



Civil society monitoring report on the quality
of the national strategic framework
for Roma equality, inclusion, and participation
in Slovenia

Prepared by:
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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

CSA	Cash Social Assistance
CSW	Center for Social Work
FLUL	Faculty of Law of the University of Ljubljana
GIPH	Government Institute for Public Health
GON	Government Office for Nationalities
IERS	Institute for Ethnic and Regional Studies
MESS	Ministry for Education, Sport and Science
MLFSAO	Ministry of Labour, Family, Social Affairs and Equal Opportunities
NRCP	National Roma Contact Point
NRP	National Roma Platform
PI	Peace Institute
RTF	Roma Task Force
RUS	Roma Union of Slovenia

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This NRSF contains several paragraphs with stigmatising statements about the Roma. This can be read as an imprint left by the centre-right minority government in power at the time of the drafting and adoption of the NRSF. In 2020, the then-governing centre-right minority government installed a so-called Roma Task Force (RTF), which was consulted during the drafting of the strategy. It supported an increase in policing surveillance of Roma settlements. The NRSF contains an entire chapter dedicated to “community policing”, which is almost the only measure proposed to meet the objective of increasing the number of people who would feel comfortable having Roma as neighbours. Moreover, the RTF initiated a number of punitive amendments to the Law on Security, which have been evaluated by the Equality Advocate as discriminatory on the ground of ethnic origin. Slovenia continues to reject the official collection of ethnically segregated data, which limits the effective oversight and evaluation of the measures proposed and implemented by this and previous NRSFs.

Participation

The main body representing the Roma¹ in Slovenia vis-à-vis the government is the Council of the Roma Community of the Republic of Slovenia (CRCRS). This body is active both in the drafting and the evaluation of the NRSF. This has been an issue of concern. The composition of the CRCRS has been dominated by one organisation (Roma Union Slovenia) which was the main organisation at the time of the establishment of the CRCRS in 2007 in accordance with the Law on the Roma Community (ZRomS-1). However, since then, the structure of Roma civil society has diversified, which is not reflected in the CRCRS. Systematic support is needed to build capacity in the RCS to enable them to meaningfully make use of their right to participate in policies concerning the Roma community as stipulated by the ZRomS-1.

Relevance

The NRSF continues the effort of previous strategies in the area of the educational inclusion of Roma children. This happens through multipurpose centres within Roma settlements and additional training for Roma children in Slovenian and Romani. The NRSF fails to address educational and residential segregation, which are among the main problems regarding social exclusion, the low level of education, and poor living standards of the Roma in Slovenia. The NRSF endorsed measures in the area of social security which are likely to worsen social exclusion and poverty. The new measures foresee transforming cash social assistance (CSA) into payment in kind in the case of non-compliance with compulsory primary school attendance or to redeem debt (e.g., in public utilities). These measures have been found by the Equality Advocate to be “unduly oppressive”, discriminatory, and might further jeopardise especially children’s social security. The NRSF lacks preventive and supportive measures in the area of social services delivered to Roma settlements and targeted measures for unemployed Roma to win gainful employment outside of the public work scheme. Measures such as the transformation of CSA into payment in kind and the sole focus on public work contribute to the stigmatization of Roma. An increase in the supportive presence of social workers in Roma settlements and mentors in the area of social security and in the process of searching and applying for jobs would be desirable.

¹ According to the 2002 census, 3,246 Roma live in Slovenia; the Council of Europe estimates that 8,500 Roma live in Slovenia. Most Roma in Slovenia speak Romani (Minority Rights Group International, World Directory of Minorities and Indigenous Peoples - Slovenia : Roma, 2008, available at: <https://www.refworld.org/docid/49749cae53.html> [accessed 10 January 2023]).

Expected effectiveness

The NRSF is in alignment with the EU Roma strategic framework and other international and domestic policy documents. However, the evaluation of the effectiveness of the proposed measures is limited due to the lack of official data collection on the situation of the Roma community in Slovenia and the lack of overview by the single responsible ministry of the implementation of past measures.

Alignment with the EU Roma strategic framework

The NRSF mentions women, children and elderly members within the Roma community. It contains measures specifically directed at Roma women, for example, in the area of employment. However, elderly people and children are missing as cross-cutting target groups. In several areas, such as employment and social security especially, targeted measures for Roma are missing, as the suggested mainstream measures do not reach the Roma community.

INTRODUCTION

National Roma strategic framework

The 'National Programme of Action of the Government of the Republic of Slovenia for Roma' for the period 2021-2030 was developed between 2019 and 2021. The process of its preparation was significantly impacted by the newly formed Roma Task Force headed by the Ministry for the Interior under the then-governing centre-right minority government.² The strategy is currently undergoing revision initiated by the newly elected centre-left majority government.³ The RTF (now called a 'working group') had two meetings (November 1 and December 14, 2022) to identify legislative obstacles associated with the current strategy or even open it for amendment. The RTF has formed two subgroups: one on housing and spatial planning and the other on social inclusion, education, and security.

About this report

This report was written based on desk research and five interviews with Roma civil society organisations in Slovenia and one in Croatia as well as one individual expert. The interviews were conducted online via Zoom in November and early December 2022. The documents reviewed were research studies by the Minority Rights Group Europe and the Faculty of Law of the University of Ljubljana as well as reports by the Ombudsperson and the Equality Advocate. Interview partners additionally shared news articles from the Slovenian press when relevant. All the data was analysed by Eva Schwab, the main author of this report. Marek Hojsik and Roland Ferkovics provided supervision during the drafting of the report and support during two of the interviews, Siniša-Nenad Musić organised the interviews, Niko Okorn, Stefan Simončič and Tamara Kovačević provided assistance in finding relevant documents. Balázs Váradi from the Budapest Institute acted as a reviewer and gave detailed feedback on the first draft of the report.

² Janez Janša of the Slovenian Democratic Party (SDS) became Prime Minister as a result of the elections of March 13, 2020, amidst the COVID-19 pandemic. Janša is known as an authoritarian populist with anti-immigration and anti-minority stances who has openly sympathised with the illiberal democracy model of Viktor Orbán in Hungary (Deutsche Welle, "Anti-immigration Janez Jansa to form government", April 6, 2018, <https://www.dw.com/en/anti-immigration-leader-janez-jansa-to-form-slovenia-government/a-44067203> [accessed 10 January 2023], Vladislavljivic, Anja, "Slovenian NGOs facing eviction claim Jansa wants them silenced", *Balkan Insight*, October 28, 2020, <https://balkaninsight.com/2020/10/28/slovenian-ngos-facing-eviction-claim-jansa-wants-them-silenced/> [accessed 10 January 2023]).

³ Formed by Robert Golob, leader of the Freedom Movement (GS), elected on 1 June 2022 in coalition with the Social Democrats (SD) and the Left (Levica).

1. PARTICIPATION

1.1. Roma participation in the NRSF preparation

In 2019, the Government Office for Nationalities (GON), which acts as the National Roma Contact Point (NRCP) in Slovenia, organised the National Roma Platform (NRP) in preparation of the new 'National Programme of Action of the Government of the Republic of Slovenia for Roma for the period 2021-2030' (NRSF). The NRCP has organised the NRP since 2016, and there have been five events until now (so-called SIFOROMA). The NRP has no fixed structure but aims at being interdisciplinary and invites all relevant stakeholders, including a variety of Roma NGOs. For the preparation of this NRSF, the NRP consisted of two events: an evaluation of the previous NRSF and recommendations for future action.

At a meeting on 15 November 2019, the GON provided relevant line ministries with the starting points for the preparation of the new NRSF. A multi-stakeholder event was organised by the GON on 26 November 2019. On 20 December 2019, GON sent out the findings and proposals made during the NRP events to relevant ministries and invited all relevant bodies to prepare the basis and proposals for strategic goals, objectives and actions. In early September 2020, the GON, with the support of the newly formed Roma Task Force (RTF) (see Section 1.3), invited all relevant ministries to review and update the drafted objectives and actions for the new NRSF. Based on all the proposals by the relevant ministries, its own planned activities and the findings of the RTF, the GON drafted a new NRSF for the period to 2030, which was consulted on in March and April 2021. The NRSF was published on the government and GON websites on 25 May 2021 and was sent out for comments to all municipalities where members of the Roma community live, the CRCRS, the Human Rights Ombudsperson and the Advocate for the Principle of Equality. On 14 June 2021, the GON held a consultation with representatives of the CRCRS. The public consultation on the draft NRSF ended on 25 June 2021. The draft NRSF was submitted to the RTF for consideration before the GON sent it to the government for consideration and adoption.

The Roma Civil Society (RCS) is represented in the RTF by the Council of the Roma Community of the Republic of Slovenia (CRCRS), which is the umbrella organisation of the Roma community established under the Act on the Roma Community in the Republic of Slovenia (hereafter: ZRomS-1)⁴ (see Section 1.3) with four seats. Moreover, four seats are reserved for representatives of municipalities with Roma communities and eight seats for representatives from relevant ministries.

There are at least four bigger networks and numerous smaller Roma organisations which are not part of the CRCRS and thus do not participate in the RTF (see Section 1.3 on deficiencies in the representation of the RCS by the CRCRS). Some of them were invited to comment on the NRSF via email by the GON⁵ or made use of the opportunity to comment on the draft strategy as individuals when it was published on the government website. On 29 July 2021, the GON published a report on comments and how they were answered by the responsible state bodies.⁶ The document contains comments by the

⁴ ZRomS-1 was adopted in 2007 to grant special rights to the Roma community living in Slovenia. Different from Italian and Hungarian ethnic communities, the Constitution of the Republic of Slovenia (hereafter: Constitution) does not determine the collective and individual rights that should belong to the Roma community and its members but leaves their regulation entirely to the law. Law on the Roma Community in the Republic of Slovenia (Official Gazette of the Republic of Slovenia, No 33/07).

⁵ EPEKA, for example (Interview with Stefan Simončič, 4.11.2022).

⁶ GON, "Pregled prejetih pripomb in predlogov na osnutek Nacionalnega Programma ukrepov za Rome za obdobje 2021-2030 in odziv pristojnih organov", July 29, 2021, <https://www.gov.si/assets/vladne->

municipality of Krško, Novo Mesto, and Lendava and by the Roma Minority Development Association Preporod, the organisation Project Man and Romano Veseli, the Human Rights Ombudsman, the Equality Advocate, and Amnesty International. The majority of comments were rejected by the government with justifications that mainly repeated the arguments already contained in the NRSF. Amnesty International abstained from extensively commenting on the draft NRSF 2021-2030 and instead pointed to their comments on the previous strategy published on their website (Government Office for Nationalities 2021) in response to what they saw as a lack of serious engagement of the state bodies with the comments.⁷

There are no members of parliament in Slovenia that identify as Roma and no employees in government institutions.

1.2. Roma participation in the NRSF implementation, monitoring, and evaluation

The GON has set up the National Roma Contact Point (NRCP) for monitoring the implementation of the NRSF by establishing coordinators in the ministries and government departments as well as contact persons to work with the GON and assist their coordinator. The CRCRS, the umbrella organisation of the Roma community and the local governments where Roma live, is also invited to appoint a coordinator. For the past two decades, the same Roma organisations have participated in drafting the strategy and evaluation (see Section 1.3), which is seen as the reason for the lack of progress by other Roma organisations interviewed for this report.

1.3. System of policy consultation with civil society and stakeholders

The NRSF aims to strengthen the institutional framework for the representation of the Roma community in Slovenia through the CRCRS (Objective 8.2.2.1, NRSF 2021-2030). The CRCRS is the umbrella organisation of the Roma community established under the ZRomS-1, which represents the interests of the Roma community in Slovenia vis-à-vis the state institution and is co-financed from the state budget under the ZRomS-1 through an annual contract. In early 2020, an evaluation of the NRP, the main platform involving Roma civil society (RCS) in the drafting of the NRSF, was carried out. In the questionnaire, the participants of the events pointed out that "it would be necessary for representatives of the CRCRS and other prominent Roma representatives and other opinion leaders (from different civil society organisations) to participate more actively in the project activities and attend the events. Until now, they have always been invited to all events within the NRP, but they have rarely attended the events or very few of them and mostly always [sic] the same representatives" (NRSF 2021). Furthermore, participants pointed to the need to "pursue approaches to shed light on different issues from different perspectives, but above all with lessons from practice" and that "consideration will need to be given to motivation and appropriate methods to engage more members of the Roma community in the debate, who need to become more active [at] improving their own position and image in wider society" (NRSF 2021).

RCS is represented in the RTF by the CRCRS. The CRCRS was established as the public body representing the interests of the Roma community, both autochthonous and non-

[sluzbe/UN/NPUR-2021-2030/Pregled-odzivi-in-pripombe-ter-predlogi-na-NPUR-2021-2030.pdf](#) [accessed 10 January 2023].

⁷ Amnesty International Slovenia, "Strategija za Rome 2015", April 2015, <https://www.amnesty.si/media/uploads/files/www-STRATEGIJA%20ZA%20ROME-cel.pdf> [accessed 10 January 2023].

autochthonous,⁸ in Slovenia vis-à-vis state authorities, according to Article 9 of the ZRomS-1. It consists of 21 members: seven representatives of Roma councillors from municipalities with autochthonous Roma and 14 members of the Roma Union of Slovenia (RUS).

In October 2022, the Advocate for the Principle of Equality (hereafter: Equality Advocate) investigated whether the composition of the CRCRS, as provided by Article 10 of the ZromS-1, discriminates against the non-autochthonous Roma community.⁹ Specifically, he investigated whether the division into autochthonous and non-autochthonous Roma communities that shape the right to political representation of Roma at the local level (see Section 1.4) is also present at the national level. In his assessment, the Equality Advocate argued that in 2007, when ZromS-1 was adopted, the RUS was the only Roma association in Slovenia, thus the only representative body of the Roma community. However, since 2007 the Roma community organisations have reconfigured:

"In the years before and after the adoption of the ZromS-1, several associations withdrew from the RUS – in 2007, three, in the years 2009 and 2010, six, so that the RUS then comprised 19 associations. However, after the installation of the CRCRS, a few new associations were formed, so that in 2014 the CRCRS united 33 Roma associations with Prekmurje, Dolenjska, Bela krajina, Ljubljana, Maribor, Velenje and Piran. In addition to areas where the Roma community is traditionally settled (i.e., autochthonous), RUS also covers other areas of Slovenia where the Roma community is not traditionally settled." (Equality Advocate 17.10.2022 Assessment)

After receiving information on this issue from four out of five active Roma federations,¹⁰ the Equality Advocate arrived at the opinion that Article 10 of the ZromS-1, by which non-autochthonous Roma are only represented through the 14 representatives of the Union of Roma of Slovenia, does not discriminate against non-autochthonous Roma. However, he found that the representation of the RCS by the Roma Union is deficient as "more than two-thirds of all Roma associations in the Republic of Slovenia are not included in the RUS" (Equality Advocate 17.10.2022 Recommendation). He recommended that the government of the Republic of Slova amend the ZromS-1 in accordance with Article 21 Law on Protection against Discrimination "in order to enable[e] the representation of members of the Roma community in the CRCRS" (ibid.).

Concludingly, one can say that the system of policy consultation with RCS is deficient and that the NRSF puts the blame on the "inertia" of the RCS while ignoring structural barriers to participation, such as the composition of the CRCRS and insufficient measures in capacity building for the RCS (see Section 1.5).

In July 2020, the newly elected centre-right minority government established the Roma Task Force as a consultative body of the government, replacing the previous Government Commission for the Protection of the Roma Community established on the basis of the ZRomS-1. The Task Force existed for one year and was then abolished by the new centre-left majority government. The Task Force was chaired by the Secretary of the Ministry of

⁸ Slovenian authorities make a distinction between autochthonous and non-autochthonous Roma, i.e., Rom who have traditionally lived in Slovenia and Roma who have arrived recently, in large part due to the break-up of the former Yugoslavia.

⁹ Equality Advocate, "Ocena diskriminatornost Zakona o romski skupnosti v Republiki Sloveniji", October 17, 2022, <https://zagovornik.si/izdelki/ocena-diskriminatornosti-zakona-o-romski-skupnosti/> [accessed 10 January 2023].

¹⁰ Union of the Roma Community of Slovenia, Alliance for the Development of the Roma Minority - Preporod, Federation for the Development of the Roma Community, The Roma Sports Federation of Slovenia Pušča.

the Interior and set up narrower expert sub-groups in the areas of (1) employment and social policy, (2) education and training, (3) penal policy, and (4) spatial planning, environmental protection and municipal financing (Eighth Report of the RS). Apart from representatives of all key ministries, the Task Force also consisted of representatives of municipalities where Roma live (especially in south-eastern Slovenia) and the CRCRS. The Roma Task Force held three regular and one correspondence meeting between August and December 2020 and proposed to the government the preparation of proposals for amending legislation in the field of social protection, family benefits, labour market regulation, and in the area of criminal offences. Most significantly, the RTF supports “proactive policing” measures for Roma settlements¹¹ (see Section 5) and withholding cash social assistance and driver’s licenses to enforce compulsory primary education and the payment of fines and bills.¹²

The work of the RTF is worth mentioning as it had a previously unseen impact in the field of policymaking and is likely to have repercussions in the case of the future election of a right-wing government. The fact that it was chaired by the Ministry of the Interior sends a strong signal that Roma are considered a security issue (see Section 5). While the RTF has been discontinued, a recent initiative by 11 municipalities in the southeast of Slovenia has renewed the proposed amendments to the law on parental care and family benefits, the law on social security benefits, the law on labour market regulation, the law on the protection of public order and the law on drivers.¹³

1.4. Empowerment of Roma communities at the local level

In Slovenia, the Roma are guaranteed special rights to political participation. However, at the local level, this right to political participation is attributed differently to autochthonous and non-autochthonous Roma. In 2002, the government amended Article 39 of the Local Self-Government Act¹⁴ and established 20 municipalities where Roma are autochthonous (out of a total of 212 municipalities in Slovenia) that are obliged to ensure the right of the Roma community to elect their own representative, a so-called Roma councillor, to the municipal council. These municipalities are: Beltinci, Cankova, Črenšovci, Črnomelj, Dobrovnik, Grosuplje, Kočevje, Krško, Kuzma, Lendava, Metlika, Murska Sobota, Novo mesto, Puconci, Rogašovci, Semič, Šentjernej, Tišina, Trebnje and Turnišče. In each of these municipalities, a special working body must be set up in the municipal council to monitor the situation of the Roma community. The Roma councillor is a member of this working body. In municipalities where non-autochthonous Roma are settled, Article 7 of the ZRomS-1 provides that local authorities may set up a special working body to monitor the situation of the Roma community. This has been done in Maribor, for example. The Institute for Ethnic and Regional Studies (IERS 2022) found that the position of Roma councillor frequently remains ineffective as individuals elected for the position often lack the education necessary to make themselves heard among their colleagues in the municipality. In its comments to the NRSF submitted to the government, the Roma association Preporod suggested a pilot project to employ Roma councillors so that they

¹¹ GON, “Prvi sestanek Delovne skupine za obravnavo romske problematike: člani so ga ocenili kot uspešnega”, August 26, 2020, <https://www.gov.si/novice/2020-08-26-prvi-sestanek-delovne-skupine-za-obravnavo-romske-problematike-clani-so-ga-ocenili-kot-uspesnega/> [accessed 10 January 2023].

¹² Glücks, Nenad, “Tako bi se država lotila romske problematike: namesto izplačil v denarju bi jim plačevali račune, za vozniški izpit bi se zahtevala osnovnošolska izobrazba”, *Reporter*, December 12, 2020, <https://reporter.si/clanek/slovenija/tako-bi-se-drzava-lotila-romske-problematike-namesto-izplacil-v-denarju-bi-jim-placevali-racune-za-vozniski-izpit-bi-se-zahtevala-osnovnosolska-izobrazba-833185?mundefined> [accessed 10 January 2023].

¹³ MMC RTV SLO, “Župani jugovzhodne Slovenije želijo spremembe petih zakonov, ki zadevajo romsko problematiko”, October 24, 2022, <https://www.rtvsllo.si/lokalne-novice/dolenjska/zupani-jugovzhodne-slovenije-zelijo-spremembe-petih-zakonov-ki-zadevajo-romsko-problematiko/644881> [accessed 10 January 2022].

¹⁴ ZLS-L, Official Gazette of the Republic of Slovenia, No 51/02

can dedicate more time to their role in the municipal government and improve their skills. The proposal was rejected by the government on the grounds of equal treatment of all municipal councillors (Government Office for Nationalities 2021).¹⁵ The NRCP reported a lack of participation of Roma councillors in the training offered to them.

The implementation of Roma inclusion measures concerning spatial and communal planning of Roma settlements and social protection and partly also education depend on action at the local level, which is frequently insufficient. This lack was first pointed out in the 19th annual report of the Ombudsperson (2013). Since 2016, the NRP has been supporting municipalities to develop and prepare action plans for Roma inclusion. In 2021, the government adopted a decision that, according to Article 6 of ZRomS-1, municipalities are also obliged to adopt their own local action plans "tailored to local needs and taking into account any constraints they may face" (NRSF 2021, Human Rights Ombudsperson 2021:15). According to the NRCP, eight municipalities have LAPs at the moment (Lendava, Ivančna Gorica, Trebnje, Črnomelj, Krško, Kuzma, Novo Mesto, and Brežice) and according to the 27th report of the Human Rights Ombudsperson (2021:15) still only 13% of the municipalities meet the statutory obligation of adopting detailed sectoral programmes and measures following the ZRomS-1.

The NRP identified gaps and shortcomings in the implementation of the NRSF at the local level. According to the municipalities, "additional efforts are needed to strengthen inter-institutional integration and cooperation" (NRSF 2021). To address this, on 20 April 2021, the GON held a video conference with municipalities with Roma communities entitled 'Together we are more successful: building multidisciplinary teams and/or municipal action plans'. The situation of the Roma community varies greatly from municipality to municipality, as does the municipalities' approach. Nevertheless, representatives of most municipalities expressed their interest and need for further assistance and support from the GON in the establishment of multi-disciplinary teams and the preparation of local action plans. To address these needs, the GON has secured EU funding until 2023 to hold NRP events at the local level to discuss the implementation of specific measures or sets of measures and the achievement of the objectives.¹⁶

Local governments must provide the funds for measures related to their original competences (such as spatial and communal planning of Roma settlements, social protection, and partly also education). With the adoption of the Act on the Financial Relief of Municipalities by the National Assembly on 7 December 2020, the financing of municipalities where Roma settlements are located changed. The adopted law amends the Act on Municipal Financing (ZFO-1) and provides "that municipalities with Roma settlements are entitled to 3.5% of the municipality's eligible expenditure, which amount to between five and six million EUR per year" (NRSF 2021). According to the provision of the new Article 20a of the ZFO-1, responsibility for the situation of the Roma is shared between the municipalities and the state authorities, meaning that additional funds from the state budget will co-finance the implementation of the constitutional rights of the permanently settled Roma community. The provision applies to 25 municipalities. The first 20 are those municipalities where the Roma community settled in the municipality has the

¹⁵ According to Article 34a of the Act on Local Self-Government, "members of the Municipal Council shall hold their office on a non-professional basis and shall be entitled to remuneration for the performance of that office. A member of the Municipal Council is entitled to a sitting fee for attending a meeting of the Municipal Council or a meeting of a working body of the Municipal Council". Preporod suggested that employment would help the professionalization of Roma councillors as it "would provide for the recruitment of Roma councillors in each region, where they would be brought together in working groups with the aim of working together, drafting proposals, cooperating with stakeholders and joint training for the development of the Roma community" (GON 2021).

¹⁶ The GON successfully applied to the European Commission's closed call for proposals for the next project, the 'National Roma Platform for National Focal Points for Roma Inclusion' (SIFOROMA5), which will run from 1 July 2021 to 30 June 2023 (NRSF 2021).

right to have at least one representative on the municipal council (Beltinci, Cankova, Črenšovci, Črnomelj, Dobrovnik, Grosuplje, Kočevje, Krško, Kuzma, Lendava, Metlika, Murska Sobota, Novo mesto, Puconci, Rogašovci, Semič, Šentjernej, Tišina, Trebnje and Turnišče). In addition, the municipalities Brežice, Ivančna Gorica, Ribnica, Škocjan and Šalovci, which have registered Roma settlements on their territory, receive funding.

However, there is debate about whether the additional funds will be actually used for improving the situation of Roma: "It is essential to understand that this is not 'Roma' money, but funds intended for municipalities, which can also be used for purposes not directly related to the rights of members of the Roma community, but can also be used to cover the costs that this section of citizens causes others" (Government Office for Nationalities 2021). The funds are not earmarked, and, procedurally, it is problematic that the opinion of the CRCRS has not been obtained (as stipulated by the ZRomS-1 for the adoption of any legislation concerning the Roma community). Moreover, MPs questioned the choice of eligible municipalities as arbitrary, asking, for example, why Maribor was not included despite its share of Roma population.¹⁷ The RUS reported that at a recent meeting with the new government (23.11.2022), the Ministry for Public Administration clarified that the funds are not earmarked but have to be spent on the Roma community. The GON (Interview 1.12.2022) commented that the decision ultimately lies with the municipalities and that the GON encourages municipalities to adopt LAPs as a way to make sure that these funds reach Roma communities. As mentioned above, only a minority of municipalities do have LAPs at the moment, thus the purpose of these funds is not clearly defined, and it remains to be seen whether they reach Roma communities.

The FLUL points out that the distinction between autochthonous and non-autochthonous local Roma communities is not recognised by international human rights law and that some states actively reject the differentiation on the grounds of potentially weakening the protection of ethnic minorities, which is "why many experts have also have warned that the autochthonousness criterion will be increasingly difficult for states to defend against international institutions and treaty bodies" (FLUL 2021:97). Even at the time of the adoption¹⁸ legal theorists pointed to problems with the definition of indigeneity:

"The notion of an autochthonous national community is not sufficiently defined in legal, political and professional terms. Already in the debate at the time of the adoption of the Constitution, some legal theorists, in particular those who, in the context of international law, deal with the legal status of minorities or national communities, [...] argued that the Constitution should not use this concept and should not link to it an extremely high level of rights." (FLUL 2021:102)

In order to fulfil the rights of local Roma communities, the FLUL recommends the abolition of the criterion of autochthonous vs. non-autochthonous Roma and granting the right of a councillor to all local Roma communities:

"The assessment of international and domestic legal acts, as well as the fieldwork, has shown that the role of the Roma representative on the municipal council is of the utmost importance in ensuring [...] the fulfilment of the rights of Roma in a given municipality. On the basis of these findings, we propose the abolition of the criterion of autochthonous origin as a condition for the appointment of a representative of the Roma community in a municipality in municipal councils so that Roma communities in all municipalities with an identifiable Roma population in

¹⁷ STA, "Novela zakona o financiranju občin, dodaten denar za tiste z romskimi naselji", *N1 SLO*, December 22, 2021, <https://n1info.si/novice/slovenija/novela-zakon-financiranje-obcin-romsko-naselje/> [accessed 10 January 2023].

¹⁸ Constitutional Court of the Republic of Slovenia, Case U-I-315/02-11, decision of 3 October 2002.

all municipalities with a Roma community, to enable the selection of their representative on the municipal council, who will advocate and care for the fulfilment of their rights.” (FLUL 2021:104)

1.5. Capacity-building of Roma civil society

The CRCRS implements public calls for proposals for the co-financing of programmes of activities of Roma community organisations. Some of these organisations “focus their activities on training and providing support to Roma councillors in municipal councils, representatives of associations and other prominent representatives in the Roma community working for the benefit of the community, as well as providing technical support and assistance to associations in applying for tenders in various fields” (NRSF 2021). In the past, the CRCRS has promoted information and publishing activities that are important for the development of the Roma community by co-financing the Roma Information Center and Radio Romic.¹⁹ The GON monitors the activities of the CRSRS and the use of the financial resources allocated to it. The NRSF (2021) says: “the allocation of funds to CRCRS and other Roma organisations and associations has strengthened the capacities of Roma civil society”. In 2020, the Equality Advocate investigated unfair funding related to Radio Romic (see Section 2.9). Among other points, the petitioner pointed out that...

“The responsibility for the situation of the Roma population is either placed on the ministerial portfolios or [...] the CRCRS. The latter, according to the petitioner, was neither staffed nor in any way otherwise qualified to conduct policy [concerning the Roma community] at the national level, including [not preparing] calls for tenders for [the co-financing of] programmes for the Roma community and for the Roma community itself allocating public funds.” (Equality Advocate 19.5.2020)

All stakeholders interviewed for this report agree that the RCS in Slovenia is weak. One of the key findings of the NRP was that “the participation of members of the Roma community in all the measures and opportunities of their inclusion available to them has not been sufficiently ensured so far” (NRSF 2021). While there are a lot of small NGOs in Slovenia that work on Roma inclusion in the fields of sports and culture, there is much less engagement with areas such as issues of social inclusion, housing, employment, etc. Existing NGOs mostly lack the capacity to engage in policy-making processes, including the preparation of the NRSF. Epeka pointed out that many organisations do not even have the capacity to apply for funding, let alone to read and comment on the development of the NRSF.

However, evaluations of the reasons for this lack of capacity vary greatly. The NRSF mentions in several places the “inertia” of RCS, for example, in the preparation of the NRSF. IERS, on the other hand, found out that it is frequently the “shifting responsibilities between actors, especially between the state and the local community, which often place[...] the blame for the ineffectiveness of measures solely on members of the Roma community, [and] lead[...] to general apathy and inertia and create[...] fertile ground for the perpetuation of prejudice against Roma” (IERS 2022).

Apart from financial incentives for participation in the consultation process, further developmental aid is needed to build capacity in the RCS. In their comments on the NRSF (GON 2021), the Roma association Preporod suggested awarding staff scholarships to talented Roma students to help build RCS – the comment was rejected by the government on the grounds that general scholarships are available to Roma as well.

¹⁹ <https://www.radioromic.com/>

2. RELEVANCE

2.1. Fighting antigypsyism and discrimination

As a member of the EU, Slovenia has adopted anti-discrimination legislation (Protection from Discrimination Act 2016) and an anti-discrimination body (Equality Advocate). Nevertheless, discrimination against Roma in Slovenia remains poorly reported locally and lacks acknowledgement at the international level. In its report on discrimination against Roma in Slovenia and Slovakia, the International Minority Rights Group found that...

"The Handbook on European non-discrimination law 2018, published by the European Union Agency for Fundamental (FRA), which compiles cases of discrimination [against] the Roma community, does not include any cases from [...] Slovenia, which also points to the problem that Slovenian Roma rarely pursue legal remedies in cases [of] discrimination; this certainly contributes to the distorted picture of discrimination against the Roma community in Slovenia on an international level. The number of court cases that address discrimination against Roma in Slovenia are extremely few." (Minority Rights Group Europe 2022)

The Equality Advocate has only pursued a few proceedings concerning racial discrimination cases brought by Roma applicants and provided advice in a small number of cases of discrimination:²⁰

- 2019 - three discrimination proceedings and two discrimination cases and two counselling sessions,
- 2020 - three discrimination proceedings and one counselling,
- 2021 - three discrimination proceedings and three counsellings.

These included two cases of alleged discrimination against Roma by police. In 2020, during lockdown, a Roma community reported mistreatment by police officers during an intervention in their settlement: "When the police officers from the Novo mesto Police Department allegedly intervened unjustifiably, shouting loudly, waking up several underage children and making fun of the rest of the Roma, provoking them, throwing one of the violators' identity cards on the floor after the procedure was completed". While the Equality Officer could not find evidence for discrimination, he advised an "investigation of police conduct intended at the misuse of power" (Equality Advocate 2021:37 Annual Report). Another investigation into controversial treatment by an employee by the Specialised State Prosecutor's Office was dropped as the client did not follow up by submitting a complaint after the Equality Officer had sought clarification from the state prosecutor's office (Equality Advocate 2021 Annual Report).

According to the survey conducted by the Minority Rights Group Europe (2022), this small number of cases reported to the Equality Advocate points to a mismatch between the actual experience of discrimination and what is reported:

"Although the vast majority (44) of Slovenia's 50 Roma with whom we spoke had experienced discrimination (mainly in relation to administrative authorities, in health and education systems, and in shops), none of them reported their case to an equality body. According to the information obtained in the interviews, this is partly due to the

²⁰ A proceeding refers to an investigation by the Equality Advocate to find whether an incident amounts to a case of discrimination. In 2021 the Equality Advocate led 119 administrative procedures, 65 of which were concluded and found 10 cases of discrimination (The Slovenia Times, "Equality ombudsman finds ten cases of discrimination in 2021", July 6, 2022, <https://sloveniatimes.com/equality-ombudsman-finds-ten-cases-of-discrimination-in-2021/> [accessed 10 January 2023]).

belief that nothing is going to change, that no one is actively working in this area and that the Roma community will accumulate additional problems if they decide to report incidents. In addition, many of them did not even know what discrimination was, they did not know about the different forms of discrimination, ... and did not know how and where to report discrimination or what legal help is available.” (Minority Rights Group Europe 2022)

In its 2022 report, the ECRI found “serious shortcomings in the prosecution of hate speech, resulting in hate speech potentially amounting to criminal offences being rarely prosecuted in Slovenia” (ECRI 2022). The reason for this is that hate speech is prosecuted if the conduct of the perpetrator “represents a concrete danger to public order”, while “hate speech that potentially amounts to hate crime” alone is not considered a sufficient alternative reason for prosecution. The number of hate speech cases dealt with by the police increased from 13 in 2018 to 50 in 2020 and the criminal charges filed by the police increased from 19 in 2018 to 44 in 2020, whereas prosecutors issued six indictments in 2018 compared with seven in 2020 (Equality Advocate 2020).

Antigypsyism and discrimination are especially prevalent in the Dolenska region of Slovenia. Most recently, 11 mayors of municipalities with Roma citizens have started an initiative to change five laws regulating the system of social welfare to the disadvantage of Roma in the southeast that follows earlier proposals by the Roma Task Force (as mentioned above). They have not yet managed to gather enough political support and reach parliament. Antigypsyism is also present in the media. The problem of bias leading to the negative representation of Roma in the media was raised by the Equality Advocate in 2020 (Equality Advocate 2020 Annual Report).

The NRSF recognises that antigypsyism as propagated in the media is a cause of discrimination against Roma in education and employment: stereotypes against Roma are...

“exacerbated by media images, which generalise specific events to all members of the Roma community and strongly influence the mentality and perception of the majority population even in places where the majority population has no contact at all with members of the Roma communities. These established patterns are the most threatening to all efforts to improve the educational and employment situation among Roma, as they create a destimulating ... environment for change and ... an unfavourable situation in the majority society for greater acceptance of Roma as fellow citizens and neighbours”. (NRSF 2021)

The NRSF includes measures against antigypsyism that target civil servants who come into contact with members of the Roma community and mentions specifically police officers and judges. The section on measures for fighting Antigypsyism and discrimination among civil servants is police-centric: training sessions for civil servants (in centres for social work, schools, and kindergartens) are provided by the police, and the goal is “community policing” (see Section 5) and the relevant document guiding training is a manual adopted by the GON on “preventing early marriages”. The participation of a member of the Roma community in this training is not obligatory but only applied “where appropriate”. The GON (Interview 1.12.2022) explained that the police are a state service frequently called upon by Roma themselves to settle problems within settlements, and this is why training for other civil servants is provided by the police.

Moreover, the NRSF mentions in its goals the need to fight Antigypsyism among policymakers but does not mention training for state officials for any level above the municipal government. In October 2022, the Human Rights Ombudsperson published a report on the deficiencies in the human rights training for public officials in Slovenia, pointing to the substantial need for such training and insufficiencies in its provisioning:

“The Ombudsman perceives the most violations of human rights, fundamental freedoms, or other irregularities by the state administration. Indeed, in the period 2017–2020, the Ombudsman found a total of 1,082 violations by the state administration, of which 1,065 were committed by the so-called civil part of the state administration. The Ombudsman also draws attention to the high number of its partially implemented and unimplemented recommendations, as well as to their slow implementation. [...]

Three sets of training programmes provided by the Administration Academy have been reviewed, namely mandatory training for appointment to a title, mandatory training for the highest-ranking civil servants – training for leadership in the administration, and optional education, training, and fulfilment of civil servants. It follows from the analysis that normative and actual changes in the content of the training programmes are necessary in all three sections.” (Human Rights Ombudsperson 2022)

Moreover, the NRSF misconceptualises discrimination at times. Residential segregation is addressed less as a form of discrimination and more as an entrance point for discussing social problems faced in Roma communities in ways that reinforce stereotypes.²¹ In his comments on the NRSF submitted to the GON, the Equality Advocate requested that the NRSF treat discrimination as a cross-cutting theme in the NRSF and that “measures will reflect the needs of different groups of Roma community members in relation to the additional risks of intersectional discrimination based on age, gender, place of residence, wealth and other personal circumstances” (GON 2021). The Minority Rights Group Europe (2022) further observes that in local action plans, the objective of fighting discrimination often remains vague without clear targets or a budget.

The study of the Minority Rights Group Europe (2022) makes the following recommendations:

For the European Commission:

- Monitor closely the implementation of the ‘National Action Programme for Roma Action Plan 2021-2030’ in Slovenia and [...] current and future action plans for achieving tangible and effective progress towards Roma inclusion and equality.
- Ensure that the EU structural funds invested in improving living conditions [for] marginalised Roma will effectively address structural forms of discrimination, in particular, segregation [in] housing, education and other areas; and institutional racism at various levels, such as deep-rooted institutional discrimination [against] Roma women in healthcare.
- Launch campaigns to raise awareness among Roma about discrimination and inform them about the procedure for [petitioning] the Equality Ombudsperson.

For national decision-makers

- Simplify bureaucratic procedures and ensure additional support for Roma in seeking legal redress in cases of discrimination in legal proceedings.
- Improve services to provide free legal aid assistance and advice at the national level and support NGOs working in this field.

²¹ For example, in Section 3.2., Objectives and Targets for Social Protection and Social Inclusion, “Many members of the Roma community, especially when they live in concentrated settlements and especially when they live in Roma settlements, are in most cases quite poorly integrated into the wider social environment. They therefore form and act in their communities according to their own systems of criteria and values and practices and behaviours, which may differ from those of mainstream society. In these systems, education and employment are often not particularly valued”.

- Introduce compulsory non-discrimination training for officials and lawyers who are confronted with the Roma community.
- Ensure regular turnover of Roma members of consultative bodies.
- Ensure that local decision-makers dedicate more budget resources to raise awareness among the Roma community and others about discrimination.
- Increase the exchange of knowledge, experience and good practice between municipalities where Roma represent a large proportion of the population.

Ombudsperson Slovenia:

- Raise awareness of discrimination and Roma communities' available legal remedies.
- Encourage discriminated persons to make their cases report their cases to the equality body and provide legal support to continue the procedure.
- Strengthen long-term cooperation with the Roma community in regions with a large Roma population; carry out regular field visits and establish contact points to help Roma who are discriminated against can provide assistance to help discriminated people cope with bureaucra[ti]c procedures necessary [for] report[ing] discrimination.

Because of the derogatory significance of the term, the IERS (2022) and the RUS suggested replacing the term antigypsyism with anti-Romaism.²²

2.2. Education

School segregation was partially addressed ten years ago when Slovenia abandoned the proximity principle in deciding which school children should attend relative to their place of residency. However, the Minority Rights Group Europe (2022) points out that "NGOs in Slovenia have repeatedly reported that Roma children are illegally separated in classrooms from other children. It is also worrying that 30-40 per cent of pupils who are attending schools and classes for children with special needs classes are Roma children, even though Roma represent less than 1 per cent of the total population". The NRSF does not mention the problem of educational segregation or the disproportionate amount of Roma children in special needs schools.²³ The segregation of Roma children in classrooms is illegal, and the practice is identified based on reports gathered by NGOs from Roma parents, and there is no official data.²⁴

One of the reasons why Roma children are placed in schools for children with special needs is often that they lack Slovenian language skills, which situation could be alleviated by including Roma children more systematically in preschool education. The NRSF recognises the problem of a lack of Slovenian language skills among Roma children and the importance of inclusion in preschool education. The MESS estimates that "approximately 5% of all 5-year-olds in Slovenia are not enrolled in pre-school education ... [and] that approximately 35% of Roma children in south-eastern Slovenia are not enrolled in pre-

²² In Slovenian, "anti-ciganizem" and "anti-Romaizem".

²³ The only mention of educational segregation is the example of the Leskovac Primary School in Krško which started a programme to integrate Roma children in regular sections of schools after the establishment of segregated educational facilities in Pušča in Murska Sobota municipality, Vejar in Trebnje municipality, Brezje in Novo mesto municipality and Kerinov Grm in Krško municipality had been flagged by NGOs (Second RCM Report 2018).

²⁴ The Second RCM Report on Slovenia refers to data collected by the weekly political magazine Mladina and Amnesty International.

school education" (NRSF 2021). The NRSF introduces a 240-hour short preschool education programme, but its implementation is at the discretion of kindergartens which have to apply for funding for the programme, and they have shown little initiative so far. In the evaluation of the Slovenian coalition partners, one of the biggest achievements of the previous NRSF has been the implementation of day centres (multi-purpose centres) within Roma settlements which became a place where Roma children can go directly after school and are provided with an environment to do their homework, but these centres have also been places to provide pre-school education. These centres were set up by the MESS as part of the five-year project 'Together for Knowledge' (2016-2021) funded by the ESF. The current NRSF renews the funding for another two years.²⁵ Furthermore, one of the reasons for non-enrolment in kindergarten is Article 72 of the Parental Care and Family Benefits Act, which provides for a 20% higher child allowance for children under four years of age. In its comments on the NRSF submitted to the GON, the municipality of Krško recommends that "[f]or Roma children it would make sense to abolish this allowance and to provide additional financial incentives to those Roma parents who do enrol their children into kindergarten" (GON 2021). The suggestion was rejected by the GON by explaining the rationale behind the measure directed at parents who cannot get a place for their child in a nursery due to lack of space or the child's illness.

In the interview (1.12.2022), the GON reported the case of Dobrovnika municipality, which found out about the high number of Roma in special needs schools based on the municipal budget and brought up the issue for investigation to the GON. The GON raised the issue to the MESS, which argued that the cases were all justified.

The NRSF sets the goal of increasing the number of Roma children who complete primary education by 2025 to at least 20% and until 2030 to at least 40%. Coalition partners from Slovenia pointed out that these targets are too weak, especially in light of the fact that the primary school completion rate among the Slovenian majority population is above 98% (UNESCO 2019). One of the measures that the NRSF proposes to increase the completion of primary schools is the Roma assistant. A recent amendment to the regulation on norms and standards for the implementation of educational programmes for children with special needs (Official Gazette of the RS No. 54/21) added the position of Roma assistant in kindergartens and primary schools. Their status is not fully regulated yet, however. Based on their study, the FLUL points out that...

"the Roma assistant is a key institution for the integration of Roma children in the educational process. It is therefore of the utmost importance that the Roma Assistant is included in the civil servants' pay system. The institution of the Roma assistant must undoubtedly be maintained and supported in a systemic way". (FLUL 2021:112)

The RUS reported from observing the project that out of 60 positions that were paid, 27 went to Roma assistants, while 33 went into financing (non-Roma) administrative staff. They recommended that more money flow to Roma. The IERS recommended that Roma assistants should not be the only ones responsible for the success of Roma pupils, but all teachers and members of the administration should be trained in multicultural education. The role of the Roma assistant should be broadened to teaching and other pedagogical tasks to combat prejudice among children from the majority population as well, and the name changed to "intercultural mediator" (IERS 2022). Roma assistants in primary schools and kindergartens are proposed as primary venues for teaching Romani culture but only to Roma children. The coalition partners propose to have Roma assistants as intercultural mediators. The NRSF endorses measures financed by the ESF to include Romani language classes in primary schools and the development of teaching materials. The CRCRS had suggested in the consultations on the NRSF to open Romani language classes to all

²⁵ The NRSF specifies ESF funding for the multipurpose centres for the year of the adoption of the plan (EUR 200,000) and the following year (EUR 800,000).

children. This proposal was not adopted. CRCRS also reported that they were not included in the planning of Romani language teaching in primary schools.

The NRSF proposes two punitive measures against parents who do not send their children to primary and secondary school. The NRSF proposes to transform child benefits into payment in kind for up to three months if parents fail to send their children to primary school. These measures have been discussed as potentially harmful to the social security of children (see Section 2.6 on social protection). Further, the NRSF suggested an amendment to Article 72 of the Pupils Act to punish parents financially who withdraw their children from secondary education through reducing child benefit by 33%. The Equality Advocate pointed out that this regulation is problematic because secondary education is not compulsory, and the measure would interfere with the freedom to choose other forms of qualification, including informal learning, after the completion of primary school.

"Schooling beyond the primary school leaving age, which does not mean the completion of primary school or education, is not compulsory. Freedom of education is also guaranteed, including the possibility to choose between forms of education and the right to acquire non-formal education and other skills which can be a source of livelihood (e.g., sports, languages, music, technical skills). There is no data to confirm that the current receipt of child benefits for those adolescents who have completed or have not completed primary education do not continue their education at a second level (secondary school). The proposed amendment to the Pupils' Income Tax Act-1 also does not make it clear that the parents' costs of supporting and educating adolescents are lower than those incurred by parents for supporting and educating adolescents or younger children." (Equality Advocate 11.3.2022)

Apart from a lack of data that would support the assumed rationale behind the proposed amendment, the Equality Advocate also points out that this measure...

"would be particularly difficult for those who are financially weakest and for those who may not have the capacity (e.g., mental, linguistic) to continue their education at a second level and do not have the status of a pupil with a disability or are temporarily disabled (e.g. injury, medical treatment)". (Equality Advocate 11.3.2022)

As the amendment is not based on a problem analysis based on actual data, the Equality Advocate proposes that it might be discriminatory:

"A key problem with the proposal is the absence of a situation analysis and justification, and the lack of clarity of the objectives, which would enable an assessment to be made as to whether the proposed measures are appropriate, adequate and proportionate and consequently not discriminatory." (Equality Advocate 11.3.2022)

The coalition partners recommended that students need additional support and families financial assistance to keep sending their children to school, especially after the end of compulsory primary education. Education is an investment that many families cannot afford. Roma children are often withdrawn from schools to generate an income, and especially after the end of compulsory education, they become eligible for unemployment benefits, which is an additional incentive to drop out of school. Punitive measures against families who do not send children to schools (see Section 2.6) are likely to worsen their situation. These families would actually need more support to achieve higher levels of education for their children. During the consultations held on the NRSF, the CRCRS suggested reserving a proportion of stipends for high school students for Roma pupils. This proposal has not been adopted in the NRSF.

Another problem that has been raised by the coalition partners is that non-Roma children are often sent to various afternoon educational activities, such as music school, which Roma parents cannot afford.

2.3. Employment

Unemployment among Roma is still exceedingly high. While there is a lack of official data, NGOs reported that in the southeast of the country, only 2% of Roma were working in the formal economy, while “Roma working in the informal sector were exposed to labour violations, in particular with regard to wage compensation and termination procedures” (US Embassy 2021). Moreover, EPEKA estimated that the “unemployment rate among Roma in the Maribor area exceeded 90 per cent” (US Embassy 2021).

The evaluation report of the previous NRSF, as well as several other studies, pointed to the lack of progress in the area of employment (IERS 2022). The EC’s evaluation of the NRSF to 2020 concluded that the “goals of reducing the employment gap between Roma and the majority population and increasing the inclusion of young Roma (16-24 years old) in education or the labour market have not been achieved” (IERS 2022). In Europe, the gap between Roma in employment and the rest of the population is more than 30%. While there is no detailed data for Slovenia, ISCOMET reports that “[b]ased on data from employment offices, social work centres, local communities and civil society organisations, we can conclude that the situation in the Republic of Slovenia is even worse on these parameters, despite large regional differences” (IERS 2022).

The NRSF mainly endorses a mainstreaming approach in the area of employment without addressing the problem of accessibility of mainstream labour market services for Roma, such as the language barrier. No specific measures for enhancing the chances of Roma obtaining gainful employment are suggested except one, which involves prolonging the period for the unemployed from the Roma national minority to participate in active labour market programmes (ALMP), especially inclusion in public works. The inclusion of Roma in public works is co-financed by the Ministry of Labour, Family, Social Affairs and Equal Opportunities (MLFSAO) at a rate of 95% (wage co-financing), while the wages of other groups are co-financed at a rate ranging from 30 to 80%. While for the majority population, the government foresees a maximum of one year, Roma, like disabled persons and persons aged 58 and older, can be in public work programmes for double that duration (two years). IERS points out that, despite significant funding allocated to the area of employment, “the results achieved ... have not fully met the goals ... [r]egular employment of Roma is mainly temporary and often limited to public works” (IERS 2022). There are few who transition from ALM to permanent employment: “An overview of the activities over a ten-year period shows that the number of leavers into employment has not changed significantly and is 260-270, despite the four-digit figures for participants in the programmes” (IERS 2022). Participation in public works can also contribute to the further stigmatization of Roma as they are regarded as a labour force that is “in need of socialization” (NRSF 2021) in a way that goes beyond what other unemployed populations need to become employable again.

The NRSF lacks adequate problem identification in the area of employment. The explanation of the measures is highly stigmatising.²⁶ The NRSF puts the blame for unemployment partially on specific values developed within the Roma community

²⁶ The measures in employment are explained in the NRSF in a way that stigmatises Roma based on their living conditions and does not address how these living conditions come into being or the problem of discrimination by employers: “the particular lifestyle and internal value system that is established within a large part of the Roma community contributes to the fact that they do not generally seek employment or other forms of training after leaving school. The environment in which members of the Roma community live is not conducive to the development of personal growth and the strengthening of competences, which in turn leads to a general passivisation and inactivity on the part of individuals. Their particular way of life (subsistence, linked to dependence on cash social assistance) and value system do not allow them to learn about the employment and educational opportunities offered by educational institutions and the labour market”.

("passivisation") rather than addressing structural discrimination.²⁷ In a survey by the European Discrimination Barometer (2019), "being Roma" was indicated as the main personal circumstance leading to labour market discrimination. Sixty-one per cent of respondents in the 28 EU countries think this on average and 57% of respondents in Slovenia.²⁸ The survey further points out that in Slovenia, 57% of respondents think that an applicant who meets the same requirements as another applicant would not be selected if s/he is Roma (compared to 38% of respondents on average in EU countries) (IERS 2022). Another structural barrier to employment has been pointed out by the NRP report (2019) 'Together we are more successful: finding new approaches and opportunities for great labour market inclusion of Roma'. The level of the minimum wage is not adapted to the level of social assistance, so that recipients of social benefits are discouraged from seeking employment: "Under the current system, social assistance recipients are exempt from the obligation to pay municipal contributions and infrastructure costs or to pay fines for offences, but when they enter the labour market, these amounts are immediately deducted from their personal income" (IERS 2022). While raising the minimum wage might price out some low-educated individuals from employment altogether, policy instruments like grace periods can help alleviate this problem. Finally, one of the Slovenian coalition partners observed that agencies for the unemployed are unwilling to cooperate in programmes that put Roma into paid employment as they profit from having many Roma registered on them. Although unemployment has dropped in Slovenia over the past years, these agencies have almost the same number of people registered.

The measures suggested by the current NRSF are either mainstream measures, or, if targeted, one-sidedly focused on the Roma (to increase their employability), while they do not address structural barriers such as antigypsyism among the majority population, especially among employers. In this, one could argue that in the area of employment, the NRSF diverges from the EU strategy framework in that it suggests that barriers to integration are internal to the Roma population and not structural barriers to employment based on discrimination and Antigypsyism.

The Institute for Ethnic and Regional Studies (IERS) points at structural problems with Slovenian labour market services, saying that, currently, the public employment agency (PEA) functions as a sort of "recruitment agency" that offers services mainly to employers but does not "support those who are not sufficiently prepared for the labour market" (IERS 2022). Roma should be offered additional assistance as they often cannot benefit from the regular measures of the public employment service. This latter point has also been supported by the FLUL:

"The fieldwork revealed a lack of information on the opportunities available to Roma in the context of PEA. Despite the fact that current measures already address many of the problems of Roma in a fairly comprehensive way as one of the vulnerable groups, the effective distance between Roma and the programmes needs to be removed to make the PEA available to them. We therefore propose the introduction of a Roma employment adviser who would work in the field, in the regional units of the Employment Service, and provide information to Roma about employment opportunities and other programmes." (FLUL 2021:115)

²⁷ Not only in the labour market but also in housing and education, which leads to Roma being in an unfavourable position in the labour market. Epeka, for example, pointed out that of 230 Roma registered unemployed in Maribor, 100 have not finished primary school.

²⁸ European Union (2019) "Special Eurobarometer 493. Report on Discrimination in the European Union", <https://europa.eu/eurobarometer/api/deliverable/download/file?deliverableId=71116>.

Finally, IERS (2022) recommends that employers who choose to employ Roma should be rewarded not only financially but with intangible incentives that improve their reputation. It would help to set up a database of employers who employ Roma. One area which looks promising for job creation is the green economy, especially green tourism.

As an exception to the above, both GON and EPEKA positively pointed out the social activation programme for Roma women, which will continue in the period 2021-2027 (NRSF 2021). This programme offered a small amount of financial compensation to participants as an incentive.

2.4. Healthcare

According to a report by Amnesty International, infant mortality among Roma is four times higher than in the rest of the population, and the mortality rate for children aged 1-4 is four times higher than for children of the same age in the non-Roma population. Premature deaths are part of Roma lives, with an average life expectancy of 22 years less than the rest of the population.²⁹ The Human Rights Ombudsman recommends that...

“the Ministry of Health takes effective measures to improve the health situation of the Roma and ensures the elimination of the pronounced inequality in the health of the Roma as compared to the majority population. In this regard, the Ombudsman also recommends regular monitoring of the efficiency of measures by means of health and healthcare indicators”. (27th annual report of the Ombudsperson 2021:38)

The NRSF does not contain targeted measures or concrete indicators for evaluating the success of the suggested measures for Roma. It references the reporting of implementing NGOs and the annual public evaluation of all programmes of the Ministry of Health. The coalition members from Slovenia found that NGOs in the health sector mainly target Roma women of reproductive age. Other groups, such as elderly people and their needs, are not being addressed, especially when it comes to preventive measures which lower the risk of severe illnesses. The coalition members reported that a lot of Roma face problems in accessing healthcare services because public health institutions are understaffed and employees lack the time to explain diagnoses and prescriptions to patients, making it difficult to put them into practice. This issue was especially prominent during the COVID-19 pandemic when many medical services were provided via phone and email, which increased communication problems – many Roma, especially women, do not have access to the latter. FLUL (2021:78) observed that nurses working in postnatal care racially stereotype Roma women, which can cause problems for the latter in accessing these health services. A lack of trust between Roma and mostly non-Roma healthcare staff can lead Roma to omit visiting the doctor unless a condition has become very severe (FLUL 2021:79). Coalition members from Slovenia observed that, frequently, Roma find it easier to communicate with Roma healthcare staff so there is a need to employ more Roma in the health sector. The NRSF does not mention the staffing crisis in the health care system. It mentions the problem of healthcare staff being “insufficiently informed” and tending to “misdiagnose” Roma patients. There are, however, no measures proposed in the NRSF to alleviate this problem.

Finally, in their comments on the current NRSF submitted to the government, Romano Veseli pointed to the problem of increasing drug use in Roma settlements, which is not addressed by social workers:

²⁹ Amnesty International, “Slovenia: ECHR judgement is a blow to Roma communities”, March 10, 2020, <https://www.amnesty.org/en/latest/news/2020/03/slovenia-echr-judgment-is-a-blow-to-roma-communities/> [accessed 10 January 2023].

"NGOs working in Roma settlements have noticed an increasing trend in recent years towards drug dealing and an increase in the number of younger Roma (aged 11 and over) with PAS problems. Similar findings are presented in the draft NDPD by the MoI and the Police, respectively. An active approach with concrete measures to address the problems of young Roma with PAS and to raise awareness of the Roma community is a priority objective which will have direct effects on other specific objectives of the programme areas in the field of education, social protection, social inclusion, child and youth protection, health care, improving coexistence in Roma settlements and their surroundings, and in the field of integration into the social and cultural life of the Roma community." (GON 2021)

The government rejected the comment on the basis of the presence of pre-existing mainstream measures.

2.5. Housing, essential services, and environmental justice

Only a fraction of the population in illegalised Roma settlements³⁰ has access to clean drinking water (FLUL 2021). The biggest problems in this regard are in the Dolenska region. In early October 2022, the UN Special Rapporteur on the Environment visited Slovenia and expressed concern about the lack of access to drinking water in the Roma settlement of Dobruška.³¹ In his 27th annual report, the Human Rights Ombudsperson emphasised that "inadequate legal and municipal services in Roma settlements pose a threat to the realisation of the human and special rights of the Roma community and its members" (27th Report of the Ombudsperson 2021:14). The NRSF proposes the adoption of municipal spatial plans for the regularisation of Roma settlements. However, problems associated with housing, essential services and environmental justice remain because responsibility is unresolved between national and local governments. This view was expressed both by the coalition partners and by comments to the NRSF (GON 2021).

The biggest problem is ongoing residential segregation in Slovenia and underserved Roma settlements, which is especially pronounced in illegal settlements:

"The regularisation (legalisation) of some Roma settlements has ... not eliminated the problem of segregation of the Roma, which is also reflected in the emergence of extreme livelihood strategies, such as crime and violence among the inhabitants of the Roma settlements, and violence between Roma and gadje. Even if some legalised settlements, ... some of the inhabitants of the settlements still live in improvised dwellings, which do not provide a safe and healthy living environment... An important aspect of this way of dealing with living conditions is dealing with the problem of ghettoisation: the fact that Roma live neither in legalised nor in illegalised settlements, but because they have nowhere else to go. Legalisation in itself does not contribute to solving structural inequalities." (Faculty of Law of the University of Ljubljana 2021:60)

In the study by FLUL (2021), Roma interlocutors (residents and councillors) reported problems with moving out of segregated Roma settlements, such as not being allowed to sign a rental contract or even non-Roma residents collecting signatures against the move

³⁰ The term "illegalised" is used by FLUL (2021) to indicate the process by which Roma settlements were constructed informally on public land and then became illegal due to changes in planning documents and laws.

³¹ STA, "Poročevalca ZN šokirale razmere v romskem naselju Dobruška vas", *N1 SLO*, October 6, 2022, <https://n1info.si/novice/slovenija/porocevalec-zn-boyd-poziva-k-odlocnejsemu-resevanju-dolgoletnih-tezav/> [accessed 10 January 2023].

of a Roma tenant to their neighbourhood. A common practice for obtaining housing outside of segregated settlements is Roma offering care to elderly persons from the majority population who do not have heirs, and then inheriting the houses from the former owners. The study by FLUL (2021) reports one case of sexual abuse of a Roma minor by an elderly man in such a caregiving arrangement. Roma in Slovenia have access to public housing, but the way in which it is provided often further marginalises Roma, as is, for example, the case in the municipality of Kočevje (FLUL 2021). The public rental housing provided to Roma in Slovenia is segregated. There is a lack of social services in these settlements for the maintenance of infrastructure and amenities. In Maribor, for example, support for inhabitants of social housing was outsourced to the Association of Help and Self-Help for Homeless People Kralji Ulice (Eighth Government Report). Coalition members from Slovenia observed that when amenities are broken in these settlements, public authorities charge a higher price for their repair or replacement than in other non-Roma parts of the town.

The NRSF does not recognise discrimination against Roma in housing and the need for additional action to provide (desegregated) public housing for Roma: "The RTF ... considered that the current housing policy measures ... provide members of the Roma community with roughly comparable conditions for obtaining non-profit rental housing or a housing unit" (NRSF 2021). Accordingly, the measure the NRSF proposes in relation to public rental housing is to "inform municipalities where Roma live about [pre-existing] co-financing opportunities for public rental housing". The NRSF mentions desegregation as an objective, but there are no measures attached to it. At the meeting with the new government concerning revising the NRSF (11.11.2022), the CRCRS proposed that municipalities that earmark public housing for Roma will receive additional funds from the national government for building or renovating.

Housing and essential services are the preconditions for the success of all other inclusion measures. During the pandemic, the Ombudsperson, in his 27th annual report (2021:40), emphasised that the MESS examines "the conditions in which pupils from the Roma community live and ensure[s] that they are not further disadvantaged due to the (current) measures to contain the pandemic". Desegregation is one of the most important means of improving living conditions and needs to be included in the programme of measures. Interlocutors in the FLUL study said there should be measures for the state to buy housing for Roma outside of segregated areas (FLUL 2021). Coalition members stated that social services and mentoring should be increased for Roma transitioning into rental housing.

2.6. Social protection

Despite widespread criticism from civil society organisations, the Ombudsperson and the Equality Advocate, the NRSF further supports the parliamentary initiatives of past years to transform cash-based social assistance (CSA) into payments in kind to help cover debts to public utilities or educational institutions or for non-compliance with the compulsory primary school attendance of children. The amendment has been adopted in the meantime. The Equality Advocate found the measure to be "unduly oppressive" and that it interfered with pre-existing regulations in respect of the transformation of CSA into payment in kind used by social workers on a case-by-case basis, for example, in cases of drug or alcohol abuse. The Equality Advocate pointed out that...

"it was not clear how the changed method of payment of child benefit in kind would have a clear and reasonable connection with the object of the regulation (the provision of means for the maintenance, upbringing and education of the child), other than that it seeks to influence the conduct of parents who find themselves in proceedings on suspicion of having committed [...] alleged breaches of the primary education obligation. The effect of the measure appears to be primarily restrictive (potentially also [lessening] children's social security)". (Equality Advocate 15.6.2021)

Moreover, he pointed out that the ruling prioritises the interest of public utility companies and public institutions to cover their operating costs over...

"the potential interests of the full enjoyment of the right to social of social security, potentially including children. In doing so, the proposed solution also imposes on the responsible institutions considerable administrative burdens (approving how and in what way benefits are to be paid). These burdens are not negligible, as [decisions about] the payment of benefits in kind should be tailored to individual needs on an ongoing basis over a three-month period". (Equality Advocate 15.6.2021)

Furthermore, he argued that the proposed measures might discriminate on the basis of ethnic origin:

"The proposed measures give ground for suspecting direct and indirect discrimination against different groups of people. The aim of the proposed solutions is to address the problem of non-attendance at primary school and non-payment of the costs of certain public services, and this need is perceived in relation to practices of a certain group of people with a certain ethnic origin, i.e., the Roma. ... The policy subject thus encroaches on the area of EU law, which strictly prohibits any discrimination on the grounds of people's ethnic origin." (Equality Advocate 15.6.2021)

The Equality Advocate refers to a court ruling about the installation of locked and inaccessible electricity meters in Roma settlements in Bulgaria justified as "preventing electricity theft",³² which was ruled to be discriminatory. Based on this ruling, the Equality Advocate argued that for establishing "possible interference with the right to equal treatment in the EU ... [i]t is sufficient that the restrictive measure is targeted at a particular group of people, which is related to their ethnic origin" (Equality Advocate 15.6.2021). The NRSF (2021) states that, according to estimates, the largest part of the Roma community in Slovenia is dependent on CSA and child benefits.³³ The authors are thus aware that Roma will be severely affected by the proposed measures, which can be regarded as discriminatory in that sense.

In an interview (1.12.2022), the GON explained that payment in kind does not have to be seen as a punitive measure in all cases. As some families are indebted to other Roma families, not receiving cash but payment in kind can be a way to secure the basic needs of families and children when such money would otherwise immediately go on debt payments. As data is lacking, this cannot be confirmed, but as it is not mentioned as the background informing the policy in the official documents, the main motivation of this policy can be seen as punitive, perhaps with the above-mentioned positive side-effect in some cases.

The NRSF does not include additional measures to make social welfare more accessible to Roma: "Members of the Roma community shall not be subject to special treatment in terms of positive discrimination in exercising their right to social welfare services" (NRSF 2021:39). The Roma Youth Organisation Croatia remarked that lack of targeted social security measures for Roma in Slovenia is problematic. Mediators are needed to make social protection more accessible to Roma. Roma often do not access their rights because they lack the education to handle the paperwork, especially. For example, stamps have to

³² C-83/14 CEZ Razpredelenie Bulgarija AD v Commission for Protection against Discrimination

³³ "Records on ethnic or national belonging and (self-)identification are not kept, but according to the assessments of organisations working continuously with members of the Roma community on the ground, it is possible to assess that the livelihood and material situation of the majority of members of the Roma community living in the Republic of Slovenia is to a large extent dependent on social transfers, in particular on CSA and child allowances." (NRSF 2021:40)

be bought for some documents, but they are refunded once the documentation is submitted. However, without knowing this, the expenses associated with the paperwork can be a barrier. Mentors could also help monitor whether there is any discrimination against Roma in social welfare institutions.

2.7. Social services

Centres for Social Work (CSW) in Slovenia face an acute staffing crisis. For example, in the municipality of Kočevje, for 300 beneficiaries of CSA, there is only one social worker (FLUL 2021:77). The NRSF does not address this problem. It mentions that since 2004 “four part-time positions in five CSD units, and two full-time professionals in one CSD unit [have been introduced] to assist and work with Roma” (NRSF 2021:39). This is a very small number considering that there are 62 local units of CSW in Slovenia.

Social services in Roma communities are especially needed, but these communities are often avoided by social workers. Coalition partners from Slovenia observed that CSW sends out staff only when there is a need for a serious intervention, like removing a child from a family because of suspected neglect or abuse, while softer measures that are preventive and supportive are lacking or the responsibility is put entirely on NGOs. This problem could be solved by engaging social-work students to undertake field visits during their internships with Centres for Social Work rather than having them remain in the office. There is also too little cooperation between state institutions such as social services, schools, and public employment services. The Human Rights Report of the US Embassy (2021) found that there is too little specialised training for police to engage in rape prevention and help victims of domestic violence from historically marginalised groups such as the Roma:

“NGOs reported that professionals, who by law are obliged to provide services to survivors of violence, were not provided with sufficient practical training and educational programmes. NGOs highlighted the lack of systematic and ongoing domestic violence and rape prevention programmes and reported that there was a lack of specialised assistance programmes available for Roma and older women or other historically marginalised groups.” (US Embassy 2021)

The introduction of seven Roma multi-purpose centres by the former NRSF (2016-2021) is a measure that the coalition partners regarded as a major positive intervention, with the problem that funding for these centres is not secured beyond the next two years. The coalition partners also positively evaluated the social activation programme funded by the MLFSAO that targets Roma women directly that took place in five locations in 2019 and is to be continued with ESF support until 2027.

There is a lack of measures addressing indebtedness, and the above-mentioned new regulation on the deduction of debt from CSA is likely to exacerbate Roma impoverishment.

2.8. Child protection

The lack of the targeted use of social assistance is especially felt in the area of child protection. Child protection is not mentioned in the NRSF as a topic. In its comments to the NRSF, the municipality Krško pointed to a lack of systematization and oversight for measures such as the detection of abuse of children’s rights and withdrawal procedures (GON 2021). Social workers interviewed for the study of the Faculty of Law also pointed to problems in systemic regulation and insufficient care for children: “the state does not have a good system in place, not for adoption, not for fostering, nor for safe houses” (FLUL 2021:78).

2.9. Promoting (awareness of) Roma arts, culture, and history

Roma organisations are associated with a variety of cultural programmes in Slovenia, such as the European capital of Roma, the Slovenian Roma route, Roma TV, and Roma Radio. In the case of the latter, there has been a dispute over funding, investigated by the Equality Advocate in 2020. The petitioner claimed that the funding of Radio Romic's radio broadcasts by the GON "violates the principles of public procurement or tendering and thus prevents equal competitive opportunities [for] others" as only Radio Romic has a co-financing contract with the GON through which it received EUR 50,000 in 2019, and is the only Roma radio with its own frequency, while the petitioner had to apply for funding through a call for tenders by the Ministry of Culture for the Roma community (they received only EUR 1,500, while the Radio received an additional EUR 6,700). The privileged position of Radio Romic was institutionalised when the ZRomS-1 was adopted in 2007, a time when its founding organisation, the RUS, was the only Roma association for all Roma in Slovenia. But since this situation changed, the funding of radio stations should also be diversified. The petitioner also raised the point that the RUS represents autochthonous Roma, thus the privileging of Radio Romic through a contract "places non-autochthonous Roma and their radio stations in an unequal or disadvantaged position stations". The Equality Advocate found that the financing of Radio Romic was an achievement in the realisation of minority rights and that withdrawing this special right would be a reversal in the progress of the realisation of minority rights and thus in violation of the 'International Covenant for Economic, Social and Cultural Rights' (Equality Advocate 15.9.2019). The current NRSF does not contain information on the amount of funding that will be spent on public tenders on other Roma-led radio stations or measures for supporting other Roma radios to get their own frequencies.

The role of Roma in Slovenian history is not part of the school curriculum, which mentions only World War II and the genocide. The NRSF mentions the initiative of updating the National Kindergarten Curriculum for a more diverse target group, but no measures are attached to this. These two points could also be addressed by changing the position of Roma assistants into intercultural mediators, as mentioned above.

3. EXPECTED EFFECTIVENESS

3.1. Coherence with related domestic and European policies

The NRSF builds on the new EU Strategic Framework 'A Union of Equality: An EU Strategic Framework for Roma Equality, Inclusion and Participation' and follows its horizontal and sectoral objectives. The Equality Officer pointed out that the harmonisation of the NRSF with the EU Strategic Framework needs to be improved in terms of treating discrimination as a cross-cutting theme (GON 2021).

The NRSF also contributes to the central objective of the Slovenian Development Strategy 2030 to "ensure quality of life for all" (NRSF 2021).³⁴ Specifically, it includes the following development objectives:

- Lead a healthy and active life,
- Knowledge and skills for a good life and work,
- A decent life for all,
- Culture and language as fundamental factors of national identity,
- An inclusive labour market and quality jobs, and
- A trustworthy legal system.

This is in line with the Law on the Roma Community (ZRomS-1).

The Republic of Slovenia has ratified two important documents from the Council of Europe related to the protection of minorities and minority languages – namely, the 'Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities' and the 'European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages'. When ratifying the FCNM, the State undertook and declared in writing that the rules of this Convention also apply to members of the Roma community living in the Republic of Slovenia, and when ratifying the ELMJ, the State notified the Council of Europe that the provisions of Article 7(1) to (4) of the Charter would apply *mutatis mutandis* to the Romani language.

The Human Rights Ombudsperson recommends the ratification of the 'Optional Protocol to the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights' as soon as possible (27th annual report of the Ombudsperson 2021:15).

3.2. Responsibility for NRSF coordination and monitoring

The GON monitors the implementation of the NRSF, acts as the NRCP, and draws on coordinators in ministries and government departments, local governments and individuals from the CRCRS. In accordance with ZRomS-1, the government reports annually to the National Assembly on the implementation of its legal obligation towards the Roma community, including on the implementation of the measures of the NRSF. Monitoring of the implementation is also carried out through the NRP, particularly in specific areas, which resulted in the preparation of a substantive framework and concrete proposals from the field for the launch of the preparation of the new NRSF 2021-2030. A first assessment of the NRSF will be prepared in the first half of 2023, and a second assessment will be prepared at the mid-point of the NRSF implementation by the end of 2026 at the latest. A final assessment will be conducted at the end of the programme, no later than the end of 2030. Further, the NRSF states that throughout the programme period, the government

³⁴ Government of the Republic of Slovenia, "Strategija razvoja Slovenije 2030", December 7, 2017, https://www.gov.si/assets/vladne-sluzbe/SVRK/Strategija-razvoja-Slovenije-2030/Strategija_razvoja_Slovenije_2030.pdf [accessed 10 January 2023].

will also regularly take note of the reports of the Ombudsperson and will respond constructively to their recommendations.

After the first year of implementation of the previous NRSF, the Peace Institute (PI), which was selected in a call for tenders, carried out an evaluation of the implementation of the NRSF and prepared an 'Annual Evaluation of the Implementation of the National Programme of Action of the Government of the Republic of Slovenia for Roma for the period 2017-2021' (Peace Institute 2018). The evaluation and its conclusions were presented and discussed in December 2018 at the meeting of the then-working Government body, the Commission of the Government of the Republic of Slovenia for the Protection of the Roma Community.

The process of evaluation is severely limited by the lack of quantitative data on the Roma living in Slovenia as well as on the measures conducted by the ministries and NGOs. The GON has neither the budget to collect data nor the leverage to ask ministries to do so. There is a lack of coordination and inter-institutional cooperation between the state, including local authorities and civil society. While the NRSF notes that cooperation still needs improvement (NRSF 2021), blame is often put on RCS for not being active enough. IERS (2022) points out the problem of shifting responsibilities between various state bodies, including local governments, which leads to inefficiencies in the plan's implementation. In an evaluation of the NRP in early 2020, participants pointed out that in order to improve the monitoring, "the results of the work of individual ministries should be measurable over time, and new monitoring modalities or models should be designed and developed where necessary for the next NSRF period" (NRSF 2021).

3.3. Quality of the plan

The plan contains all of the elements of the European strategic framework. However, the question is how effective it will be given the serious shortcomings in regard to data, the lack of involvement of RCS and the vague articulation of indicators (see sections below). The plan contains a number of stigmatising misconceptions in the section on problem identification (statements about inertia among the Roma population regarding employment, their tendency to engage in criminal activity, which decreases the sense of security of the majority population, and inertia in the RCS), especially in the introduction.³⁵ Coalition partners suspected that these formulations are some of the imprints that the Roma Task Force left on the NRSF.

The FLUL study remarked that moralising language should be removed from measures targeting the Roma community as this further contributes to polarisation among Roma and the majority population:

"Ethnic border relations are characterised by two communities facing each other who share the same history but see it in diametrically opposite

³⁵ For example, quoting from the introduction of the NRSF 2021-2030: Roma are "trapped in a cycle of poverty, passivity and dependence on social assistance and other forms of public entitlements, ... the latter has become an accepted way of life for the majority, which is why it no longer achieves its purpose, i.e. as a transitional form of assistance for people who, through no fault of their own, have found themselves in need in their quest to regain material independence", or "value systems in the community ... place the satisfaction of the individual's mainly increasing material needs (vehicles, property, gold, entertainment, weapons, alcohol and illicit drugs) at the top of the list, create a gulf between what is desired and what is available that is difficult to bridge leads to frequent offences and criminal acts, which are intended to enable people to make a quick buck and meet their needs... crimes and offences go unpunished [which creates] a dangerous situation ... where offenders and misdemeanants are given a sense of power, that no one can do anything for them, and victims of crime and misdemeanours are given a sense of inequality before the law, i.e. that Roma are not treated equally, but better than the rest of the population, in penal policy. This situation, in environments where such cases are more frequent, reinforces the mistrust between communities and the prejudices that are the basis for groups who feel that they are not protected by the law to resort to self-help, which leads to vigilantism and direct confrontation between Roma and the majority local population".

ways. In order for that the social border to be ethnic (as opposed to [based on], e.g., class, age, etc.), the following elements are necessary: a common history, one or conflict over territory, and a mutually dehumanising ideation. Typically, people on both sides of the border conclude that the problem is unsolvable; that the community on the other side has radically different values and goals; and that the members of the other group are seen through this or that lens, different ideologies of dehumanisation, the latter in the function of a constant 'surveillance' that is exercised by the larger group over the smaller.

The resolution of ethnic border relations presupposes the following starting points for action: Refusal to determine who is 'right' and who is 'wrong', who is 'guilty' and who is 'not guilty': in practice, this also means renouncing methods of solving the 'Roma problem' that 'hard grip' and 'teach responsibility', for example through forced debt settlements from social transfer debts, or by conditioning the duties of the state and the municipality on the lessons learned about 'responsibility'. In other words, from analysing the situation, planning strategies and actual. All moralising must be removed from the analysis of strategies, strategies and actions." (FLUL 2021:86f.)

In order to achieve this goal, the FLUL suggests enhancing Roma participation in public policy-making through installing a special office of Roma Ombudsperson in Slovenia:

"The UN Human Rights Committee's recommended that Slovenia 'take effective measures to strengthen the participation of Roma in public life and decision-making processes'. With regard to one of the final recommendations of this study, that a special office be established Ombudsman for Roma Rights, it can be prefaced here that the core task of such an office would be mediation and the active establishment of relationships in which the structural recognition of the problems on both sides of the ethnic border would be the first step: such an Advocate would therefore have the primary task of fieldwork and the implementation of a strategy to overcome the ethnic border." (FLUL 2021:87)

3.4. Funding

As in the previous period, the implementation of the measures of the NRSF will be financed both by the European Structural and Investment Funds and the national budget. Local governments must provide the funds for measures related to their original competences (such as spatial and communal planning of Roma settlements, social protection, and partly education).

There is insufficient data on the amount of funding that went into the measures associated with the previous NRSF, thus, it is difficult to evaluate whether the amount of funding allocated in this NRSF is sufficient. For example, the municipality Krško in its comments on the NRSF submitted to the GON, stated:

"For all the measures in the NSRF, it would be necessary to have a financial breakdown of past measures so that it is clear to anyone reading the document how much money has been allocated to each measure and, above all, how much will be allocated in the future. This would make it easier for decision-makers to decide whether each measure makes sense." (GON 2021).

Amnesty International pointed out the lack of funding for the programme 'Together for Knowledge' (GON 2021): "The Together for Knowledge project is therefore clearly not going ahead, the funds foreseen in the NPDP of 37,540.37 euros, which is [a] ridiculously low [amount] in relation to the needs". Other studies in areas such as employment found

that the funding goes to active labour market policies but has not had the expected effect (IERS 2022).

In the study conducted by the Legal Faculty of the University of Ljubljana (2021), Roma interlocutors expressed concern that the dominance of the RUS in the CRCRS also has an effect on the actual distribution of funds, favouring Prekmurje over other regions in Slovenia.

3.5. Monitoring and evaluation

As the current legislation on personal data protection does not allow for the official collection of data on the basis of national or ethnic origin, Slovenia does not collect data on members of the Roma community. Regarding the position of the Slovenian government on disaggregated equality data released on 26 November 2020,³⁶ the ECRI pointed out that...

"[t]here are still strong hesitations from [sic] the authorities to collect disaggregated equality data... it emerged from the information communicated to ECRI that no legislation is currently envisaged to ensure that disaggregated equality data are collected in all cases, with due respect for standards on data protection, including the principles of confidentiality, informed consent and voluntary self-identification. The ECRI, therefore, takes the view that effective action has not yet been taken". (ECRI 2021)

To remedy the lack of data, the NRSF mentions surveys conducted in the last ten years to obtain more comprehensive data on members of the Roma community living in Slovenia. To date, some project work and research have been carried out in specific areas, which can serve as a source of data and, if followed up, could also serve as a source for monitoring progress. The National Institute of Public Health (hereafter: NIPH) has carried out two surveys on the health of the Roma population. The first one was a survey of Roma in Prekmurje,³⁷ and the second one was carried out using data sources from the NIPH and the Geodetic Institute of Slovenia.³⁸ The first survey was carried out with the consent of the persons involved, while the second was based on a project in which the persons were not identified. In the project 'Together for Knowledge', the MESS asked schools to submit estimates about the number of Roma children for the years 2016-2021.³⁹ Competent authorities can also obtain relevant information on a case-by-case basis through public calls for tenders for the co-funding of programmes and projects in a specific subject area, which can also serve as a source for monitoring progress when implemented. In light of the above, monitoring progress through expert research is possible within the content areas and competences of the Ministries. In 2019, GON joined as a participant in the public call for the selection of research projects of the 'Targeted Research Programme 2019' with the theme 'Barriers to a dignified life for the inhabitants of Roma settlements in the areas identified in the EU Framework for National Roma Integration Strategies up to 2020' (Faculty of Law of the University of Ljubljana 2021). The objectives of this theme were:

³⁶ Government of the Republic of Slovenija, "41. Redna seja Vlade Republike Slovenije", November 26, 2020, <https://www.gov.si/assets/vlada/Seja-vlade-SZJ/2020/11-2020/SJsev141.doc> [accessed 10 January 2023].

³⁷ Branislava Belovič, Liljana Zatelet Kragelj, Jerneja Farkaš Lainščak (2015) "Z zdravjem povezan življenjski slog romov", NIPH, https://www.nijz.si/sites/www.nijz.si/files/publikacije-datoteke/zzv_zivljenski_slog_romov_slo_tisk_novo.pdf.

³⁸ NIPH (2018) "Javnozdravstveni pristopi, namenjeni romski etnični skupnosti v Sloveniji", https://nijz.si/sites/www.nijz.si/files/publikacije-datoteke/javnozdravstveni_pristopi_romi.pdf.

³⁹ MESS (2021) "Strategija vzgoje in izobraževanja romov v Republiki Sloveniji 2021-2030" <https://www.gov.si/assets/ministrstva/MIZS/SRI/Romi/Strategija-VIZ-Romov-2021-2030.pdf>.

"To gain qualitative insight into the problems and obstacles that prevent or hinder Roma settlement residents from achieving conditions for a dignified life and lead to their social exclusion;

to explore the factors and causes affecting the inclusion or exclusion of Roma settlement residents in the areas defined in the EU Framework for National Roma Integration Strategies up to 2020;

[to] make proposals to eliminate or alleviate the problems and obstacles faced by the inhabitants of Roma settlements;

[to] make recommendations for the preparation of the strategic framework and measures of the Programme of Measures on the basis of Article 6 of the Law on the Roma Community in the Republic of Slovenia (Official Gazette of the Republic of Slovenia, No 33/07) after 2021."
(Government Office for Nationalities 2021)

The results of this study have not been sufficiently taken into account in the current NRSF. The most glaring example of this is the findings of the FLUL in the area of housing segregation, the recommendation to abolish the differentiation between autochthonous and non-autochthonous Roma communities, the need to improve coordination between the national and the local government in the area of housing, and the cautioning against the usage of moralising language in policy making (including racialising stereotypes) – all of which have been arguably disregarded in this NRSF.

As was already pointed out by the second and third RCM Monitoring Report on Slovenia, several international organisations such as the Committee on the Rights of the Child, the Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination, the European Commission against Racism and Intolerance, and the Commissioner for Human Rights of the Council of Europe have been calling on Slovenia to collect disaggregated data.

The lack of data makes it difficult to evaluate the impact of the NRSF. In the case of education, the municipality of Krško, for example, points out that the NRSF suggests as an indicator the number of Roma children who have finished primary education and asks how the Centre for Ethnic Studies is going to evaluate the success of this measure in the absence of ethnically disaggregated data. Moreover, the municipality of Krško stated: "The fact that no data is collected for others should not be a reason not to collect data for the Roma. This is a small community, [...] which research has shown [...] live in significantly worse conditions than the rest of the population, their general health is worse, and their life expectancy is shorter. For this reason, professional institutions (NIJZ, CSD, etc.) and policymakers should be allowed to collect data from members of this community for the purpose of improving their situation" (GON 2021). In his 27th annual report, the Ombudsperson seconds this position and asks, "whether the absence of data on the actual situation and social circumstances of members of the Roma community is not one of the reasons for the lack of progress in the integration of Roma into society" (27th annual report of the Human Rights Ombudsperson 2021:18). He refers to Article 14 of the Constitution which guarantees equality before the law and equal opportunities as one of the fundamental human rights and asserts that "the inadmissibility of collecting disaggregated data based on individual personal circumstances cannot be invoked on the grounds that Article 38 of the Constitution, which regulates the protection of personal data, does not permit this". The FLUL study arrived at a similar conclusion:

"The implicit result of the field research for this study is the impression that the police still know the most about the Roma population, which is, of course, unsustainable in a democratic state... any systematic 'comprehensive strategy to tackle discrimination' will require at least the following data: How many children in Roma families have (local) Roma as their mother tongue, how many children have (local dialect) Slovene, and how many children have a third language? How many Roma adults

over the age of 18 are illiterate in Slovenia? How many adults and children are actually included in the health care system?" (FLUL 2021:85)

The municipality Krško pointed out that there is still no proper evaluation of the previous NRSF:

"We pointed out some time ago that there is still no evaluation of the current NRPDP, nor is there any clear evaluation of the expenditure for the implementation of the measures and quantification of the impact.

We do not consider the number of meetings of various bodies and commissions, the number of Roma assistants, counsellors and DSP teachers, nor the number of unemployed Roma involved in the activities of the ZRSZ to be relevant data. The relevant data is the number of children regularly attending both preschool education and compulsory primary school programmes. The relevant data is the level of knowledge attained, the number of children who successfully complete primary or secondary education, the number of Roma who are regularly employed after completing the APZ programme, etc." (GON 2021)

The indicators that are used are mainly output and not outcome indicators. For example, in the area of education, the objective (1.2.1.1) is to increase social and language skills before entering primary school; the indicators used to measure this are output indicators.

- Estimate of the number of preschool children enrolled in kindergartens with Roma sections.
- Number of kindergartens that have created a part-time option within the current school year.
- Number of short programmes implemented by year. Only Roma children are not included in the shorter programmes, so the indicator does not reflect the actual situation.
- Estimated number of children in short kindergarten programmes by year. Shorter programmes do not include only Roma children, so the estimate does not reflect the actual situation.
- Number of kindergartens with sections for Roma children.

Epeka observed that indicators are frequently chosen in a way that conceals the actual problem. For example, the NRSF sets out to increase the number of Roma assistants, and the indicator is the "number of Roma assistants newly employed". However, if there is no training for Roma assistants, it can be difficult to find suitable staff for this position, which is then frequently blamed on the Roma community itself.

3.6. Assessment of the expected effectiveness and sustainability

The expected effectiveness of the NRSF is seriously diminished by the lack of data on the Roma community in Slovenia and the lack of reporting of the implementing ministries on the amount of funding and success of measures already implemented.

In its comments on the NRSF submitted to the GON, Amnesty International stated that...

"the draft text is not a strategic document, as it is not measurable (it has neither precisely defined objectives nor are they measurable in any way), it does not have specific financial constructions (it refers instead to budget or financial provisions of other bodies, which can always be changed independently of the NRSF), it is not time-bound (the measures are to be implemented in an indefinite period of time, i.e. until 2030) and,

finally and crucially, it does not lay down any accountability whatsoever for the (non-)achievement of the objectives (which are not defined at all anyway, as we have already mentioned). This makes the NRSF a collection of ongoing actions in one place". (GON 2021)

The FLUL points to two major reasons why the NRSF 2017-2021 was not successful and which seem to persist with the new NRSF: first, the unclear division of responsibility between the local and the national level, especially in the field of housing. Second, persistent Antigypsyism among policymakers and a lack of Roma participation in the process:

"The second major reason for ineffectiveness is the naturalised, entrenched ethnic border relations which are unreflectively shared by many decision-makers and stakeholders at all hierarchical and institutional levels. Within this, [the following] are particularly unrecognised: The issue of the intergenerational trauma of poverty; The misunderstanding of the ethnic border as a clash between two interpretations of the same situation and its history, where thinking becomes moralising rather than analytical (e.g. on "blame" instead of systemic causes), the latter turning into ideas and actions at the local level, which are, in places, even manifestly illegitimate; Misunderstanding and normalisation of dehumanising beliefs about racially labelled Roma as 'racial', mental, cultural or even 'genetic'. Others; A general belief that the 'Roma problem' is exclusively a Roma matter and that it is exclusively generated by the Roma themselves." (FLUL 2021:109)

Finally, coalition members from Slovenia stated that previous strategies covered a period of five years while this NRSF covers ten years, which is a problem in terms of the lack of flexibility to adapt to changing or newly arising needs. Also, the process of developing the strategy takes too long – the current strategy was developed in a period of about one and a half years. There is, however, the possibility of making revisions to the NRSF, which the current government actively makes use of (see Introduction).

4. ALIGNMENT WITH THE EU ROMA STRATEGIC FRAMEWORK

4.1. Reflecting diversity among Roma

The NRSF insufficiently covers diversity among Roma. It mentions the special needs of women and children and differences in the situations of Roma in different municipalities. However, children are not regarded as a special target group across areas. Epeka emphasised that a group which will increase in relevance are elderly Roma people – as life expectancy grows and younger people are in employment or education, the question of the access of elderly Roma people to gerontological services has to be addressed, such as retirement homes. In his comments on the NRSF (29.7.2021), the Equality Advocate requested that “the document makes it clear that the measures are intended for all members of the Roma community living in Slovenia, including Sinti”.

4.2. Combining mainstream and targeted approaches

The NRSF does not contain enough targeted measures. Epeka pointed this out, for example, in the area of education – that education is highly esteemed as a value in Slovenian majority society. However, its value is not seen within the Roma population due to a variety of reasons related to their social exclusion and marginalisation, which makes education seem unnecessary. The current NRSF refers to the systematisation of Roma assistants in this area as a targeted measure. Moreover, Epeka emphasised that Roma women are especially excluded from education, and there should be more measures that target them specifically. The GON has the most insight into the specific problems in each of the areas and should draft targeted policies for the ministries, not the other way around.

4.3. Usage of instruments introduced by the Council Recommendation

The usage of racialising stereotypes in the NRSF, most likely the imprint of the Roma Task Force, is concerning with regard to the prevention of discrimination in the context of rising populism in Europe. Moreover, the NRSF is deficient with regard to the necessity of (appropriate) ethnic data collection for the effective planning of measures. There is still room for improving the recognition of diversity in the Roma population in the measures proposed by the NRSF with regard to Council Recommendation 2a, which highlights the importance of addressing exposure to discrimination on multiple grounds (sex, gender, age, etc.) as well as with regard to the necessity of recognising the diversity of groups within the Roma community (such as Sinti, Ashkali, etc.).

5. ADDITIONAL FINDINGS

This NRSF adds one entire policy objective called 'Improving co-existence in and around Roma settlements' that is not part of the EU Strategy Framework. Here, the NRSF endorses 'proactive policing' measures that increase the presence of the police force, patrolling and surveillance of Roma settlements in order to "increase the felt sense of security among the majority population" living in proximity to Roma settlements. The measure was introduced by the Roma Task Force under the heading "proactive policing", which has the goal of "mak[ing] coexistence with the Roma community more bearable for citizens".⁴⁰ While it is not entirely clear from the NRSF or related press releases what 'proactive policing' entails, it seems to include increased surveillance of Roma settlements for the purpose of "security assessments and appropriate police action" (NRSF 2021),⁴¹ which brings us back to the point raised by FLUL (2021) that it seems that in Slovenia the police are still the public body with most information on Roma citizens, which is unacceptable in a democratic state.

The coalition member from Slovenia stated that surveillance has especially flared up in the Dolenska region and Novo Mesto, which are located next to the international highway A2. Illegal activities around that highway are committed by multiple groups, but Roma are mainly blamed. These measures contribute to the criminalisation of poverty and over-policing of marginalised communities and further polarisation of the already existing divide between Roma and the majority population. It is instead recommended to invest more into building trust between the marginalised and majority populations.

⁴⁰ Novo Mesto, "Novo mesto obiskal dr. Anton Olaj, predsednik vlade delovne skupine za obravnavo romske problematike", December 1, 2020, https://www.novomesto.si/dogajanje/novice/2020120107420503/novo_mesto_obiskal_dr_anton_olaj_predsednik_vladne_delovne_skupine_za_obravnavo_romske_problematike/ [accessed 10 January 2023].

⁴¹ "The security problem often involves non-compliance with the applicable RS regulations, which leads to a disproportionately high security risk and, as a consequence, a greatly reduced quality of life for people in the vicinity of Roma settlements. Police administrations have specific plans in place to improve the efficiency of policing in these areas. Although the Police assess the security situation in Roma-populated areas on the basis of monitoring and evaluation of security incidents, this is only for the purpose of preparing security assessments and proportionate police action, otherwise no records are kept by the Police" (NRSF 2021:71).

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The NRSF covers all of the areas of the EU Roma strategic framework, including Antigypsyism. However, how these different areas are covered is limited as there are a number of stigmatising misconceptions. Many of the measures are elusive and difficult to evaluate, partially because of the weaknesses in problem identification and partially because of a lack of data. Accountability is somewhat limited as responsibility for many targeted measures is left with NGOs. The GON pointed out that the NRSF is only one among many policy documents that target Roma in Slovenia, but in this case, it is recommended to use the NRSF to evaluate the policies and measures that affect Roma. One such example is the social activation programme for Roma women that has been implemented since the last NRSF and was positively evaluated both by the coalition partners and the GON.

Recommendations to national authorities

1. Simplify bureaucratic procedures and ensure additional support for Roma in seeking legal redress in cases of discrimination.
2. Improve services to provide free legal-aid assistance and advice at the national level and support NGOs working in this field.
3. Introduce compulsory non-discrimination training for officials and lawyers who deal with the Roma community.
4. Ensure the regular turnover of Roma members of consultative bodies.
5. Ensure that local decision-makers dedicate more resources to raising awareness among the Roma community and others about discrimination – for example, amending Article 20a on the financing of local authorities earmarked for Roma communities.
6. Increase the exchange of knowledge, experience and good practices between municipalities where Roma represent a large proportion of the population.
7. Abolish the 20% reduction in child benefit for children over four years old and provide additional financial incentives for Roma parents who send their children to kindergarten.
8. Abolish the transformation of cash social assistance in kind as a punitive measure in the case of debt and non-compliance with compulsory primary school attendance and introduce supportive measures instead.
9. Increase the supportive and preventive presence of social workers in Roma settlements.
10. Take measures against residential segregation, such as buying property outside of Roma settlements and providing support and mentorship for Roma transitioning from segregated to mixed public rental housing.
11. Systematise measures and oversight in the area of child protection.
12. Provide education on Roma culture and history not only to Roma children but to all school children and further develop the position of the Roma coordinator into that of intercultural mediator who is included in the pay system for civil servants.
13. Launch campaigns to raise awareness among Roma about discrimination and inform them about the procedure for accessing the Equality Ombudsperson.

Recommendations to European institutions

14. Monitor closely the implementation of the 'National Action Programme for Roma Action Plan 2021-2030' in Slovenia and the respective current and future action plans for achieving tangible and effective progress towards Roma inclusion and equality.
15. Ensure that the EU structural funds invested in the improving living conditions of marginalised Roma effectively address structural forms of discrimination, in particular segregation in housing, education and other areas, and institutional racism at various levels, such as deep-rooted institutional discrimination against Roma women in healthcare.
16. The European Commission should investigate if the huge proportion of Roma children in special-needs schools constitutes Slovenia's failure to ensure effective protection from discrimination and correctly implement the Racial Equality Directive (2000/43/EC) and launch a pre-litigation (infringement) procedure against Slovenia.

Recommendations to civil society

17. Increase participation in the preparation and monitoring of the NRSF, including the submission of comments to the GON.
18. Increase awareness of discrimination and use existing channels of reporting via the Ombudsperson and the Equality Advocate.

Recommendations to other stakeholders

19. For municipalities: adopt local action plans for Roma integration.
20. For municipalities: increase collaboration between various local stakeholders in the field of Roma integration.
21. For the Ombudsperson: Raise awareness of discrimination and legal remedies available to Roma communities.
22. For the Ombudsperson: Encourage persons who have been discriminated against to report their cases to the equality body and provide legal support for continuing the procedure.
23. For the Ombudsperson: Strengthen long-term cooperation with the Roma community in regions with a large Roma population; carry out regular field visits and establish contact points to help Roma who are discriminated against. Provide assistance for people who are discriminated against to help them manage the bureaucratic procedures necessary for reporting discrimination.

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ANNEX: LIST OF PROBLEMS AND CONDITIONS

Fighting antigypsyism and discrimination

Problems and conditions	Significance:	Identified by strategy:	Measures to address:	Targets defined:
Antigypsyism not recognised as a specific problem in national policy frameworks	Significant problems	Mentioned but not analysed sufficiently	Absent	Absent
Prejudice against Roma	Significant problems	Mentioned but not analysed sufficiently	Present but insufficient	Some targets but not adequate
Hate crimes against Roma	Irrelevant			
Hate speech towards and against Roma (online and offline)	Critical problems	Mentioned but not analysed sufficiently	Present but insufficient	Some targets but not adequate
Weak effectiveness of protection from discrimination	Significant problems	Irrelevant	Absent	Absent
Segregation in education, housing, or provision of public services	Significant problems	Mentioned but not analysed sufficiently	Absent	Absent
Forced evictions and demolitions leading to homelessness, inadequate housing, and social exclusion	Minor problems	Irrelevant	Absent	Absent
Statelessness, missing ID documents	Significant problems	Irrelevant	Absent	Absent
Misconduct and discriminatory behaviour by police (under-policing/under-policing)	Significant problems	Irrelevant	Present but insufficient	Some targets but not relevant
Barriers to <i>de facto</i> exercise of EU right to free movement	Minor problems	Irrelevant	Absent	Absent

Other country-specific issues not listed above (please extend the table with new rows)				
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Education

Problems and conditions	Significance:	Identified by strategy:	Measures to address:	Targets defined:
Lack of available and accessible pre-school education and ECEC services for Roma	Significant problems	Understood with limitations	Present but insufficient	Some targets but not relevant
Lower quality of pre-school education and ECEC services for Roma	Minor problems	Irrelevant	Absent	Absent
High drop-out rate before completion of primary education	Significant problems	Understood with limitations	Present but insufficient	Adequate but with room for improvement
Early leaving from secondary education	Significant problems	Mentioned but not analysed sufficiently	Present but insufficient	Some targets but not relevant
Secondary education/vocational training disconnected from labour market needs	Significant problems	Irrelevant	Absent	Absent
Misplacement of Roma pupils into special education	Significant problems	Irrelevant	Absent	Absent
Education segregation of Roma pupils	Significant problems	Irrelevant	Absent	Absent
Increased selectivity of the educational system resulting in concentration of Roma or other disadvantaged pupils in educational facilities of lower quality	Significant problems	Irrelevant	Absent	Absent
Limited access to second-chance education, adult	Significant problems	Irrelevant	Absent	Absent

education, and lifelong learning				
Limited access to and support for online and distance learning if education and training institutions close, as occurred during the coronavirus pandemic	Significant problems	Irrelevant	Absent	Absent
Low level of digital skills and competences and limited opportunities for their development among pupils	Significant problems	Irrelevant	Absent	Absent
Low level of digital skills and competences and limited opportunities for their development among adults	Significant problems	Irrelevant	Absent	Absent
Other country-specific issues (extend the table as needed)				

Employment

Problems and conditions	Significance:	Identified by strategy:	Measures to address:	Targets defined:
Poor access to or low effectiveness of public employment services	Significant problems	Irrelevant	Absent	absent
Youth not in employment, education or training (NEET)	Significant problems	Irrelevant	Absent	Absent
Poor access to (re-) training, lifelong learning and skills development	Significant problems	Irrelevant	Absent	Absent
Discrimination on the labour market by employers	Significant problems	Irrelevant	Absent	Absent
Risk for Roma women and girls from disadvantaged areas of	Significant problems	Understood with limitations	Present but insufficient	Some targets defined but not

being subjected to trafficking and forced prostitution				relevant
Primary labour market opportunities substituted by public work	Significant problems	Irrelevant	Absent	Absent
Barriers and disincentives to employment (such as indebtedness, low income from work compared to social income)	Significant problems	Irrelevant	Absent	Absent
Lack of activation measures, employment support	Significant problems	Irrelevant	Absent	Absent
Other country-specific issues (extend the table as needed)				

Healthcare

Problems and conditions	Significance:	Identified by strategy:	Measures to address:	Targets defined:
Exclusion from public health insurance coverage (including those who are stateless, third country nationals, or EU-mobile)	Significant problems	Irrelevant	Absent	Absent
Poor supply/availability of healthcare services (including lack of means to cover out-of-pocket health costs)	Significant problems	Mentioned but not analysed sufficiently	Absent	Absent
Limited access to emergency care	Significant problems	Irrelevant	Absent	Absent
Limited access to primary care	Significant problems	Irrelevant	Absent	Absent
Limited access to prenatal and postnatal care	Significant problems	Irrelevant	Absent	Absent

Limited access to health-related information	Significant problems	Mentioned but not analysed sufficiently	Present but insufficient	Some targets but not relevant
Poor access to preventive care (vaccination, check-ups, screenings, awareness-raising about healthy lifestyles)	Significant problems	Mentioned but not analysed sufficiently	Absent	Absent
Poor access to sexual/reproductive healthcare and family planning services	Significant problems	Mentioned but not analysed sufficiently	Absent	Absent
Specific barriers to better healthcare of vulnerable groups such as elderly Roma people, Roma with disabilities, LGBTI and others	Irrelevant	Irrelevant	Absent	Absent
Discrimination/ antigypsyism in healthcare (e.g., segregated services, forced sterilisation)	Irrelevant	Irrelevant	Absent	Absent
Unrecognised historical injustices, such as forced sterilisation	Irrelevant	Irrelevant	Absent	Absent
Inequalities in measures for combating and preventing potential outbreaks of diseases in marginalised or remote localities	Significant problems	Irrelevant	Absent	Absent
Other country-specific issues (extend the table as needed)				

Housing, essential services, and environmental justice

Problems and conditions	Significance:	Identified by strategy:	Measures to address:	Targets defined:
Poor physical security of housing (ruined or	Significant problems	Irrelevant	Absent	Absent

slum housing)				
Lack of access to drinking water	Significant problems	Mentioned but not analysed sufficiently	Present but insufficient	Some targets but not relevant
Lack of access to sanitation	Significant problems	Mentioned but not analysed sufficiently	Present but insufficient	Some targets but not relevant
Lack of access to electricity	Significant problems	Mentioned but not analysed sufficiently	Present but insufficient	Some targets but not relevant
Limited or absent public waste collection	Significant problems	Mentioned but not analysed sufficiently	Present but insufficient	Some targets but not relevant
Restricted heating capability (families unable to heat all rooms/all times when necessary) or solid waste used for heating	Significant problems	Irrelevant	Absent	Absent
Lack of security of tenure (legal titles are not clear and secure)	Significant problems	Mentioned but not analysed sufficiently	Present but insufficient	Some targets but not relevant
Lacking or limited access to social housing	Significant problems	Irrelevant	Absent	Absent
Overcrowding (available space/room for families)	Significant problems	Irrelevant	Absent	Absent
Housing-related indebtedness at levels which may cause eviction	Significant problems	Irrelevant	Absent	Absent
Housing in segregated settlements/ neighbourhoods	Significant problems	Mentioned but not analysed sufficiently	Absent	Absent
Housing in informal or illegal settlements/ neighbourhoods	Significant problems	Mentioned but not analysed sufficiently	Present but insufficient	Some targets but not relevant
Exposure to hazardous factors (living in areas prone to natural disasters or	Minor problems	Irrelevant	Absent	Absent

environmentally hazardous areas)				
Limited or lacking access to public transport	Significant problems	Irrelevant	Absent	Absent
Limited or lacking internet access (e.g., public internet access points in deprived areas, areas not covered by broadband internet)	Significant problems	Irrelevant	Absent	Absent
Limited or lacking access to green spaces	Significant problems	Irrelevant	Absent	Absent
Roma excluded from environmental democracy	Critical problems	Irrelevant	Absent	Absent
Other country-specific issues not listed above (please extend the table with new rows)				

Social protection

Problems and conditions	Significance:	Identified by strategy:	Measures to address:	Targets defined:
High at-risk-of-poverty rate and material and social deprivation	Significant problems	Mentioned but not analysed sufficiently	Present but insufficient	Some targets but not relevant
Income support programmes fail to guarantee an acceptable level of minimum income for every household	Significant problems	Irrelevant	Absent	Absent
Limited access to income support schemes (low awareness, barrier of administrative burdens, stigma attached)	Significant problems	Irrelevant	Absent	Absent
Ineffective eligibility rules (well-designed means-testing ensures that those who need	Significant problems	Irrelevant	Absent	Absent

support can get it; job-search conditions ensure the motivation for returning to work)				
Low flexibility of income support programmes for addressing changing conditions of the household	Significant problems	Irrelevant	Absent	Absent
Discrimination by agencies managing income-support programmes	Minor problems	Irrelevant	Absent	Absent
Risk of municipalities misusing income support to buy votes	Minor problems	Irrelevant	Absent	Absent
Other country-specific issues not listed above (please extend the table with new rows)				

Social services

Problems and conditions	Significance:	Identified by strategy:	Measures to address:	Targets defined:
Limited quality, capacity and comprehensiveness of help provided by social services	Significant problems	Irrelevant	Absent	Absent
Limited access to social services: low awareness of them, low accessibility, (e.g., due to travel costs) or limited availability	Significant problems	Irrelevant	Present but insufficient	Some targets but not relevant
Services providers do not actively reach out to those in need	Significant problems	Irrelevant	Present but insufficient	Some targets but not relevant
Limited ability of social services to effectively work together with other agencies (e.g., public employment service) to help clients	Significant problems	Irrelevant	Present but insufficient	Some targets but not relevant

Discrimination by social service providers	Irrelevant	Mentioned but not analysed sufficiently	Present but insufficient	Some targets but not relevant
Lack of adequacy of programmes for addressing indebtedness (providing counselling and financial support)	Significant problems	Mentioned but not analysed sufficiently	Present but insufficient	Some targets but not relevant

Child protection

Problems and conditions	Significance:	Identified by strategy:	Measures to address:	Targets defined:
Child protection not considered in the NRSF	Significant problems	Irrelevant	Absent	Absent
Specific vulnerability of Romani children as victims of violence not considered	Significant problems	Irrelevant	Absent	Absent
Segregated or discriminatory child-protection services provided to Roma	Irrelevant	Irrelevant	Absent	Absent
Activities aimed at strengthening parental responsibility and skills not available or not reaching out to Roma parents	Significant problems	Irrelevant	Absent	Absent
Illegal practices of child labour	Minor problems	Irrelevant	Absent	Absent
Large-scale and discriminatory placement of Romani children in early childhood care institutions	Irrelevant	Irrelevant	Absent	Absent
Persistence of large-scale institutions rather than family-type arrangements	Irrelevant	Irrelevant	Absent	Absent
Early marriages	Minor problems	Mentioned but not analysed	Present but insufficient	Some targets but not relevant

		sufficiently		
Barriers to children's registration; statelessness	Minor problems	Irrelevant	Absent	Absent
Biased treatment of Roma youth by security and law enforcement	Minor problems	Irrelevant	Absent	Absent
Inadequate child/ adolescent participation	Significant problems	Irrelevant	Absent	Absent

Promoting (awareness of) Roma arts, culture, and history

Problems and conditions	Significance:	Identified by strategy:	Measures to address:	Targets defined:
Poor or lacking awareness of the general population of the contribution of Roma art and culture to national and European heritage	Significant problems	Mentioned but not analysed sufficiently	Absent	Absent
Exclusion of Roma communities from national cultural narratives	Significant problems	Irrelevant	Absent	Absent
Romani history and culture not included in school curricula and textbooks for both Roma and non-Roma students	Significant problems	Irrelevant	Absent	Absent
Lack of inclusion of Romani language in schools, and development of necessary educational materials and resources for Romani language preservation and teaching	Significant problems	Understood with limitations	Adequate with room for improvement	Adequate with room for improvement
Lack of memorialisation of Roma history through establishing monuments, commemorative activities, and institutionalising dates relevant to Roma	Significant problems	Irrelevant	Absent	Absent

history				
Other country-specific issues not listed above (please extend the table with new rows)				

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