

Country fiche: NETHERLANDS

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"> • Different approaches to ensure full enrolment of Roma in education are used locally; some of them are derived directly from the set of measures of NRIS, whereas others are developed independently by municipalities. • Schools and municipalities are responsible for developing measures preventing early school leaving (i.e. among the 12-23 age group). • Compulsory education from the age of 5 until 16 is accessible for the children who are legally in the country and also for the ones who are in the procedure of waiting for the decision to get a residence permit. • Schools receive extra funds to support all children with impairment (physical, mental, language issues, etc.). • Roma's participation in and completion of primary and secondary education are increasing. • It appears that local plans for improvement of educational opportunities for Roma children are much more successful than the projects created through the national set of measures. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Even though Roma children speak Dutch from an early age at home, their language skills remain difficult during the secondary school, mostly in reading and writing. With additional support provided by the school, this could easily be addressed. • Attendance into high schools and higher education has to be improved. • In certain municipalities a hidden cap quota was introduced in schools in order to prevent the enrolment of too many Roma children that could lead to 'white flight' and segregation; this measure is considered controversial by some NGOs. |
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EMPLOYMENT

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| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The NGOs run local projects aimed at increasing employment and employability among Roma and in particular among Roma youth. The projects are funded through the post-war funding administered by the Ministry of Health, Welfare and Sports. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There are no specific data about the situation of Roma on the labour market, even though the data are available for some other ethnic minorities or people of different origin. • There are no measures targeting Roma and some mainstream 'activating' measures negatively impact on excluded people (example is Participation Law). • Regardless of their educational background, Roma are at higher risk of unemployment than non-Roma. • Roma face discrimination and antigypsyism in accessing employment, both by employment agencies and by employers. Such cases remain underreported. |
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HEALTHCARE

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| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • All legal residents and all Dutch tax residents are entitled to health care and required to take out health insurance. • Local volunteer projects assist some Roma in health-related activities. The projects are implemented by NGOs and are funded through the post-war funding administered by the Ministry of Health. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Stateless Roma (including those without documents who arrived in 1970s and those in difficult economic conditions) face grave problems in accessing healthcare. • There are no specific measures targeting Roma implemented or planned. • Antigypsyism manifests itself on occasions when visiting rights of family members of Roma patients in hospitals are limited by hospitals' managements. |
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HOUSING

- Contrary to previous policies, today Roma are allowed to live in caravans, should they want to.
- A new housing policy framework for Roma was issued in 2018, directed at preventing discrimination against Roma in relation to adequate housing in trailer parks, ensuring their cultural rights and providing legal security in this area, but the implementation is to be assessed.
- The lack of political will is not helping to properly maintain the current sites and/or to create new ones.
- Roma are regularly discriminated on the housing market.
- There are some potentially counterproductive social housing policy directions which may lead to a reduction of access to social housing to only the most excluded, instead of serving as prevention measure for wider vulnerable groups.
- High rents and arrears lead to evictions. In the set of measures of NRIS there is no specific attention on these issues.

HORIZONTAL MEASURES

STRENGTHS/KEY ELEMENTS OF THE MS APPROACH

WEAKNESSES/GAPS/RECOMMENDATIONS

ANTI-DISCRIMINATION

- The protection against discrimination is regulated by four different laws. In January 2016 a revised Dutch national action programme against discrimination was presented, bringing together under a single umbrella the various programmes and plans to combat discrimination and rendering anti-discrimination policy more strategic and comprehensive.
- There is no official evidence of discrimination of Roma at school related to enrolment policies or to bullying and harassment at school.
- The set of policy measures for Roma inclusion does not mention direct, indirect or multiple discrimination and does not take into consideration the rights of Roma women at all.
- Number of Roma children in special schools is considerably higher than the national average.
- More than 200 Roma, of unknown country of origin, with very few rights and limited access to public services remain effectively stateless. Their children inherit this status at birth. This situation should be remedied as a matter of urgency.

FIGHTING ANTIGYPSYISM

- The Netherlands has officially recognised the Roma Holocaust during the Second World War.
- There have been erected commemorative monuments for the Roma victims of the Second World War. The Ministry of Health, Wellbeing and Sports, through the post-war funding has financed several projects, exhibitions, websites, and online educational platforms.
- The Dutch set of policy measures for Roma inclusion does not target antigypsyism.
- Public authorities together with representatives of the Roma civil society should launch rights awareness campaigns and promote Roma access to justice.

ADDRESSING SPECIFIC NEEDS OF MOST VULNERABLE GROUPS AMONG ROMA

- The Ministry of Health supports grassroot NGOs, through the post-war funding, to implement small-scale Roma women's initiatives or projects addressing the labour market situation of Roma youth.
- A large programme aimed at combatting exploitation of Roma children is implemented by nine municipalities in partnership with national police and Salvation Army. It focuses on law enforcement in the case of multi-problem families with Roma background.
- The availability of culturally sensitive health care services (e.g. the possibility for female patients to avoid contact with male health professionals), already provided for other ethnic minorities, should be extended to Roma women as well.
- While combatting the criminal exploitation of Roma children, antigypsyist rhetoric with a stigmatising effect on Roma families should be avoided. Involvement of Roma NGOs can be helpful in both effectiveness and sensitivity of the programme.
- The specific needs of Roma women should be addressed (e.g. in areas such as access to education employment and others; rather than only the assumed problem of early marriages).



STRUCTURAL MEASURES

STRENGTHS/KEY ELEMENTS OF THE MS APPROACH

WEAKNESSES/GAPS/RECOMMENDATIONS

STAKEHOLDER INVOLVEMENT AT THE CENTRAL LEVEL

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| <ul style="list-style-type: none">• The National Roma Contact Point (NRCP) is within the Ministry of Social Affairs and Employment.• Most of the government funding programmes are mainstreamed and Roma are among potential target groups.• In 2010, the Netherlands Institute for Sinti and Roma (NISR) was created and financed by the government with an objective to work with municipalities, institutions and Roma legally residing in the Netherlands. But the institute was closed in 2012 because of lack of effectiveness and support from municipalities and Roma. | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• There is no official public information regarding the tasks and the mandate of the NRCP or the ways it is communicating and collaborating with other authorities on the topic of Roma social inclusion.• NRCP seems to have limited effectiveness and very limited resources (only one employee, part time position, no budget).• The Roma are not involved in drafting, implementation, monitoring or evaluation of the national programmes.• Since the programs are not specifically targeting Roma, the ethnically disaggregated data is not available. Therefore, it is very difficult to evaluate the outreach and effectiveness of these programmes for Roma or possible bottlenecks which have excluded Roma. |
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CIVIL PARTICIPATION AND EMPOWERMENT

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| <ul style="list-style-type: none">• NRCP had regular consultative meetings with a core group of three Roma representatives, leaving unrepresented Sinti, Travellers and “old Dutch” Roma communities.• Roma women's organisation <i>Romane Sheja</i> was set up with support of Roma men. | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Roma interest and participation in the voting during the national election is low.• Roma representation on the political scene and in policymaking is almost inexistent. There is a need for constructive interaction with the government.• Roma activists claim an inequality in participation in projects – Roma are expected to participate as volunteers, while ethnic Dutch persons are involved on paid basis. |
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MAINSTREAMING OF ROMA INCLUSION AT THE LOCAL LEVEL

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| <ul style="list-style-type: none">• The municipalities are considered responsible for the implementation of the “Policy measures in the Netherlands for the social inclusion of Roma”.• Municipalities with more concentrated Roma population receive public funds for programmes in which Roma are directly targeted. These municipalities have employees designated to work with Roma. | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• In the vast majority of cases, Roma are just the beneficiaries and not the partners or employees of the designated programmes. |
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DATA COLLECTION

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| <ul style="list-style-type: none">• In a situation of lack of data specifically on Roma, some available data on “persons of non-Western background” can be relevant for describing the situation of at least part of Roma in country. | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Roma groups are not recognised as national minorities. The Travellers are not even recognised as an ethnic minority, but, along with other Dutch caravan dwellers, just as “ordinary citizens with special living style”.• Officially, there is no systematic collection of data concerning the situation of Roma due to legal framework protecting personal data.• Some municipalities engaged in illegal ethnic data collection and creation of databases. NGOs have noticed cases of collection of personal and family-related data from Roma children without their |
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parents' consent or participation for a national institute of healthcare.

FUNDING FOR CIVIL SOCIETY

- Some funding is available for (pro-)Roma NGOs within a governmental post-war funding programme, within the framework of the post-Second World War restitution scheme.
- There are Roma NGOs, some of them active, but self-empowerment initiatives in Roma communities are rare or do not exist, due to the difficulty in accessing funding.

EXAMPLE OF PROMISING PRACTICE

Local initiatives developed by Roma NGOs, based on the needs of Roma, with funding from post-war funding programme "Repair money" (*Rechtsherstelgelden*), contributed to the creation of more possibilities and growth for Roma, giving them a sense empowerment. Such initiatives are especially motivational for younger generations as they create good examples for them and support them.

MOST IMPORTANT PRIORITIES TO BE ADDRESSED

- To support the access of Roma children to higher education
- Sustained funding for small-scale initiatives implemented by Roma NGOs
- Establish an independent national network to monitor antigypsyism in the country.
- The national and local authorities should consider Roma, Sinti and Travelers organisations a real partner in drafting policies and implementing projects, and support/facilitate their capacity building and access to funding.
- The National Roma Contact Point should set up the National Roma Platform.