



## Policy transfer on Roma access to housing

### WG Roma inclusion & WG Homelessness

8-10 April 2019, Toulouse

### Background document



## National context

In France, the national strategy for Roma inclusion is part of the national policies to promote equal access to all services. The global inclusion policy for reduction of poverty includes measures to promote access to education, healthcare, employment and housing. However, specific actions can be implemented to offer social support to the Roma community, as part of a global strategy against discrimination.

Some 570 slums and illegal camps have been identified in France inhabited by about 16,000 persons. Roma from Romania and Bulgaria make up the majority of persons living in slums, together with other inhabitants comprising some French nationals, other EU citizens and persons from countries outside the EU.

On 25 January 2018, the French Government issued a governmental instruction reinvigorating a 2012 Circular concerning the national policy to eradicate informal slums and squats. This instruction stipulates that local strategies must be developed in partnership based on a precise overview of the situation of each slum, squat or camp, permitting the definition of a housing or sheltering strategy together with a global social support.

## Toulouse's social housing context

Toulouse and its metropole enjoy a positive image thanks to the dynamic aerospace sector and record the most important demographic growth in France, with nearly 15,000 new inhabitants every year, of which 9,000 settle on the territory of Toulouse.

Therefore, the demand for social housing is high in Toulouse Métropole. In 2018, 32 800 applicants were registered, 60% of which wanted housing in Toulouse; 8 600 social housing units were allocated. Toulouse counts 54 076 social housing units corresponding to 21,58% of all main residential units on the territory. Access to social housing is legally defined and provided by 13 social housing organisations present in Toulouse that allocate social housing units according to the same rules: regular administrative status and specific levels of income.

Toulouse also has a wide offer of sheltering services, reinforced during winter, but the demand is high: 5,800 families apply for emergency sheltering and only 15% can be satisfied.

## Toulouse's approach to Roma housing inclusion

Since the 1990s, the municipality of Toulouse has been facing with the arrival of populations originating from the Balkans and Central Europe, namely Romania and Bulgaria. The Roma migrants from Romania were the first to settle in Toulouse, those from Bulgaria came later.

The Toulouse's Social Inclusion Programme has been progressively developed since 2008, with several adaptations and adjustments to match with the difficulties identified all along.

In Toulouse the social inclusion support mission is implemented and coordinated by the Solidarity and Social Cohesion Department which carries out public inclusion policies through different complementary services who work together to offer adequate solutions:

- social housing
- active ageing
- accessibility policy with a focus on inclusion of people with disabilities
- youth prevention and protection
- combatting discrimination and exclusion
- mediation support and integration of homeless
- social cohesion policy

Initiated in 2013, the Toulouse's Social Inclusion Programme was first implemented with the Integration Village of Grynfogel created to house 24 families of Romanian nationality, mostly from the Roma community after the evacuation of a building for insalubrity and safety reasons. The project was carried out on the basis of the governmental directives of 26 August 2012, in partnership with the state services and EU funds (ERDF).

Since 2015, the Municipality of Toulouse has built up a complete and organised process to dismantle illegal camps and squats, based on the seeking out of scattered housing accommodations rather than grouped ones. All partners of the programme consider this new option as giving better results in terms of social inclusion.

The process includes a social support programme entrusted to two service providers, associations selected through a public contract: SOLIHA 31 and France Horizon. These associations work together with all the adequate public services to ensure access to schooling, healthcare, homecare, literacy and learning programmes, employment, leisure activities and citizen involvement, among others.

Altogether, 11 illegal camps have been dismantled in partnership with state services, social housing organisations and social support providers (NGOs) with financial support from the government and the city. At first, only the Roma community from Romania and Bulgaria was concerned by this approach because they were almost the only ones to settle down in illegal camps. However, currently Toulouse tends to open the approach to other vulnerable persons including refugees and asylum-seekers because they are the new groups in actual camps.

## Accelerated Housing First pilot action in Toulouse

The local approach developed in the last few years has contributed to the involvement of Toulouse in the national programme for piloting the Housing First approach. A two-year project is being implemented in Toulouse since June 2018 and will be extended to Toulouse Métropole in 2020.

The main objective is to change the approach developed up to now based on a step by step residential experience with social support, starting from emergency sheltering, stabilisation accommodation to finally reaching permanent autonomous housing. The point is now to offer from the very beginning an autonomous housing unit with social support to tackle the social and other challenges and difficulties.

The second objective is to enlarge the housing offer by seeking housing units in the private sector. This can only be done by giving some level of security to private landlords: e.g. guarantee for regular payment of rent, appropriate use of housing units, prevention of risks of degradation, social support to the tenants in extreme vulnerable conditions etc.

Recent laws have reinforced the possibilities to develop this approach but there is a great challenge to change progressively the approach towards housing for the most vulnerable persons and those that suffer from discrimination.

### Questions for reflection

You are invited to reflect on the following questions and bring your reflections at the meeting:

1. **What is the situation of Roma housing inclusion in your city? Are you facing similar challenges as in Toulouse?** (e.g. illegal camps inhabited by Roma and/or migrants)
2. **What can you learn from Toulouse's approach to Roma housing inclusion? What do you find innovative or different in this approach compared to your city's approach?**
3. **Would you consider transferring (parts of) this approach to your city?**
  - Which elements would you like to transfer and adapt to your city?
  - What would be challenging or difficult to transfer to your city and why?
  - How could these challenges be overcome?
  - What resources would you need to transfer this approach to your city? Which actors would need to be involved?



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