

Country fiche: CZECH REPUBLIC

Position of civil society involved in the Roma Civil Monitor

SUBSTANTIVE POLICY AREAS

STRENGTHS/KEY ELEMENTS OF THE MS APPROACH

WEAKNESSES/GAPS/RECOMMENDATIONS

EDUCATION

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| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Recent reforms introduced inclusive education: programme for mildly mentally handicapped was abolished and children with special educational needs have right for support measures in mainstream schools. They can be enrolled in special schools only if education in mainstream school failed. Support activities and projects focusing on the transition of pupils from sixth grade to the final three grades of compulsory schooling and secondary education have been supported under ESIF. Starting with 2017 social scholarships have been introduced by the Ministry of Education to reduce barriers for Roma accessing university studies (however, is criticised for being based on reimbursement of costs). Some local measures limit discrimination and segregation in pre-school education by using online registration or by redesigning catchment areas. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The impact of (inclusive) reforms on Roma is not monitored and assessed. Social mobility of youth whose parents achieved only basic or vocational education has not improved. The plan to establish a nationwide cut-off score for high school admission examinations will cement the social reproduction of deprivation with disproportionately harmful impact on Roma. Educators are unprepared to address the challenge of educating cohorts who are increasingly diverse with respect to their backgrounds and needs. While the National Roma Integration Strategy (NRIS) has identified ethnic discrimination and segregation in education as a problem, policy fails to address this aspect. Selectivity of the educational system increases and spatial and structural segregation in education, along the lines of both ethnicity and social status, is intensifying; there are no policy measures to address this problem. Non-Roma parents pressure schools to intensify segregation, and schools resist this pressure randomly. |
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EMPLOYMENT

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| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Mainstream public employment services are available for Roma, who participate mostly in the public work programmes. Government Agency for Social Inclusion promotes coordination of employment and social services at local level and anti-discrimination in employment. Anti-discriminatory legislation is in place, job ads are monitored by Labour Inspectorate that fines employers including discriminatory conditions in their ads. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Roma access to upskilling programmes provided by the public employment services is limited. Public work programmes do not support integration in the primary labour market. Public employment services' outreach measures should be strengthened. There is a need for effective measures against indebtedness and usury; life-long debt traps and extremely high fees related to distrains are the main barriers for finding formal employment for many unemployed (Roma and non-Roma) who remain dependent on informal job market. |
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HEALTHCARE

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| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Health insurance is mandatory, failing to pay does not lead to denial of insurance. The new project of the Ministry of Health addressing health inequalities is more extensive than previous annual projects and aims to root the piloted methods in the public administration system in a systematic way. The National Institute for Public Health promotes mediation in "excluded localities"; a centre to promote the health of the | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Some Roma cannot afford co-payments for medication, or for medication not covered by insurance, or for treatment not covered by public healthcare (e.g., dentists), or for disability-related equipment, or for Emergency Room fees. Travel costs also prevent access to care. While education of health workers about communication with Roma has been identified as a |
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socially excluded will open in each of the country's 14 regions.

priority by the National Roma Integration Strategy, the course the Ministry refers to when reporting its compliance offers just two hours of education about communication with patients in general. More can and should be done.

- Addressing smoking and premature birth are of special concern to the Roma.

HOUSING

- Housing allowances are considered effective, they are accessible for many low-income households and reflect regionally differentiated housing costs.
- Despite of a lack of national social housing policy, several local governments pilot progressive social housing models. Several NGOs successfully pilot social rental agency models.
- ESIF supports local development of social housing (development of new dwellings in segregated areas is excluded and spatial concentration of social dwellings is limited) and supporting social inclusion services, including prevention of homelessness.
- Positive local experience with "Housing First" pilots is being scaled up by the government, that allocated ESIF funds to replicate it in other municipalities.
- A methodology for identification of residential segregation and suitable placement of social housing has been developed and is piloted by 12 municipalities.
- The Parliament rejected a draft law on social housing that would mainstream and scale-up positive practices piloted on the local level. In consequence, existence of social housing, access to it and in consequence housing conditions of Roma depend on decision of individual local governments.
- In many municipalities, the only option for many Roma is housing in Roma ghettos or substandard, but extremely expensive accommodation ("social hostels") because of lack of available social housing and unaddressed discrimination in accessing both private and public rental housing,.
- Public spending on housing allowances is criticised for not being efficient as they finance expensive substandard housing. There are efforts to limit access to housing allowances, driven by both economic and populist arguments, which would probably lead to deterioration of housing and homelessness (because of lack of accessible social housing).
- Segregated Roma neighbourhoods and pockets of concentrated poverty remain an unaddressed problem; their number continues to increase.

HORIZONTAL MEASURES

STRENGTHS/KEY ELEMENTS OF THE MS APPROACH

WEAKNESSES/GAPS/RECOMMENDATIONS

ANTI-DISCRIMINATION

- A number of significant anti-discrimination cases have succeeded in court.
- 2016 amendment to the Education Act promotes inclusive education and desegregation in education.
- Low rights awareness and mistrust within Roma communities have negative impact on anti-discrimination law enforcement.
- Public Defender of Rights office should be empowered to independently file public interest antidiscrimination actions, and provide all victims with access to free legal aid.
- The education reform has had no discernible impact on desegregation yet: every fourth Roma pupil still educated in segregated settings. Government needs to fully commit to a comprehensive program with a fixed timeline to end segregation.
- Residential segregation remains unaddressed problem. Moreover, segregated neighbourhoods' inhabitants' access to housing benefits was restricted in 12 cities and towns. These measures and the law enabling them were challenged at the Constitutional Court as violating the country's basic law.
- As a result of unsanitary conditions and inadequate showers and toilet facilities in residential hostels, Roma

families with children suffer from hepatitis A, bacillary dysentery, bed bugs or scabies.

FIGHTING ANTIGYPSYISM

- Some of the official documents explicitly use the term “antigypsyism”.
- There have been several initiatives perceived as good practices in fighting antigypsyism, including crime prevention assistants and caretaker/prevention workers.
- Recognition of the Roma Holocaust strengthened by the government buying out the pig farm located at the site of the former concentration camp at Lety u Písku. The victims are being compensated too.
- Crimes motivated by hatred of Roma are reported on.
- There are no official records of the total number of Roma Holocaust victims compensated so far and no integrated data about the Roma victims of the Holocaust in general. It is also important to raise awareness of the Roma Holocaust and expand the learning requirements in the primary schools..
- Hate crimes are not sufficiently recognised as such by police, prosecutors and judges.
- The forced sterilisations of Roma women are being addressed through negotiations about compensation. The compensations have to happen urgently.
- There are very few examples of public officials being sanctioned for their hate speech against Roma. The same stands for the online hate-speech.

ADDRESSING SPECIFIC NEEDS OF MOST VULNERABLE GROUPS AMONG ROMA

- The National Institute for Public Health implements awareness-raising and prevention programmes in socially excluded communities, targeting children and women, discouraging smoking, informing about the prevention of HIV transmission, and promoting healthy diets.
- National Youth Strategy 2014-2020 includes the aim to improve access to education, employment, healthcare and social welfare services for disadvantaged youth, including Roma.
- The issue of compensation for Roma women sterilized without their informed consent, remained unresolved (however, in August 2018, the Prime Minister promised to support a new proposal for compensation).
- Indebtedness of children is rising – this concerns in particular children from poor families or from foster/institutional care, whose parents failed to pay administrative or municipal fees or transportation to school for them. Such children face distrains in the moment of adulthood, excluding them from labour market.
- No measures have been adopted to address (explicitly) Roma LGBT+ issues.

STRUCTURAL MEASURES

STRENGTHS/KEY ELEMENTS OF THE MS APPROACH

WEAKNESSES/GAPS/RECOMMENDATIONS

STAKEHOLDER INVOLVEMENT AT THE CENTRAL LEVEL

- National Roma inclusion policy is framed by two concurring concepts, mainstream social inclusion and Roma-targeting with distinct governance structures and national strategies.
- Social inclusion concept is promoted by an Agency for Social inclusion (ASZ) with extensive regional structures and participates in ESIF planning, implementation and management.
- Roma-targeted approach is promoted by NRCP, which supports a governmental council for Roma, where several line ministries and Roma civil society is represented; NRCP has also its own grant scheme (approx. 2M EUR yearly) to support Roma projects and regional Roma coordinators.
- 2014-2020 ESIF target at addressing the spatial concentration of extreme poverty. Several OPs have dedicated financial allocations and/or calls for projects in such concentrations within a “coordinated approach” managed by ASZ.
- There is an antagonism between the two governance structures and their strategies and activities are weakly coordinated and connected.
- NRCP’s impact on policy-making is limited due its weak mandate and capacity.
- Despite existence of special units at several ministries addressing problems of socially excluded areas, the actual outreach and impact on Roma is not known. The mainstream social inclusion policies should include specific monitoring and assessment of their effect on Roma.
- There have been problems in coordination of different OPs and ASZ in implementation of “coordinate approach”, jeopardising implementation of local strategies largely relying on ESIF.

CIVIL PARTICIPATION AND EMPOWERMENT

- NRIS identifies the participation as a separate priority. Roma are represented in several governmental, regional and local councils/committees and there is a special governmental council for Roma, chaired by the PM with representation of all relevant ministries.
- Roma civil society is lively and focuses on diverse areas, including Roma women, LGBTI+, cultural visibility (including literature).
- Roma NGOs established an advocacy network “Romanonet” to influence public policies and ESIF planning and implementation.
- There have been several significant successes of Roma’s advocacy efforts, leading to e.g. government’s buyout of a pig farm on a site of former concentration camp for Roma or ongoing legal fight against discriminatory local policies.

- Despite impact of the governmental Roma council on policy-making has improved, it is contingent on NGO representatives’ activity rather than formal mandate.
- Roma’s participation (through NGOs or NRCP) in design, implementation and monitoring of ESIF both at the national and local level is limited, if any, as they are not represented in existing structures and processes.
- Roma NGOs are often excluded from the planning and implementation of the “comprehensive approach” on the local level.
- National Roma platform rather aims at dissemination of information on NRIS in regions, than real participation in policy-making.

MAINSTREAMING OF ROMA INCLUSION AT THE LOCAL LEVEL

- Public policies relevant for Roma inclusion are in hands of local government that enjoy great autonomy.
- Tens of municipalities develop, with assistance of governmental ASZ and involvement of local civil society, their local strategies for social inclusion whose implementation is funded from ESIF.
- Municipalities pilot innovative approaches to social inclusion, in particular in field of social housing, social entrepreneurship or employment, and engage in effective mutual learning and knowledge transfer.

- Engagement in Roma inclusion depends on good will, priorities and political support of local governments.
- There are municipalities with open anti-Roma policies, which might be illegal (discrimination in access to public services, deliberate segregation, repression, bans of use of public spaces or suspension of housing allowances). The central authorities seldom proactively and effectively act against such policies and practices.
- Local governments often exclude Roma needs and Roma civil society from local strategies for social inclusion; central government has limited leverage to ensure that they address also Roma inclusion.
- Regional Roma coordinators lack proper methodological guidance; local Roma advisor employed and funded by municipalities lack also clear mandate.

DATA COLLECTION

- A [Map of Socially Excluded Localities](#) provides data of such areas and this map is used for targeting of social inclusion interventions, including ESIF.
- A methodology of [identification of residential segregation](#) has been piloted by the Ministry of Labour and 12 municipalities.
- Czech school inspection collects data on discrimination and segregation of Roma children in education.

- There is a lack of public and political consensus on collection and use of ethnically disaggregated data, what hinders their collection.
- Most of the data from the research for [Map of Socially Excluded Localities](#) is not publicly available.
- Use of the available data on special concentration of poverty and Roma segregation could be more extensively used for better targeted public policies, in particular for desegregation in housing and education.
- Data foreseen by strategies and ex ante conditionality are not being collected in reality.

FUNDING FOR CIVIL SOCIETY

- Czech NGOs enjoy certain stability thanks to outsourcing of social services by public authorities. NGOs receive public funding for provision of social counselling and preventive services.
- Government finances a Roma museum in Brno, which became a hub of Roma cultural activities.

- Roma NGOs’ dependency on public funding limits their autonomy in advocacy work and open criticism of public policies or practices.
- Emphasis on economic effectiveness and growing competition among NGOs to get public contracts for social services negatively impact Roma and grassroots NGOs.



- Access to funding, in particular on the regional and local levels, is hindered by extensive administrative burden (e.g. erroneous application of SGEI in social services) and lack of transparency.

EXAMPLE OF PROMISING PRACTICE

And NGO from Brno *IQ Roma Servis* has promoted hiring Roma by private enterprises and given an “Ethnic Friendly Employer” award since 2007 to employers who have demonstrated respect for the principle of the equal treatment of an ethnically diverse workforce over the long term and who have ensured that principle is adhered to. The award is given to employers who do not discriminate against Roma, who are open to hiring them, and who perceive the problems Roma face. The project influences the atmosphere in society by demonstrating that Roma want to work, do work when hired, and are worth hiring full-time.

MOST IMPORTANT PRIORITIES TO BE ADDRESSED

- Adoption of measures, policy or laws which will eliminate overdependency of development and implementation of social inclusion measures on the willingness of local administrations to participate in available programmes.
- Desegregation of preschool and primary education.
- Introduce a functional, nationwide social housing system and include socially vulnerable Roma as one of the priority target groups of the social housing.
- Enforcement of the existing Antidiscrimination Act, empowerment of the Public Defender of Rights office to independently file public interest antidiscrimination actions, and provide victims with free legal aid.
- Expand the piloted activities providing health care to Roma communities into permanent national programmes encouraging Roma to take advantage of preventive health care.
- Adopt measures to help persons in debt trap, increase the costs of distraints borne by debtors and adopt law to eliminate child indebtedness and distraints.