be aware that decision-makers have busy working schedules and do not have a lot of time. Thus, you should be clear, brief and specific when you approach them.

b) Meetings

Personal meetings with decision-makers are often the most effective way to communicate your message and get the attention of your target audience. You could also consider participating in meetings and events where you can identify relevant people that could potentially be allies. You may consider bringing to the meeting and leave with your target audience some print materials to reinforce your arguments (e.g. letters, statements).

c) Events and campaigning

Public events such as conferences, roundtables and workshops can be useful to communicate your message. However, to be effective, these events need to be well organised.

Campaigning can be used in order to influence policy, to raise awareness on a specific issue and to raise public support. Campaigns should have a simple and strong message. Examples of typical campaigning activities include public events such as demonstrations, an exhibition, petitions, posters and pamphlets.

TIPS:

- Consider opportunities such as national and international days, celebrations and or other dates that can be used as opportunities for organising events or campaigns: the International Holocaust Remembrance Day (27 January), International Day for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination (21 March), Roma Day (8 April), Roma Genocide Remembrance Day (2 August),

International Day for the Eradication of Poverty (17 October) or Human Rights Day (10 December).

- Build coalitions and network with individuals and organisations interested in Roma issues or anti-discrimination. Check if there are different groups in your area that could work together with you and help you spread your messages (e.g. other NGOs). Joining forces with others makes your voice more powerful.

7 - Working with the media

The media is a cost-effective, powerful way of communicating messages to your audience. It provides an opportunity to raise awareness about Roma related issues. Finding supportive media can help spread your messages among the general public, raise awareness about Roma issues, promote Roma culture, break stereotypes and prejudices. Identifying the right media to find out the topics they cover might strategically help you to communicate your message and advertise your project. Media can also be a great ally since they play a major role in constructing and influencing people's attitudes and behaviour.

Working with the media includes using electronic and print mass media. See the table below for some examples.

Type of media	Media personnel
Radio Television Film and video Newspapers Online media (blogs, Facebook or Twitter)	Journalists, reporters and correspondents Columnists Script writers and editorialists Commentators, freelance writers and producers Producers

Table 5: Examples of media and its personnel

You can also work with the media by writing press releases where you can provide information about significant situations or events.

Methods of communicating your message to the media

a) Talking to journalists

Roma representatives should pay attention to whom they are giving interviews and consideration should be given to the extent to which the journalists can be relied upon. You should now the journalist and find what his/her interests are. This is due to the fact that many non-Roma journalists have the general tendency to depict Romani issues in media as constructed from personal and unverified editorial points of view. They usually report on the situation of Roma in an unbalanced manner and without enough information by taking untrue facts on Roma for granted, without making sure that the editorial questions are based on real information. Nevertheless, the Roma interviewed should always try to build and maintain a good relationship with the journalist as strong relationships mean good collaborations. Prepare yourself for the interview, be brief, confident and enthusiastic.

b) Press releases

Press releases are an effective way to inform the media about an event, project or situation to inform media coverage. Press releases are a widely used method of issuing news to journalists and alert them to a story so they can report on it. When preparing

a press release, ensure that the most important information is at the top and the general information is at the bottom - *"who, what, why, where, and when"*. Include contact information at the end.

c) Social media

Social media is a powerful tool for awareness raising online. For an effective use of online social networking, it is important to use the right channels.

Blogs are key channels for sharing your message(s) online. They can serve a variety of purposes and some blogs focus on local or national policies, while others have a more European scope. Blogs provide a good opportunity for users to have online discussions and debates on Roma related topics.

Social networking sites such as Facebook (www.facebook.com) and Twitter (www.twitter.com) are an excellent way to send out information and messages to your target online audience. Both sites provide opportunities to cultivate supporters and advocates.

8 - Fundraising

► Look for funds to support your actions

Although many advocacy activities can be performed with little or no funding, some other activities involve some funding. Funding might be needed to pay the salary of the person(s) carrying out the advocacy activities, office costs or other activities such as preparing documents, making telephone calls and attending meetings.

Funding sources depend on the level at which you are working (i.e. local, national or European). At local and national level some sources include local, district and national governments, the private sector, national and international non-governmental and inter-governmental organisations. At European level, the European Commission provides *"operating grants"* offering financial support towards the functioning of an organisation in performing its main activities or in order to carry out some others. Additionally, the European Commission also supports the financing of specific projects through *"calls for proposals"* or *"action grants"*. See our publication *"Guidelines on how to apply for European Commission Funds"* [7] for more information on EC funding.

Ideally, you should try to have funding from different sources as this will give you more freedom and flexibility in your advocacy work. Finally, research and find out which funding organisations,

[7] http://www.erionet.eu/doc-guidelines-ec-funds_2012

bodies and/or institutions are interested in Roma inclusion and anti-discrimination issues.

Some fundraising methods include:

- Organise fundraising events: concerts, dinners, etc.
- Apply for grants from foundations and international donor agencies
- Apply for national or local government grants and projects
- Look for in-kind donations (equipment, office supplies, etc.)

9 - Evaluate your efforts

Evaluating your advocacy actions at the end, can help you improve your future campaigns. It is important to evaluate your campaign and your results in order to identify what works and what does not work, to improve your future actions so they have a bigger impact. Consider asking yourself the following questions:

- ***How effective were your efforts?***
- ***What results have you achieved?***
- ***How can your advocacy be improved?***

By evaluating your actions, you learn from what you did and continue with your actions emphasising the good parts and changing what does not work. Follow the below criteria when evaluating.

Criteria	Question
Relevance	Is the issue still a problem?
Efficiency	Were methods used efficiently for the planned activities?
Effectiveness	Were the activities delivered as planned?
Impact	Did the advocacy action changed/improved the lives of Roma?
Sustainability	Will the change still happen after the end of the activity/project?

Table 6: Criteria for evaluation

Part 3

Advocacy activities

Part 3 – Advocacy activities

Some ideas for advocacy activities…

- Organise your own petition, competition, etc.

- Write articles on Roma inclusion for the media or post them on the internet (e.g. your Facebook or Twitter account, blog or website)

- Organise an event (e.g. seminar, workshop or conference) on a Roma related issue involving relevant actors from different fields

- Organise a photo or art exhibition displaying different aspects of Roma culture

- Create videos to inform about Roma issues

- Address Roma culture in schools with students by making presentations

- Organise meetings or events with parents to discuss relevant Roma related topics

- Write a letter to your local authority/Mayor to pressure him/her to implement the National Roma Integration Strategies (use our template[8])

[8] http://www.erionet.eu/from-words-to-practice_template-letters

- Write a letter to your national authority to pressure him/her to implement the National Roma Integration Strategies (use our template[8])

- Contact your National Roma Contact Point and work closely with him/her[9]

- Organise a concert promoting Roma music and culture, a play to raise awareness about school discrimination or a media debate about Roma stereotypes

- Organise a radio show on the topic

- And many more!

[8] http://www.erionet.eu/from-words-to-practice_template-letters
[9] http://www.erionet.eu/national-roma-strategies.htm

Part 4

Challenges faced by Roma activists and possible solutions

Part 4 – Challenges faced by Roma activists and possible solutions

This section presents the main advocacy challenges faced by Roma activists shared during ERIO's Advocacy Training *"Learn how to fight for your rights"* [10].

Challenges	Possible solutions
For European level NGOs: Using network knowledge and expertise and mobilising local member organisations to influence to a higher extent what is decided at EU level	• Convince potential partners that working at European level makes a network stronger, as well as renders the issue that is fought for more visible • Show Roma communities that resources are well-invested • Explaining to Roma how their rights are violated might motivate them to engage actively with local, national and European level NGOs
Tensions between national and EU level: Getting the message of the added value of the EU decisional process across through the network members	• Work with other European groups since they try to mobilise the communities on specific issues and then they link it at one point in order to advance it to the European Parliament Committees and eventually try to influence the decision-making process

[10] http://www.erionet.eu/event-190614

Difficulty to mobilise Roma to participate and advocate for Roma	• Organise Roma to a frontal position • Organise capacity building activities for Roma on how to advocate for Roma inclusion
How to best face Roma issues during interviews with non-Roma journalists or how to answer disturbing media questions.	• Manipulation of media in the interests of NGOs • Speech adaptation according to the experience of the interviewer and its area of expertise • Improvement of knowledge on Roma issues of the Roma interviewee in order to better bring knowledge to the public and to come up with adequate answers even to inconvenient questions

Table 7: Key challenges faced by Roma activists and possible solutions