



Civil society monitoring report
on implementation
of the national Roma integration strategy
in Greece

*Assessing the progress
in four key policy areas
of the strategy*

Prepared by:
HEROMACT
Roma Women Association
Association of Greek Roma Mediators
"Megas Alexandros" Greek Roma Associations' Federation
Roma without Borders
State of Human Rights
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- HEROMACT – Hellenic Roma Action (coordinating NGO),
- Roma Women Association,
- Association of Greek Roma Mediators,
- “*Megas Alexandros*” Greek Roma Associations’ Federation,
- Roma without Borders,
- State of Human Rights.

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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.

CONTENTS

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS	5
EXECUTIVE SUMMARY	6
INTRODUCTION	9
EMPLOYMENT	10
Improving access to labour market and effectiveness of employment services	10
Fight against discrimination in employment and antigypsyism at workplace.....	17
HOUSING AND ESSENTIAL PUBLIC SERVICES	19
Addressing Roma’s needs in spatial planning and access to basic amenities.....	19
Improving access to secure and affordable housing	23
Effectiveness of housing benefits and social assistance to access and maintain housing	24
Fight against discrimination, residential segregation and other forms of antigypsyism in housing	26
IMPACT OF HEALTHCARE POLICIES ON ROMA	27
Ensuring equal access to public healthcare services.....	27
Addressing needs of the most vulnerable groups among Roma	30
Fight against discrimination and antigypsyism in health care	31
EDUCATION	33
Access to quality early childhood care and preschool education.....	34
Improving quality of education until the end of compulsory schooling	38
Support of secondary and higher education particularly for professions with high labour market demand.....	42
Fight against discrimination, segregation and other forms of antigypsyism in education	44
BIBLIOGRAPHY	49

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

ASEP	Supreme Council for Civil Personnel Selection
CoE	Council of Europe
DEPOS	Public Service for Urban and Residential Planning
EPHA	European Public Health Alliance
ESF	European Social Fund
ESIF	National Strategic Reference Framework
EU MIDIS	EU Minorities and Discrimination Survey
FEAD	Fund for European Aid to the Most Deprived
FRA	EU Fundamental Rights Agency
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
GNP	Gross National Product
HCDCP	Hellenic Centre for Disease Control & Prevention
ISHB	Individual Student Health Bulletin
JMD	Joint Ministerial Decision
JUSTROM	Access of Roma and Traveller Women to Justice (project)
MEP	Member of European Parliament
MOUSA	Management Organisation Unit of Development Programmes
MP	Member of Parliament
NCHR	National Committee of Human Rights
NCPR	National Contact Point for Roma
NCSS	National Centre of Social Solidarity
NEAC	National Emergency Aid Centre
NEET	Not in Education, Employment, or Training (youth)
NGO	Non-Governmental Organisation
NHS	National Health System
NRIS	National Roma Integration Strategy
NSRF	National Strategic Reference Framework
OAED	Labour Force Employment Agency
OPEKA	Organisation for Social Care and Solidarity
OSCE	Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe
PHC	Primary Health Care
POSER	Pan-Hellenic Federation of Greek Roma Associations
ROM NETWORK	Pan-Hellenic Inter-Municipal Network for the Support of Greek Roma
ROP	Regional Operational Programme
RVRN	Racist Violence Recording Network
SSE	Social and Solidarity Economy
SSI	Social Solidarity Income
WHO	World Health Organization

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

It can be stated that the situation of Greek Roma in Greece is again “one step” before the implementation of a multifaceted policy, which has the characteristics of a strategy and which, if it is methodically implemented, could yield, in a relatively short time, visible positive results.

Only recently it was established an institution in charge of the Greek Roma issues, specifically, the Special Secretariat for Roma Inclusion which acts as the focal point for collecting and disseminating information, for planning, but also for receiving complaints, and suggestions for improving the social inclusion of Greek Roma people. The monitoring process of the entire planning during the past two years required considerable cooperation efforts among different agencies, organisations and individuals. Such a holistic approach helped in linking measures and results of among different thematic areas.

During 2019, significant developments are foreseen for Greek Roma, it is expected that the focus will be on evaluating and reflecting on the implementation of the Roma policy and actions, and the thoughts are that this period will not be one of fall back.

Employment

Employment is among the primary issues in the hierarchy of the needs of the entire Greek society and hence for the Greek Roma. Despite the improvement indications stated in the FRA 2016 surveys, the reality is that during the 2008 great economic crisis period in Greece there has been a loss of significant income, especially for the lower social class group of people, such as Greek Roma, who live under or at the subsistence level. Many Greek Roma have been working for more than 50 years out of the formal labour market, without engagement in employer-employee relationships and without “formal characteristics” of self-employed persons or entrepreneurs.

It is the first time that the State is planning and using a holistic approach to tackle the issue of Greek Roma exclusion, linking for example the measures for employment with pre-requisites (education, training, housing, and health). Also, it is for the first time when there are plans to promote and support the organised employment of Greek Roma women in the social economy, in order to contribute to improving their status in the Greek society. It is very important that the Plan for improving the employment of Greek Roma started with legal arrangements addressing chronic problems. The active involvement of the local government with specific employment programmes that respond to the local needs and place particular emphasis on youth that is not in education, employment or training (NEET) are among the positive aspects of the measures expected to be implemented in 2019. The Plan to promote Greek Roma in Employment is a result of the continuous consultations with Greek Roma. The contribution of Greek Roma mediators who work in community centres established in all Greece is particularly important.

Housing and essential public services

The problems in the field of housing have always been one of the causes of social exclusion, since those problems bring added difficulties to other fields of inclusion, such as the difficulty of Greek Roma’s attendance in school. The problems were more serious, when there were non-sedentary Greek Roma in Greece, but it is no longer the case. The failure of the state to address the housing situation for Greek Roma during the past fifteen years combined with the ten years of great economic crisis in the country, did not only impact negatively the housing conditions for Greek Roma, but also affected the level of tolerance from the general population and the public authorities towards Greek Roma.

The Greek State stopped the housing interventions back in 2004 and nowadays implements a new policy for improving housing of Greek Roma. In 2019, it is planned to relocate Greek Roma people living in miserable conditions of camps/settlements and to

implement measures that will improve the conditions of those settlements that are already in relatively good conditions. It should be noted that the National Roma Integration Strategy (NRIS) and its focus on thematic policies and measures are not only a “wish list” but consists of laws voted by the Greek Parliament. Some of the measures included in the state policy on Greek Roma housing are: relocation of camps and settlements, improvement of the existing infrastructure, creation of a self-management and protection system of the residential complexes, measures to facilitate access to employment, education, health and other public services, rent subsidy for finding a home in the city (social fabric), raising awareness of the local community and finally joint actions by Greek Roma and Greek non-Roma citizens.

Impact of health care policies on Roma

The national health system in Greece cannot meet the needs of the weakest social groups, including Greek Roma, for two main reasons: less state funding than anticipated and rough handling of the health system’s coordination. It is true that the national health system in Greece established in 1983 was designed to provide equal access and full public health coverage to all the population. Nowadays, it is enriched with supportive measures for the vulnerable social groups, such as Greek Roma, in order to prevent and promote their health. Despite these measures and the good will of the medical staff to help as many people in need as it is possible, the Plan for social health was not yet implemented as it was supposed to.

Although in Greece there are no separated data for Greek Roma people, there are some data sets used by researches and for European projects, which show that a wide range of socio-economic and environmental determinants of health have a negative impact on the Greek Roma population, resulting in poor health. Furthermore, what is significant in the case of Greek Roma is that the health issue cannot be considered and understood individually, but in relation to other basic needs such as housing, welfare services, etc. Consequently, it is suggested that only through the prism of a holistic approach, which aims to improve the living conditions at multiple levels, could be seen a significant progress in the health care for all the in need social groups, to which the majority of Greek Roma people belong to.

Education

Greek Roma people, as all Greek citizens, have the right to education, however, there are still many difficulties which impede Greek Roma from accessing and remaining in school as well as completing their studies across all levels of education.

Although there is no official data on the number of Greek Roma students, the experience shows that in areas where Greek Roma are socially integrated, they are also involved in the lifelong learning programmes. The problems of uneducated young Greek Roma people are connected with problems of social integration and interethnic relations. The discriminative behaviours against Greek Roma children still occur almost exclusively in the first stages of education, i.e. in pre-school education and in the first stages of primary school, but as the level of education rises, the negative behaviours decrease and are gradually eliminated altogether. It is to be highlighted that the cooperation between school, Greek Roma families and the wider society, not only solves problems but also prevents them from occurring.

INTRODUCTION

In 2019, in Greece, the issue of social exclusion of Greek Roma¹ and the need to develop measures to deal with it is again in the forefront, especially as the country is already moving into a pre-election period. It is true that in relation to the previous decade, there is a very significant difference, since now, after about two and a half years of conciliation, research, studies, mapping, consultation, legislation and preparation, the Greek State can no longer declare that it is not aware of what and/or how the situation should be addressed, at least for the most urgent problems faced by Greek Roma.

The establishment and operation of the Special Secretariat for Roma Integration, even if it has not yet yielded visible results in the living conditions of the camps and settlements of the Greek Roma so far, succeeded something significant: to update and capitalise the knowledge existent in the 1995-2005 decade so that today Greece can make use of it and can prioritise the needs taking into consideration the criteria and tools used during that period, too.

It can now be considered that a national strategy was developed upon the establishment of the Secretariat for Roma Integration, since the previous strategy for Roma was very general and vague. More precisely, the strategy lies on the plans started two years ago by the Special Secretariat for Roma Integration. Furthermore, giving an example of the attempt to systematise the policy for Greek Roma, the overwhelming majority of the entire planning is validated by the members of the Greek Parliament voting for either laws or amending provisions in existing laws or joint ministerial decisions.

The methods used in the development process of the current report rely extensively on discussions with many representatives and members of the Greek Roma communities across the country. Considerable help was provided by the Greek Roma mediators and who are also members of the Association of Greek Roma Mediators, which is one of the six NGOs of the RCM Greek Coalition. In total, 236 Greek Roma people from 58 different places were contacted throughout country. The positions and conclusions presented in the current report were formulated after consultations with 144 smaller or larger Greek Roma organisations. The NGOs forming the Greek coalition are based in four different large Greek regions, and all of its members are directly connected with the local governments, women's organisations, the Greek Roma representatives, the networks of municipalities, which make their contribution to the current report highly valuable.

Another very important source of information used for the purpose of developing the report, was the Special Secretariat for Roma Integration, which exchanges data and know-how on a daily basis with all ministries, public institutions, Greek Roma associations and the Roma departments of community centres throughout the country. It also exchanges information and elements with the municipalities where Greek Roma live and with those who are interested in implementing various actions in different areas meant to improve the conditions of Greek Roma people. Equally important data sources for development of the report were the studies and researches, which are reflected in the thematic chapters accordingly.

¹ In Greece, the term "Roma" is considered as a politically correct term and it is not so common in everyday life, while the term "Gypsies" is much more common and preferred by all sides (State, wider society and Greek Gypsies). The word "Roma" is considered by Greek Gypsies as a word that should be used only internally, among Gypsies themselves. However, in this report intended for international audience, authors use the word "Greek Roma", unless special cases (e.g. if the term "Gypsies" is part of a title of a document or as part of quotations, etc.).

EMPLOYMENT

Improving access to labour market and effectiveness of employment services

Employment in Greece represents one of the most important areas to be developed, as due to the great economic crisis during which the country has passed in the last decade, the most visible consequences are the loss of a high percentage of income and per-capita purchasing power. During 2009-2018, the life in Greece has deteriorated so much, that the poorest parts of the society have faced severe challenges even in covering daily essentials for survival. That is why the focus of the country has been on economic growth and employment particularly on the poorest and weakest social groups in the country, such as Greek Roma, who suffered the extreme consequences of the financial crisis in the last decade.

In Greece, the National Roma Integration Strategy 2011-2020 (NRIS) includes the promotion of employment and vocational training as a specific strategic objective. With the establishment of the Special Secretariat for Roma Integration, an updated and detailed plan of measures and actions based on the national strategy was prepared. For this a new data on Greek Roma employment was used,² reflecting the situation at the local and national levels, derived from sources such as social research in Vlycho Megara, MIDIS II FRA, deliverables of European co-funded programs for Greek Roma employment such as SERCO, as well as from local action plans of the municipalities for the integration of Greek Roma.³ In the design process of these measures, which promote the integration of Greek Roma into the labour market, various sectors (economy, development, education, training, employment)⁴ were involved.

According to the FRA 2016 EU-MIDIS II survey,⁵ 43 percent of Greek Roma (14 per cent of Roma women and 71 per cent of Roma men) declared to be in paid jobs (what does not necessarily mean that they were legally employed)⁶ or they were self-employed, while 55 percent of the majority population are employed in paid jobs. Generally, compared to earlier surveys, FRA notes an improvement in the area of employment of Greek Roma in Greece and identifies the largest gender gap⁷ among the researched countries. It must be

² The Special Secretariat gathers data on the available labour and training sources and on research institutions on labour market discrimination to document the working environment and employment of Greek Roma, to formulate policy proposals and to monitor relevant indicators over time.

³ The Local Action Plans for Municipal Integration of Greek Roma include measures in every pillar of social inclusion based on the concept of holistic intervention.

⁴ Co-operation of the Ministries of Labour Social Security and Social Solidarity, Education, Rural Development, Economy as well as the NSRF – Employment Division under the supervision and coordination of the Special Secretariat for Roma Integration.

⁵ https://fra.europa.eu/sites/default/files/fra_uploads/fra-2016-eu-minorities-survey-roma-selected-findings_en.pdf

⁶ Greek Roma people have income from non-formal work, which covers their basic needs. At the same time, the income is connected with the overall mobility of the trade, which because of the economic crisis has very much decreased. Consequently, Greek Roma people, even if they do not work legally, they have an income, and which is generally fluctuant and in the recent years affected by the financial crisis. Please see also the employment chapter and the description of this issue.

⁷ According to the FRA, EU-MIDIS II 2016 survey, for comparison, the gender gap is still substantial also in the general population, but it is not as large as among Greek Roma. The gender gap in labour market participation among Greek Roma could be explained by the higher engagement of women in domestic work as their main activity (in Greece 48 percent of Greek Roma women declare, as main work, domestic work). This ratio is high for Greek Roma women also when compared with women of the general population, which could be explained in terms of expectations of traditional gender roles. For more information, please, see FRA, EU-MIDIS II 2016 survey (part 2.2. Labour Market Participation, 2.2.1 Main activity status, table 1; and 2.2.2 Paid

mentioned that the research does not offer comparable data per sectors, nor separate rates for the overall population, for the Greek Roma or for other vulnerable groups.

The small difference in rates of paid work between the overall population and Greek Roma can be explained by two facts: firstly, the respective FRA survey was conducted in the middle of the great economic crisis that impoverished the country, thus what happened was not an increase of the percentage of Greek Roma in paid work but on the contrary, a great decrease of the proportion of the majority population in the labour market; and secondly, Greek Roma who lack education, training and qualifications, engage in vendors professions, which are not legalised. More precisely, the proportion of Greek Roma vendors engaged in economic activities compared to the overall population continues to remain high even in the midst of the great economic crisis. Moreover, although the percentage of employed and paid Greek Roma is recorded as high, their income is seriously reduced. It must be stressed that the income from vending activities is not necessarily linked to the minimum standard income.

The issue of legalising this occupational activity of being legally a vendor has for decades encountered bureaucratic difficulties. In addition, the process of legalisation implies a financial burden that makes it inaccessible and unprofitable for Greek Roma people. Vending is exercised by a large majority of Greek Roma to just cover their living costs in an informal way and without any supporting evidence. Nevertheless, vending is an activity that can be practiced as a legitimate profession. All the aforementioned reasons generate a state of reluctance for Greek Roma people who feel comfortable and secure in what they know to do for years: to get involved with this informal form of trade and earn their living.

In this way, Greek Roma work informally and without the state's legal permission. Hence, they often suffer the consequences for their illegitimate work – such as lower pension (all uninsured Greek citizens are entitled to the minimal pension at the age of 67) and limited medical care but also sanctions – which are among the causes of their social exclusion.

On the basis of the above, the data from the Special Secretariat for Roma Inclusion and the experience of the Greek Roma NGOs, the following can be highlighted as crucial issues faced by Greek Roma in employment:

1. The difficulty to join labour market, due to the low levels of education, training and professional specialization; and the prejudices and distorted perceptions of non-Roma Greeks, and Greek Roma people, concerning their relationships at work.
2. Illegal and informal work (lack of supporting documents).
3. Employment of Greek Roma in a limited number of sectors of the economy (agriculture as land workers, vending, waste management and popular traditional arts).
4. The high rates of labour exclusion of Greek Roma women due to their lack of educational and professional skills.
5. High unemployment rates particularly among young people.

Specific measures, intended to address these problems successfully, that are planned, implemented or to be implemented, are mentioned below.⁸

Work, Figure 5) at: https://fra.europa.eu/sites/default/files/fra_uploads/fra-2016-eu-minorities-survey-roma-selected-findings_en.pdf

⁸ The policy framework as well as specific actions to promote Greek Roma employment were presented by the Special Secretariat to a Council of Europe / Cahrom thematic work visit held in the Netherlands (June 2018).

In Greece, employment services are provided by the State – through the Employment Organisation of the Labour Force (OAED),⁹ local governments, trade union organisations (INE-GSEE) but also by non-public employment agencies, vocational consultants and others. All citizens are entitled to the employment services, so, at least in theory, Greek Roma have equal access to these services. However, in practice, Greek Roma people who are illiterate, like those living in remote camps, find it difficult to access OAED’s training and employment programmes; additionally, until recently they could not have access to social benefits, such as Social Solidarity Income, since the registration in the OAED unemployed register is required for this kind of aid, which in turn implies the existence of a permanent residence permit.

Considering all the above-mentioned difficulties, the NRIS includes in its objectives the social approach for Greek Roma, and their encouragement to use the employment services and their access to the existing programmes. Therefore, the OAED board decided to facilitate the registration of unemployed and homeless people in the OAED register, with engagement of the Roma departments of community centres and other social services.¹⁰ OAED’s employment service also incorporates social services, at least in the offices of major urban centres. The Roma departments of the community centres and other social structures operating locally develop actions to mobilise Greek Roma to get formal employment or self-employ and local bodies and businesses as possible employers. These actions are based on the potential employees’ characteristics and needs of the labour market and the economy of each regional unit. Apart from the Roma departments of community centres, actions and services supporting employment are provided by the Employment and Entrepreneurship Counselling Regional structures, within the implementation of the Regional Operational Programmes (ROPs).

Those structures’ activities aimed at increasing Roma’s employment include:

- **Counselling:** Information, reinforcement and upgrading of Greek Roma’s personal skills to alleviate prejudices and negative attitudes in the broader social environment. These actions aim at facilitating Greek Roma’s integration into legal workplaces or beginning of their legal entrepreneurship.
- **Awareness-raising** focused mainly on employers’ and the professionals’ bodies in each region. It aims at mitigating stereotypes at the expense of the Greek Roma, activating the authorities related to entrepreneurship and professional activities, and providing as much as possible complete information to all potential beneficiaries.
- **Counselling and mentoring services** to Greek Roma exercising or intending to engage **in entrepreneurial activities**. The counselling concerns legal, accounting and bureaucratic issues, as well as improving the functioning of existing businesses, such as the human resources management, or the business plan, networking, collaborations etc. In this way and in both cases their chances of sustainability are increased.
- **Collaboration with the central employment services** (OAED) or other bodies such as the General Secretariat for Lifelong Learning and the Youth of the Ministry of Education. This action aims at integrating Greek Roma into apprenticeships, training, retraining or employment programs that are implemented in certain periods.
- Within the framework of the **Social and Solidarity Economy** (SSE), it is planned the establishment of support centres, which will function as informative and

⁹ www.oaed.gr

¹⁰ <http://www.oaed.gr/documents/10195/1214556/DELTIO+TYPOY+28022018.pdf/51b05cec-f574-47f1-8165-62a9200e37d7>

consulting structures of existing social enterprises and social entrepreneurs, as well as technical and financial supportive structures for the development of new SSE enterprises. The social economy and the opportunities provided can prove to be very important for the course of Greek Roma's employment. Their participation in mixed (Roma and non-Roma) cooperative programmes, which play an active role in different kind of jobs with social impact, is the ultimate vehicle for achieving multiple benefits, which can go far beyond the limits of the Employment sector and can determine the social path of some Greek Roma in future.

Finally, it is important to mention that in the national employment planning process, there are data from the Labour Market Diagnosis System of the National Institute of Labour and Human Resources¹¹ at regional and sub-regional level, which have been used to facilitate the best possible targeting of labour market sectors on issues of training and employment support.

In the context of state's efforts to tackle poverty and unemployment, the Greek State established the Social Solidarity Income (SSI), measure, which is a monthly (money and in-kind) benefit to the weakest of the Greek society, imposed by the relevant law in 2018.¹² A large part of the beneficiaries of the SSI are the Greek Roma, since this is the group of Greek citizens with the lowest standard of living.

In the institutional framework regarding the SSI there is a connection between the provision of this measure and the active role of the beneficiaries. In this way the beneficiaries do not assume a passive role, just receiving this aid but they have to cooperate with OAED to join employment, vocational training and work experience programmes, while at the same time those aged 40 or more (born in 1978 and earlier) have to complete compulsory education. In addition, in order to support legitimate work, the beneficiaries of the SSI who are also vendors or are engaged in the open trade, are motivated to obtain legally open trade licenses,¹³ as long as they are eligible for the SSI, they will be exempted from the obligation to pay the relevant taxes. Among "side effects" of the implementation of the SSI and other similar measures was the complete elimination or at least a huge reduction of the Greek Roma without documents such as identity card, or with problematic registrations in the public registers.

In both, problem mapping and policy planning, the emphasis was placed on young people having no education or training or employment (NEETs). The government took into consideration the importance of education and training for the Greek Roma's inclusion in employment as well as the importance of the new generation of Greek Roma, to break the process of transferring poverty and deprivation from generation to generation. For the NEET approach, the Ministry of Labour and the Ministry of Education implemented a mainstream pilot programme in which information and personalised guidance groups of young vulnerable social groups aged 15-24 were set up to increase the number of young people completing compulsory education. The members of these groups attended either the "second chance" education or they participate in OAED's training and apprenticeship programmes. Specifically, 110 young Greek Roma from the Municipality of Halandri and from the municipalities of Western Attica participated in the pilot project.

Additionally, the OAED provides specific training and employment programmes for young people – that are not Roma-targeted, but young Greek Roma can benefit from them – at different types of institutions, including:

¹¹ http://lmds.eiead.gr/?page_id=789

¹² The Social Solidarity Income (SSI) was instituted by Law 2281/2018 and is available to indigent Greek citizens; accordingly, it is paid to the majority of Greek Roma.

¹³ This is the business license for merchants in open markets, bazars, folk markets, commercial and religious festivals, fairs, etc, which gives the legal right to a merchant to sell products.

- Offices for linking the vocational training with the labour market,
- Professional apprenticeship schools,
- Vocational training schools,
- Post-lyceum vocational training institutes
- Youth entrepreneurship programmes.¹⁴

In addition, the Roma departments of community centres, engage in actions to tackle the problem of Greek Roma students who do not regularly attend schools, as well as the vocational orientation of young people.

Particular importance and emphasis are given on promoting women's employment in general, through the use of the institutional framework of the Social and Solidarity Economy (SSE).¹⁵ During the last decades, there have been incentives to promote female employment; for example, in 2000, the amount of the OAED subsidy given to young unemployed people for setting up a business was 9,000 EUR for men, while for women was reaching the amount of 14,000 EUR. Last but not least, in order to inform the general population, part of which is also the Greek Roma people, the Special Secretariat for Social Economy implemented a campaign with workshops and exhibitions aimed at informing local societies about benefits, terms and conditions for establishing social enterprises in regions of the country. Furthermore, especially for the Greek Roma, the Special Secretariat for Roma Integration in collaboration with the Special Secretariat for SSE, conducted informative meetings and workshops, where executives from both Special Secretariats with experience and specialisation in employment and entrepreneurship, inform, collaborate, answer questions and support Greek Roma women and young people who are active agents or are interested in developing actions that are part of SSE. At the moment of development of this report, the most recent meeting was held in Athens on 30 November 2018 with the participation of Greek Roma women and young people.

During the last year, the state addressed the problems of lack of work permits and informal work concerning a large percentage of the Greek Roma, by regulation of parameters in the exercise of open-air commercial activities, including:¹⁶

- **Additional priority in the licensing** for flea markets procedure for "people living in camps or settlements in conditions of social exclusion such as the Greek Roma" (required supporting documents and the whole terms for eligibility of a person for this measure are determined by Joint decision of the Ministers of Economy and Development and Labour, Social Security and Social Solidarity).¹⁷
- **Establishment and organisation of local open markets** and their operation on special terms in cooperation with municipalities and local Greek Roma organisations.¹⁸
- **Reduction or exemptions** for SSI beneficiaries (SSI) from the payment of the local open-market taxes.
- **Abolition of the very high fines** and criminal penalties in force until 2017 and regulation of changing the way of repaying the debts incurred by them. Unfortunately, there has been a vicious cycle of accumulation of legal issues and debts that not only did not deal with trafficking and the underground economy in

¹⁴ <http://www.oeed.gr/home>

¹⁵ Law 4430/2016, Gazette Paper no. 205, Issue A', 31-10-2016

¹⁶ Law 4497/2017 Gazette Paper no. 171, Issue A', 13-11-2017

¹⁷ Paragraph 2e, Article 19, Law 4497/2017, Gazette Paper no. 171, Issue A', 13-11-2017)

¹⁸ The first joint market of municipalities and Greek Roma associations is already operating in the Efkarpia location of the Pavlos Melas municipality.

open-air trade but added obstacles to the integration of Greek Roma into legal work.

In the planning of the employment policy, measures were included to enable Greek Roma to become familiar with stable income generating work, to substantially upgrade their work skills and to gain experience from a typical working environment. Also, the planned actions take into account the spatial factors, adapting to the existing needs and possibilities.

Particular emphasis is put on the development of new career opportunities in the areas of social economy and green development as well as support for entrepreneurship and private initiative. Programmes and actions related to and promoted the above-mentioned issues include:

- **Community Service Programmes.** They started in 2016 initially in municipalities with very high and long-term unemployment and poverty, among the residents of which there are very often Greek Roma also. Beneficiaries are long-term unemployed, older unemployed, low-skilled and low-income people (characteristics that many Greek Roma meet). The aim of these programmes is to upgrade the cognitive level of participants and to let them gain work experience through work in positions and projects that deliver a measurable social benefit to the local community. Jobs are subsidised by OAED. In this context, municipalities can employ participants, including Greek Roma in public works to improve the living space of the Greek Roma or the wider area of the city. An additional benefit for the Greek Roma by participating in these local authorities' community service programmes is their familiarity with the conditions, the terms and the formal working environment of legal wage labour. Nonetheless, a large proportion of Greek Roma cannot participate in these programmes because participation in them requires the completion of compulsory education. There are no data on Roma participants available, as in Greece, ethnical data are not collected.
- **Local Action Plans for Greek Roma Inclusion** include specific actions to promote Greek Roma employment in the local labour market.¹⁹
- Within the context of emergency housing assistance to Greek Roma living in inappropriate housing conditions, there have been planned organised relocations, which are being developed as complex types of social housing.²⁰ The experience of relocating social groups to new sites so far has shown that the whole effort can fail by a lack of organisation in the management and surveillance of the new site. For this reason, the establishment of "**Care Management Teams**" located in the temporary relocation areas and in cooperation with the municipal services will help to reduce the risks of degradation and depreciation of the new site infrastructure, to ensure the acceptance of the population to be relocated and to deal with issues of administrative and financial management of the organised. This will create new job opportunities for individuals from the groups of beneficiaries.
- In addition, in existing settlements where improvements in technical and social infrastructure are envisaged, there will be set up **working groups** to improve living conditions in which Greek Roma will be employed and will ensure safe and legitimate waste management, the protection of communal areas, the improvement of the structured environment, information and education of the Greek Roma population on the issues of personal and environmental hygiene and civil protection, as well as facilitating the participation of Greek Roma in actions of broader society. Thus, in this measure, housing benefits are combined with Greek

¹⁹ <https://egroma.gov.gr/apasxolisi/>

²⁰ A more detailed description can be found in the Housing chapter.

Roma employment but also awareness of the responsibility for the good functioning of the relocated places.

- The recruitment of **Roma mediators** in Roma departments of community centres²¹ that have been set up in areas with a significant Greek Roma concentration and in Roma camps in order to provide a qualitative provision of social support services to this particular social group. Until the end of November 2018, in the Roma Departments of the community centres 27 Greek Roma Mediators had been recruited.²²
- There are plans for the implementation of interventions for the development of **entrepreneurship** with mixed (Greek Roma and non-Roma) schemes, focusing on the primary sector (livestock farming, agricultural crops), in the field of waste management and recycling and more generally in technical professions where the Greek Roma people already have a presence and professional experience. The proposal concerns (a) a subsidy for new jobs for 375 Greek Roma aged 20-39, (b) a subsidy for 240 Greek Roma aged 20-44 for setting up a private enterprise, and (c) 420 Greek Roma aged 20-44 for the formation of corporations.²³
- The **circular economy** is also an area in which Greek Roma have strong formal but also informal/irregular activity and there are plans to facilitate the smooth transition of Greek Roma to formal employment within programmes and actions in the area of circular economy and in other employment sectors.

Furthermore, it should be mentioned that within the employment sector, as within other sectors with similar difficulties, the programmes, actions and measures by which Greek Roma can have benefits are those that apply to all other Greek citizens. The existent difference is that now due to the establishment of the Special Secretariat for Greek Roma Inclusion, issues related to the Greek Roma are also taken into account in the planning of the national policies by the Greek State in every field. As mentioned above, vocational training, retraining, and work experience programs are being implemented, targeting both the general population as well as vulnerable groups. Greek Roma constitutes one of the target groups of these programmes. Greek Roma access to these programmes is facilitated by the Roma Departments of Community Centres, which exist in almost all of the country.

The training, further education and work experience programmes that are being implemented or are foreseen to be announced by OAED, are highly meeting the needs of the Greek Roma and the requirements of the market, because:

- The implementation by the State of programmes for employment which have a public benefit meet the needs of the local authorities and at the same time respond to the skills of the Greek Roma that they have the opportunity to improve and also to familiarise themselves with the requirements of formal work, and thus overcoming the relevant prejudices that exist both within Greek Roma and non-Roma society regarding employment.
- The Local Action Plans for Greek Roma inclusion of the local authorities are based on data and knowledge of the needs and the potential of each local labour market.

²¹ The Community Centres, operated by local governments, are the first contact point of the Greek Roma citizen with the social service of the municipality. There is a platform depicting the geographical location of Community Centres across the country and the number of centres' attendees updated every 10 days electronically: <https://kentrakoinotitas.gr>. Specific data concerning the Attica Region (representing some 60% of all Greece): <http://socialattica.gr/eidi-domis/kentro-koinotitas>.

²² Unfortunately, there are no data indicating the separate number of women and men.

²³ <https://egroma.gov.gr/apasxolisi/>

- There is a dialog which is foreseen to culminate in a co-operation agreement between the Special Secretariat for Greek Roma Inclusion and the Ministry of Rural Development concerning the promotion of Greek Roma employment in the primary sector of the economy.
- There are similar proposals to promote Greek Roma employment in sectors of the economy for which Greek Roma have empirical knowledge that can be capitalised to their own benefit, as well as the benefit of local, regional or national economy (trade, circular economy, technical professions, textiles etc.).
- Lastly, as an indicator of the existent dynamic, it is important to note that during the tourist season (April to October) in Greece, a large part of the human workforce, is transferred to the tourist areas and primarily to the islands. This concerns a very large number of jobs, but they are only available for about eight months of work. The Greek Roma constitute a small part of this mobile workforce, usually working as auxiliary staff.

Fight against discrimination in employment and antigypsyism at workplace

The mechanisms for monitoring discrimination in employment, as well as in other areas, are not strong, even for wider issues outside employment, such as the social or public authorities' attitudes and practices. In general, the discrimination controlling mechanisms are weak or unreliable.

Especially in employment, the issue began to emerge only after the advent of a wave of labour force coming from neighbouring states (Albania and Bulgaria) in the 1990s. Then, various NGOs started to highlight incidents that raised issues which were not related to direct racial discrimination but mainly to the economic exploitation of employees by the employers.

Thus, even controls made by the State through Labour Inspectors are almost exclusively about the existence of informal work. The violations are many, but they are always counted as violations of labour, economic and tax legislation, not violations that relate to discrimination and racism, even when the incidents relate to the violation of the labour rights of foreign workers.

Identifying and recording discrimination in employment is very difficult for a number of reasons, the main ones are:

1. Greek Roma deliberately refuse to be registered under any other "characteristic" apart that of Greek citizens.
2. The second reason is that the Greek Roma either are working out of the formal labour market, practicing outdoor trade, or are self-employed, and so they are not exposed to discrimination by employers or co-workers.

From the above, it emerges that in Greece there is no data regarding discrimination against Greek Roma in employment. It is indicative that even the various awareness-raising campaigns occasionally implemented by human rights NGOs focus on the general conditions of Greek Roma rather than specifically on employment issues.

The only well-known case of crowding out Greek Roma from workplaces is the recruitment of mediators in the Roma departments of community centres, a prerequisite for which (as a required skill), is knowledge of the Romani language. This condition was set by the government in order to increase the recruitment chances for Greek Roma to the position of mediators in the Roma Departments. However, in various parts of the country, there have been cases where non-Roma candidates, who as regards the other qualifications (formal education, language skills, etc) were better than Roma candidates, falsely declared that they knew the "Romani" dialect and were recruited as mediators, by-passing the

Roma candidates.²⁴ After the objections raised by Roma and the Association of Greek Roma Mediators, the government took action to avert this problem. Specifically, with the recommendation of the Special Secretariat for Greek Roma Inclusion, the government introduced by law the "Process of Proof of Knowledge of the Greek Romani Language or Local Dialect".²⁵ Specifically, through Skype, a three-member special committee tests candidates' Romani language skills and candidates, who actually speak the language, are prioritised in the recruitment process.

The mentioned issue is a positive example of a resolution of discrimination that happened quickly and effectively because there was timely, correct, organised and multifaceted cooperation between the state, the mediators, the Greek Roma organisations and trade unions.

Fortunately, in recent years, several Greek Roma who have received higher or advanced education are actively involved in the case of Roma inclusion in Greek society, trying to implement proven and successful practices and methods from areas where Greek Roma are almost fully integrated.

Moreover, it is worth mentioning that the governmental initiatives, such as the employment in local authorities' programmes for works with social benefits, or specialised training programmes at OAED apprenticeship schools for specific professions, if properly used by Greek Roma, can change their work landscape in the next decade. Indeed, the same holds for the Social and Solidarity Economy (SSE) framework, through which Greek Roma people can evolve even as an important factor in the country's economy, through cooperation schemes with local government, women's and youth organisations, cooperatives or even with private professionals and companies.

²⁴ These cases have been detected by the Association of Greek Roma Mediators which also submitted relevant litigations. The most known cases are in municipalities of Nafpaktos, of Ilida and of Rhodes.

²⁵ Article 55 of Law 4520/2018 (Gazette Paper no. 30, Issue A', 22 February 2018)

HOUSING AND ESSENTIAL PUBLIC SERVICES

Addressing Roma's needs in spatial planning and access to basic amenities

It is a fact that among the pillars that compose and sustain the problem of social exclusion, housing has a major impact and greatly affects the future course of individuals or whole social groups. The issue of Roma housing in Greece used to be at the top of the hierarchy for many decades. This prioritising has however changed due to the great crisis that the country has gone through. In the past two years, the Special Secretariat for Roma Integration conducted a nation-wide mapping survey of the situation of housing of Greek Roma. This mapping was carried out after the passage of 20 years from the previous housing study DEPOS, implemented in 1997-1999. The recent mapping also contributed to other services, such as the Management Organisation Unit of Development Programmes (MOUSA),²⁶ regions and municipalities, and the National Centre for Social Solidarity"(NCSS),²⁷ as the former National Roma Contact Point (NRCP) which was also responsible for the implementation of the NRIS.

This Pan-Hellenic mapping concluded that about 110,000 Greek Roma live in camps or settlements in housing conditions that are distinctly different and inferior to those of the rest of the Greek population, in a state that to a greater or lesser degree requires rehabilitation. This difference may concern both the location where the Roma are settled (residential segregation); and the type, form and conditions of the housing in which the Roma are living.

Comparing to the estimates of the population of the Greek Roma being approximately 250,000, it can be concluded that almost 45% of the Greek Roma live in housing conditions that are distinct and worst to those of the rest of the Greek population, while the remaining about 55% (about 140,000) of Greek Roma live in housing conditions similar the average of Greek population. Of course, the fact that a large part of the total Greek Roma population is integrated in housing terms does not mean that it does not face many other major and important problems that may be related to employment and extreme poverty, education, healthcare etc. It is noteworthy that since the middle of the 2000s, in Greece, there have been no Roma itinerant population, not even small groups of families. The main reason for this is that the Roma are no longer the significant labour force in the agricultural sector, where immigrants or refugees are mainly employed.

Based on the Mapping of the Special Secretariat for Social Inclusion of the Roma,²⁸ the settlement of Greek Roma is categorised as follows:

- Type 1 settlements – single-type camps, highly downgraded areas: Living conditions are not acceptable. Housing consists of huts or sheds, and basic facilities are missing.
- Type 2 settlements – mixed camps: There is a mix of houses with casual constructions (sheds, tents, movable structures, such as containers) with permanent use and only partial facilities. The settlements of this type are usually found at the outskirts of towns and villages.
- Type 3 settlements – neighbourhoods: There are neighbourhoods with houses (flats or detached houses and some movable structures, such as containers), which are often in downgraded areas of urban settlements.

²⁶ <http://www.mou.gr/el/Pages/Default.aspx>

²⁷ www.NCCS.org.gr

²⁸ Special Secretariat for the Integration of Roma serves now as the National Roma Contact Point (NRCP) and is responsible for supervision and coordination of the NRIS implementation.

The categorisation was based on the criteria: of a) location of the settlement in relation to the urban structures; b) housing type; c) the existence of facilities (sewerage, electricity provision, public waste collection, public transport within a distance up to 500 m, settlement planning, road construction, sidewalks); d) access to employment, education, healthcare and social services.

	<i>number of settlements</i>	<i>population</i>
Type 1 settlement	74	9,291
Type 2 settlement	181	63,861
Type 3 settlement	116	36,855
TOTAL	371	110,007

Source: Special Secretariat for the Integration of Roma

The survey found that some 21,505 Roma live in miserable conditions in 144 settlements, including the 74 Type 1 settlements and part of the Type 2 settlements.

Historically, many of the Roma currently living in relatively well conditions and within the urban fabric, were living until the mid-1970s in much worse housing conditions, similar to those of Roma who live today in situation described as Type 2, or even Type 1 settlements. That is a strong proof that the situation is possible to improve or even to be solved.

On the contrary, some of the settlements marked as "Type 1", provide a strong evidence that even good conditions can be eliminated in a short time if the proper care is absent. Specifically, a big number of these settlements created between 2000 and 2004 at places which were allocated or bought for this purpose by the State, regions or municipalities. These settlements were supplied with water and electricity and the Roma were installed in the houses typically provided for earthquake victims, within which there were the necessary amenities, even air conditioning. The Roma families who settled in these settlements came from campsites with tents, shacks, huts and sheds, and therefore their relocation to the earthquake-victim settlements represented a significant improvement of their housing conditions. However, the implementation of these relocations in the 2000s offered some of the best evidence of the impasse in addressing social exclusion, if it is not implemented as part of a holistic approach. In particular, the lack of a plan for the maintenance and development of these settlements, the increase in the number of Roma family members, the economic crisis, the interruption of water supply and electricity due to outstanding bills, the absence of parallel support measures for education and employment, and other causes led to the gradual deterioration of the settlements, and the miserable conditions of the Roma living in them.

The General Framework for Spatial Planning and Sustainable Development of Greece²⁹ expresses geographically its economic, residential, social cultural and ecological policies based on the assessment of the needs of society. The main principle of settlement organisation is the equal access of all citizens to all services, facilities and infrastructures. However, in reality, according to an FRA survey from 2016, 11% of all Roma have no access to electricity and 9% have no access to drinking water, which are accessible to the totality (100%) of the general population. Yet, the survey states that since 2011 access to basic amenities has improved.³⁰ Moreover, one of the problems of the 74 settlements "Type 1" lies in the fact that they are close to streams, industries, rivers and other areas that cannot be used for residential purposes. According to the FRA study, the residential area and the wider region where 28% of Greek Roma live, is facing environmental problems. Also, some Roma living in settlements of types 2 and 3 do not have access to

²⁹ Approved by Decision no. 6876/4871, Government Gazette Issue A, no. 128 -03/07/2008 (Expresses the objectives of spatial planning based on the definition set out in the 'Torremolinos Charter' adopted by the Council of Europe Conference of Ministers for Regional Planning (CEMAT) in 1983.

³⁰ http://fra.europa.eu/sites/default/files/fra_uploads/fra-2016-eu-minorities-survey-roma-selected-findings_en.pdf

basic amenities due to outstanding bills (electricity, water) or because the area is downgraded (public transport).

The issues of Roma social inclusion are coordinated by the Special Secretariat for Roma Integration. For the housing issue in particular, the Special Secretariat share the responsibility with other governmental bodies,³¹ regional and local authorities, Roma communities, as well as with civil society organisations with experience in programmes and interventions for Roma inclusion. Based on the problems and needs of each type of settlement, the Roma housing policy is to be addressed through the following actions aimed at integrated social inclusion:

- Development of municipal social housing from a transition period.³²
- Improvement of infrastructures and housing and living conditions in settlements.
- Infrastructure development and replacement of shacks, huts and sheds, with housing for earthquake victims.
- Rent subsidies with a choice of beneficiaries following a personalised approach and based on specific criteria (for more information see next section).

First of all, there are plans to relocate gradually the 74 “Type I” settlements,³³ where there are serious urban, spatial, environmental and health problems and the Roma are housed in rough or irregular accommodation without access to basic amenities, education and employment. The relocations are carried out in accordance with Law 4483/2017, into organised settlements provided specifically for this purpose by the government, regional authorities, municipalities, other public organisations or even individuals. The sites must be environmentally safe (not streams, riverbeds, etc.) and have access to public utility networks (water supply, sewage, electricity, waste collection etc).

The process of relocation is planned as follows: Firstly, a municipality submits special dossier with the request documents as provided for in the relevant law and Joint Ministerial Decision 28586/283 from 22 May 2018 to the Committee for Temporary Relocation of Special Social Groups, established under the authority of the Ministry of Labour, Social Security and Social Solidarity. The local action plan includes the relocation site, the infrastructure, the house types it will have and the way the new settlement will operate. Following the Committee’s proposal, four ministers (interior, labour, health and environment) adopt a Joint Ministerial Decision (JMD) about the relocation.

Alternatively, according article 159 of Law 4483/2017, in camps and enclaves with unacceptable conditions and in cases where the readiness to relocation is not yet available, the municipality should provide emergency support measures as they arise from the corresponding health reports it has carried out the relevant competent department of the region. Such intervention is considered as a temporary solution, aimed at ensuring public health, through improving individual and environmental hygiene, and providing socially excluded social groups with access to basic social goods. In addition, the purpose of the intervention is the individual care and hygiene of children and their support for their smoother integration into school.

³¹ Ministry of Labour, General Secretariat of the National Labour Force, NSRF General Secretariat, Special Service for the Coordination and Monitoring of ESF Actions General Secretariat for Spatial Planning, General Secretariat of the Public Investment Program of the Ministry of Economy and Development.

³² There are also cases such as in Komotini, where the interventions will have the character of a permanent residential establishment, since they will be implemented not as an “exceptional” intervention, but “normally” as an extension of the urban fabric of the city, based on the existing institutional framework.

³³ In camps or settlements belonging in the 74 cases of “Type 1” but it will not able to be immediately relocated, interventions will be made to improve living conditions as a direct “relief”.

The intervention shall include, according to the needs of each area, the development of basic infrastructure, the creation of facilities for personal hygiene and the setting up of teams for the operation "Improving Living Conditions".³⁴

With regard to improving conditions in Type 2 settlements and in degraded neighbourhoods, municipalities submit local action plans with concrete measures, plans and timeline of measures.

Costs for relocation and improvement interventions will be covered by national and European resources. Moreover, the resettlement fee may be charged to the users of the dwelling, after a decision by the relevant city council and the assent of the Committee for the Temporary Relocation of Special Social Groups. By the time of writing of this report, the planned relocation interventions have not been implemented yet, therefore, it is not possible to evaluate their success.

Additionally, for Roma and other citizens who do not have access to the water supply and electricity networks due to outstanding bills (which in the period of the economic crisis are very high), there is a possibility of time limitation of the debt and the payment of the balance in instalments under the Joint Ministerial Decision No 43213/6382 from 10 July 2018.

The experience coming from interventions in the residences during the previous decades has shown that the solution of the Greek Roma's housing problem presupposes the combination of three factors: a) the political will from the government expressed in the planning and implementation of the housing strategy as well as the perspective of Roma's integration; b) the political will and the active participation of all the people in charge in the whole local government process; and c) the active participation of Roma in all levels and stages of policy and state interventions that concern the Roma population, including the design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation.

In Greece, at the moment, the housing strategy planning for Greek Roma is almost completed aiming to integrate the Roma population in the broader social environment and following a holistic approach to the current situation, but there can be no evaluation of its results, since it is expected to start running in 2019.

According to the legal framework regulating the municipalities' operation, local governments have an obligation to defend the interests of all local communities, including Roma living in settlements outside the urban area or on the outskirts of the city, or in its neighbourhoods. Their main concern regarding the form of the local action plan for Roma's social inclusion is to improve the quality of life of the entire local community (both Roma and non-Roma). Also, the provision of technical and financial support to the local action plan by the state is an additional incentive. However, the Roma's housing needs are not always included in the priorities of the municipalities either due to the stereotypes and prejudices of the local community or due to objective legal, technical and financial difficulties that the local authorities deal with.

As far as the Roma's participation in the formation and implementation of housing policy is concerned, the general feeling is that there are Greek Roma representatives expressing their requests to the local authorities but more information and support is needed in the Greek Roma communities, on the ground. In particular, there are some problems that

³⁴ These teams and their operation are mentioned also in the Employment chapter, because the employees of these teams should be Roma, residents of the settlements. It is one of the measures existing in the overall plan of the Special Secretariat for Roma Inclusion, based on the Holistic Approach Principle. It is foreseen a close cooperation with these teams and the entire settlements with the Roma departments of community centres and social services, health and hygiene service providers, schools and the teachers, and in general the total social environment.

might occur as far as the design and implementation of the projects for Roma's relocation is concerned:

- Legal issues related to the ownership status of the sites for relocation.
- Local authorities not willing to take over the political costs whenever there are reactions from different parts of the wider local community.
- Individuals or members of social organisations, both Roma and non-Roma, who consider camps and people living in poverty as targets of economic or political exploitation.
- Financial difficulties due to the high cost of the process of relocation.
- Insufficient preparation of the Roma and the entire local community for accepting and supporting the state's interventions since the change of Roma's establishment affects the daily routine of both, the Roma community and the entire local population.

Improving access to secure and affordable housing

For the housing needs of poor households, some specific measures have been put in place, which also concern the Roma as they are in the overwhelming majority of poor households. It should be noted that according to a 2016 FRA survey, 37% of all Greek Roma lived in problematic homes (roof leakage, humidity, rotten shutters, etc.), while the corresponding percentage in the general population was 13.7%.³⁵

To improve the access to housing, following measures exist:

- a) The allocation of vacant residences by OAED.³⁶ These residences came to OAED after the abolition of the Organisation for the Worker's Housing, which used to build and rent dwellings for employees on favourable terms. Eligible beneficiaries of housing are employees and private pensioners without owning their first residence.
- b) The development of municipal social residences in organised areas for the relocation of specific social groups (see more in the previous section; this measure was only in stage of planning in the moment of writing of this report). In these cases, the design of the residential environment and residential units follows the principles of social housing. In particular, it is taken into account the topographical location of the development of social housing complexes in relation to the urban area, the physical boundaries, the access to the local labour market and services, the size of the population and the size and type of families to fit into the appropriate residence, the common areas, etc.
- c) Subsidy for the rental housing available for all Greek citizens depending on eligibility criteria (such as income, number of persons in household, disabilities, and others) or specifically for Roma to be relocated from existing settlements.

Roma's access to safe and affordable housing is linked to the extent to which they are included in the above measures. In reality, this is promoted mainly through the last two of the above-mentioned measures.

In Greece, there is no policy of building apartments for social use. Thus, apartments that some municipalities possess (mainly bequests) are scarce and do not cover the need for housing the Roma and non-Roma people who would need them.

The goal of the National Housing Policy is to install the Roma in regular homes within the urban area, in mixed neighbourhoods (e.g giving them subsidies for renting a house as part of the plan for Roma's relocation). Nevertheless, it is a fact that both existing

³⁵ http://fra.europa.eu/sites/default/files/fra_uploads/fra-2016-eu-minorities-survey-roma-selected-findings_en.pdf

³⁶ <http://www.oaed.gr/stegastike-politike>

stereotypes of non-Roma and antisocial behaviour of non-Roma often make it difficult for both groups to communicate in mixed neighbourhoods. Searching for house is not easy for Roma people because often the homeowners fear either that Roma will not be consistent in paying the lease or that the neighbours, being afraid of Roma, will oppose them, or that Roma will develop antisocial or delinquent behaviour. However, these difficulties have been reduced when Roma are involved in education, legal work and social life living as active citizens (for example, in the areas of Agia Varvara, Serres, Ilion, Amaliada, Kato Achaia, etc.). To support of individual housing of Roma families, municipalities search for dwellings that can be used for this purpose and pay the owner rent for a pre-agreed period of time; moreover, the local governments undertake in mediation between the owners and tenants. The choice of beneficiaries – Roma tenants is done through a personalised approach and specific criteria; the Roma family must become self-sustaining through employment, such as the participation of even one of its members in active promotion policy in employment. Also, the whole family will be supported by a wide network of social services provided by community centres.

The government and municipalities or civil society have implemented many programmes to promote contact between Roma and non-Roma with a view to preventing conflicts. An example is the “PROACTIVE” project implemented and coordinated by the Centre of Studies for Security, in which front-line officers are trained by policemen and Roma mediators in social mediation issues.

Effectiveness of housing benefits and social assistance to access and maintain housing

There are social benefits and social assistance that help covering housing costs or resolving housing-related problems, including:

- Housing allowance: It is paid to households staying in a rented dwelling or to these people who are charged with the cost of a mortgage loan for their first residence. The amount of the allowance increases depending on the number of the members of the household, or in the case of single parent families with small children.
- Heating allowance.³⁷
- Social Invoice for Electricity and Water Supply of the households.
- Reconnection with the electricity and water supply networks of low-income households, decoupled due to debts and debts settlement of these financially weak people on favourable terms.
- Social Solidarity Income, combining an income support³⁸ with the integration into social programmes for decreasing poverty and FEAD.
- Hostels for temporary residence operated by the National Centre of Social Solidarity (NCCS) that offer the neediest people a possibility to stay for a short period of time. They are available in various cities in Greece, but mainly in large urban centres (Athens, Thessaloniki, Patras, Heraklion, Larissa, etc.)
- Social services providers’ support in settlement of debts related to water and electricity bills.
- One-off allowance for dealing with extraordinary problems that can prevent eviction from housing.
- Provision of financial aids, goods and services.

A number of beneficiaries, both Roma and non-Roma, are literally dependent these social supports. At the same time, there are Roma and non-Roma who prefer to accept low paid employments so as not to exceed the income thresholds set by the requirements for enjoying these benefits. Thus, sometimes multiple benefits act as a disincentive for Roma’s

³⁷ Provided 20 cents per petrol’s litre.

³⁸ The income support is 200 EUR plus 100 EUR for each adult and 50 EUR for each minor household member. In the year 2019 1.4 million households are expected to receive a social dividend

social inclusion in the labour market. Today, benefits are allocated to vulnerable groups through the online platform of the Organization for Social Care and Solidarity (OPEKA). OPEKA keeps a register of beneficiaries for social benefits to control and cross-check data to prevent unjustified benefits. Also, the philosophy of giving some kind of bonus is gradually changing, and there are efforts to link the allowances with the motivation to activate the citizens to work. OAED's benefits for unemployment, the Social Solidarity Income (SSI) and other benefits from municipalities are combined with actions to promote those benefiting from education, vocational training and employment. More generally, lately, the State is pursuing a more rational policy on social benefits, which restores distortions and problems of past decades, such as the empowerment of controlling and cross checking the relevant data and mainly, connecting the benefits to clear indications of civil activation.

The benefits are based on mainly financial criteria based on the income and available to every poor household. Most Roma are potentially benefiting because they belong to poor households. However, in order to make use of their right to benefit from any kind of social allowance, they must first be aware of them and then to be able to perform all the necessary actions for being beneficiaries (application, collection and submission of documents etc.), which in practice is very difficult for illiterate and marginalised Roma living in informal type of residence. In order to overcome these difficulties and to really make it possible for all Roma to access these benefits, public authorities inform potential beneficiaries through the community centres with Roma departments operating in Roma communities where Roma mediators work to facilitate the communication. They inform local Roma communities and help the beneficiaries to carry out the proceedings for applying. Also, various NGOs dealing with issues of vulnerable social groups and other social services, inform various Roma communities about the opportunities coming from programmes and benefits. In general, it is estimated that over 50% of Greek Roma are benefiting from various forms of benefits or benefits.

The allowance for housing help to mitigate and prevent extreme poverty the large share of the vulnerable Greek population; according to the Greek Statistical Authority, the population being at risk of poverty or social exclusion increased from 27.6% in 2009 to 35.7% in 2013.³⁹ According to a FRA study, in 2016 the risk of poverty concerning the general population was 22%. While the social allowances help people to survive and avoid extreme situations, they do not create conditions for social growth that will lead to social inclusion of marginalised societies. For this to happen, it is required a stable, satisfactory income, which presupposes the access to the labour market. More generally, the purpose of the subsidies is to support the households or individuals in order them to find motivation to improve their living conditions.

In addition to the aforementioned benefits, during the crisis there were legislative initiatives to facilitate over-indebted individuals by regulating their debts and protecting their first residence from eviction.⁴⁰ Also, regarding the implementation of any measures, aids, benefits and support programmes, particular emphasis is given on the protection of households having underage children and of single parent families. This priority is based on the international provision for child-protection, which is applied to all social groups without any discrimination.

³⁹ https://www.statistics.gr/documents/20181/300673/GreeceInFigures_2015Q3_GR.pdf/e0897735-44e7-4d40-aff5-79f14317f7e2

⁴⁰ Law 3869/2010 (Government Gazette 130 / A / 3.8.2010) Arrangements for debts of over-indebted individuals. Amendments and additions Law 3996/2011 (Government Gazette 170 / A / 5.8.2011), Law 4161/2013 (Government Gazette 143 / A / 14.6. 2013), Law 4336/2015 (Government Gazette 94 / A / 14-8-2015) and Law 4346/2015 (Government Gazette 152 / A / 20.11.2015).

Fight against discrimination, residential segregation and other forms of antigypsyism in housing

The implementation of Roma relocations within the segregated camps or these settlements within the residential area will be a strong sign of political will to refute any kind of exclusion or discrimination of Greek Roma in housing. The analytical mapping available to the Special Secretariat is now a good tool to remedy the problems that have been accumulated during the past years. Also, the Roma settlements have suffered significant damages created by state intervention in the 2000s. Now the state plans various measures to tackle these settlements, in some cases relocation of inhabitants of existing settlements and their demolition, in others replacement of simply constructed dwellings with new ones, reforming the environmental conditions and solving different problems which make everyday life difficult such as providing connection to public utility networks. These measures can give a positive perspective to specific areas especially there where housing decline is usually combined with crime and social conflicts.

Legislative arrangements underpinning the implementation of the resettlement of Roma settlements are a valuable tool for overcoming possible legal and other “technical” barriers that may arise. Incentives to Roma families to move away from separate settlements and poor housing conditions recently began to yield the first fruits with the beginning of the Halandri Municipality in Attica, there was the first consensual demolition of Roma paraphernalia, of these families to homes in the city through the rent subsidy process.

Improvement of the infrastructure and landscaping of Roma-dominated neighbourhoods, in conjunction with legislation relating to the inclusion of areas in urban plans, improvement interventions such as road openings, communal spaces, extension of water supply, drainage and electricity networks, are undoubtedly actions that abolish residential stigmatization and restrict discrimination.

At city level, it is certain that many homeowners, in order not to rent them to Roma, have various causes and excuses. It is certain that such behaviours are very difficult to confirm, since even if there was a possibility. In reality, Greek Roma do not accept to be recorded as Roma in any type of official document. There are many court cases involving Greek citizens which relate to conflicts and the protection of interests through appeal to the judicial system. When using the judicial system, Greek Roma do not recognise the need to appeal to any other form of identity beyond that of Greek citizen. More generally, in areas where the Roma have a good level of social inclusion, there is an acceptable cohabitation with the non-Roma population of each region, since there is generally a meeting of interests, since in those areas a high proportion of the Roma are also owners of real estate.

IMPACT OF HEALTHCARE POLICIES ON ROMA

Ensuring equal access to public healthcare services

In Greece, health services are provided by public and private institutions forming the National Health System (NHS). Actual access of Greek Roma, similarly to other economically weaker citizens, to high-quality and free-of-charge health services is very difficult. A study from 2011 estimated that 77% of Roma are completely uninsured, which means that they do not have access to medical treatment rights emerging from employment. For those uninsured, but who are entitled to have a welfare booklet (as citizens of no financial means), treatment in public hospitals is free, as well as provision of elementary health services.⁴¹ Regarding Roma access to private insurance, according to the survey conducted in Greece in 2009, of the 3,492 Roma surveyed, 0.2% said they had private insurance and 6.8% stated that they "bought" the offered health services from their own resources.⁴² According to the more recent data from FRA's 2014 survey EU MIDIS II, 79% of interviewed Roma over 16 indicated they were covered by the national basic insurance scheme for healthcare or supplementary insurance.⁴³ In 2016, the right to free access to all public health structures for the provision of nursing and health care (free of charge) was given to uninsured and vulnerable social groups.⁴⁴ This institutional framework has equalled the right of insured and uninsured persons to accessing the public health system. Following the adoption of the law on the provision of healthcare to uninsured and economically weak citizens in 2016, all Greek Roma can have free nursing, medical and pharmaceutical care in all public health structures. Although the insurance coverage is universal, the population belonging to low income groups such as the Roma face barriers to access to health services and health care.

The NHS in Greece is financed by 60% of public expenditure (state budget and social security) and 40% by private expenditure either by direct payment by the users themselves or through private health insurance. High private spending is due to the state's inability to meet the needs. Particularly high is the presence of the private sector in primary health care (PHC). Finally, PHC is provided without state planning and co-ordination by a mosaic of institutions and the allocation of PHC units in the country is not geographically rational nor is it correlated with local needs.⁴⁵

In Attica and Thessaloniki, they are scarce, while those set up in rural areas are under-functioning because they have neither the staff nor the necessary equipment. In contrast, across the country, there are plenty of private diagnostic centres, private labs, and private doctors. But access to the private ones require financial participation of patients. Uninsured and needy citizens like the Roma cannot pay for themselves the cost of healthcare and given the weaknesses of the Health centres, they usually end up in outpatient clinics in public hospitals where there is a lot of waiting due to overcrowding. Similarly, many drugs

⁴¹ D. Ziomas, N. Bouzas and N. Spyropoulou (2011) *Greece: Promoting the Social Inclusion of Roma. A Study of National Policies*. European Commission.

⁴² *Health and the Roma community: Analysis of the situation in Europe*, http://www.gitanos.org/european_programmes/health/

⁴³ European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights (2016) *Second European Union Minorities and Discrimination Survey (EU-MIDIS II) Roma – Selected Findings*. Available at: https://fra.europa.eu/sites/default/files/fra_uploads/fra-2016-eu-minorities-survey-roma-selected-findings_en.pdf

⁴⁴ Law 4368/2016 (Government Gazette 21 Issue A', 21-2-2016).

⁴⁵ Oikonomou Charalambos, *Health Policies in Greece and European Societies*, Dionikos Publications, Athens 2004 (National School of Public Health)

or medical equipment are provided with financial participation of patients that can be up to 20%.

Indicatively, there is evidence from the 2009 health survey about Greek Roma's access to healthcare: out of 175 Roma who had reported that they had recently visited a doctor, 30.9% had visited a public hospital doctor, the 6,8% visited a doctor contracted with the public health system, 23,7% visited a doctor of the health centres and 13,6% visited a private physician whom they paid on their own. The same survey recorded whom they had addressed on emergencies: 91.8% to a public hospital, 4.6% to public first aid services and 2.17% to a private institution, which they themselves paid.⁴⁶ According to the same survey, of the 641 Roma who needed medical assistance, 83% received it, while 17% did not. The reasons for not receiving medical assistance were economic weakness (26.2%),⁴⁷ need to go out for work (17.1%), lack of means of transport (11.7%), inability to make phone appointments (8%) and hospital waiting (7.2%). The inadequacy of public health care institutions, poverty, illiteracy and lack of health education are responsible for the significant lag in the prevention sector for Roma and population groups with such characteristics. Please note that no difference is found between Roma and non-Roma in the time required for access to a health unit, waiting time, etc.

A wide range of socio-economic and environmental determinants of health have a negative impact on the Roma population, resulting in poor Roma health.⁴⁸ This is particularly valid under the conditions of the economic and social crisis in Greece, which mainly affects the lower socio-economic strata and socially excluded groups such as the Greek Roma. It is characteristic, that in 2014, according to the FRA Survey, 96% of Greek Roma had income below the poverty threshold when the risk of poverty in the general population was 22%.⁴⁹ In consequence, average life expectancy of Roma is much lower than that of the general Greek population, i.e. 55-65 years old for Roma against 78 years old for the total population.⁵⁰

Critical issues in Roma's health concern also the quality of life in Roma settlements without basic facilities (water supply, sewerage, public waste collection, etc.) access to health and welfare services etc. These conditions are an unquestionable cause of health problems. Characteristically, the problem of obesity is a problem for both the Roma and the general population, as the percentage of obesity in Greece (24%) is the second highest among the EU countries. Also, the percentage of smokers remains high among the Roma and non-Roma, while at the level of preventive checks, despite the differences between them, they fall short of the citizens of other European countries).⁵¹

In Greece there is no collection of data on the Roma population in any sector, so there are no exact data that are specifically related to the health of Greek Roma either. However, a report "*Greece: Promoting the Social Inclusion of Roma. A Study of National Policies*"

⁴⁶ Source: http://www.gitanos.org/european_programmes/health/. At the time of the economic crisis due to fiscal policy and the ban on recruitment, the problem of health centres is much larger, so the rate of those visiting the outpatient clinics in hospitals should be higher.

⁴⁷ Nowadays, the attribution to financial reasons is rare because healthcare is provided free of charge to the uninsured citizens.

⁴⁸ <https://epha.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/10/closing-the-life-expectancy-gap-of-roma-in-europe.pdf>

⁴⁹ European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights (2016) Second European Union Minorities and Discrimination Survey (EU-MIDIS II) Roma – Selected Findings. According Eurostat the at risk of poverty rate of general population in 2014, 36% (<https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/documents/2995521/7034688/3-16102015-CP-FN.pdf>)

⁵⁰ D. Ziomas, N. Bouzas and N. Spyropoulou (2011) *Greece: Promoting the Social Inclusion of Roma. A Study of National Policies*. European Commission.

⁵¹ https://ec.europa.eu/health/sites/health/files/state/docs/chp_gr_greece.pdf

published in 2011 by the European Commission provides some information about the health status of Roma in Greece. The report states, for example:

- 90% of the Roma population assesses their health status as good or very good with no gender differences but significant differences (reaching 60%) between age brackets;
- most of the population (over 90%) does not suffer from any chronic disease, migraines or headaches, allergy or high blood pressure. Menopause-related problems suffered by women are the most common diseases;
- 98% of the population under 45 years old is free of disabilities and chronic diseases;
- as regards their contact with the health services, it was found that the main reason for failing to receive medical attention was economic (60% of the cases), the reasons being "could not get off work", "too expensive", "no means of transport", "did not have insurance". In addition, the majority of minors (63%) have never gone to the dentist independent of gender, whereas only 25% of adults have never gone to the dentist. Moreover, 21% of women have never gone to the gynaecologist and 35.6% have never gone for reasons other than pregnancy.⁵²

From the more recent casual collection of data in the context of various surveys and also from the experience of the social services of the municipalities, we can formulate further information about Roma's health conditions and access of healthcare services:

- The share of Greek Roma with chronic limitations of activities due to health issues was 13% for both women and men. In the general population it was 26.4 for females and 21.8 for males.⁵³
- Roma tend to have illnesses associated with poor diet and stress.⁵⁴
- Roma women have a high frequency of spinal and joints problems.⁵⁵
- There is a high incidence of eye and dental problems due to poor nutrition and malnutrition.⁵⁶
- Depression and psychosomatic problems are observed⁵⁷ especially in deprived areas with poor living conditions and a high degree of marginalisation. The problem is more pronounced among women, who are not really experiencing adolescence, as a result of early "marriages", switching from childhood to adulthood. This often leads to depression and is combined with widespread use of psychotropic drugs and tranquilizers. The effect of the same bad living conditions on men, leads in widespread use of addictive substances from very young age.

Living conditions, perceptions and behaviour in health, limited inclusion in prevention programmes are directly related to poor Roma health. For these reasons, the government plans to create hygiene structures and environmental health improvement groups in settlements and Roma concentration areas. In particular, the Special Secretariat, in cooperation with the Directorate General for Public Health of the Ministry of Health, focuses on Type I settlements and Type II (see chapter Housing for the typology of settlements). In the context of its cooperative role and given the urgent need to intervene in the above

⁵² D. Ziomas, N. Bouzas and N. Spyropoulou (2011) *Greece: Promoting the Social Inclusion of Roma. A Study of National Policies*. European Commission.

⁵³ European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights (2016) *Second European Union Minorities and Discrimination Survey (EU-MIDIS II) Roma – Selected Findings*

⁵⁴ FRA Country thematic studies on the situation of Roma, June 2013. Available at: http://www.gitanos.org/european_programmes/health/

⁵⁵ This problem is related to childbirth and other factors. The problem in Greece is reported in the *Health and Roma community: analysis of the situation in Europe*, Tables 5.5 and 5.6

⁵⁶ <http://fra.europa.eu/en/country-data/2013/country-thematic-studies-situation-roma>

⁵⁷ *Health and the Roma community: Analysis of the situation in Europe*, http://www.gitanos.org/european_programmes/health/

settlements, in February 2018, imprinted the requested parameters of Health Recognition Reports for them to be drawn up by the competent services of the regional authorities (85 settlements with a population of over twenty persons in 50 municipalities in the country). These reports should include actions concerning (a) the prevention of damage to public health due to the location of the settlement; (b) the decontamination of the premises by combustion products, from standing water and sewage on the basis of the existing infrastructure network; (c) the control of rodents and arthropods of sanitary importance; (d) to ensure access to drinking water, etc., and assess the needs for installation of sanitary structures (showers, toilets, Laundry facilities) in proportion to the population and plan establishment of improvement teams composed of a Public Health Supervisor and technicians of various specialties.

Addressing needs of the most vulnerable groups among Roma

Among 227 women aged 16 and over surveyed in *Health and the Roma community: analysis of the situation in Europe* (2009): 21.5% had never gone to a doctor, 35.6% had gone only because of pregnancy and childbirth, 91.6% had never had a mammogram, and 68% had never done a test pap, while only 5.3% went to a doctor for counselling or family planning. Characteristically, out of 215 surveyed minors, 62.8% never went to a dentist.

An epidemiological study of vaccination coverage of Roma children aged 2-6 years at national level in 2017 found that a large majority of children (86%) maintained the vaccination book while vaccination coverage rates were too low for all vaccines without exception. The best living conditions in the settlement, its proximity to primary health facilities providing vaccinations and the presence of Roma mediators are associated with higher vaccination rates, while barriers to access to vaccination services have been reported as high economic costs, long distance and procedural difficulties.⁵⁸

Over the past decade, a serious problem was the fact that, despite the implementation of many Roma children's vaccination programmes, these were mainly done at the initiative of various NGOs without coordination and without ensuring the preservation of the data of the vaccinated children. The result is that we do not know which children were vaccinated and in which vaccines. From now on an improvement is expected, because on the one hand from the school year 2015-2016 for the enrolment of children in school must be submitted the "Individual Student Health Bulletin" (ISHB),⁵⁹ which is updated every 3 years and contains all the health data of each child, but also because all the necessary medical exams for filling in of ISHB can now be made by public structures totally for free.

More generally, modern prevention programmes are implemented for the general population and vulnerable groups mainly by state institutions such as the Centre for Disease Control and Prevention (HCDCP),⁶⁰ the Health Information Centres of the Network of Healthy Cities (WHO) and local governments, based on the health needs identified by the HCDCP.

The social services are playing more generally an important role in prevention and even more the Roma departments of community centres and the social services of the hospitals. The Roma departments of community centres are important, because they operate across the country in about 50 municipalities and employ, among other social scientists, trained Roma mediators who are well aware of the issues and problems of Roma communities. Also, the social services of the hospitals and in particular of the gynaecological clinics, because they can approach the usually young Roma women and girls who go to hospitals to give birth. There, exploiting the residence time of these young women and girls in the hospital, they provide them personal empowerment, transferring basic knowledge for the

⁵⁸ <https://phdtheses.ekt.gr/eadd/handle/10442/43513>

⁵⁹ Joint Ministerial Decision, No. Φ.6/304/75662/Γ1 – Gazette Paper No 1296, Issue B', 21/05/2014

⁶⁰ <http://www.keelpno.gr/en-us/home.aspx>

“Must” and for the “Don’t” of maternity issues, information on the value of performing basic exams such as mammography and Pap test, and finally, basic principles of contraception and family planning.

It is important to note that many of the serious health problems that Roma women face during their lives are due to premature pregnancies (often in early stages of puberty), which, in addition to social regression, are also a cause of very serious health problems. Unfortunately, various past actions that dealt with early marriages did not work, mainly because of the very strong resistance from the Roma communities.

Lastly, new regulations came into force, making the family doctor as the first point of contact of the citizen with the public health services. Family doctor services are provided free of charge.⁶¹ This measure was originally (1983) included in the NHS since its adoption, but it was gradually dropped or cancelled. Today its implementation is mandatory and can therefore help remove barriers to access but also improve the efficiency and effectiveness of health services.

Since 2017, the Ministry of Health has an independent Department for the Protection of the Rights of Health Care Recipients has been operating. It is directly addressed to the Secretary General of the Ministry and is responsible for formulating a policy to protect the rights of health care recipients. It is also responsible for co-ordinating, co-operating, controlling supervising and monitoring the proper functioning of the Health Protection Offices Rights Offices that operate in all public hospitals. In the Ministry of Health, there are also specialised structures to protect other vulnerable groups: Committee for the Protection of the Rights of Health Service Recipients and the Special Committee on the Protection of the Rights of Persons with Mental Disorders.⁶² Particular information on health and patient rights is provided by medical and nursing staff in accordance with the Code of Medical Ethics and the Code of Nursing Ethics.⁶³ On the local level, access of the vulnerable social groups is facilitated by social services.

Fight against discrimination and antigypsyism in health care

As repeatedly reported in this report, there is generally an objective difficulty in Greece to record discriminatory behaviour against Roma and antigypsyist behaviour because of the refusal of Greek Gypsies to be recorded in any document as anything other than Greek citizens.

Moreover, in particular in the big urban centres (Attica and Thessaloniki), there are now enough Roma who are employed as health professionals with various specialisations, either in the public sector or in the private sector (doctors, nurses, microbiologists, radiologists, midwives, diabetologists, physiotherapists and many other specialists). This helps to better understand and facilitate the Roma in various issues that may arise.

A typical case in which many Roma families have suffered in the past is the lack of identification documents for Roma women who were going to give birth so that in order to receive their child from the hospital they would first have to state their identity. This often required a lot of time to settle, so the new-born was kept for the rest of the time until the issue was settled, either at the maternity hospital, or (if the case was taking more time) in the relevant local childcare institutions. Hospital social services often in co-operation with the municipal social services have helped with the identification procedures and have also provided support to the mothers. This problem began to exist in the last 15 years

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<http://www.idika.gr/pfy/%CE%BF%CE%B9%CE%BA%CE%BF%CE%B3%CE%B5%CE%BD%CE%B5%CE%B9%CE%B1%CE%BA%CE%BF%CE%82%CE%B9%CE%B1%CF%84%CF%81%CE%BF%CF%82.html>

⁶² <http://www.moh.gov.gr/articles/citizen/dikaiwmata-lhptwn-yphresiwn-ygeias>

⁶³ Law 3418/2005 (Government Gazette 287, Issue A', 28-11-2005) and Law 3252/2004 (Government Gazette no.132, Issue A', 16-7-2004)

because foreign Roma came to Greece from the Balkan countries, mainly from Albania and Bulgaria, and many were able to acquire Greek citizenship through the naturalisation or the process of registration of undocumented Greek Gypsies,⁶⁴ appearing as Greek Roma but without documentary evidence.

The Special Secretariat when informed of the problem and proposed its solution by means of a special provision that the Parliament has voted as “Maternity Identification Procedure – Registered Child Enrolment” with which the problem is solved easily, quickly and without putting new-borns or mothers in turmoil.⁶⁵ This was yet another proof of the effectiveness that can come from timely reaction and co-operation between State, local government, Roma departments, mediators, and the Roma community.

With regard to cases involving bad or discriminatory behaviour of health professionals towards any Greek citizen, as well as in all other areas, there are the competent departments and departments responsible for dealing with possible complaints. Specifically, for health issues, these services are described in the previous subchapter.

⁶⁴ This was a procedure followed for the registration of almost all the non-registered Greek Roma for the acquirement of the Greek citizenship by them in the past decades (1979). The same procedure has followed by many migrants Roma from the neighbouring Balkan countries, declaring that they are unregistered Greek Roma and succeeding to acquire the Greek citizenship. When this practice was revealed by authorities, the rules and procedures became much stricter and more difficult, and in order to avoid the granting of Greek citizenship by foreigners, there was a great hassle for “real” Greek Roma persons who unfortunately were yet unregistered.

⁶⁵ Article 62 of the law 4554/2018 (Government Gazette-ΦΕΚ, Part1. No 132, 19/07/2018)

EDUCATION

The provision of free education at all levels to all Greek citizens is a constitutional principle of the Greek State. The Ministry of Education has the responsibility for administering, supervising and coordinating government policy for the whole education system. The education system is divided into three levels: primary education includes kindergartens of two years that is included in the compulsory education,⁶⁶ and primary schools that lasts for six years; secondary education includes gymnasia lasting three years (lower secondary education)⁶⁷ and lyceums (upper secondary education);⁶⁸ finally, the tertiary education⁶⁹ consists of universities, polytechnics and the school of fine arts. All teachers in the country are graduates of tertiary education. Compulsory education starts in the age of four (in the past five) and consists of kindergarten, primary school (for many decades this was the only level of compulsory education) and gymnasium. Apart from formal education, lifelong learning, which as non-formal education is addressed to the whole population and supplies to its graduates of a certificate of knowledge in various nationally recognised fields.⁷⁰ From the pre-school age to the completion of university education, education in Greece is offered free of charge, along with all accessories accompanying it (books, meals, transportation, accommodation), while poor students or students from vulnerable groups (including Greek Roma) are offered extra housing allowances, financial aids, scholarships, etc. that also indirectly support the education.

Critical problems of Greek Roma's participation in education policies to tackle them can be summarised as follows.

The FRA survey EU MIDIS II carried out in 2014 and published in 2016 shows an improvement in the situation of Greek Roma in Greece in education,⁷¹ compared to the situation five years before the past five years (FRA EU MIDIS 2011),⁷² but the gap between Roma and non-Roma population remain significant:

- 28% of Greek Roma children aged 4-6 were in pre-school education, while in the general population this number is 84%,
- 69% of Greek Roma children of compulsory school age were in school, while in the general population this number is 95%,

⁶⁶ Law 4521/2018 (Government Gazette 38/τ.Α, 2.3.2018)

⁶⁷ It is a prerequisite for attending higher degrees of schools. Apart from the daily ones, there are evening gymnasia for children from 14 years of age and over, as well as second-chance secondary gymnasia that are of two-year duration and are for adults.

⁶⁸ The general day lyceum lasts three years, while the general evening lyceum four years. Besides the general ones, there are also the (day or evening) vocational high schools or technical professional high schools (EPAL) where, apart from the general knowledge in basic subjects, specific subjects are taught according to their themes (technical, maritime, musical, sports, forestry and others).

⁶⁹ The undergraduate studies last for 4-6 years, postgraduate courses of 1-2 years, and doctorates of at least 3 years.

⁷⁰ https://eacea.ec.europa.eu/national-policies/eurydice/content/greece_el

⁷¹ European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights (2016) *Second European Union Minorities and Discrimination Survey (EU-MIDIS II): Greek Roma – Selected Findings*.

⁷² European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights (2011) *The situation of Roma in 11 EU Member States. Survey results at a glance*. Available at: https://fra.europa.eu/sites/default/files/fra_uploads/2099-FRA-2012-Roma-at-a-glance_EN.pdf. The reports stated: "The lowest participation rates in pre-school and kindergarten education for both Greek Roma and non-Greek Roma children are reported in Greece (10%) and Slovakia...", "At least 10 % of Greek Roma children aged 7 to 15 in Greece, Greek Romania, Bulgaria, France and Italy are identified in the FRA survey as not attending school, meaning that they are either still in preschool, not yet in education, skipped the year, stopped school completely or are already working. This proportion is highest in Greece with more than 35 % of Greek Roma children not attending school..."

- 9% of Greek Roma children aged 15-17 was in upper secondary education (ISCED3), while in the general population this number is 88%,
- 0% of Greek Roma young people aged 18-24 was enrolled in post-secondary and tertiary education (ISCED4 +), while in the general population this number is 36%,
- the share of young Greek Roma aged 18-24 who dropped out of education and training prematurely was 92%, while the share in the general population was 8%,
- the share of Greek Roma who had not completed any education was 42% among 16-24 years old, 56% of persons of 25-44 years, and 82% among the people of 45 years of age and older.

These results clearly demonstrate that despite the absence of legal barriers for Roma to access education in Greece, in reality many problems impede Greek Roma from accessing and remaining in school and completing their studies across all levels of education.

It is also a problem that 12% of Greek Roma students attend schools only for Greek Roma and 36% of Greek Roma students attend schools where the majority of students are Greek Roma. There is no intention of separation. There are schools with only Greek Roma students in areas inhabited only by Greek Roma (remote Greek Roma settlements) and schools with a majority of Greek Roma students in areas with high Greek Roma concentration.

There is no evidence on Greek Roma participation in the lifelong learning programmes. Empirically, it is known that Greek Roma are mainly involved in lifelong learning programmes only in socially integrated areas.

The educational policy implemented in the country aims to guarantee the right of every student to have unimpeded and free access to knowledge and to promote education as a public good that all young people can enjoy. Within the framework of this general objective and of the NRIS, the following measures and actions for Greek Roma education, which are listed below, are implemented by each level of education, with the following specific objectives: (a) increasing the Greek Roma children participating in preschool education and the completion rate of the attendance in primary school (b), raising the number of Greek Roma children completing compulsory education, (c) raising the number of Greek Roma children attending higher education, (d) general improvement of relations between education system and Greek Roma.

Access to quality early childhood care and preschool education

In each city, there are public and/or private childcare schools (nurseries) that accommodate infants and children from 8 months to up to 4 years olds by providing attendance and care services. To accommodate children in these structures a monthly payment for the provided meals is required, which, in the case of children of unemployed and poor families, is paid entirely by the State. Every city has public kindergartens and besides the basic compulsory programme, offers also optional full-day programmes, which are of help for working parents.⁷³ The number of kindergartens and places is determined by the local population, so it is almost always sufficient; the number of requests for children is even smaller than the number of available places and not all children in kindergarten age have been actually enrolled.⁷⁴ This is so because in a large number of Greek families the care for children of up to 4 years old has been taken over by grandmothers, who have either never worked or are pensioners.

⁷³ The basic programme lasts from 8.15 to 13.00. The all day-programme continues from 13.00 to 16.00. The reception of the students starts from 7.45 and ends at 8.15.

⁷⁴ https://www.eetaa.gr/en_pages/index_en.php?tag=en_services

Although pre-school care and education are extremely important for acquiring social skills and familiarising children with the school environment, the participation of Greek Roma children is small. The main reasons which impedes the participation of Greek Roma children in care schools is that many Greek Roma parents have difficulties to prove that they have a low income which will allow them free access to these structures. This is so because they work in the informal sector, or are unemployed but without possessing the official Unemployment Card issued by OAED.⁷⁵ There are no records about the number of those without the Unemployment Card, but there are plans in this regard by the social services (community centres and their Roma departments) of the municipalities. Possible other causes of low participation, according to the Greek Roma Civil Monitor coalition of NGOs and the social services of the municipalities involved, include:

- Undervaluation of pre-school care and education by Greek Roma parents.
- The distance of kindergartens from the camps and living areas of the Greek Roma. This problem exists primarily in Type 1 settlements (see the Housing chapter for the typology of settlements).
- Inadequate supervision of enrolments in public kindergartens by government agencies.

The government, by recognising the contribution of quality pre-school education to the alleviation of social inequalities, has made compulsory kindergarten for all children from the age of 4, from the current school year 2018-2019,⁷⁶ in order to ensure the universal participation of 4-6-year olds in the education system. Two-year compulsory pre-school education is already in place in 84 municipalities.

The directives by the Ministry of Education emphasise that exclusion or separation of children and their marginalisation is contrary to the Constitution and the Laws. In addition, the kindergarten principals as well as the primary school principals are required not only to encourage but also to seek Greek Roma children who live in their area and to take care of their enrolment and attendance. If there are difficulties in enrolment due to non-vaccination or inadequacies in the Student's Individual Health Bulletin (SIHB),⁷⁷ school directors should work with the municipality, public primary healthcare structures and the Control Centre of Disease Prevention, to solve any kind of problems. They also have to arrange for children to be enrolled in the municipal register if they are not registered and not to reject the enrolment of children in school for this reason. The enrolment in the all-day kindergarten programme is optional for all Greek children. Finally, students who change school during the school year, because they moved to another place of residence, are provided with an attendance document for moving students, with which they are admitted to the new school without any other procedures (the measure applies to all children when required).⁷⁸

Additionally, the programme "Integration and Education of Greek Roma Children"⁷⁹ is under the supervision of the National and Kapodistrian University of Athens with the

⁷⁵ OAED Organisation of the Employment of Labour Force: <http://www.oaed.gr/>

⁷⁶ Law 4521/26.2.2018 Governmental Gazette38/A

⁷⁷ Relevant report is included in the chapter for Health.

⁷⁸ In order to enrol and support the schooling of Greek Roma students the relevant directives are: Decision of Ministry Φ.4/155/Γ1/1237, 11.9.1996 (Government Gazette 893B), the circulars of the Ministry of Education 116184/C1, 10.9.2008, Φ.3/960/102679/C1, 20.8.2010, 180644/C1, 26.11.2013 and Presidential Decree 79/2017 (Government Gazette 1099A) as amended by the Law 4559/2018 (Government Gazette 142A).

⁷⁹ This programme, mentioned already in the previous RCM report, started in 1997 with the supervision of University of Ioannina. Since 1997, it has been implemented at times between which there are large gaps of even two years. This is the main reason why the expected results were not met; the previous successful results were cancelled due to the large gaps. It is certain that this program has helped to educate the Greek Roma, but the overall value for money of the programme is considered negative.

collaboration of the Aristotle University of Thessaloniki and the University of Thessaly. In its current course, the programme is implemented in municipalities of the Attica, Peloponnese, Western Greece, Ionian Islands, Epirus, Sterea Ellada, Evia, Crete and the South Aegean regions. The target group is Greek Roma children in the age groups for which compulsory school attendance is required but are out of school, as well as Greek Roma children attending public schools, including the kindergartens, in need of additional support. The actions that are implemented to remove obstacles to school enrolment are the following:

- Approaching Greek Roma communities in settlements and camps for the registration of Greek Roma children who are enrolled at the school.
- Cooperation of pre-school teachers, social workers and Roma mediators to activate Greek Roma families, dismantle stereotypes, inform and assist families to collect, complete and submit the required documentation for registration and regular attendance of children at school.
- Interventions are also being implemented in the families of the pupils and at the school in order to ensure the quality of the Greek Roma pupils in the educational environment,⁸⁰ to reduce the ratio of school dropouts and to facilitate their transition to the higher education level.
- "Parents' Schools" for Greek Roma and non- Roma), aiming at providing information, counselling and support for settling issues concerning the proper and regular attendance of Greek Roma children.
- Implementation of motivational activities within a school or within camps, based on the specific needs of each region (psychological and social support and activities related to the environment, health and arts. The motivation activities are aimed at all students to strengthen Greek Roma and non-Roma pupils' ties.
- Educational interventions to mitigate the negative stereotypes and prejudices of teachers, parents, local authorities and the wider society.

In addition, various organisations, such as the church, NGOs or private entities, such as the Diocese of Demetrias in Volos (Thessaly Region), the Diocese of Ilion, Acharnes and Petroupoli (Attika Region), NGO Centre of Love in Elefsina (Attica), NGO "Centre for the Support of Children and Family" in the centre of Athens and many others throughout Greece are also implementing various actions aimed at enhancing the education of Greek Roma children.

Kindergarten teachers are graduates of university education with scientific competence, certified by higher education institutions. For their training, the Lifelong Learning Centre implements training seminars, in which participation is optional. Also, the responsible education programme coordinators,⁸¹ identify the educational needs and implement seminars for the teachers of their region. The participation of teachers in these seminars is mandatory.⁸²

The entry of repatriated Greek expatriates and refugees in Greece⁸³ identified the need for intercultural education for the smooth integration of children into the Greek educational system and the provision of specialised scientific knowledge to teachers in order to respond

⁸⁰ Quality assurance of treatment a) in the educational environment (prevention and combat of discrimination) and b) the educational outcome (simulating the performance and progress of Greek Roma pupils with non-Greek Roma students)

⁸¹ According to the Staff Regulations of the Coordinators of the Educational Work (FEK 4299/A, 27.9.2018), the Coordinators are high civil servants working for the Ministry of Education and are in charge to record the educational needs, organize and implement training actions and to support the school units of their area for which they are responsible; the coordinators' support includes the planning, implementing and giving feedback on the evaluation of the educational project.

⁸² Law 4559/2018

⁸³ A large wave of repatriated and expatriate people has been noted in the 1980s.

successfully to the conditions of heterogeneous multicultural classes.⁸⁴ In the case of Greek Roma, it must be stressed that coping with them as children from different cultural backgrounds is an absolute distortion, since Greek Roma have been in Greece for over a thousand years, so their culture is Greek, too.

In this context, it should be mentioned that during the two-year period 1999/2000 POSER⁸⁵ made a field research within the Greek Roma communities throughout Greece to find cultural elements that are specific to Greek Roma only. The only particular element identified was the Greek Romani language, dialect, (which, unfortunately, nowadays in Greece is spoken by less than half of Greek Roma). Thus, the education of Greek Roma children through methods used in educating children with different cultural backgrounds is guaranteed to achieve nothing, since the Greek Roma are part of the wider Hellenism and its culture. By this is not meant that pupils should be treated as a homogeneous group, since each child has its own personality, background, skills, and experiences, but this is a different issue. The problems faced by Greek Roma children are mainly related to the low level of familiarity with school and the limited potential of their family environment to help develop their linguistic and cognitive abilities (parental illiteracy). These problems are addressed with the cooperation of teachers, Greek Roma Integration and Education Programme members and Roma mediators with the children and their parents.⁸⁶

The parents of Greek Roma and non-Roma children can express views and requests through the parents' associations of each kindergarten and in cooperation with the nursery directorates to implement a variety of supportive activities.⁸⁷ There are no separate parent associations for Greek Roma. Information on children's progress is made by teachers at scheduled meetings with parents or in extraordinary meetings if deemed necessary by the teachers or by the parents. According to a survey conducted under the Greek Roma Integration and Education Programme, Greek Roma parents are interested in educating their children, to regularly visit teachers and to participate in parents' associations, but no data are provided separately for the parents of the children in the kindergarten or elementary or high school.⁸⁸

Kindergartens are supervised and supported in the execution of their educational work by the education programme coordinators and primary education principals (high civil servants), and the conclusions of their audits from each Educational Region after their finalisation through internal processes are published on the website of the Ministry of Education and are readily accessible to the public and accordingly to the Greek Roma community as well.

The operation and maintenance of kindergartens (including their equipment and the safety and hygiene of the premises etc.) are the responsibility of the Primary Education School Committee, which is established as a public law legal entity at the municipality level in order to take care of the school environment in cooperation with the directorates of

⁸⁴ Legislative acts from 1983 to the present day (law 4415/2016) have laid down the principles, skills of qualified teachers and scientists to implement and support intercultural education.

⁸⁵ The Federation of Greek Gypsy Associations, founded in 1998, was the first organized expression of Greek Gypsies.

⁸⁶ The specific actions are described in "Action 6" of the programme "Integration and Education of Greek Roma Children" (http://www.keda.uoa.gr/Greek_Roma/index.php/program/actions) and concern the connection and cooperation between school, student's family, Greek Roma community, wider society and local authorities' services.

⁸⁷ <https://edu.klimaka.gr/nomothesia/symvulia-epitropes/1700-sylogos-gonewn-kwdikopoihsh-nomothesias>

⁸⁸ G. Markou, C. Parthenis, G. Papakonstantinou, M.P. Corre, *The Greek Roma Inclusion in Greek Society: Diversity and Structural Exclusion*. ed. Gregoris, Athens: 2018. It is reported that 72.7% of interviewed Greek Roma parents from all over Greece, visit schoolteachers to be informed about the progress of their children, 46.7% participate in meetings of parents' associations with other parents and 1 in 10 Greek Roma parents participates as an active member in the body for school management

kindergartens and the municipal authorities. However, in many kindergartens, parent associations provide financial resources to improve equipment or carry out activities, although this is not mandatory.

Improving quality of education until the end of compulsory schooling

The effort put in improving the access of Greek Roma to primary education has lasted for many years. Since 1987, the Ministry of Education has sent guidance to school leadership to enrol Greek Roma children to primary education, based on a Decision of the Ministry of Education since 1987,⁸⁹ and the ones addressed during 1992 and 1995 were specifically intended to address bureaucratic obstacles in enrolling Greek Roma children at school and attending in joint schools and classes with non-Roma students.⁹⁰ In 1999, teachers were invited to support the "Integration and Education of Greek Roma Children" (see more details in the previous section) in primary schools, which also provided support for lower-performing pupils.⁹¹ A series of measures and guidelines introduced by diverse laws and ministry circulars⁹² seem to have effect and currently 69% of Greek Roma children of compulsory school age attend school of equivalent educational attainment (72% Greek Roma boys and 66% Greek Roma girls).⁹³ However, the fact that the participation of Greek Roma in education compared to other Greek citizens lags behind is important. According to FRA MIDIS II (2016), the highest percentage of Greek Roma without formal education in all three age groups, among all countries included in the research, is in Greece, accounting for 42% of those aged 16-24, 56% for ages 24-44 and 82% for ages 45+.

Greek Roma pupils are at a disadvantage compared to the rest of the pupil population. The cognitive/linguistic gaps, the inability of their parents to follow and enhance their education, their living conditions, their marginalization and early marriage are key factors of non-regular attendance and early withdrawal from education.

In a survey conducted between 2011-2012 as part of the programme "Integration and education of Greek Roma children" (conducted outside Macedonia and Thrace), it was found that out of 1,632 surveyed Greek Roma children attending 58 schools at different levels (18 preschool, 30 primary and 10 secondary schools), 59.1% regularly attended kindergarten (53.4% were of boys and 65.7% were of girls), 58.6% went to primary school (60.4% of boys and 56.7% of girls) and 15.2% went to gymnasium (17.6% of boys and 12.4% of girls). In this survey, the difference in girls' higher participation in kindergartens is noticeable, in particular when comparing to the participation of girls in high school; this can be possibly explained by the problem of early marriages. The results are similar to the rates of Greek Roma attendance, deriving from the research carried out by the National

⁸⁹ Ministry of Education, Γ1/206, 14.4.1987 "Education of Gypsies' children", which states: "Because Greek Roma children do not attend the kindergarten at all, teachers need to be informed about their living conditions, in order to help them and protect the rights of their pupils when these rights are being violated or abused or hindered by bureaucratic procedures."

⁹⁰ Ministry of Education, Γ1/372/853/ΓΓΓ.475, 16.9.1992 "Literacy of Gypsies' Children", Φ4/350/Γ1/1028, 22.8.1995 "Registration and question of Gypsies' children in nursery school and primary school"

⁹¹ Circular of Ministry of National Education and Religious Affairs, 1.9.1999 "Ceremony of Gypsies children" and Decision of Ministry of Education and Religious Affairs, Φ10/20/Γ1, 7.9.1999 "Foundation and functioning of classes and reception areas and tutorial classes"

⁹² In fact, there are Decisions of the Ministry issued by the Ministry of Education regarding the Establishment of positions for receiving new students and Teaching Positions, which both aim at the Implementation of Programs for Greek Roma Students (358/4, 29.8.2000, 425/Δ4, 28.8.2001 and 86335/Δ4, 26.8.2002); circulars to facilitate the enrolment and support for the attendance of Greek Roma children at school (Φ1TY/1254/126877/Γ1/2008, Φ1TY/1073/117052/Γ1/2009, 132975/Γ1/2010, Φ3/960/102679 (F7/448/23316/C1/2010), the circular for the financial support of Greek Roma households after the relevant confirmation of continuous education of their children at school (F7/448/23316/C1/2010) (125211/Γ1/2011, 18357/Γ1/2012, 180644/Γ1/2013) and others circulars which concern the operation of classes for receiving tutorial courses in areas with high educational priority and finally the circulars that assure to provide psychosocial support and participation of the Greek Roma in these programmes.

⁹³ Survey FRA MIDIS II (2016).

and Kapodistrian University of Athens in its intervention areas.⁹⁴ The education policy aims to improve access for Greek Roma to education and to advance their studies to the highest level possible, especially for Greek Roma girls among whom the school dropout is higher than for boys.

Primary and secondary education teachers are graduates of higher education. Their pedagogical and didactic competence is certified by a special certificate of a higher educational institution. They are trained through the optional training programmes implemented by the Lifelong Learning Centre and mandatory by the coordinators of the educational programme. In schools attended by Greek Roma, where the needs of specialised scientific training are increased, the teachers of the Greek Roma Integration and Training programme in cooperation with the primary and secondary education directorates and the school managers provide specialised training and tools for the implementation of effective teaching methods (collaborative, experiential learning, etc).

For the duration of the last three years the following measures were planned to be implemented:

- Reduce the number of students from 25 to 15 per class in 52 primary schools where students from vulnerable social groups (Greek Roma) attend.
- Place a social worker in the above primary schools and lower secondary school with Greek Roma pupils.⁹⁵ Social workers have already been placed in 47 primary schools and 7 high schools.
- Access without conditions for students from vulnerable social groups (Greek Roma) in all-day programmes of every school in the country.
- Pilot operation of Parents Schools in selected schools.

The recent implementation of these measures means that there are no published data yet concerning the results and their evaluation at the moment of production of this report.

At the same time, the following actions are being implemented under the "Greek Roma Children's Integration and Education" programme:⁹⁶

- Operation of support classes taking place within the school after compulsory classes and mentorship programmes with the participation of lower-performing pupils in primary and secondary education to cover cognitive and linguistic gaps, co-operation with other students, regular attendance and reduction of frequent withdrawals.
- Operation of support classes for those Greek Roma students, of all classes, who have failed to pass their exams.
- Operation of study classes for low-performing students.
- Creative employment actions within and without school.
- Literacy enhancement programmes for adult Greek Roma (parents and other family members).
- Provision of the attendance document for moving students for those students who have changed their place of residence in the course of the school year, so that they can enrol in the new school without the formal and usually time-consuming procedures.⁹⁷

⁹⁴ Of the 468 primary school pupils, 37.6% graduated from the primary school. Of 73 students who went to Gymnasium graduated from this 47.9%, from 13 students who went to General Lyceum school graduated 69.2% and from 11 students who went to Professional Training Lyceum graduated 18.2%

⁹⁵ Law 4485/2017 (Government gazette 114/A). Ministerial Decision: 138620/Δ1, 4.8.2018 (G.g. 3672/B), 148144/Δ1, 10.9.2018 (G.g. 4204/B), 220971/Δ1, 31.12.2018 for primary schools and 142628/ΓΔ4/2017 (G.g. 3032/B), 163144/Δ2, 2.10.2018 (G.g. 4480/B), 206145/Δ2, 29.11.2018 (G.g. 5530/B) for gymnasiums.

⁹⁶ The program is implemented in Municipalities of the Regions of Attica, Peloponnese, Ionian Islands, Epirus, Sterea Ellada, Evia, South Aegean and Crete.

⁹⁷ Ministerial Decision 10645/ΓΔ4, 22.1.2018 (G.g. 120/B)

- Actions by Greek Roma mediators (waking up and accompanying children to and from school, informing the family about their obligations and rights in relation to school, etc.).
- Daily control of school attendance and timely response to non-regular or inadequate attendance through targeted actions from the School Principal, those in charge of the Greek Roma Children's Integration and Education programme, the municipality and the Greek Roma mediators.

The above actions can be carried out in schools attended by Greek Roma in each area of intervention. The principal and the teachers of each school together with those in charge of the Greek Roma Children's Integration and Education programme will choose (all or some of) the actions they will implement and adapt them according to the needs they have found in the school.

Particularly in the Greek Roma camps/settlements, there is an effort to record the non-attending school children, to raise awareness and promote them in education as well as to try to connect the camps/settlements with the schools in the area and to facilitate access through the development of communication and cooperation between the Greek Roma population and the relevant authorities.

As regards the serious problem of early marriages, especially for Greek Roma girls, which, along with the cessation of education, has multiple negative effects in their lives, there are no substantial countermeasures beyond a powerless and non-systematic effort to inform communities of the consequences. Early marriages are a frequent phenomenon in Greek Roma communities (and until a few decades ago of the Greek population as a whole) and especially in Greek Roma communities where the degree of social inclusion is small. In the case of early marriages, the minimum age for the boys is approximately 14 and for the girls 12 years old. However, for socially integrated Greek Roma, the age of marriage for boys and girls is gradually changing, because of increasing interest in education and professional development, while the influence of old beliefs (e.g. virginity) is reduced.

In addition to the measures mentioned above, there other initiatives that contribute to improvement of the educational level of Greek Roma. We can mention the Second Chance School, which allows adults (over 18) who have left school to complete compulsory education that includes currently 58 second chance schools across the country.⁹⁸ Another is the School Meals programme, implemented by the Ministry of Labour, Social Security and Social Solidarity and the Ministry of Education, addresses the needs of children of vulnerable groups and reduces school dropouts (expected medium- and long-term benefits in reducing social inequalities and social exclusion). The programme is currently implemented in 62 municipalities, 960 school units providing about 154,000 quality meals a day.⁹⁹ All school units attended by Greek Roma students are participating in the programme.

Positive results are also expected from the requirement that needy people (including many Greek Roma) who receive the Social Solidarity Income¹⁰⁰ must fulfil the following obligations related to education: if they are younger than 40 years, they must join or return to the education system; if they have school-age children, they must attend their school constantly.

Finally, in the context of intercultural education, the main principle is to promote measures that contribute to eliminate inequalities and to ensure equal opportunities in education, primary and secondary schools. The country can host reception classes and develop

⁹⁸ Second Chance Schools were instituted in Greece under Law 2525/1997.

⁹⁹ Ministerial Decisions: Φ14/ΦΜ/181027/Δ1/2017, Φ14/ΦΜ/192967/Δ1/2017, Φ14/ΦΜ/47755/Δ1/2017, Φ14/ΕΚ/57965/Δ1/2018, Φ14/ΦΜ/16744/18749/Δ1/2019

¹⁰⁰ The SSI is described in detail in the chapter on Employment

actions to reduce early school leaving and improve the learning performance of pupils from vulnerable social groups and/or with cultural and religious peculiarities.¹⁰¹ Of course, as regards the intercultural education of Greek Roma in primary schools, the situation is similar to what it was stated above in regards to Greek Roma pupils in kindergartens. In other words, the inclusion of Greek Roma children in the above measures can only be accepted in light of the reference “vulnerable social groups”.

The parents of children (Greek Roma and non-Roma) can express views and requests through the parents’ associations, which are founded in each school unit and in collaboration with the principals of the primary and secondary schools in order to carry out a variety of supporting activities. There are no separate Greek Roma parents’ associations. According to a survey carried out under the Greek Roma Integration and Education Programme,¹⁰² Greek Roma parents are interested in educating their children, to regularly visit teachers and to participate in meetings with the association of parents. Unfortunately, the survey does not provide separate data for parents of nursery or elementary or high school children (see pre-primary education section). This process is being attempted through Action 6 “Connecting school, family and local community” within the programme “Integration and Education of Greek Roma Children”, but unfortunately, due to many different factors in each area, the results are few and small.

Primary and high schools are supervised and supported in the execution of their educational work by the relevant education programme coordinators and the directors of primary and secondary education. The conclusions of the programme and its monitoring according to all the legal proceedings are published on the website of the Ministry of Education and are accessible to the public.

The maintenance of the school buildings, the equipment, the operation, the safety, the hygiene of the premises etc, are the responsibility of the school committees of primary and secondary education that are established as legal entities of public law by the municipality in cooperation with the school principals and the services of the municipality. The parents of children do not have to contribute towards these costs.

Nevertheless, Greek households spend large amounts of money on private tutorials to enhance the student performance and to learn foreign languages. This is because there is strong competition in examinations to enter higher education but also for labour market integration. Greek Roma families are unable to cover the costs of such private tutorials.

Connecting and cooperation between school, Greek Roma families and the wider society not only solves problems which lead to school dropouts, but also prevents them from occurring. There are many positive examples of collaboration, such the area of Agia Varvara in Attica, where available statistical data demonstrate the effectiveness of the interventions. In the Agia Varvara, area of Attica, during the 1970s the percentage of Greek Roma children who completed the primary school was 43%. Today, the figure is 98.7%. In the 1980s, the percentage of Greek Roma children who completed gymnasium was 24.3%. Today the figure is 73.6%. In the 1990s, the percentage of Greek Roma children who completed the Lyceum was 6.4%. Today the percentage is 31.8%. For example, in the school year 2017/2018, in the last class of the General Lyceum, there were 43 Greek Roma pupils in Agia Varvara.

¹⁰¹ Law 3879/2010, (Government Gazette 163A / 21.09.2010), project "Integration of vulnerable social groups into schools – Classes of Reception, school year 2018-2019" with the EU co-financing

¹⁰² G. Markou, C. Parthenis, G. Papakonstantinou, M.P. Corre, *The Greek Roma Inclusion in Greek Society: Diversity and Structural Exclusion*. ed. Gregoris, Athens: 2018.

Support of secondary and higher education particularly for professions with high labour market demand

The rate of Roma attendance in secondary education according to an estimate included in the FRA MIDIS II (2016) research report compared to the 2011 survey has improved.¹⁰³ It is reported that 69% of Roma children attend compulsory education, i.e. primary and secondary school (lower secondary level). The corresponding percentage in the general population is 95%. It is also reported that at high school (upper secondary level) 9% of Roma children attend. The corresponding percentage in the general population is 88%. In the corresponding FRA MIDIS II survey in 2011 it is reported that in Greece less than one in 10 children completed upper secondary education.¹⁰⁴

According to a survey conducted within the Greek Roma Children Education Programme during the 2012-2013 school year, almost all (92.6%) respondents who dropped out of school early expressed a strong desire to have completed primary and secondary education, and some of them to have continued their studies at a higher level. In concrete numbers, from 468 surveyed pupils of Greek Roma in primary school only the 37.6% has graduated. Of the 73 Greek Roma students who continued their studies in gymnasium, 47,9% graduated. Of the 13 Greek Roma students who went to high school graduated 69.2% and out of 11 Greek Roma students in professional training high schools graduated 18.2%. There are no data regarding the number of children who fulfilled the preference they expressed.¹⁰⁵ Greek Roma parents expressed similar desires, as almost all parents (99%), and considered it necessary for their children to attend school. Furthermore, the majority of parents (85.8%) encouraged them to participate in school activities, in which they themselves also participated (56.6% %), while 72.7% of the respondents stated that they regularly visited the school to keep updated on the progress of their children and about 1 in 10 attended school committees (such as the managing board of the parent association, municipal school committees for primary and secondary education and others).

The above data show that the problem is not due to the negative attitude of the Greek Roma towards education but due to the objective (mainly financial) difficulties and the social environment (inside and outside the Greek Roma communities) that often discourages the efforts of young Greek Roma who want to complete higher education and dispirits their parents who stand by them.

The current aim of both the teachers and the municipality for the young Greek Roma is to avoid the interruption of education after the completion of the compulsory education. The measures and actions mentioned in the primary education section are also implemented in secondary education (teaching and study support classes, tutorials for failed classes, psychosocial services, mentoring, etc.).

Additionally, there are support actions, which are also implemented by municipalities such as tutoring courses, foreign language courses, IT courses, creative employment courses (theatre, painting, gardening, photography etc) and other actions according to the needs of the local labour market, the skills and interests of general citizens and the Greek Roma

¹⁰³ European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights (2016) *Second European Union Minorities and Discrimination Survey (EU-MIDIS II) Roma – Selected Findings*: “Compared with the 2011 Roma survey, EU-MIDIS II finds slightly higher enrolment rates in compulsory schooling in most countries – with the exception of Romania and Slovakia, where there are no substantial changes.” Available at: <https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/documents/2995521/7034688/3-16102015-CP-EN.pdf>

¹⁰⁴ European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights (2011) *The situation of Roma in 11 EU Member States*: “five out of 11 EU Member States, Portugal, Greece, Spain, France and Romania, fewer than one out of 10 Roma is reported to have completed upper-secondary education”. Available at: <http://fra.europa.eu/en/country-data/2013/country-thematic-studies-situation-roma>

¹⁰⁵ We know from the registration of over 60 Greek Roma graduates. The authors of this report are aware of many Greek Roma students who stopped education early and continued after a long time.

in particular. According to estimates by municipalities there is a small Greek Roma participation, mainly young girls and boys. More information will be available to the Roma departments of community centres in the future, as they were recently created in the municipalities. These supportive measures and actions started to be implemented in the early 2016 as part of the wider social policy of the government and were included in the total package of social policy decided and implemented under the Governmental Council of Social Policy (ΚΥ.Σ.ΚΟΙ.Π) which operates under the supervision and coordination of the Vice President of the government.

Particularly significant is the personal contact with students and their parents, which both teachers and Roma departments of the community centres seek. Moreover, career guidance actions implemented in all schools can inspire and mobilize young Greek Roma to continue after the completion of compulsory education towards acquiring professional skills based on their potential and interests.

The activities that have been described for completing compulsory education and for continuing education after compulsory education are also implemented during and after schooling especially for young people who dropped out of school prematurely using second-chance schools and evening schools. These schools offer the opportunity to first-class graduates to enter university without an examination (there are cases in which Greek Roma people have followed this path and are currently university graduates).

In general, there is no precise evidence of Greek Roma participation in the above education levels because the state does not keep separate records for Greek Roma. There is evidence of targeted research and empirical evidence from services developing support actions for Greek Roma education as well as from Greek Roma organisations and NGOs. The above-mentioned survey within the Greek Roma Children Education Programme showed that the percentage of young Greek Roma attending higher education institutions (universities) was 2.8% and higher technological educational institutes (polytechnics) was 1.0%. This very small percentage was considered significant compared to 1999, when it was zero.

A characteristic example, which is important to be mentioned, is that at the request of the Greek Roma mediator association and the relevant suggestion and support by the Special Secretariat for Greek Roma Inclusion,¹⁰⁶ the Governing Board of the Hellenic Open University (EAP) approved and decided to grant free scholarships to prospective Greek Roma students who have completed secondary education and wish to study at any of the faculties of the Hellenic Open University.¹⁰⁷

Based on the knowledge of each Roma community and the experience acquired by the researches, by policies', measures' and actions' implementation, by the operation of more than 250 Roma Associations, by the more than 30 years continuously monitoring of the entire Greek Roma community, the authors of the reports express the ascertainment, that the participation of Greek Roma in all levels of education and schools is on the rise (as it is also confirmed by the FRA MIDIS II 2016 report). Particular features of this rising trend are that it is related to the degree of social inclusion of the Greek Roma (especially in housing) and that concerns both sexes.¹⁰⁸

¹⁰⁶ <https://egroma.gov.gr/>

¹⁰⁷ www.eap.gr

¹⁰⁸ Greek Roma NGOs know a large number of new Greek Roma students or secondary and tertiary education graduates as well as Greek Roma attending evening and high schools, but the nominal mention of these cases is not possible because of the lack of systematic data collection.

Fight against discrimination, segregation and other forms of antigypsyism in education

Similarly to other fields covered by this report, discrimination against Greek Roma in education is almost impossible to discern, because Greek Roma prefer to be identified as Greek citizens, as it is reflected in their self-determination.¹⁰⁹ Moreover, there are no official data on Greek Roma, since for the Greek State, Roma are only Greek citizens facing social exclusion problems.¹¹⁰

As regards segregation of Roma children in schools, the FRA MIDIS II (2016) research indicated that there are schools with only Greek Roma (12%) or mainly Greek Roma (36%) students. The Greek state policy ensures that there is no segregation among pupils from vulnerable groups (Greek Roma, migrants, asylum seekers, etc.) in separate schools or classes. Schools that have students coming from these vulnerable groups can set up reception classes and training departments to prepare them so that they can attend the taught programmes. However, objectively, where there is a massive Greek Roma establishment in an area, there is a large number of Greek Roma in schools in this area as well. In cases where the Greek Roma live in houses scattered across the city (Agia Varvara, Ilion, Drapetsona, Serres, etc), the composition of students in each school consists of students from all social groups. Therefore, the problem is linked to the residential segregation of the Greek Roma, and not to an intended policy of practice of segregation in schools or antigypsyist attitudes. Various measures included in the national strategy for the social integration of the Greek Roma deal with this problem (see the chapter on housing). The reasons of the educational segregation are usually the distance of camps from schools, the limited places in schools, and indeed, in some cases of implementation of the project "Integration and education of Greek Roma children", the separation was temporary and it lasted long enough to prepare Greek Roma children to enter the education classes.

Discrimination against Roma children in education occurs almost exclusively in the first stages of education, i.e. in pre-school education and in the first stages of primary school, while as the level of education rises, negative behaviours are decreased and gradually eliminated altogether. The explanation for this phenomenon is that Greek Roma children who do not terminate their studies at the primary school and continue at secondary or tertiary education win the appreciation and respect because of the huge effort they have made. Additionally, it demonstrates that phenomena of discrimination during the first stages of education happens due to ignorance and stereotypes, which actually later can be overcome. This example can explain and manage the problems of discrimination and antigypsyism that are only the results and not the causes of the social exclusion.

NGOs reported cases of unequal application of sanctions that is interpreted by pupils themselves as discrimination of non-Roma students in favour to Greek Roma, when for example, in high schools the absences of Greek Roma students are circumvented so that they do not have to repeat the grade, while which non-Roma students are sanctioned for absenteeism.

¹⁰⁹ See the Declaration of Greek Roma Conference from Thessaloniki on spring of 2001:

"We, the Greek Gypsies, definitely declare to every 'direction' that we constitute an unbreakable connected piece of the whole Hellenism. Any other view, by anywhere could be expressed and/or emanated; it will not only find us in a total disagreement, but also in a strongly opposite and clearly inimical position. We also state that even if there is ever a question of choosing only one of the two "constituents" of our identity for which we feel proud, namely: a) 'Greeks' and b) 'Gypsies', we are consciously and unanimously voting to keep the term 'Greeks' and the deletion of the term 'Gypsies'." This declaration was unanimously voted by 46 Greek Gypsies' Associations, including four associations of Muslim Greek Gypsies from Thrace.

¹¹⁰ Moreover, it is quite characteristic that, by Legislative Decree 3370/1955, Greek Gypsies are not simply recognised as citizens - residents of the country to whom Greek citizenship is attributed but as native Greeks.

Stereotypical perceptions exist in both communities (Greek Roma and non-Roma) that fuel the prejudice and fear their members. Racist phenomena occur in areas where the degree of social inclusion of Greek Roma is small and there are severe social problems (poverty, illiteracy, poor housing conditions, etc.), while in the regions where social integration is advanced, they tend to disappear. In addition to the measures that have been reported, if racist phenomena is observed in kindergartens, the provisions of the law demand cooperation between the school head and the competent education programme coordinator, the head of primary education or the regional director of education etc. with a view to address the situation. However, there were not noticed such incidents in kindergartens.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Horizontal

1. It is important to mention that a holistic approach is considered as a necessary condition to succeed in addressing the problems faced by Greek Roma through the implementation of an integrated strategy. The addressee of each proposed recommendation, in addition to the fact that each is addressed to the responsible ministry, all together are addressed to the Special Secretariat for Roma Integration, which oversees and coordinates the NRIS. In all the following, Greek Roma involvement (mediators, experts and representatives) is prerequisite, in all stages (planning, implementing, monitoring and evaluating).

Employment

For the participation of the Greek Roma in the typical labour market and in high skills and professions with high demand on the labour market, following actions and measures are recommended:

2. Institutionalisation of cooperation between the Labour Force Employment Agency (OAED), regional and local authorities and Greek Roma communities in the design and implementation of professional counselling and training programmes for Greek Roma adults, in high demand professions, considering the local labour market.
3. Implementation of programmes offering vocational training and work experience to Greek Roma in professions from the tourist sector that have a high return across the country.
4. Making use of the social economy and the skills of Greek Roma in the agricultural, commercial and artistic fields to develop partnership initiatives between Greek Roma and non-Roma, aiming not only at Greek Roma entering the formal labour market but also accelerating the integration process through the realisation of the value of the "co-partner". This measure could help Greek Roma to realise the importance and the value of acting collectively, by formulating partnerships and collaborations.
5. Institutionalization of cooperation between OAED, Special Secretariat for Greek Roma Inclusion, Special Secretariat, Social Solidarity Economy (SSE), regional governments and several Greek Roma women's associations (e.g. under a long-term partnership agreement or within a specific time period, such as the NSRF implementation), for the planning and implementation of integrated support programmes for Greek Roma women. The objectives of the programmes concern not only women's professional development but also their social empowerment and stress the importance of Greek Roma women for the future of the entire local community.

Housing and essential public services

Regarding the issue of housing, the Greek policy contains a set of measures which if implemented according to the plan, can produce a positive result, especially since they are in most cases combined with measures of other sectors as well as with the active involvement of Greek Roma people. In addition to what the government envisages, may the following be considered:

6. Application of the usufructuary right provision – the procedure whereby a person or a family may become officially owner of land or even a building that was inhabited without being formally its owner, but has been used as a customary landlord for a period of continuous years, which differs, depending on the regions in Greece (Article 1045 of Urban Law Code). Mainly, it has been suggested to the

Special Secretariat for Greek Roma Integration to detect the possibilities of using the usufruct law, which will give the right to many Greek Roma families to be the landowners of many regions in the country and at the same time will limit the cost for land's purchase by the state or the local government.

7. Disposal of land to poor citizens. In Greece, in the past years, there was the possibility of disposal land for cultivation and habitation for poor residents/citizens of areas, in order to limit their migration and desolation. This measure has been abolished, but in recent years in some regions it has again begun to be debated due to the social effects of the great economic crisis. If the measure is finally activated is considered that the Greek Roma (as citizens and residents) could benefit.
8. Conducting research on the housing stock in the municipalities in order to assess its utilisation. In many municipalities across Greece there are old houses, which are neither inhabited nor claimed by anyone with the result that they are most often ready to collapse, dirty and used for illegal activities, posing a risk for the public health and safety. The State and the municipalities should seek a legitimate way of restoring these. On the other hand, any thought of granting housing loans to Greek Roma families should be avoided at this time, since a significant proportion of the problems that currently exist are due to the distorted implementation of housing loans to the Greek Roma in the early 2000s.

Impact of healthcare policies on Roma

Following measures can contribute to improvement of the healthcare of Roma, additionally to measures addressing the problems in housing, education and employment that would lead to effective solution of problems in this field:

9. Strengthening social services in primary and secondary health care units with qualified staff and Greek Roma mediators to facilitate the access and information of Greek Roma patients or their escorts as well as the smooth operation of the units.
10. Conducting research on the interventions made in Greek Roma settlements to carry out preventive examinations and vaccinations to draw useful conclusions for the planning of future actions by the competent services for the prevention and improvement of Greek Roma health.
11. Conduct research focusing on women and children (ages from 0 to 10), on the Greek Roma that are the most vulnerable among the Greek Roma community, taking into account ignorance of family planning, healthy child development, prevention, health care management etc.

Education

Despite some progress in the field of education, the ongoing problems would require:

12. Pan-Hellenic research for detecting the causes of school leaving.
13. Creation of a vocational guidance and information section at the gymnasium (first cycle of secondary education) with the participation of qualified scientists and professionals.
14. Creating "Parents' Schools" (special courses on parenting issues) in all municipalities with a Greek Roma population and transferring good practices.
15. Establishing of a "study surveillance" of voluntary teams in Greek Roma communities to monitor and address issues related to the participation and attendance of Greek Roma pupils in schools.
16. Collaboration of OAED, municipalities and Greek Roma communities for the implementation of information and empowerment programmes for young Greek

Roma who stopped education at an early stage, in order to either continue their education or to choose the most suitable training programme. Finally, it is necessary to be provided special measures for supporting young Greek Roma women who stopped education because of giving birth (i.e. by providing them with appropriate and accessible childcare services).

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