

Country fiche: GREECE

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"> • To increase the proportion of Roma children in pre-school education, since school year 2018/2019, at least two years of pre-school education (from the age of 4) have been compulsory for all children. • In each city there are nurseries (for 8 months old up to 4 years old) which are free of charge for poor families. • In the last three years several measures targeting Roma children's education have been implemented, including reduction of the class size attended by vulnerable social groups, social worker in schools with Roma, pilot operation of Parents Schools in selected schools or actions to tackle early dropouts. • Within the Social Solidarity Income framework beneficiaries aged 40 or more have to complete compulsory education. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Participation of Roma children in preschool education remains low, due facilities' unavailability in segregated settlements, lack of assistance in enrolment and low awareness of parents. • Many Roma cannot access available pre-school education facilities; they often face difficulties in proving their eligibility to nurseries for poor families (e.g., as working informally, they are and not able to provide income statement). • Drop-outs from primary and secondary education remain a problem that has not been effectively addressed; it concerns also pupils before completing compulsory education. • Marginalised or vulnerable Roma are quasi not participating in available lifelong learning programmes. • Segregation of Roma pupils remains a problem. Despite official policy of desegregation, there are many indirect methods of segregation in education, such as the operation of single-cultural schools, with Roma-only students. |
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EMPLOYMENT

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| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Newly introduced public employment services are tailored to Roma jobseekers; they have been designed in cooperation of several line ministries and the Special Secretariat for Roma Integration. • Roma departments in local community centres support access to services and promote employment. • Specific measures to legalise informal economic activities (such as vending) have been adopted. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Access to public employment services is limited by lack of literacy skills among Roma. • Job opportunities available for Roma are mainly limited to the social economy and self-employment • Despite adopted measures (such as subsidies or campaigns), the gap in (formal) employment rate of Roma women (22%) and men (82%) remains huge. • Mechanism for monitoring cases of discrimination against Roma in employment is weak. |
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HEALTHCARE

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| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • New laws (2016 and 2017) made free access to all public health structures for the provision of nursing and health care as well as family doctors available to uninsured and vulnerable social groups as well. • Social services, Roma departments and hospitals' social services improve Roma's access to healthcare; in about 50 municipalities trained Roma mediators are employed. • Based on request of central authorities, regional authorities developed reports about the health-related needs of the most marginalised Roma settlements; based on the reports specific measures have been planned, including development of sanitary facilities or employment of teams of specialists and mediators. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The geographical distribution of primary healthcare services in the country does not match local needs, especially of the Roma. Availability of primary and secondary health services in general should be strengthened. • Roma's use of the medical services remains limited, in particular in the field of prevention, dental care or vaccination. • Key specific health challenges to address among the Roma include depression, addiction, premature pregnancies, dental problems, in general diseases associated with poor diet and stress. |
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HOUSING

- A new strategic approach has been fostered by the state, introducing new regulations, among others with the aim of relocation of people from camps and settlements into better settlements (safety, access to infrastructure) or into desegregated setting, improvement of infrastructure, creation of a self-management and protection system of the residential complexes, and rent subsidy for finding a home in the integrated parts of cities.
- No forced evictions against Roma are implemented.
- For two decades no state policies have been implemented to improve the housing situation. Along with effects of the financial crisis, the situation has considerably worsened in terms of dilapidation and segregation.
- Roma's housing needs are not always included in the priorities of the municipalities either due to the stereotypes and prejudices of the local community or due to objective legal, technical and financial difficulties that the local authorities deal with.
- Roma generally have limited access to housing in non-Roma neighbourhoods due to discrimination and prejudice.
- Getting access to housing related subsidies and programmes in practice is very difficult for illiterate and marginalised Roma living in informal housing. This is even more important as families who will be resettled from camps will have difficulties to cover their housing costs.

HORIZONTAL MEASURES

STRENGTHS/KEY ELEMENTS OF THE MS APPROACH

WEAKNESSES/GAPS/RECOMMENDATIONS

ANTI-DISCRIMINATION

- Race Equality Directive is incorporated into domestic law and a National Council against Racism and Intolerance was established as national equality body in 2015.
- Government has attempted to address segregation in education and since 2015 has reminded school authorities of their obligation to ensure unobstructed access of Roma children to schools.
- The law in place does not provide Roma with effective protection from discrimination. There is a need for effective enforcement of anti-discrimination laws; and a more comprehensive national strategy to combat racism and discrimination that pays particular attention to antigypsyism and aligns fully with the NRIS.
- Major gaps in anti-discrimination law implementation mean that segregation in education remains high. Authorities must bring an end to persistent segregation and ensure full compliance with the existing law and judgements of the European Court of Human Rights condemning school segregation of Roma in Greece.
- Police misconduct remains a problem, which could be addressed by setting up an independent body to investigate alleged cases of racial discrimination and racially motivated misconduct by the police.

FIGHTING ANTIGYPSYISM

- Greek legislation condemns racism and discrimination.
- The government and independent authorities such as the Ombudsman address the issues of discrimination, racism and intolerance with more sensitivity.
- Institutional setting is in place, but there is no indication that these mainstream institutions protect Roma victims of racism.
- Antigypsyist motivation is not reported in cases of discrimination and hate crime against Roma. In the Annual Report 2017 of Racist Violence Recording Network, there is only one reported case against Roma among 120 incidents of racist violence in Greece.
- Hate speech, including by politicians, is neither being reported nor sanctioned. The far-right Golden Dawn parliamentary party and other formal and informal right-wing organisations present a constant threat to the Roma population in Greece.



- Regarding media, relevant authorities do not take any action to prevent making references to the ethnicity of crime perpetrators, if they are Roma (this is not happening if the perpetrators are non-Roma). Journalists need education and Roma participation in relevant institutions needs to increase.
- There is a need to work on positive narratives and contributions of Roma to the Greek societies.

ADDRESSING SPECIFIC NEEDS OF MOST VULNERABLE GROUPS AMONG ROMA

- The School Meals programme addresses the needs of children of vulnerable groups; all schools attended by Roma pupils are participating in the program.
- To address the NEET youth dropped out from education, a pilot programme of information and personalised guidance was set up (Second Chance, evening schools, apprenticeship programmes) and implemented by local governments. (Roma Departments of Community Centres).
- Plans have been elaborated to promote Roma women’s employment in the social sector.
- Supporting services in several public hospitals employ trained Roma mediators, who provide young Roma mothers with counselling on infant care and reproductive health issues.
- Substantial measures should be taken, beyond powerless and non-systematic efforts, to inform Roma communities about the serious consequences of early marriages (especially in the cases of girls).
- Special measures should be launched to support young Roma women who dropped out from education because of childbirth.
- Vaccination coverage among Roma children should be increased; the past programmes have been done mostly by NGOs on a project basis and funding, but information about vaccinated children is not available.
- 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

- Special Secretariat for the Social Inclusion of Roma was established in the end of 2016 to oversee the NRIS implementation.
- The institutional framework for the new actions (Special Secretariat) is based on well skilled and experienced staff, which has gathered enough evidence for a relevant policy design.
- The Special Secretariat develops the National Action Plan for the Inclusion of Roma in cooperation with line ministries and provides technical support for local action plans for Roma inclusion.
- Due to the financial and sovereign debt crisis, as well as the refugee crisis, the issue of Roma integration has slipped the radar of decision makers in Greece, especially since 2015.
- Many measures aimed at Roma inclusion are still in stage of planning and diverse ambitious plans have not materialised yet.

CIVIL PARTICIPATION AND EMPOWERMENT

- The number of non-registered Roma without the right to vote has significantly dropped since 2004 (registration became condition for welfare); attorney offices provide assistance to remaining unregistered persons in registrations.
- Meetings of the National Roma Platform are organised at the central, regional and local level, promoting the participation of Roma people.
- The Special Secretariat established a mixed Task Force which aims to train Roma communities to evaluate policies concerning their social integration.
- Political representation of the Roma community is not developed as their problems are generally not recognised as distinct from the problems of the Greek society at large.

- Roma empowerment at the local level was found to be more successful in municipalities where the community was consulted when taking the decision on how the funding will be spent. Especially important are programmes focusing on entrepreneurship, trainings and education in political participation.

MAINSTREAMING OF ROMA INCLUSION AT THE LOCAL LEVEL

- Municipalities provide information about the situation of Greek Roma to the Special Secretariat that acts as a consultation platform.
- According to the Ministry of Labour, Social Security and Social Solidarity, 35 municipalities have developed their Action Plans for Roma inclusion and 49 out of 240 Municipal Community Centres have established Roma departments.
- A Roma mentoring network is being set up to address access issues to benefits and programs.
- Local authorities lack the financial and human resources necessary for effective exercise of their legal responsibilities and tasks.
- There is a large disparity between municipalities in terms of their approach to Roma integration. Roma living in settlements are especially excluded from municipal programmes, as well as public and political participation.
- National authorities need to overcome local resistance to Roma inclusion policies at the local level.

DATA COLLECTION

- The Special Secretariat aims to set up an electronic platform including data on Roma (censuses, living conditions, available services, projects) provided by the municipalities, regions and Roma organisations and inputs from the public. This platform will be a part of the geo-information system on social inclusion.
- The NRIS includes an “inventory of Roma settlements” comparing the situation in 1998 and 2008. (By the document, the number of individuals living in such setting increased by 8 to 10 per cent between 1998 and 2008.)
- There are no official statistics about Roma and the census does not collect data about the Roma ethnicity.

FUNDING FOR CIVIL SOCIETY

- From the central government level, Roma NGOs obtain funding via the general Public Investment Programmes aimed at funding efforts and projects that strengthen the economy, support the modernisation and promote the social cohesion of the country in a long-term horizon.
- Additional sources of funding are the EU funds, EEA/Norway grants, as well as international private foundations operating in Greece.
- There is a lack of credible information on funding dedicated to Roma NGOs.
- There is no specialized fund at the central government level for projects tackling issues of Roma integration.

EXAMPLE OF PROMISING PRACTICE

The holistic approach and integrated approach to planning the policies, with measures both included in the NRIS and promoted in the local-level policy-making supported by the Special Secretariat for Roma Integration is considered promising. This approach is reflected in a consultation process at the central level, which is coordinated by the Special Secretariat and includes all relevant ministries, civil society and experts, including also Roma and their associations. At the local level, the Special Secretariat assists the local authorities to organise similar process with involvement of Roma and to plan complementary measures addressing problems that Roma face in different fields (employment, education, healthcare, housing) through integrated interventions.

MOST IMPORTANT PRIORITIES TO BE ADDRESSED

- Active participation of Roma in decision-making at all levels should be further supported in all stages (planning, implementation, monitoring and evaluation).
- The central government should develop measures that will ensure that local authorities assume their responsibilities in Roma inclusion at the local level.

- The position of Roma women should be strengthened in Roma communities and in general; problems of early marriage and motherhood should be addressed and girls' participation in education supported.
- Roma's employment should be supported through development of social economy, high-quality occupational counselling and linking the (re)training to the professions in higher demand at the regional labour markets. Such schemes should not be Roma-only, but support ethnical mix.