

Country fiche: CROATIA

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"> • Compared to the other areas, the biggest progress in Roma inclusion has been done in education. The trend is that Roma participation in education is continuously increasing. • Affirmative measures for Roma inclusion are in place in all levels of education (except for adult education). • As an affirmative measure, Roma children are entitled for free of charge preschool education, additional to compulsory one year of pre-school education for all children; this compulsory one year can be provided in kindergarten or elementary school. • In some schools, Roma assistants are employed with open-term contract and financed by the central government. • To increase secondary school completion, Roma students are supported with free of charge dormitory and scholarships, which are lowered if a student repeats a grade. • In certain towns, to fight school segregation, local transportation expenses are completely covered from the municipal budget. All children living farther than 3 km from school are entitled to free transportation. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Despite positive impact of introduction of one year of obligatory pre-school education, still many Roma children are not in pre-school education before the age of five because of facilities' low capacity and preference for families with working parents; segregation in pre-school education remains significant. • The Ministry of education changed the policy and does not support hiring of new Roma assistants by schools. Schools that did not have the assistants previously and showed the need for engaging them only later, must finance them from different projects. • Residential segregation is one of the main causes of educational segregation. • Due to the professional orientation services and their previous low academic achievement, most of the Roma are enrolled in vocational schools. |
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EMPLOYMENT

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| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The mainstream public employment services are available to Roma jobseekers and Roma are explicit target groups of some implemented measures. • Public employment services have taken action to prevent employer's discrimination against Roma. • Ombudsman office engage to raise awareness and train public employment officers about discrimination. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Public employment measures are not tailored to the needs of Roma: e.g. do not support upgrade of education though majority of Roma have primary education only. • Roma mainly participate in public works which does not effectively help re-employment in open labour market. • Antidiscrimination initiatives have been small scale and there is no information on their effects. |
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HEALTHCARE

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| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The overall goal in the NRIS regarding health care is to improve health of Roma population and to improve access and quality of health care. • The coverage of health insurance in Croatia is broad. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The ethnic dimension is not used in governmental health data gathering (an issue to address in itself), but indirect evidence and localised studies point at worse health conditions and a shorter lifespan among the Roma than among the majority population. • Distance and expense of transportation have been indicated as a concern with respect to access to primary care. |
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HOUSING

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| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There is political will to improve living conditions in Roma settlements. • The process of legalisation started a few years ago with tangible outcomes. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • More than 50% of Roma live in segregated settlements. Desegregation of Roma settlements is not the focus of the government and of the local and regional authorities. |
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| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Some community centres were built and there is a plan for building playgrounds and new community centres. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Instead of comprehensive, sustainable provisions to end residential segregation, politicians offer settlement upgrades. The local and national authorities should avoid building up any new exclusively Roma villages and commit to a long-term desegregation perspective for existing ones. • Local and regional authorities should act to legalise informal housings. • Social housing is mostly available only in large cities, and due to the composition of the stock and allocation policies, it is not suitable to solve the housing challenges of Roma families. |
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HORIZONTAL MEASURES

STRENGTHS/KEY ELEMENTS OF THE MS APPROACH

WEAKNESSES/GAPS/RECOMMENDATIONS

ANTI-DISCRIMINATION

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| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The current NRIS aims to eliminate school segregation by 2020. REF noted a significant progress in data gathering, and some improvement in enrolment in primary school, completion rates up and obligatory preschool, plus official political commitment to end segregation. • The Ministry of Internal Affairs has some affirmative measures for including Roma in police academy, and the Ombudsperson's office organises seminars to tackle discrimination for employees of public administration who are professionally in direct contact with Roma. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • High incidence of anti-Roma discrimination indicates low effectiveness of (the enforcement of) equality legislation. Public authorities should reinforce the law and act to raise rights awareness and trust among Roma. • The anti-discrimination legislation should be amended to place public authorities under a duty to promote equality in carrying out their functions. • Approximately 40% of 6-15-year-old Roma children are segregated in setting where all or most of the children are Roma. It is recommended that the educational authorities ensure the implementation of desegregation measures to meet the 2020 target. • Legislation should be amended to ensure that organisations that combat discrimination can bring civil cases concerning an individual person. |
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FIGHTING ANTIGYPSYISM

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| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Constitution of Croatia recognises Roma as a national minority. • The most relevant human rights institutions explicitly recognise manifestations of antigypsyism, such as discrimination, hate-speech and hate-crime against Roma. • Ombudsperson reports provide data on hate crime, including public incitement to violence and hatred, and the data are disaggregated by ethnicity. • Authorities have improved protection against hate crime through amendments to the Criminal Code. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The concept of antigypsyism has not been used by Croatian civil society, public authorities or other policy actors. Most of the existing initiatives target rather Roma than the racism of the mainstream society. • Roma continue to be the targets of racially motivated crime, with violent incidents in areas surrounding Roma settlements going unreported due to the limited trust and mutual understanding between the community and the police, and concerns that ethnic profiling practices are increasing. • Existing provisions in the criminal law on racist motivation as an aggravating circumstance are rarely applied. Antigypsyism as a bias motivation in cases of violent incidents should be made an integral part of investigations. • No institution or organisation systematically monitors antigypsyism in media. The implementation of the Electronic media act has to be improved. |
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ADDRESSING SPECIFIC NEEDS OF MOST VULNERABLE GROUPS AMONG ROMA

- The situation of Roma women, who may carry double or triple burden of disadvantages in the society, and may be underprivileged within their communities as well, is recognised in governmental policies.
- No measures have been adopted to address (explicitly) Roma LGBT+ issues.
- Access to preschool education should be further improved for Roma families, even in cases where the parents are unemployed; moreover, the issue of segregation in kindergartens should be addressed.
- The NRIS should address the needs of young Roma (between the age of 16 and 30 years) in a way that considers the diversity within this group, e.g. regarding their family and duties.

STRUCTURAL MEASURES

STRENGTHS/KEY ELEMENTS OF THE MS APPROACH

WEAKNESSES/GAPS/RECOMMENDATIONS

STAKEHOLDER INVOLVEMENT AT THE CENTRAL LEVEL

- Upon NRIS adoption, a Committee for Monitoring of NRIS Implementation 2013-2020 was formed.
- Ministries and national-level public authorities (NLPA) are assigned to take a leading role in the implementation of measures for Roma inclusion. They are mandated to report about the progress and results to the Office for Human Rights and Rights of National Minorities (OHMR).
- OHMR, under which the National Roma Contact Point (NRCP) is located, requested an external evaluation of the NRIS and its Action Plan. The findings and the recommendations were the basis for developing a new NRIS action plan.
- Evaluation's findings showed that the implementation of the NRIS action plan 2013-2015 was unsatisfactory.
- Public funding is sometimes spent for activities that have not been planned in the NRIS action plans, rather funds are allocated on different Roma integration activities upon decision of the OHMR.

CIVIL PARTICIPATION AND EMPOWERMENT

- One member of the Croatian Parliament is elected to represent the voice of 12 national minority groups, including Roma. One Roma MP has been in Parliament since 2007.
- Roma can form, in special minority elections, Councils of Roma National Minority or be elected as Representatives of Roma National Minority at the local or regional levels.
- Generally, Roma people in Croatia have a low level of education which has negative impact on their participation in available governance structures and awareness of their rights.

MAINSTREAMING OF ROMA INCLUSION AT THE LOCAL LEVEL

- Every local and regional government is recommended to develop an action plan for Roma inclusion as long as there is a defined number of Roma inhabitants
- In practice, the leadership on Roma agenda is more often taken by regional government than by local governments. Counties are the ones that are taking leadership at the regional level for Roma integration.
- In reality, many local authorities failed to develop the action plans, or they were developed very late.
- In many smaller communities Roma can use affirmative measures which they are granted based on the national legislation. Governments of small localities do not provide any additional measures which could lead to an improved situation of Roma in their locality.

DATA COLLECTION

- There is 16,975 Roma in Croatia, representing 0.40 per cent of the overall population, however, according to the recent data collection project developed in support of an efficient implementation of the NRIS, it is said that around 25,000 to up to 30,000 Roma live in Croatia.
- A large-scale project was developed and implemented focused on collecting baseline data for an efficient implementation of NRIS; in the long-run, this will allow measurement of the results of the Action Plan, as pre-defined indicators will be used.
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- OHMR developed an online and public platform to report on the implementation of measures for Roma integration.
- Any ministry or other public institution can collect ethnically disaggregated data which is collected in different ways. In some cases, where Roma are using mainstream measures, such as social welfare, the system allows Roma to self-identify.

FUNDING FOR CIVIL SOCIETY

- One of the most recent changes, which impact positively the civil society, is that the umbrella of Roma associations in Croatia is financed with 200,000 EUR per year, by the government.
- Croatian Government has Roma targeted initiatives which are financed from the state budget and there are also initiatives financed from ESIF. For example, in 2016, only the Ministry of Science and Education spent almost 1.5 million EUR for measures for Roma.
- Roma associations are funded through smaller local projects and from the local government, from where funding is allocated for basic work. However, funding for Roma civil society is limited due to lack of the capacity of Roma NGOs.
- Roma associations are formally eligible to draw ESIF as well, but in reality, they are usually not main applicants because of their limited capacity (so, in best case they are only project partners).

EXAMPLE OF PROMISING PRACTICE

For almost two decades, the Croatian Government has implemented Roma inclusion policies, including affirmative measures. However, their impact was unknown due to lack of data. In response to this problem, the government requested the ministries and other public authorities to collect ethnically disaggregated data and to support them, developed a large-scale project of collecting basic data about Roma. The project helps in assessing the effectiveness of the NRIS implementation, as previously recommended by an external evaluation of NRIS. The government established a commission for monitoring NRIS implementation, including representatives of ministries, public bodies and Roma. The commission is established on a parity basis (equal number of Roma and non-Roma) and chaired by one of deputy prime ministers; deputy chair of the commission is the member of Parliament who is representing Roma national minority in the Croatian Parliament. These measures contribute significantly to a higher accountability of the governmental Roma inclusion policy.

MOST IMPORTANT PRIORITIES TO BE ADDRESSED

- To tackle the residential segregation; it will have a positive impact on desegregation is education, too. Sole focus on improving living conditions in segregated settings can only conserve segregation.
- To actively address the segregation in education; impact of education of Roma children in segregated setting should be researched.
- To provide adult Roma with opportunities to participate in adult education and complete their secondary studies; financial support to cover related expenses would help.
- To strengthen the intersectoral cooperation between ministries and public institutions to make sectoral measures more effective and ensure that allocated funds are actually spent.
- To recognise the phenomenon of antigypsyism and plan actions to fight it.
- To support development of Roma NGO sector, its depoliticization and financial independence from (Roma) politicians.