



# Civil society monitoring report on implementation of the national Roma integration strategies in Slovenia

Focusing on structural and horizontal  
preconditions  
for successful implementation of the strategy

**Prepared by:**  
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on implementation of the  
national Roma integration strategy  
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Although the Roma Civil Monitor pilot project, as part of which the report was prepared, is coordinated by CEU, the report represents the findings of the author and it does not necessarily reflect the views of CEU. CEU cannot be held responsible for any use which may be made of the information contained therein.



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## LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

CoE	Council of Europe
ECtHR	European Court of Human Rights
ESF	European Social Fund
ESIF	European Structural and Investment Funds
MP	Member of Parliament
NPMR	National Program of Measures for the Roma
REF	Roma Education Fund
SDS	Slovenian Democratic Party

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Roma as recognised national minority in Slovenia are relatively well supported by the State. A clear indication of this is the Roma Community Act<sup>1</sup>, which passed in 2007. Roma civil society organisations and networks are relatively strong both on the local levels and on the national level. Problems arise from the distinction between 'autochthonous' and 'non-autochthonous' Roma communities, with only the former enjoying special minority rights. Moreover, lack of data on Roma in Slovenia (only few surveys on their living conditions and no ethnically disaggregated data) complicate the design of policies and projects.

However, there is an obvious lack of connections and collaboration between stakeholders in making of policies aimed at social inclusion of all socially vulnerable Roma, which would go beyond the national minority agenda. For example, while annual reports made by the Ombudsman correctly identify the key issues, such as lack of access to drinking water in Roma settlements,<sup>2</sup> the policy responses from the government are limited to small-scale interventions or completely absent.<sup>3</sup>

### Governance and overall policy framework

The distinction between 'autochthonous' and 'non-autochthonous' Roma has severe repercussions on the level of political participation of the Roma.<sup>4</sup> Only in 20 (out of 212) municipalities have Roma in Slovenia been recognised as autochthonous community and been granted a seat in municipal councils. Tenders for regularization and infrastructure improvements in Roma settlements are tied to the municipality having a Roma councillor or a working body of the Municipal Council for monitoring the situation of the Roma community in municipalities without autochthonous Roma (which exists only in three municipalities).

### Anti-Discrimination

In 2016, the anti-discrimination legislation (Protection against Discrimination Act) was amended. The role and independence of the Advocate of the Principle of Equality have been strengthened, providing him with investigative powers. However, there is an ongoing discrimination against Roma in housing and education, and there are only few cases of discrimination reported, including one regarding access to drinking water pending at the European Court for Human Rights in Strasbourg.

### Addressing Antigypsyism

The term "antigypsyism" is rather unknown in Slovenia and Roma-targeted actions are not framed as efforts to address this specific form of racism. Despite, the fact that hate speech, prejudice and stereotypes are still very present, there are no initiatives to include information about the Roma and their culture and history, or about racism in the primary schools' curricula.

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<sup>1</sup> Pravno-informacijski sistem (13 April 2007). *Zakon o romski skupnostiv Republiki Sloveniji (ZRomS)*. Available at: <http://www.pisrs.si/Pis.web/pregledPredpisa?id=ZAKO4405>

<sup>2</sup> <http://www.varuh-rs.si/media-centre/work-and-news/news/detail/the-ombudsman-examined-the-living-conditions-in-the-roma-settlement-dobruska-vas-in-the-skocjan-mu/?L=6&cHash=d073d82dcfd9e17e9d197272c3aedfde>

<sup>3</sup> Štular, E. and Žura, J. (19 September 2017). Strasbourg graja Slovenijo zaradi vode za Rome, občina Škocjan ogorčena. Available at: <https://www.rtvsllo.si/lokalne-novice/strasbourg-graja-slovenijo-zaradi-vode-za-rome-obcina-skocjan-ogorcena/432972>

<sup>4</sup> Council of Europe, Advisory Committee on the Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities (2017) *Fourth Opinion on Slovenia*. Adopted on 21 June 2017.



## INTRODUCTION

According to the 2002 census, 3,246 citizens in Slovenia declared to belong to the Roma minority. However, experts estimate the number of Roma living in Slovenia between 7,000 and 12,000, many of which refuse to officially self-declare. Most Roma live in Prekmurje, Dolenjska, Bela Krajina, and Posavje districts, as well as in the bigger cities such as Ljubljana, Maribor, Velenje and Celje.<sup>5</sup> Slovenia does not collect data disaggregated by ethnicity and thus there is little data on Roma besides the census. Also, Slovenia was not part of international surveys on Roma conducted by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), World Bank, European Agency for Fundamental Rights (FRA), OSCE and others.<sup>6</sup> There are only a few studies by the Council of Europe on the Roma in Slovenia. The CoE estimates that 8,500 Roma live in Slovenia.<sup>7</sup>

A key problem in Roma integration policies in Slovenia derives from the fact that the provisions of the Roma Community Act only pertain to the so called 'autochthonous' Roma communities, which are located in Dolenjska and Prekmurje region, some of which are settled there already since the 17<sup>th</sup> century. "Newcomer" Roma that came to Slovenia in the decades following World War II from other, mostly poorer Yugoslav Republics (e. g. Kosovo) and mostly settled in the urban centres (e. g. estimated at 1,300 persons only in Ljubljana), on the other hand, are considered "non-autochthonous" Roma. They are excluded from the rights proceeding from the Roma Community in Slovenia Act. This partial application of the Roma Community Act to autochthonous Roma only has been criticized by UNO human right bodies as well as the Council of Europe and the Slovenian Constitutional Court.<sup>8</sup>

The EU framework and the financing it entails has generally been a positive influence on the situation of the Roma community in Slovenia. Funds have been made available for marginalised groups including the Roma, but until recently a relatively small portion of these has been targeted directly at improving the Roma socio-economic position. Several good practices have been imported and some developed and there has been an increase in the knowledge of key stakeholders. Roma civil society organisations have also recognised the opportunities the EU framework brings, but their capacities are often still insufficient for them to take on complex projects. A critical weakness at this point is that the Roma are still victims of discrimination and there are few incentives to stimulate their employment in a majority of economic sectors.

For the purposes of the development of this report, the authors used various methods of data collection. Association EPEKA has been working with Roma for nearly a decade, therefore many data are taken from its long-term field experience, collaboration with members of Roma community and through the participant observation. For the purpose of this report, the authors have carried out several interviews, distributed and evaluated questionnaires, conducted focus groups, consultations, public assemblies, etc.

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<sup>5</sup> Government of the Republic of Slovenia (2010) *Programme of Measures for the Integration of Roma*.

<sup>6</sup> Archibugi, Daniele/ Benli, Ali Emre (2017): *Claiming Citizenship Rights in Europe: Emerging Challenges and Political Agents*. Routledge.

<sup>7</sup> [https://ec.europa.eu/info/policies/justice-and-fundamental-rights/combating-discrimination/roma-and-eu/roma-integration-eu-country/roma-integration-slovenia\\_en](https://ec.europa.eu/info/policies/justice-and-fundamental-rights/combating-discrimination/roma-and-eu/roma-integration-eu-country/roma-integration-slovenia_en)

<sup>8</sup> Necak Lük, Albina, Novak Lukanovic, Sonja (2011): "Inclusion of Roma Children into Education in Slovenia: The Language Competence and Culture Dimensions". In: *The Open Education Journal* 2011, 4 (Suppl 2-M6), p. 164-173.

## GOVERNANCE AND OVERALL POLICY FRAMEWORK

### Representing interests of Roma in the parliament

There is nobody in the Slovenian parliament who identifies himself or herself as a member of the Roma. In accordance with Slovenian law, there are two members of parliament from the two national ethnic minorities: the Hungarian and Italian minority. While the Roma are recognised as a minority, the same right is not extended to them despite numerous outcries by Roma representatives and groups.<sup>9</sup> Different from the Hungarian and Italian minority, Roma are not recognised as a national minority, but as a “minority community” (a minority without a “mother state” to care for its rights), which is entitled to the election of a minority representative only at the local level in those 20 municipalities, where Roma are recognized as “autochthonous communities”.<sup>10</sup> At the national level there is the Roma National Council, seven members of which are elected every four years from among the Roma City Councillors and 14 members from the biggest Roma umbrella association, Roma Union Slovenia.

Despite this, the Roma have – through personal initiatives, civil society organisations and Roma umbrella associations – opened several lines of dialogue with members of the parliament and various government bodies and commissions: they cooperate or at least communicate with political parties in all the relevant regions and throughout the political spectrum. Parties both on the left and right wing have shown a degree of cooperation with the Roma community. Thus, for example the MP Eva Irgl, a member of the right-wing SDS party, head of the Commission for Petitions, Human Rights, and Equal Opportunities has reacted to a petition of the local Roma NGO from Dolenjska – *Zveza Romov za Dolenjsko*. The Commissioner forced the local government of Novo Mesto to take over ownership of the land, where one of the Roma settlements is located, which is currently in the hands of the Ministry of Defence, and thus opened the path to infrastructural improvement.<sup>11</sup>

In some cases, the members of various Roma communities have appeared as election candidates for different parties (e.g. Social Democrats and The Left), but Roma candidates are usually placed at the bottom of the list and have thus little chance of being elected.<sup>12</sup>

In 2017, the party The Left - *Združena Levica* and parliament member Mr. Matjaž Hanžek proposed changes to the 10-year-old “The Roma Community in the Republic of Slovenia Act”<sup>13</sup> (the first such legislative act in the EU). The changes would put more responsibility for improving the infrastructure (water and electricity) of Roma settlements on municipal authorities, which would also receive appropriate funds from the government. The changes to the Act would also grant Roma minorities a higher degree of self-government (especially in Dolenjska region, in which the Roma community faces the most severe challenges and often also opposition from the mainstream population). On 30 May 2017, the government

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<sup>9</sup> A.Č. (2013, April 5). *Romi si želijo svojega poslanca*. Available at: <https://www.rtvsllo.si/slovenija/romi-si-zelijo-svojeqa-poslanca/306022>

<sup>10</sup> “The Constitutional Court of the Republic of Slovenia considers the Roma as a special Romany ethnic community living in Slovenia, while the Slovenian Constitution (Official Gazette RS, Nos. 33I/1991-I, 42/97, 66/00, 24/03, 69/04, 69/04, 69/04, 68/06; hereinafter: Constitution) employs the expression ‘Romany community’.” (National Programme of Measures 2010-15).

<sup>11</sup> G.G. (2016, May 5). *Dolenjski Romi so obiskali Evo Irgl*. Available at: <https://novice.svet24.si/clanek/novice/slovenija/572b8caa7ec53/dolenjski-romi-so-obiskali-evo-irgl>

<sup>12</sup> Bešter, Komac, Pirc 2017.

<sup>13</sup> Pravno-informacijski sistem (13 April 2007). *Zakon o romski skupnosti v Republiki Sloveniji (ZRomS)*. Available at: <http://www.pisrs.si/Pis.web/pregledPredpisa?id=ZAKO4405>

rejected the changes,<sup>14</sup> with the explanation that it would prepare its own draft law in cooperation with experts and representatives of the Roma community.<sup>15</sup>

Election participation has been decreasing both among the general population and among the Roma, especially the younger voters. For example, in the 2017 presidential election the overall rate of participation was only 42.13 per cent.<sup>16</sup> Following from a lack of actions addressing the ever lower trust in established political institutions, which is especially critical in Slovenia,<sup>17</sup> particularly minorities often feel marginalised. Mistrust and lack of political activity is strongly present in vulnerable groups and it creates a vicious circle in which members of marginalised groups rarely participate in democratic processes and consequently feel ever more underrepresented in democratic institutions. For example, the 2014 EU elections for the EU parliament had the lowest participation rate in Slovene history (24.55 per cent).

In the village Pušča, which is our most prosperous and infrastructurally advanced Roma community, the participation rate was only 30 per cent. Interestingly over 95 per cent of the Roma in Pušča voted for the incumbent president, Borut Pahor. Other Roma populations in Slovenia are far more divided both on general political issues and also on specific Roma related topics. We think that a reason for this is Roma empowerment and resulting pluralism. Election participation among the Roma is somewhat higher in local than in national elections: from 3,051 Roma eligible to vote for a Roma city councillor in Slovenia, in 2014, 1,615 Roma went voting,<sup>18</sup> which means 52.9 per cent election participation. In comparison to the 2006 and 2010, local elections with a total of 1,780 and 1,900 voters, the overall participation of Roma in the election for Roma city councillors has decreased in 2014. However, there are differences among municipalities, in some of which participation increased.<sup>19</sup> One of the reasons producing discontent with the institution of Roma city councillor is seen in the divided interests of Roma communities/settlements in one municipality, which often feel that the Roma City councillor represents only the interest of her/his own settlement.<sup>20</sup>

## Mainstreaming of Roma inclusion across ministries and other public authorities at the national level

The institution coordinating the Roma integration is the Office for National Minorities, which is responsible for national strategies and long-term programs for minorities. The Office is also the National contact point for Roma. While the Office provides considerable expertise,

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<sup>14</sup> Other documents: Office for National Minorities (Unknown). *Constitutional and legal position of the Roma minority*. Available at: [http://www.un.gov.si/en/minorities/roma\\_community/constitutional\\_and\\_legal\\_position/](http://www.un.gov.si/en/minorities/roma_community/constitutional_and_legal_position/)

Changes proposed: Pravno-informacijski sistem (30 May 2017). *Zakon o spremembah in dopolnitvah Zakona o romski skupnosti v Republiki Sloveniji (ZRomS-1A)*. Available at: <http://www.pisrs.si/Pis.web/pregledPredpisa?id=ZAKO7639>

Rejection of proposed changes: National Assembly (2017, May 30). *Predlogi zakonov - konec postopka - Izbran dokument 1788-VII Evidenčni sklep MDT*. Available at: [http://www.dz-rs.si/wps/portal/Home/deloDZ/zakonodaja/izbranZakonAkt?uid=C1257A70003EE6A1C1258130003335DC&db=kon\\_zak&mandat=VII&tip=doc](http://www.dz-rs.si/wps/portal/Home/deloDZ/zakonodaja/izbranZakonAkt?uid=C1257A70003EE6A1C1258130003335DC&db=kon_zak&mandat=VII&tip=doc)

<sup>15</sup> Council of Europe (2017) *4<sup>th</sup> Opinion on Slovenia*.

<sup>16</sup> State election commission. Presidential elections 2017. Available at: <http://www.dvk-rs.si/index.php/si/arhiv-predsednika-rs/volitve-predsednika-rs-leto-2017>

<sup>17</sup> Special Eurobarometer 461: "*Designing Europe's future*" (April 2017). Available at: <http://ec.europa.eu/commfrontoffice/publicopinion/index.cfm/ResultDoc/download/DocumentKy/78720>

<sup>18</sup> State Election Commission, 2017. *Lokalne volitve*, <http://www.dvk-rs.si/index.php/si/volitve/lokalne-volitve>

<sup>19</sup> Bešter, Komac, Pirc 2017.

<sup>20</sup> *Ibid.*

there are still many impediments that undercut their work. The key obstacle is the lack of action following up to the findings the Office makes. Typically, the Office detects a problem and proposes potential solutions but there is little response from other governmental bodies. This leads to a situation where there is a lot of research and field evaluations but very little concrete actions, which could lead to actual solutions and the improvement of the situation of the Roma community.

For example, the Ministry of Agriculture, which has one of the largest EU budgets, never funded a Roma project or project aimed at solving the economic situation of the Roma minority or unemployment; they also do not support projects aimed at supporting new agriculture-based minority run businesses, since most of their projects include requirements that exclude most Roma (e.g. owning at least 6 hectares of land). Many ministries and high- and mid-level bureaucrats lack insight into Roma realities and the empathy it brings.

In May 2017, the government of Slovenia created the Inter-sectorial work group for the preparation of changes and supplements to the Act on Roma Community. The working group has been criticised for not having included adequately both experts and representatives of the Roma community.<sup>21</sup> The working group prepared new changes to the Act in November 2017, the public discussion of the Act was open until 20 December 2017 and the final version of the proposed act was prepared in January 2018. As of the writing of this report, the draft was not yet presented to the National assembly for voting. The proposed act focuses on housing as the key issue to address before focusing on issues such as social inclusion and it changes the composition of the Roma Community. The Act also focuses on inter-sectorial cooperation and increasing the social inclusion of members of the Roma community.<sup>22</sup> Several Roma civil organisations have already criticised these amendments with the complaint that they mostly benefit the Roma living in Prekmurje and Dolenjska regions and overlook the ('non-autochthonous') Roma living in urban centres. The Office for National Minorities answered these criticisms with the explanation, that the problems the rural Roma face are far more severe since they lack basic infrastructure and housing.

Apart from the afore-mentioned working group, the government has also established the Inter-sectorial working group for solving the Roma housing issues in 2006.<sup>23</sup> Along with these two Roma-focused working groups the government passed the National Program of Measures for the Roma 2017-2021 (hereafter: National Program 2017-2021),<sup>24</sup> which aims to tackle problems of education, housing, employment, health in Roma communities and also to promote Roma culture, language and identity and to fight anti-Roma stereotypes and discrimination.

## Mainstreaming of Roma inclusion at the local level

The Slovenian law makes distinction between "autochthonous" and "non-autochthonous" Roma and this has severe repercussions on both Roma political participation and the Roma integration policies on the local level.<sup>25</sup> Only in 20 (out of 212) municipalities Roma have been recognized as "autochthonous" and granted a seat in municipal councils. Roma in those municipalities have in addition to their vote in the general local elections also a vote

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<sup>21</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>22</sup> Changes to the Act, see: [http://www.un.gov.si/fileadmin/un.gov.si/pageuploads/JR\\_ZromS1\\_20112017\\_UN.pdf](http://www.un.gov.si/fileadmin/un.gov.si/pageuploads/JR_ZromS1_20112017_UN.pdf)

<sup>23</sup> [http://www.un.gov.si/en/minorities/roma\\_community/organisation/](http://www.un.gov.si/en/minorities/roma_community/organisation/)

<sup>24</sup> Government of the Republic of Slovenia. Nacionalni program ukrepov za Rome za obdobje 2017–2021. Available at: [http://www.un.gov.si/fileadmin/un.gov.si/pageuploads/NPUR\\_2017\\_2021.pdf](http://www.un.gov.si/fileadmin/un.gov.si/pageuploads/NPUR_2017_2021.pdf)

<sup>25</sup> Council of Europe (2017) *4<sup>th</sup> Opinion on Slovenia*.

for a local Roma Councillor.<sup>26</sup> In principle, only in those 20 municipalities, there are special Roma-targeted policies; in the other municipalities Roma are included in mainstream policies towards vulnerable groups.<sup>27</sup> Yet, it has to be noted that municipalities that have “non-autochthonous” Roma have also a possibility to set up a commission dealing specifically with Roma-related topics. But, there have been only three municipalities in Slovenia, which have set up such commissions in the period 2014-2018 (Ribnica, Brežice, Škocjan). Having this structure in place, enables the municipalities to apply for funding in public calls aimed at improving infrastructure in Roma settlements.<sup>28</sup>

While the institution of Roma City Councillor can be generally regarded as a positive advancement in the political participation of Roma, both their acceptance as members in the municipal council and their legitimacy among the local Roma community has been regarded critically. The president of the Roma Councillors Forum, Darko Rudas, pointed out that:

*“Irrespective of the fact that in general the institution of the Roma councillor is well established, ... at the municipal council meeting, the discussion is often still on the borderline of democracy and xenophobia. A great deal depends on how the municipal council sees Roma issues and how much it is capable of establishing cooperation with the Roma councillor in looking for solutions for the benefit of all.”<sup>29</sup>*

On the other hand, Roma councillors often do not enjoy majority support among the local Roma community, especially if the electorate feels that the Roma councillor represents only the particular interest of an individual (their own) Roma settlement.<sup>30</sup> In the period of 2002-2006 the Government Office for National Minorities has participated in activities aimed at the inclusion of Roma councillors in local self-government and provided funds for training and education programmes for Roma representatives.<sup>31</sup>

### Promoting empowerment and participation of Roma

In line with the 2007 Roma Community Act, a Roma Community Council of the Republic of Slovenia (*Svet Romske Skupnosti Republike Slovenije*) was constituted in 2007 to represent the interests of Roma *vis-a-vis* public authorities. The Council has the mandate to offer suggestions, initiatives and opinions concerning Roma and their integration to the government and other state bodies, including self-governing local communities.<sup>32</sup> In cooperation with the central government and the self-governing local communities, the Council drafted the National Programmes of Measures for Roma Integration (2010-2015 and 2017-2021).

The Council consists of seven Roma councillors, whom the local Roma councillors (see the previous section) elect every four years from among themselves, and 14 representatives from the largest Roma umbrella association in Slovenia, the Union of Roma of Slovenia (*Zveza Romov Slovenije*).<sup>33</sup> At the moment of foundation of the Council, the Union of Roma of Slovenia (founded in 1996) was indeed the main body representing Roma’s interests,

<sup>26</sup> Bešter, Romana/ Komac, Miran/ Pirc, Janez (2017) “The political participation of Roma in Slovenia”. In: *Treaties and Documents, Journal of Ethnic Studies* 78/2017, p. 73-96.

<sup>27</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>28</sup> Council of Europe (2017) *4<sup>th</sup> Opinion on Slovenia*.

<sup>29</sup> Quoted in Bešter, Komac, Pirc 2017

<sup>30</sup> Bešter, Komac, Pirc 2017; Bačlija Irena, Brezovsek Marjan, Hacek Miro (2008): “Positive discrimination of the Roma minority. The case of local councillors in Slovenia”. In: *Ethnicities* 8(2): 227:250.

<sup>31</sup> National Program of Measures 2010-2015.

<sup>32</sup> Bešter, Komac, Pirc (2017)

<sup>33</sup> *Ibid.*

but in the meantime the Roma civil society has changed and became more diverse.<sup>34</sup> Therefore, the composition of the Council has been criticised for not being representative of the whole Roma community<sup>35</sup> and not being democratically elected<sup>36</sup> – unlike the minority councils of the Hungarian and Italian communities. An initiative of the Human Rights Ombudsman, who requested to assess constitutionality of the composition of the Council, was rejected by the Constitutional Court that found no conflict with the country's basic law.<sup>37</sup>

Beyond the problem of the Council's composition, also its activities have been criticised. "As the umbrella organization, the Council has not so established that it would be a serious interlocutor to the state. It's high time to start politicizing and dancing less," said Darko Rudaš, president of the Forum of Roma City Councillors.<sup>38</sup> Additionally, the CoE in its 4<sup>th</sup> *Opinion on Slovenia* (2017) criticized the Roma National Council for being inadequately staffed and not meeting regularly (generally twice per year). CoE came to a conclusion that the Roma National Council "appears not to fulfil its role of bringing concrete situations and solutions to the attention of the government."<sup>39</sup>

In 2016 on the initiative of the European Commission, the Office for Minorities of the Republic of Slovenia established a National Roma Platform.<sup>40</sup> The main activities will be to support and assist Roma communities in developing local action plans for Roma inclusion which will be adapted to local needs and will also take into account all possible restrictions of municipalities, as well as all available options, and to strengthen inter-institutional cooperation and cooperation at the local level.<sup>41</sup>

One of the biggest and most recognisable organisations is the Forum of Roma city councillors, which connects Roma city councillors in 20 municipalities. The Forum connects several local perspectives and successfully pursues Roma interests on local, regional and national levels. The members often act as mediators between members of the Roma minority and decision-makers. The president of the forum is Darko Rudaš.

Some Roma organizations are working in the fields of empowerment and raising participation, but this is often motivated by the interests of the leaders and not so much by the idea of advancing the interests of the Roma community. On the whole, the Slovene Roma minority is fragmented and groups within it are often pursuing their own goals. There is very little cooperation between the various Slovene Roma organizations.

## Guarantees for the effectiveness of programmes with the largest budgets

One of the biggest sources of funding for Roma organizations in Slovenia is with no doubt

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<sup>34</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>35</sup> Council of Europe (2017) 4<sup>th</sup> *Opinion on Slovenia*

<sup>36</sup> Bešter, Komac, Pirc (2017)

<sup>37</sup> Constitutional Court Decision 2010 – *Decision Declaring that the First Paragraph of Article 10 of the Roma Community Act is not in Disagreement with the Constitution* [Odločba o ugotovitvi, da prvi odstavek 10. člena Zakona o romski skupnosti v Republiki Sloveniji ni v neskladju z Ustavo]. Official Gazette of the RS 54 (2010).

<sup>38</sup> Petrovčič, P., 2010. Darko Rudaš, predsednik Foruma romskih svetnikov. *Mladina*, 16 September 2010. Available at: <http://www.mladina.si/51740/darko-rudas-predsednik-foruma-romskihsvetnikov/>

<sup>39</sup> Council of Europe (2017) 4<sup>th</sup> *Opinion on Slovenia*

<sup>40</sup> Project "SIFOROMA" (Reinforcing of national consultation process in Slovenia by establishing a National Roma Platform) coordinated by the Government Office for National Minorities of the Republic of Slovenia (August 2016-July 2017) [http://www.un.gov.si/si/nacionalna\\_platforma\\_za\\_rome/](http://www.un.gov.si/si/nacionalna_platforma_za_rome/)

<sup>41</sup> *Ibid.*

the European Social Fund (ESF).<sup>42</sup> While the European Structural and Investment Funds' (ESIF) budgets addressing marginalised communities are increasing, progress is slow and few programmes show lasting effects.

Despite the fact that 1.5 billion EUR from the ESIF is allocated for the integration of marginalised communities, there is no special budget allocation targeted for addressing the specific needs of Roma. This is a serious weakness: because on one hand, many mainstream NGOs drawing ESIF target other vulnerable groups and on the other hand, most of Roma NGOs lack the capacities to undertake administratively demanding EU-funded projects, only few ESIF projects focus on marginalised Roma. In Slovenia, a very small number of open calls are explicitly aimed at supporting Roma-targeted activities, although in the last year there is a positive trend.

The largest projects concerning the Roma inclusion in Slovenia are aimed at development of infrastructure, and are mostly implemented by local authorities and ministries. Since, 2005, the central government's Office for Local Self-Government and Regional Policy has financed 80 projects (worth 5.6 million EUR) aimed at construction of basic infrastructure in Roma settlements (access roads to settlements, electricity provision, waterworks and sewage systems) and land purchases to legalise unauthorized Roma settlements. Eligible were municipalities with an elected Roma community representative in the Municipal Council or with a working body of the Municipal Council for monitoring the situation of the Roma community.<sup>43</sup>

Other most significant programmes implemented in the last years in cooperation with Roma organisations with funding from the ESF and the budget of the Republic of Slovenia include:

- 'Let's Combat Prejudice Together' ongoing from 2010, implemented by the Office for National Minorities in cooperation with Roma community NGOs and other institutions – budget of the Republic of Slovenia 40,000 EUR/year.
- Establishment of 'Support for Learning' network for Roma children attending secondary school, implemented by the Ministry of Education and Sport, self-managed local communities and the Roma Academic Club – funding since 2010 by the ESF, after that from the budget of the Republic of Slovenia.
- Employment of Roma assistants under the project 'Successful inclusion of Roma in educational processes', implemented in 2008-2010 by Roma Union of Slovenia, which was funded in 2011-2012 by ESF, and since 2013 employment of Roma assistants have been systematically financed from the State budget.
- Project 'Enhancing social and cultural potentialities in environments with Roma communities' (development of didactic materials, inclusion of Roma culture subjects in curricula, Roma language standardization) implemented by National Education Institute, Roma Union of Slovenia, public research institutes, Ministry of Education and Sport, Ministry of Culture, financed since 2008 by ESF (300,000 EUR per year).

A great part of the Roma population in urban areas is without primary education. These Roma populations have come from other areas of former Yugoslavia, speak different Romani languages<sup>44</sup> and generally suffer from high levels of social exclusion, which further lowers school attendance among Roma youth, as well as participation in higher education of Roma (many just finish primary school, some finish high school). In this way, the educational marginalisation continues from generation to generation. A very good project

<sup>42</sup> Co-financing of the Roma community in Slovenia: 2008- 2015 (26 May 2015). Available at: [http://www.un.gov.si/fileadmin/un.gov.si/pageuploads/Zbir-sof\\_ROMI24082015.pdf](http://www.un.gov.si/fileadmin/un.gov.si/pageuploads/Zbir-sof_ROMI24082015.pdf)

<sup>43</sup> Stupnik (2011).

<sup>44</sup> Council of Europe (2017) *4<sup>th</sup> Opinion on Slovenia*.

implemented in Slovenia was “Roma assistants”,<sup>45</sup> which introduced specialised staff in schools and kindergartens to help Roma children with potential issues and also facilitate the relation between Roma parents and the educational institution. A key obstacle in implementing large scale educational projects targeting Roma youth after primary school is the lack of interest in continuing with education after they become eligible for financial social help. While attendance in primary school in Slovenia is obligatory, all higher forms of education are not. As education represents a significant expense for a family with little means (while attendance is free, there are costs with books, school supplies, clothing, extracurricular activities, etc.) many young Roma lose interest in formal education and stay unemployed and involved in informal work.

Roma are also included in the public works overseen by the Employment Service of Slovenia. Although the public works rarely lead to long-term employment of those who participate in it and are seen only as a temporary measure, one can notice the positive discrimination towards Roma through the possibility of re-applying for public works. While the members of civil society can only apply for public works for a period of one year, members of Roma, disabled and unemployed persons over 58 years old can re-apply and take part in public works for the total timeframe of 24 months.<sup>46</sup>

### Civil society’s access to funding for Roma inclusion activities

Transparency of funding of the Roma civil society is of concern. The main recipients of public financial support distributed within a tender for co-financing programmes of activities for Roma community organisations (of total amount of 207,000 EUR), organised by the Office for National Minorities in 2017, were: *Zveza za razvoj romske manjšine – preporod* (Union for the Development of Roma Minority – Renaissance), *Zveza Romov Slovenije* (Roma Union Slovenia), *Zveza romske skupnosti Slovenije Umbrella – Dežnik* (Union of Roma Community Slovenia – Umbrella-Dežnik) and *Romska športna zveza Slovenije* (Roma Sports Federation of Slovenia).<sup>47</sup>

The president of the biggest umbrella association, the Roma Union Slovenia, Jožek Horvat has been elected president of the Roma Community Council in 2016,<sup>48</sup> which also provides funding for programmes and projects of Roma NGOs in the field of promoting equality and preventing discrimination against Roma.<sup>49</sup> So, he is involved in both roles of decision maker and beneficiary of the public funding, what can be regarded as possible conflict of interests. The Office for Minorities of the Republic of Slovenia is planning to reform the support the Roma civil society to make it more democratic and enable expression of various interests of the Roma minority, but this seems hard to accomplish if they rely on the Roma Community Council, which is dominated by one big umbrella organisation.

By far the largest part of funding for Roma inclusion activities comes from the EU. Since the administrative requirements are often very high, mostly non-Roma organisations being funded to work in the field of Roma inclusion. This often leads to opposition of the Roma community, since they see this as non-Roma taking Roma money. On the other hand, civil

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<sup>45</sup> Skupaj za znanje – izvajanje aktivnosti pod pornih mehanizmov pri dobivanja znanja za pripadnike romske skupnosti (Unknown). Available at: <http://www.skupajznanje.si/romski-pomocniki/>

<sup>46</sup> Employment Service of Slovenia (2017, October 24). Javno povabilo za izbor programov javnih del za leto 2018. Available at: [https://www.ess.gov.si/files/10506/Javna\\_dela\\_2018\\_Javno\\_povabilo.pdf](https://www.ess.gov.si/files/10506/Javna_dela_2018_Javno_povabilo.pdf)

<sup>47</sup> [http://www.un.gov.si/si/o\\_uradu/javne\\_objave/javni\\_razpisi/?tx\\_t3javnirazpis\\_pi1%5Bshow\\_single%5D=992](http://www.un.gov.si/si/o_uradu/javne_objave/javni_razpisi/?tx_t3javnirazpis_pi1%5Bshow_single%5D=992)

<sup>48</sup> [https://www.pomurec.com/vsebina/41040/Jozek\\_Horvat\\_Muc\\_je\\_novi\\_predsednik\\_Sveta\\_romske\\_skupnosti](https://www.pomurec.com/vsebina/41040/Jozek_Horvat_Muc_je_novi_predsednik_Sveta_romske_skupnosti)

<sup>49</sup> Office for National Minorities (2017, April 7). Javni razpis Sveta romske skupnosti Republike Slovenije za sofinanciranje programov in projektov romskih društev s področja spodbujanja enakosti in preprečevanja diskriminacije Romov v letu 2017 (JR-RD 2017). Available at: [http://www.un.gov.si/si/medijsko\\_sredisce/novica/5927/](http://www.un.gov.si/si/medijsko_sredisce/novica/5927/)

society actors, who are beneficiaries in these projects, often do not include enough Roma personnel in their project or just include them in menial capacities. This is often explained as a result of low levels of education among Roma and as the job going to the most qualified candidate.

Roma also often lack education and expertise to fully participate in all available funding opportunities. A similar lack of capacities can often also be detected in Roma organisations and networks. A separate problem is a lack of cooperation between Roma and non-Roma organisations, which can often form a very good partnership for good projects and success stories.

Most Slovene Roma organisations lack the capacities needed to tackle the administrative requirements of larger European projects. This is the main reason, so few Roma organisations are beneficiaries. Many Roma organisations that were beneficiaries in the past now face legal charges. There is a far higher rate of success among Roma organizations with easier-to-implement programs such as Erasmus+,<sup>50</sup> which has far lower administrative requirements than the European Social Fund. Also, a small number of projects implemented by the civil society target Roma. The majority of calls are aimed at vulnerable groups generally. A considerable part of civil society entities prefers to include other vulnerable groups as they find that easier than working with the Roma. This is both because of cultural differences, lack of trust and also discrimination (e.g. if project indicators include employment, it is far easier to secure it for a young person seeking their first employment than for a member of the Roma community).

In Slovenia, the biggest Roma organizations are dependent only on government funds and show little interest in finding additional sources of finance. Roma activism is almost non-existent or only present in short outbursts by individuals, as the financial instability of the NGO sector forces both Roma and non-Roma to change their occupation.

### Policies and measures addressing specific needs and challenges of Roma women, children and youth

The Ministry of Health of the Republic of Slovenia, Office for Minorities, Ministry of Labour, Family, Social Affairs and Equal Opportunities with their governmental bodies, e.g. Centres for social work, on local levels are addressing these issues and a strategy is presented in the National program of measures for the Roma 2017-2021. Initiatives aimed at providing information about health, shelters, rights, etc. to Roma women exist and they are supplemented with a wide spectrum of various educational activities both in the public and non-governmental sectors. There are also safe houses available for Roma women and children in danger, but these are not specifically targeted at the Roma but are open to all groups.

Certain crucial topics are taboo and are severely underrepresented both in national and local contexts. The most critical issues concern early or forced (arranged) marriages. Governmental institutions are often unable to sufficiently address these issues as they require a multilateral approach, including Roma youth and parents in long term programmes and also a very high degree of trust. These problems are reinforced by the Roma communities being relatively closed to outsiders and the Roma having little social contact with their non-Roma peers, which contributes to a feeling of isolation. Another factor is early school-leaving as it also contributes to losing contact with the mainstream population. This might be corrected with increasing Roma attendance in high schools and kindergartens or making attendance mandatory.

Another issue that receives almost no attention is the LGBTQ community within the Roma minority. While LGBTQ individuals are present, they often live superficially heterosexual

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<sup>50</sup> <http://www.movit.si/erasmus-mladi-v-akciji/pomembneznacilnostiprograma/socialno-vkljucevanje/roma-inclusion>

lifestyles as the Roma community is marked by a higher degree of LGBTQ discrimination than the mainstream society.

The Office for Youth of the Republic of Slovenia finances youth needs and youth related projects, but they do not have projects specifically targeting the Roma; the closest is the broader category of vulnerable groups. Despite this lack of direct funding there is a number of Roma youth and cultural organisations.<sup>51</sup> In the last decade, the Office for Youth has supported projects aimed at helping youth at risk and to address various challenges (dropouts, youth unemployment, discrimination etc.) but a change in politics on the national level can quickly change this trend. With this in mind, it would be far better if the Resolution of the National Programme on Youth 2013-2022 plans for mandatory financing of programmes targeting Roma. Many topics (e.g. arranged marriages) are still not addressed as few Roma organisations are willing to tackle this issue. But such oversights are putting the Roma minority in an even more marginalised role and increase the social exclusion of Roma individuals.

Another important problem is the lack of apartments available for young people. This leads to ever greater dependence on parents or wider family communities. This is a very strong trend among Roma youth as it is also closely related to their traditions. Together with marriages at a young age it leads to even greater social exclusion and loss of contact with non-Roma youth and general society. These problems are not addressed on the national and local levels. In 2018 there was an open call, prepared by the Public inter-municipal housing fund in Maribor, which was addressing the issue of housing in relation to young people. There were two non-profit households meant for young families and two for young couples, but the conditions were almost impossible to fulfil by young Roma members (e.g. both of the people who are applying should be employed and have a university degree in order to satisfy the measures of priority categories), which is very contradictory as the purpose of the call was to empower young people.<sup>52</sup>

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<sup>51</sup> A non-exhaustive list of Roma organisations in Slovenia: *Romano Kher*. Web-portal of the project. Available at: <http://www.romsvet.si/sl-si/romi-v-sloveniji/romske-organizacije-in-drustva>

<sup>52</sup> Javni medobčinski stanovanjski sklad Maribor. *Razpis za oddajo stanovanj v najem za mlade in mlade družine*. Available at: <https://www.jmss-mb.si/downloads/Besedilo-razpisa-za-mlade-1.pdf>

# ANTI-DISCRIMINATION

## Implementing the Racial Equality Directive

In 2016, the anti-discrimination legislation (Protection against Discrimination Act) was amended. The role and independence of the Advocate of the Principle of Equality have been strengthened, providing him with investigative powers. However, as the EoC assesses, “the new mandate may be hampered by the fact that, when not complied with, this body’s decision will remain mainly declaratory because of its lack of power to oblige the inspectorates to continue the investigation”.<sup>53</sup> Moreover, the limited number of complaints does not necessarily reflect the absence of discrimination, but lack of awareness among the public of available legal remedies.

Roma are still reluctant to fight for their own rights in courts. There are several reasons for that, such as: they have their own informal courts, they fear being discriminated in Slovenian courts and believe that, because of the discrimination they cannot find justice there. Another important reason are the costs, which are incredibly high and unaffordable for most Roma. In Slovenia there are various companies and organizations that offer free legal aid, but many members of Roma are unaware of it.

The only one known case related to discrimination of the Roma: the case *Hudorovic v. Slovenia*, which has been dealt with by the European Court of Human Rights (ECtHR) since 2014. The case concerns Roma’s access to drinking water and sanitation, which is missing in many Roma settlements, including the one, where the plaintiffs live. The case is still pending.<sup>54</sup>

## Educational and residential segregation

In the past, educational segregation was strongly present as there was a lack of strategies in the field of inclusion and integration of Roma children inside the formal educational systems. Many of those children were sent into schools, which are meant for children with disabilities. The curriculum of those schools is adjusted for children with reduced learning abilities and therefore entirely inappropriate for children that are not facing those issues.<sup>55</sup> One of the main reasons for this was the language barrier as many Roma did not speak Slovene. Many Roma were also put into special schools because of what was defined as inappropriate behaviour. Presently, there is a strong focus on integration of Roma children, especially of including young children into kindergartens at least two years before the beginning of primary school. Although the situation is getting better, the segregation is still visible in some areas. Inside the Roma settlements there are some kindergartens meant only for Roma, through which the children do not get to socialize and interact with children from civil society or any other subgroups, which again segregates them. Yet another issue is that many Roma children do not finish schooling. As the elementary school is mandatory for the first nine years, those children, who do not complete all the classes in time, often drop out after nine years, without completing primary school and without obtaining any level of formal education.

A problem we often observe is that some high schools that lack pupils attempt to attract

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<sup>53</sup> Council of Europe (2017) *4<sup>th</sup> Opinion on Slovenia*.

<sup>54</sup> See: Ribnica 24 (3 August 2015). *Skupina slovenskih Romov zaradi kršitve pravice do vode na evropskosodišče*. Available at: <https://www.ribnica24.eu/slovenija/skupina-slovenskih-romov-zaradi-krsitve-pravice-do-vode-na-evropsko-sodisce/>

Bulatovič, K. (31 July 2017). *Pitna voda za Rome temeljna človekova pravica*. Available at: <https://www.delo.si/novice/slovenija/pitna-voda-za-rome-temeljna-clovekova-pravica.html>

Lubej, G. (31 July 2015). *Po izbrisanih nova evropska sramotaza Slovenijo?* Available at: <https://siol.net/novice/slovenija/po-izbrisanih-nova-evropska-sramota-za-slovenijo-122700>

<sup>55</sup> Amnesty international Slovenia. *Romi*. Available at: <http://www.amnesty.si/romi>

Roma students, but these schools often provide education that does not match the demand of the job market. It is also very common that Roma youngsters who finish primary school or high school have difficulties finding a job due to discrimination and stereotypes at the labour market. This has a negative influence on the motivation of the whole community; many Roma youngsters (and adults) believe that formal education is not needed and do not perceive it as a value. This further frustrates the attempts to increase the numbers of Roma, who continue with education after primary schools. The residential issues Roma communities face differs by region. The Roma living in Prekmurje and those that live in an urban setting (e.g. Maribor) usually do not face very difficult housing or infrastructure problems. While their communities are to a degree separated from the wider population (e.g. the Roma village of Pušča in Prekmurje, or certain districts or streets with high number of Roma residents in Maribor) there are no "ghettos" in these cases. The Roma in Dolenjska region face most difficulties since their settlement is considered illegal, which complicates addressing their infrastructure and housing problems.

The lack of security of tenure and the irregularities of housing conditions are also used by responsible authorities as an argument against supplying Romani houses with drinking water.<sup>56</sup> In 2017 an administrative court in Slovenia ruled that Roma should enjoy special protection in housing even when living in illegally constructed buildings, as emphasised in Article 8 of the European Convention on Human Rights.<sup>57</sup> However, while the competence to improve infrastructure within Roma settlements belongs to the municipalities according to the Roma Community Act, the state is also competent to intervene if a municipality fails to address issues around an irregular settlement. This power is rarely invoked and thus both levels of government avoid taking responsibility.<sup>58</sup>

While the Roma communities in urban areas have all the infrastructure (water, electricity, etc.), they face a separate issue of unwillingness of private landlords to rent their properties to them. This issue is harder to address, but the problem is somewhat alleviated by state sponsored social housing. Through many conversations and interviews conducted with members of Roma community, we also found out that the non-profit housing opportunities are often placed in the same neighbourhood or even the same building, which can again be seen as segregation.<sup>59</sup>

## Forced evictions

Forced evictions are not avoided by the authorities. There are no specific numbers of how many Roma community members are affected by forced evictions but based on our research done through the interviews, a high percentage of forced evictions in Maribor do affect Roma. In 2016, there were supposed to be 86 forced evictions in Maribor. 31 of those were postponed and the number of new contracts reached 29, resulting in the performance of 26 forced evictions.<sup>60</sup> Because of activists and some political parties there are lowered rates of evictions to alleviate the impacts of the economic crisis. Another reason for forced evictions is the pressure on the social housing system and many applicants waiting in line. Government-run Social work centres can help with payments of bills, but many still don't manage to pay them, which often leads to eviction. Roma, who

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<sup>56</sup> Szilvasi, Marek (2017) *Thirsting for Justice: Europe's Roma Denied Access to Clean Water and Sanitation*. Budapest: ERRC. Available at : [www.errc.org/cms/upload/file/thirsting-for-justice-march-2017.pdf](http://www.errc.org/cms/upload/file/thirsting-for-justice-march-2017.pdf)

<sup>57</sup> Slovenia, Administrative Court of Republic of Slovenia (Upravno sodišče Republike Slovenije) (2017), UPRS judgement and decision No.: IU 319/2017, Judiciary of the Republic of Slovenia, 28 February 2017.). (cf. European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights (FRA) (2018): *Fundamental Rights Report '2018*, Chapter 5, Roma Integration.)

<sup>58</sup> EC (2017) *Roma and the Enforcement of Anti-discrimination law*. European network of legal experts in gender equality and non-discrimination. Available at: [http://ec.europa.eu/newsroom/just/item-detail.cfm?item\\_id=605239](http://ec.europa.eu/newsroom/just/item-detail.cfm?item_id=605239)

<sup>59</sup> Muršič, M. *Mariborski Romi – od priseljevanja do sodobnih praks*. Available at: <https://www.dlib.si/stream/URN:NBN:SI:DOC-RG4CS3F2/9c41793c-6d4d-4f05-800d-d7b31e7debba/PDF>

<sup>60</sup> Maribor 24 (2017, July 19). *Deložacije v Mariboru se nadaljujejo*. Available at: <https://maribor24.si/lokalno/delozacije-v-mariboru-se-nadaljujej>

often have large families, often run out of funds by the middle of the month. Slovenian activists and also the press are more sympathetic to non-Roma evictees than to Roma; one can see the fundraising campaigns for non-Roma evictees, while in case of Roma this never happens; at least not in the public sphere. When Roma eviction cases are reported by the press, they are often accompanied by a barrage of anti-Roma sentiment in online comment sections. Hate speech in relation to Roma issues is a very big problem. Slovenian media reported about Roma forced evictions based only on one case from 2013, when a family from Maribor was getting evicted. One of the comments that might serve as a proof of high level of discrimination was anonymously published under the article and it says: "*I know about a similar case. They gave them a flat inside the apartment building. Since then, thefts have been started in the basements, bags with scattered rubbish were laying everywhere, their children were always screaming, they had strange visitors at night, they would gather at the parking lot and loudly listen to their music. After 2 years they moved out because they build their own house. Yeah .... that's it with them. I suggest that they do not give them apartments in the apartment buildings, unless they have a building where they are separated from others, then they should fill it with Roma only.*"<sup>61</sup>

### Discriminatory behaviour by police, misconduct by prosecutors or courts

There is still a level of systemic discrimination, but it is often very hard to detect and even more importantly it often goes unreported. Throughout the conversations, interviews and focus-groups, we learned that each of the participating Roma members was at least once a victim of systemic discrimination. In the cases when the Roma involved have decided to come forward and to involve the media there were usually results (e.g. a policeman, who stopped a Roma male and showed strong anti-roman prejudice, later lost his job). But if there are no activists and media pointing to a problem it gets swept under the rug.

There is very little cooperation between the civil society and the Ministry of Justice and the Ministry of Internal Affairs. Again, there are few problems on the highest levels and on the level of policy and law. The problems appear when policies are put into practice and when midlevel bureaucrats and underpaid police officers in the field get involved. Having programmes directed towards educating policeman and prosecutors on cultural differences and ways of correctly dealing with minorities would help. Also, the Roma should be educated about their rights and what to do when someone disregards them.

In Slovenia there are some examples of police discrimination against the Roma in the last couple of years. Especially in the form of over-policing them i.e. stopping them for minor offences which are often overlooked in the case of non-Roma. Some of these examples also lead to further discriminatory and insulting outbursts (e.g. member of the Roma minority given a fine for breaking public order because of speaking with his friend in the Romani language in front of the police officer after he stopped them while driving a bike).<sup>62</sup> In the past there were more severe examples of police discrimination and violence but these were only reported within interviews and not pursued further<sup>63</sup> but overall there are few examples and reports (from NGOs like Amnesty International, Mirovni inštitut etc.) of police discrimination of Roma, which say that the members of minorities face a higher risk of being discriminated by the police.

A very prominent case of discriminatory police action against the Roma was the surveillance of the Strojani family and the attempts by the police to prevent them from

<sup>61</sup> Pernat, K. (27 August 2013). *Deložirali bi jihzaradihrupa*. Available at: <https://www.zurnal24.si/slovenija/delozirali-bi-jih-zaradi-hrupa-203747>

<sup>62</sup> POPolnkanal (14 May 2013). *Grožnje policista Romu – SVET*. Available at: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=JoELmTrp7b4>

<sup>63</sup> Djaković, J. (2009). *Policijsko nasilje nad Romi*. Available at: <https://egradiva.fsd.uni-lj.si/search/extshow/300>

returning to their land.<sup>64</sup> After the family was relocated to a refugee centre in Postojna, police members would write down the names of their visitors, write down the types of cars of those visitors, etc., which is illegal as the secret surveillance can only be proposed by the state prosecutor's office and has to be approved by the court.<sup>65</sup>

A general problem is that there are only a few Roma working for the police force. On the more positive side, the police offers Romani language courses for police officers working in areas where there are Roma, they have organized outreach to Roma communities, especially children.<sup>66</sup>

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<sup>64</sup> See: Wood, N. (7 October 2006). *Roma family's forced move raises rights issue in Slovenia*. International Herald Tribune. Available at: <https://www.nytimes.com/2006/11/07/world/europe/07iht-gypsy.3427824.html>

Republic of Slovenia Human Rights Ombudsman (23 January 2007). *Ombudsman: Roma Family Under Illegal Police Surveillance*. Available at: <http://www.varuh-rs.si/media-centre/work-and-news/news/detajl/ombudsman-roma-family-under-illegal-police-surveillance/?L=6&cHash=49e0d9ce17f0a410ce0c332942cb090b>

BBC (27 November 2006). *Roma furore hits Slovene police*. Available at: <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/europe/6188584.stm>

<sup>65</sup> MMC RTV SLO, STA (31 September 2007). *Nadzor Stroja novih nezakonit?* Available at: <https://www.rtvlo.si/slovenija/nadzor-strojanovih-nezakonit/76374>

<sup>66</sup> See: Ministry of the Interior, Police (23 September 2014). *Policijski projekt Skupa - j žekaže prve pozitivne učinke prikrepitvi integracije romskih skupnosti*. Available at: <https://www.policija.si/index.php/component/content/article/35-sporocila-za-javnost/74409-projekt-skupa-j-e-kae-prve-pozitivne-uinke>

Ministry of the Interior, Police (20 February 2015). *Pusto biskalotrokeiz Dobruškevasi*. Available at: <https://www.policija.si/index.php/component/content/article/216-projekti/76885-pust-obiskal-otroke-iz-dobruke-vasi>

## ADDRESSING ANTIGYPSYISM

### Institutional settings for fighting discrimination and racism against Roma

Not only the limited scope of the Roma Community Act (which excludes “non-autochthonous” Roma) presents a problem, but also the implementation of adopted measures for the sake of Roma communities that have the status of “autochthonous” through local authorities is problematic. The central government does not provide necessary assistance (financial or other) to increase political commitment of local authorities to implement pro-Roma measures.<sup>67</sup> Even more, local political actors often score additional political points when they take a stance against helping or supporting the Roma community. Public support for Roma causes is often seen as politically harmful both in the local and national political contexts. Thus, for example the Forum of Roma Councillors reported in February 2017 that local authorities sell the land on which Roma settlements are located or build walls around them, and disregard the National Programme of Measures.<sup>68</sup>

The media often plays an important role in this through its representations of the Roma community and related issues. In consequence, systemic discrimination is still present, and many stereotypes are still widespread among the majority population.

In the past there were several different projects targeting discrimination, segregation and integration, which were run by the government. But today, all such activities are “outsourced” to civil society organisations and funded through governmental grants. For example, in 2017 the Slovenian Ministry of Labour, Family, Social Affairs and Equal Opportunities launched an open call for establishment of multi-purpose Roma centres around the country; currently there are eight of those centres operated by NGOs, which organise activities for Roma, offer them counselling, information, individual support, protection of their rights and against discrimination and support collaboration between Roma and civil society.<sup>69</sup>

Antigypsyism is not sufficiently addressed by the state and by Roma organisations. The EU programme Erasmus+ provides grants to NGOs for activities aimed at tackling this problem; one of the main target groups are disadvantaged young people, including Roma, who can participate in various Erasmus+ projects. However, there are no data available on the extent to which the disadvantaged Roma youth actually participates and benefits from this programme.

The term “antigypsyism” is rather unknown in Slovenia and Roma-targeted actions are not framed as efforts to address this specific form of racism. Most NGOs, public authorities, and other organisations frame their activities in Roma integration in the terms of fight against discrimination and social injustice, or intercultural learning. There is also no research concerning the phenomenon of antigypsyism in Slovenia. Despite, the fact that hate speech, prejudice and stereotypes are still very present, there are no initiatives to include information about the Roma and their culture and history, or about racism in the primary schools’ curricula.

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<sup>67</sup> Council of Europe (2017) 4<sup>th</sup> Opinion on Slovenia

<sup>68</sup> “Če je denar a migrante, naj bo tudi za Roma”. In : *Svet 24*, 14 February 2017, <https://novice.svet24.si/clanek/novice/slovenija/58a1b6c04e6b8/ce-je-denar-za-migrante-naj-bo-tudi-za-rome>

<sup>69</sup> Ministry of Labour Family Social Affairs and Equal Opportunities Slovenia (21 April 2017). *Javni razpis zavzpostavitev večnamenskih romskih centrov*. Available at: [http://www.mdds.gov.si/si/o\\_ministrstvu/javne\\_objave/javni\\_razpisi\\_in\\_javna\\_narocila/?tx\\_t3javnirazpis\\_pi1%5Bshow\\_single%5D=1051](http://www.mdds.gov.si/si/o_ministrstvu/javne_objave/javni_razpisi_in_javna_narocila/?tx_t3javnirazpis_pi1%5Bshow_single%5D=1051)

## Countering hate crime and hate speech against Roma, and the antigypsyist rhetoric of politicians, public figures and media

A programme aimed at fighting against the hate speech is run by the Youth Council of Slovenia. This programme includes workshops, lectures and events with the main focus of preventing hate speech and educate youngsters about this issue.<sup>70</sup>

In cases of organised protests against the Roma, the police force usually intervenes – one of the most covered cases was during the already mentioned protests in Ambrus in 2006, when there were clashes between anti-Roma protesters and the police; most recently, the police issued tickets to protesters participating in a protest against the Roma which included obstructing traffic in roundabouts in Bučna vas in September 2017.

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<sup>70</sup> Mladinski svet Slovenije (15 June 2017). *Izobraževanje o človekovih pravicah in sovražnem govoru*. Available at: <http://mss.si/novice/izobrazevanje-o-clovekovih-pravicah-in-sovraznem-govoru/>

## RECOMMENDATIONS

### Governance and overall policy framework

The government should support initiatives targeting specifically Roma, through having special calls for proposals with devoted financial allocations. Projects targeting Roma should not compete with projects targeting other socially vulnerable groups.

The local government should align their policies and activities with the national Roma integration strategy and the central government should develop instruments to motivate the local government to do so. There should be more binding mechanisms from the central government to oblige municipalities to fulfil their responsibilities in the area of integration of Roma.

### Anti-Discrimination

All of the stakeholders that are working with Roma should be involved in intercultural learning sessions several times per year, as discrimination is often coming out of the circles where people interact with Roma (police, social workers, teachers, etc.).

The government should support initiatives aimed at informing stakeholders and possible victims about the anti-discrimination law and possibilities of seeking legal remedies.

### Addressing Antigypsyism

The government should support initiatives aimed at raising media's awareness on antigypsyism. Such initiatives should particularly focus on online media, which has an increasing number of readers and influence.

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