



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

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

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## LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

ACM	High Commissioner for Migration
CEU	Central European University
CICDR	Committee on Equality and Against Racial Discrimination
CONCIG	Consultative Group for the Integration of Roma Communities
EAPN	European Anti-Poverty Network
EFP	Institute for Employment and Vocational Training
ENEC	National Strategy for Citizenship Education
ENICC	National Strategy for the Integration of Roma Communities
FAPE	National Strategy Support Fund
GACI	Roma Communities Support Office
IHRU	Institute for Housing and Urban Rehabilitation
OBCIG	Observatory of Roma Communities
PIEF	Integrated Education and Training Programme
POISE	Operational Social Inclusion and Employment Programme
PROHABITA	Housing Access Financing Programme
TEIPS	Priority Intervention Educational Territories Programme

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This report aims to contribute to the reflection and evaluation of the implementation of the National Strategy for the Integration of Roma Communities with a focus on employment, housing, health and education issues. The Portuguese Government approved, through the resolution of the Council of Ministers (Resolution No. 25/2013 of 27 March 2013),<sup>1</sup> the National Strategy for the Integration of Roma Communities (ENICC), for the period 2013-2020. The strategy is coordinated by the High Commissioner for Migration (ACM) and constitutes an important milestone in social policy directed towards Roma communities in Portugal. In the last five years, we have witnessed the definition of some measures that have allowed some achievements, fundamentally in employment and emergence of initiatives organised by civil society, especially promoted by associations and movements of Roma citizens. There was also specific attention on the part of political bodies.

Throughout the document reflections are found that somehow translate the implementation of the strategy (objectives and targets), alerting to the need to define measures and programmes that foster effective inclusion of these communities.

### Employment

Based on permanent contact with local institutions and privileged grass-based knowledge that some social organisations own, it is apparent that this is a social group with training needs, both formal and informal, with difficulties in acquiring basic competencies (socio-relational and professional). Under different variables (profile of the addressees, difficulties of articulation between the different partners, difficulty by professionals to carry out proximity monitoring of this population, difficulty to develop inclusion programmes adapted to the characteristics of each individual) there is a great difficulty in integrating these social group and being able to reverse their situation of social disadvantage. The majority are individuals excluded from the labour market, who often associate low school and professional qualifications, deficits in social and relational competences and as far as behavioural logics make it harder to find a job and, especially, maintain it.

Roma experience serious forms of discrimination resulting from existing cultural differences and consequently difficulties in school, professional and social insertion. Although the compulsory schooling level is the 12<sup>th</sup> grade, the high rate of school dropout by Roma youths is notorious before concluding the 9<sup>th</sup> grade (mainly among females). This group thus accumulates some social, educational, professional handicaps hindering enriching insertion in the labour market, both from the point of view of remuneration and from a personal point of view.

There are measures that are not specifically targeted at Roma communities, but are targeted at people who are unemployed and in which Roma communities are also a beneficiary group. These measures are promoted by the Employment and Vocational Training Institute (IEFP).

### Housing and essential public services

Roma communities continue to live without the minimum conditions of habitability, healthiness and hygiene, which further highlights their situation of social exclusion. This phenomenon also generates very strong prejudices and stereotypes which, increasingly, prevent these citizens from freeing themselves of the situations of vulnerability, social and economic exclusion that they are in. Although the situation has improved somewhat, more

<sup>1</sup> National Strategy for Integration of Roma Communities in Portugal (ENICC): [http://www.acm.gov.pt/documents/10181/52642/RCM\\_ENNIC.pdf/8384c0f4-7c96-4979-90ba-73e5f565fd0b](http://www.acm.gov.pt/documents/10181/52642/RCM_ENNIC.pdf/8384c0f4-7c96-4979-90ba-73e5f565fd0b)

political efforts are needed to reverse these situations of vulnerability. Therefore, it is necessary to urgently guarantee access to housing, investing on the definition of mainstreamed measures and a local action strategy to eradicate the housing needs that the Roma communities face.

The National Housing Strategy (2015-2031) was adopted in the context of the promotion of equality in access to social housing policies, including a set of measures covering this population, namely integrating the resettlement needs of immigrant communities and ethnic minorities in the relocation program and to provide social housing by using the renewing buildings that are abandoned.

### Impact of health policies on Roma communities

Among Roma communities there is high incidence of diseases and malnutrition. The diseases affecting these communities underline not only the serious situations experienced by Roma citizens but also the inadequacy of services to reach these groups. However, studies show that the low socio-economic level of Roma communities has consequences for health problems, including lower life expectancy (compared with the rest of the population), as well as the highest levels of malnutrition and disease. Health standards among Roma citizens are negatively influenced by low education levels and limited access to health care and services. Discriminatory and biased attitudes are one of the key factors in the marginalisation and exclusion of some Roma citizens from public health campaigns and programmes. Cultural differences can create barriers between Roma communities and health care institutions.

The ENICC has developed a plan of actions aimed at combating health inequalities that the Roma communities face, namely development of information materials or organisation of awareness-raising activities on early motherhood, paediatric follow-up care, healthy eating habits, and other topics.

### Education

The economic and social situation that Roma communities have experienced over time has repercussions on the wellbeing of their children: economic deprivation, emotional and psychological instability, situations of discrimination and segregation, among others. In parallel, the existence of prejudices and stereotypes also contribute to increasing the vulnerability that these children are subject to. All these factors have a direct influence on the lives of the children themselves (learning problems, insertion in the school environment, discrimination among peers, school dropout and absenteeism, etc.) and their rights as children. Thus, Roma children experiencing poverty and social exclusion phenomena see their rights threatened daily. This threat is mirrored in living conditions, the risk of reduced participation in school and society, limited access to health care and certain opportunities, among others.

To address these problems, in recent decades alternative education programmes have been created aimed at reducing social and educational inequalities. But in reality these initiatives did not bring the expected improvement of school success and rather lead to segregation of Roma. More recently, new measures have been adopted to combat inequalities in education, which are coordinated and funded by ACM; for example, the *Escolhas* (Choices) Programme supporting children and young people from socially vulnerable contexts who attend primary and secondary education, or the *Opre* Programme supporting Roma students in higher education.

## INTRODUCTION

Roma communities remain, in general, a social group much exposed to phenomena of poverty and social exclusion. In general, they live in precarious housing conditions, with low school and professional qualifications and with difficulty in accessing most goods and services. As such, Roma communities face processes in which stereotypes, prejudices and discriminatory practices are developed that constitute important barriers to inclusion in very different areas of society, including education, housing, health, employment, access to justice, among others. Said elements prevent these citizens from leaving situations of vulnerability and social exclusion that are a barrier to their inclusion. This situation constitutes a vicious cycle that perpetuates and reinforces exclusion in its different forms.

There is thus a need to create the conditions required for the participation of these communities in society to be equal to that of the remaining population, because living in a situation of social exclusion means being absent/distant from all principles inherent to the exercise of citizenship, which requires, in turn, an extended set of rights and duties. In this sense, the inclusion of these communities has gained great visibility in the national and European political agenda. There is therefore a concern and a need to establish specific, integrated and efficient actions to tackle the inequalities and structural disadvantages that Roma communities face across Europe. The current political commitment is mirrored in the National Strategy for the Integration of Roma Communities (ENICC) in order to promote inclusion and the fight discrimination. The strategy is coordinated by the High Commissioner for Migration (ACM), through its Support Centre for Roma Communities (NACI) and includes five strategic axes: transversal (including the dimensions of knowledge of Roma communities and monitoring of the strategy, discrimination, citizenship education, Roma history and culture, gender equality, justice and security, mediation and social security); education; housing; training and employment and health.

However, on November 29 (2018)<sup>2</sup> ENICC's revision was approved, which resulted from the need to introduce changes, both in the definition of the Strategy, especially regarding the clarification and operationalization of the measures, and in the definition of priority areas for intervention, namely equality between women and men, knowledge about Roma people and their participation in the implementation of ENICC. This revision resulted on the extension of the Strategy until 2022, and the priority<sup>3</sup> was to reinforce schooling and professional integration; to improve the living conditions of Roma people, as well as the recognition and reinforcement of intervention in intercultural mediation, the improvement of information and knowledge, and the fight against discrimination of Roma people.

One of the first results of this project was the drafting of the national report on issues of "governance", "anti-discrimination" and "anti-Roma attitudes". This report focuses on a more sector-by-sector analysis (employment, housing, health and education), reflecting the main guidelines of ENICC and the vision of civil society organisations. To draft it we carried out a consultation process for civil society entities, associations and representatives of Roma communities.<sup>4</sup>

<sup>2</sup> Resolution of the Council of Ministers no. 154/2018 - Approves the revision of the National Strategy for the Integration of Roma Communities 2013-2022: <https://dre.pt/web/guest/home/-/dre/117142874/details/maximized>

<sup>3</sup> These priorities are governed by the following guiding principles: interculturality; non-discrimination; cooperation and participation; territoriality and equality between women and men.

<sup>4</sup> The workshop was carried out on October 2<sup>nd</sup> (in Oporto) and counted on the input of the following organisations and experts: Obra Nacional da Pastoral dos Ciganos, Letras Nómadas, Associação Ribaltambição, EAPN Portugal, Sérgio Aires; Maria José Casanova (Observatory of Roma Communities) and Olga Magano

## EMPLOYMENT

Roma communities generally have training needs, both formal and informal, with difficulties in acquiring basic competences (socio-relational and professional). As regards their situation at work, we find communities that live on so-called "traditional" activities,<sup>5</sup> and a minority that joins the formal labour market.

The majority are individuals excluded from the labour market, who often associate low school and professional qualifications, deficits in social and relational competences, and as far as behavioural logics make it harder to find a job and, especially, maintain it.

According to the national study on Roma communities,<sup>6</sup> approximately 18 per cent of respondents were active with a profession/job, compared to almost 57 per cent claiming to be unemployed, looking for their first job or never having worked. These evidences may reveal, on the one hand, a tendency to reinforce the precariousness of the socioeconomic conditions of this population groups and, on the other hand, therefore, less autonomy in their livelihoods. From the point of view of women, the situation of more than half is divided into households, unemployed, looking for the first job or never worked (45.5 per cent), although some of them are active or professionally employed (6.4 per cent).

The jobs most often mentioned by respondents relate to sales (14 per cent), agricultural work (3 per cent), domestic services (1.1 per cent), trade (0.7 per cent) and work in civil construction (0.6 per cent). Thus, a vast majority still lives on sales at trade fairs (called "itinerant sales"), some because they actually like what they do, especially due to aspects that characterise this activity, others because it is the only activity, they have access to, due to the fact that they have low schooling. These challenges add up to the discriminatory behaviour and lack of awareness of employers to hire Roma people. On the other hand, and particularly with regard to professional approach, the different solutions and opportunities in terms of social policies have not ensured the necessary conditions for the full integration of this "public". This group thus accumulates social, educational, professional handicaps hindering their insertion in the labour market.

It should also be noted that, according to the European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights, in 2016, 52 per cent of young Roma aged between 16 and 24 were NEETs (64 women and 36 per cent of men); the rate of paid work of Roma women and men between the ages of 20 and 64 (including self-employment and casual work or work) in the last four weeks was 35 per cent.

In this sense, the ENICC presents the following priorities in this specific area of action: to promote greater knowledge of Roma communities (demystify existing negative representations of these communities and obstacles to their professional integration); (training actions for workers in the centres of employment and vocational training and other technical personnel involved in the professional integration of the Roma population, as well as the qualification of Roma mediators in this area); access to employment and job creation; to increase professional qualifications with a view to integration into the labour market; revitalise the traditional activities of Roma communities for their integration through microcredit programmes and develop awareness raising actions and dissemination of good practice in this area.

<sup>5</sup> Activities associated with fairs and sales

<sup>6</sup> MENDES, Maria Manuela, et. al; Estudo Nacional sobre as Comunidades Ciganas, Lisbon, High Commissioner for Migrations, 2014: [http://www.poaatfse.qren.pt/upload/docs/Documentos/estudo\\_ennic.pdf](http://www.poaatfse.qren.pt/upload/docs/Documentos/estudo_ennic.pdf)

## Improving access to labour market and effectiveness of employment services

Employment services play an important role in integrating citizens who are in a situation of vulnerability regarding employment, either by updating their competences and defining job search strategies or through incentives for employers to hire unemployed people. In this sense, it is important to mention some measures that Portugal has not specifically directed towards Roma communities, which are measures aimed at people who are unemployed and of which Roma communities are also beneficiaries. We mean, essentially, employment-insertion contract measures that have been streamlined by IEFP – Institute for Employment and Vocational Training.<sup>7</sup> These measures consist of carrying out, during a period of up to 12 months, socially useful activities with a view to promoting socio-professional competences and maintaining contact with the labour world for subsidised unemployed people, beneficiaries of social inclusion income and other unemployed people enrolled that do not benefit from social benefits. However, these measures have not been enough to allow Roma people to be included in the labour market due to determined and comprehensive intervention action. Employment measures need an integrated approach (such as accompanying measures during the process of professional integration) which also considers the specific needs of this population.

Thus, and bearing in mind the implementation report of ENICC for 2016, there are significant advances in this axis of intervention, namely “6,027 interventions and 2,269 referrals to programmes and measures for employment and training, vocational guidance and processes of recognition and valorisation of competences (RVCC). Of these, 94 per cent were referrals to vocational training modalities”.<sup>8</sup> Despite the data presented we are aware that there is no assessment of the impact of existing measures; however, from referrals to 2,268 unemployed, 997 candidates were integrated in training measures and 54 in employment measures.

Table 1 – Employment-insertion contract measures (streamlined by employment centres)<sup>9</sup>

Measure	Promoters	Recipients	Support for the unemployed
Employment-Insertion Contract	Non-profit collective public or private entities, namely: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Public services that develop activities relevant to meet social or collective needs</li> <li>Local authorities</li> <li>Social Solidarity entities</li> </ul>	Unemployed people: <sup>10</sup> enrolled in employment services, beneficiaries of unemployment benefits or social unemployment benefits.  Subsidised unemployed in one of the following situations are deemed priorities:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Supplementary monthly allowance, totalling 20 per cent of IAS<sup>11</sup></li> <li>Transport costs (if transport is not provided by the entity)</li> <li>Meal or food allowance for each day of activity</li> <li>Insurance that covers the risks that may</li> </ul>

<sup>7</sup> IEFP is the national public employment service. Its mission is to promote creation and quality of employment and fight unemployment, by implementing active employment policies, namely vocational training: <https://www.iefp.pt>

<sup>8</sup> ENICC Execution Report for 2016, ACM, 2017, p. 23: [https://www.acm.gov.pt/documents/10181/52642/ENICC\\_Relat%C3%B3rio+Execu%C3%A7%C3%A3o\\_2016.pdf/55f8ffb5-50bc-490e-b56c-3a5994d748b6](https://www.acm.gov.pt/documents/10181/52642/ENICC_Relat%C3%B3rio+Execu%C3%A7%C3%A3o_2016.pdf/55f8ffb5-50bc-490e-b56c-3a5994d748b6)

<sup>9</sup> Employment measures – insertion: <https://www.iefp.pt/emprego-insercao>

<sup>10</sup> Unemployed people simultaneously entitled to unemployment benefits and beneficiaries of social inclusion income are deemed to be subsidised unemployed. People enrolled in employment services as workers with a suspended employment contract on the basis of non-payment of remuneration are equated to unemployed.

<sup>11</sup> Value of IAS (Social support index) is 428.90 EUR

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Disabled and handicapped person</li> <li>• Long-term unemployed</li> <li>• Age equal to above 45 years</li> <li>• Ex-prisoner or person serving time in an outward-looking open regime or other non-custodial judicial measure</li> <li>• Victim of domestic violence</li> </ul>	occur during and because of the exercise of the activity
Employment-Insertion Contract +	<p>Non-profit collective, public or private entities,<sup>12</sup> namely:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Public services that develop activities relevant to meet social or collective needs</li> <li>• Local authorities</li> <li>• Social Solidarity entities</li> </ul>	<p>Unemployed people enrolled in employment services, beneficiaries of social inclusion income.</p> <p>Unemployed people who are not beneficiaries of unemployment benefits or social inclusion income in one of the following situations may also benefit from this measure:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Registered for at least 12 months</li> <li>• Members of a single-parent family or whose spouses or people with whom they live in a civil partnership are also unemployed</li> <li>• Victims of domestic violence</li> </ul> <p>Unemployed people in one of the following situations are deemed priorities:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Disabled and handicapped person</li> <li>• Long-term unemployed</li> <li>• Age equal to or above 45 years</li> <li>• Ex-prisoner or person serving time in an outward-looking open regime or other non-custodial judicial measure</li> <li>• Victim of domestic violence</li> </ul>	

Particularly with regard to professional insertion, the different solutions and opportunities in terms of social policies have not ensured the conditions required for full integration of this “public” in their spectrum. Notwithstanding specific and partial examples of success,

<sup>12</sup> Private collective entities of the local business sector can also apply if fully participated by municipalities, associations of municipalities, irrespective of their typology, and metropolitan areas.

measures such as the social labour market and social inclusion income have not been able to fully integrate these communities. This is due, in most cases, to the fact that they are general measures and do not contemplate sufficient malleability to adapt to different groups. We are talking about measures that often do not effectively promote the employability of people, because the measures end and people return to a situation of disadvantage regarding employment. It should also be noted that there is no close monitoring and follow up of the implementation of measures.

On the other hand, professionals from different areas and at different levels with responsibilities to design and implement such measures do not know the specific needs of this ethnic group, for example their culture.

It is also important to mention that under POISE – Operational Social Inclusion and Employment Programme, applications were launched in June 2018 to promote socio-professional insertion of Roma communities. These applications belong under priority axis 3 – Promoting Social inclusion and Fighting Poverty and Exclusion (measure 3.08 – Socio-professional integration of the Roma community) and have the following aims:<sup>13</sup>

- Acquisition of competences for the employability of members of the Roma community;
- Implementation of methodologies for transition to active life of members of Roma communities;
- Awareness-raising for the promotion of workplace experiences for members of Roma communities;
- Integration of members of the Roma community in the labour market;
- Support in the implementation of sustainable business;
- Promotion of awareness of employers and monitoring members of Roma communities integrated therein.

It should be noted that the financial allocation for this application line is 1,500,000.00 EUR, with public co-payment of eligible expenditure divided between the European Social Fund (85 per cent) and the national public contribution (15 per cent).

However, the results of the applications are not yet known, but we believe that it will be another important instrument to support Roma communities in acquiring personal, social and professional competences for the development of professional activity through training in work context promoting proximity to the labour market.

There are thus expectations that this measure of POISE may support the integration of Roma communities into the labour market, as it includes several dimensions that cannot be neglected, namely empowerment of Roma and their support in the integration of the labour market as well as the awareness raising among employers aimed at challenging their prejudices and support equal opportunities.

### Fight against discrimination in employment and antigypsyism at workplace

Roma communities also experience serious forms of discrimination resulting from existing cultural differences and, consequently, difficulties in school, professional and social inclusion. These challenges add up to the discriminatory behaviour and lack of awareness of employers to hire Roma people.

In this sense, ENICC includes actions to tackle these situations, notably with employment services (priority 30 and 31 of ENICC – Promoting greater knowledge of Roma

<sup>13</sup> Public tender for applications – 3.08 – Socio-professional Insertion of Roma Communities, POISE – Operational Social Inclusion and Employment Programme:  
[http://poise.portugal2020.pt/documents/10180/77420/AAC+TO+3.08+Insercao+Socioprofissional+Comunidad es+Ciganas\\_20180927+alte.....pdf/83ab481c-a1f7-4087-85bb-6f9c7de735ba](http://poise.portugal2020.pt/documents/10180/77420/AAC+TO+3.08+Insercao+Socioprofissional+Comunidad es+Ciganas_20180927+alte.....pdf/83ab481c-a1f7-4087-85bb-6f9c7de735ba)

communities: empowering services and adapting formative responses to the specificities of Roma communities, respectively) and with society in general (including employers). Thus, a set of training and awareness-raising actions for IEFP technicians were developed in order to promote greater knowledge of these citizens. A reference for continued training of trainers by IEFP has also been defined – vocational training in a context of cultural diversity, in order to prepare the different formative agents for greater capacity to intervene with these communities, deconstructing preconceived and totally unrealistic ideas and their specificities.

One also hopes that the POISE measure (the only operating initiative dealing with discrimination of Roma people in the labour market) could help deconstruct stereotypes among employers by promoting greater openness to the hiring of Roma people, given that the line of funding (Measure 3.08 – Socio-professional integration of the Roma community) includes this aim.<sup>14</sup> This objective is to be achieved through training at workplace aimed at promoting the practice of personal and technical skills in the real working environment and the preparation of trainees – members of Roma communities for the labour market.

As regards discrimination, such situations are forwarded (at individual level or with the support of social organizations) to the CICDR - Commission on Equality and Against Racial Discrimination.<sup>15</sup> The Commission for Equality and Against Race Discrimination (CICDR)<sup>16</sup> is a Portuguese body specialised in fighting against racial discrimination. When Law 18/2004, transposing EU Race Equality Directive 2000/43/EC into Portuguese law became effective, the CICDR saw its role as a specialised body against discrimination strengthened. The CICDR aims at preventing and fighting racial discrimination in all its forms and penalizing all acts resulting in the violation of any fundamental rights or in the refusal or constraint of any economic, social or cultural rights, by anyone, because of origin, colour, nationality or ethnicity.

Law 93/2017 (Legal framework for preventing, forbidding and combating discrimination) establishes the legal regime for the prevention, prohibition and fight against discrimination on the basis of race, ethnicity, colour, nationality, ancestry and origin.<sup>17</sup> In practice, this document states that all stages of the administrative offence procedure are centred at the same entity in order to facilitate action mechanisms and make law enforcement faster and more effective. By means of this law, all stages of the administrative offence procedure as to the relevant matters – receiving and analysing complaints, prosecution and decision, and coordinating intervention in prevention, inspection and suppression of discriminating practices - are centred at the ACM via the CICDR. Also, the legislation establishes strict cooperation mechanisms between the ACM and the Authority for Work Conditions (ACT), with the latter now being included in the CICDR.

However, there is no information on how many complaints on the grounds of discrimination, there are on the labour market, as the Commission on Equality and Against

<sup>14</sup> Awareness-raising actions aimed at deconstructing prejudices and promoting equal opportunities among employers, ensuring monitoring of workers and employers at the workplace, promoting knowledge of the rights and duties of both parties

<sup>15</sup> Any complaints (on discrimination), which fall within the scope of Law no. 93/2017, of August 23, may be submitted online (<https://www.cicdr.pt/queixa>), in person to the CICDR of the ACM, through electronic mail or by post, addressed to the High Commissioner for Migration, President of the Commission for Equality and Against Racial Discrimination, Rua Álvaro Coutinho, 14, 1150-025 Lisboa.

<sup>16</sup> See: <http://www.cicdr.pt>. The CICDR is chaired by the High Commissioner for Migration (ACM) and includes representatives of the Assembly of the Republic, the Government, immigrant associations, anti-racism associations, unions, employer associations, human rights protection associations, and notable experts appointed by the other members. Currently there is only one Roma community representative in this CICDR (Olga Mariano, President of the *Associação Letras Nómadas*)

<sup>17</sup> For more information, please see: [http://www.pgdlisboa.pt/leis/lei\\_mostra\\_articulado.php?artigo\\_id=2749A0029&nid=2749&tabela=leis&pagina=1&ficha=1&so\\_miolo=&nversao=](http://www.pgdlisboa.pt/leis/lei_mostra_articulado.php?artigo_id=2749A0029&nid=2749&tabela=leis&pagina=1&ficha=1&so_miolo=&nversao=)

Racial Discrimination has no competence for that. In this matter, and according to the current Labour Code, the competent authority to initiate the promotion of the competent administrative procedure, as well as to make the final decision in the event of discrimination, is the Employment Conditions Authority (ACT).

The data obtained in 2017 mention only that most situations of discrimination against them occurred in trade (20 per cent), online or on social networks (12 per cent) and at work (11 per cent) and that many were due to racial or ethnic discrimination (38 per cent).<sup>18</sup> However, Roma associations are aware of situations of discrimination in access to employment, increasingly advocating denunciation of these situations and their punishment, as well as the need to invest in the dissemination of good practices (testimonies of Roma citizens who are employees) and in the awareness and deconstruction of the negative image that some employers have over these communities. This is also reflected in the European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights (FRA) data for Portugal in 2016, where 76 per cent of Roma people, aged 16 years and over, reported being discriminated when seeking for a job (in the last 5 years), because they were Roma.

<sup>18</sup> <https://www.publico.pt/2018/08/23/sociedade/noticia/queixas-de-racismo-e-xenofobia-batem-recordes-em-portugal---1841723>

## HOUSING AND ESSENTIAL PUBLIC SERVICES

The right to housing is a fundamental and structural pillar for a dignified life for all citizens according to the National Constitution. However, access to this basic right is still not guaranteed to a significant number of people, particularly those living in social vulnerability, as it is the case of Roma communities which are strongly affected for bad housing conditions. Although many Roma families live in urban contexts, Roma communities continue to live in precarious habitability conditions, facing different problems, namely absence of drinking water for consumption or even insufficient water for personal hygiene and housing.<sup>19</sup> According to the study promoted by the Institute of Housing and Urban Rehabilitation (IHRU)<sup>20</sup> under ENICC (priority 26), 14,754 Roma families (48 per cent) live in social housing, 2,461 families (32 per cent) live in non-standard dwellings (tent, camp or mobile accommodation), corresponding to 37 per cent of total non-standard accommodation in Portugal.

According to the 2011 Census, the share of Portuguese population living in non-standard dwellings was 0.17 per cent, corresponding to 6,878 families. With the rising prices of both buying and renting housing markets in the main cities of the country, the number of requests for social housing has been increasing, even though the number of families benefiting from public resettlement programmes is significantly falling (only 236 in 2015, less than 10 per cent of the families benefiting from resettlement programmes in 2009). With more than 70 per cent of its population living in cities or suburbs, Portugal is facing a growing housing problem that is harshly affecting the most economic vulnerable groups. The overcrowding rate, that has been diminishing since 2008 for the total population, is rising since 2009 economic crisis among people living below the risk of poverty line: more than 18 per cent of this population group, and 40 per cent of its infants (aged less than six), live in overcrowded dwellings. In 2017, the overcrowding rate was particularly higher among tenants, both at market (21.3 per cent) or controlled rents (25.2 per cent), which suggests people subjected to the market dynamics and public housing assistance face greater difficulties in accessing a decent house. Severe deprivation housing conditions indicator reveals the same tendency: it was declining among the total population until 2011 and is increasing again since 2012, mostly affecting the population at risk of poverty. The latest data published by Eurostat confirms 22 per cent of the Portuguese living in poverty, among which 15 per cent of the youngest (less than 18 years), experience severe housing deprivation, a problem affecting also more than 9 per cent of renters at controlled prices (mostly social housing in Portugal). The share of poor people living in a dwelling with a leaking roof, damp walls, floors or foundation, or rot in window frames of floor is 35.7 per cent (versus 23.2 per cent among population with disposable income above the poverty line) and it reaches 36.2 per cent amid households with dependent children and 43.3 per cent amongst single parent households.

### Access to secure and affordable housing

It is on the base of this context that we believe it urgent to intervene in this area guaranteeing access to housing by designing specific measures and implementing local actions to answer the housing needs of Roma communities.

In the context of promoting equal access to social housing policies, resolution of the Council of Ministers No. 48/2015 of 15 July 2015 approved the National Housing Strategy

<sup>19</sup> This situation had already been presented in the Amnesty International report (February 2018) that identified the communities of African and Roma descent as the most fragile in terms of housing, as a result of being vulnerable communities living in fragile conditions within society

<sup>20</sup> Study "Characterisation of housing conditions of Roma communities living in Portugal", developed by IHRU (2014)

for the period 2015-2031,<sup>21</sup> including a set of measures covering this population, namely integrating the resettling needs of immigrant communities and ethnic minorities in resettlement programme and making available vacant social housing for rehousing. More specifically, these measures focus on the following:<sup>22</sup>

- a) Contribute to social inclusion and the protection of the most disadvantaged:
  - Measure 3.1.1 Eradicate precarious housing by creating a programme to finance the resettlement of the occupants of these dwellings over a defined time horizon, giving priority to solutions involving the rehabilitation of buildings that are unoccupied.
  - Measure 3.1.5 – Promote the integration of ethnic minorities and immigrants and improve their housing conditions by integrating the resettlement needs of these communities into the resettlement programme to be developed. Provide social housing that is available for rehousing.
- b) To promote the improvement of housing conditions:
  - Measure 3.3.4 Eradicate housing in bad conditions and with no comfort. Proceed to the rehabilitation and improvement or demolition of these lodgings so that these situations are eradicated by 2030. Actions to develop: launch the programme of eradication of the lodgings without conditions of comfort and wholesomeness.

However, as these measures have been designed for a long term (2015-2031), there are still no concrete results and an effective evaluation of them. The various participants that attended the workshop consider that this is a key area that requires an effective and urgent intervention involving local authorities in the definition of housing responses that can help to overcome the housing needs faced by these communities.

Currently, Portugal has a legal device – the New Generation of Housing Policies – approved this year,<sup>23</sup> which aims at:

- i) ensuring access for all to adequate housing, understood in the broad sense of habitat and oriented to people, through significant enlargement of the scope of beneficiaries and the size of the housing stock with public support;
- ii) creating conditions for both rehabilitation of the building and urban rehabilitation to become the rule, not the exception, and become the predominant forms of intervention, both at the level of buildings and urban areas. Of all existing measures, it is important to highlight the Support Programme for Housing Access – 1.º Direito,<sup>24</sup> focused on public support to promote housing solutions for people living in unrighteous housing conditions (homelessness, situations of domestic violence, without conditions of health, hygiene and safety – tents, camps, among other situations) and that have no financial capacity to support the cost of access to adequate housing.

This legislation arises from the need to reorient the centralization of the housing policy, based on the creation of more flexible instruments adaptable to different needs, target

<sup>21</sup> Resolution of the Council of Ministers n.º. 48/2015:  
[https://dre.pt/home/dre/69812100/details/maximized?p\\_auth=8UeDEd8Y](https://dre.pt/home/dre/69812100/details/maximized?p_auth=8UeDEd8Y)

<sup>22</sup>  
[https://www.portaldahabitacao.pt/opencms/export/sites/portal/pt/portal/habitacao/EstNacHabitacao/ENH\\_EN\\_FINAL.pdf](https://www.portaldahabitacao.pt/opencms/export/sites/portal/pt/portal/habitacao/EstNacHabitacao/ENH_EN_FINAL.pdf)

<sup>23</sup> Resolution of the Council of Ministers n.º 50-A/2018:  
<https://dre.pt/home/dre/115211109/details/maximized>

<sup>24</sup> This is a programme deemed central among housing policies and aims to ensure access to adequate housing and dignified living conditions to households in a serious situation of housing need – Decree-law no. 37/2018: <https://dre.pt/web/guest/pesquisa/search/115440317/details/normal?q=37%2F2018>

audiences and territories, an implementation based on strong horizontal cooperation (between policies and sectoral bodies), vertical (between levels of government) and between the public and private sectors, including the cooperative, as well as a close proximity to citizens. The adoption of the National Housing Strategy (NHA) in 2015 aimed to take a first step towards a response to the deep financial, economic and social changes in recent years, as well as the progressive policies in this area. This New Generation of Housing Policies recognizes the crucial role that municipalities have in their implementation and reinforces their intervention in this area, in the stir of the logic of decentralization.

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

In the area of housing, segregation practices are current, there being rehousing of Roma families on the outskirts of towns and often in precarious and temporary conditions (modular houses and sometimes even in containers) away from most public services. With the economic crisis of recent years, policies have suffered budgetary cuts that have ended some programmes of the Institute for Housing and Urban Rehabilitation (IHUR), as was the case with the programme PROHABITA, which allowed municipalities to support families deprived of housing, scattering them through the urban network in apartments and homes in the private leasing market. Some Roma families benefited from this programme and an impact study carried out by the municipality of Coimbra concluded for better inclusion of these families, taking into account the situation before and after they benefited from the support of PROHABITA.

Currently, housing needs specific attention from some municipalities, because most Roma communities live in segregated locations without the minimum habitability conditions and completely isolated from the urban network. For example, in 2016 two neighbourhoods were built exclusively for Roma citizens: Albufeira for 8 families, totalling 39 people living in slums in the zone of Orada and Campo Maior for 53 families (220 Roma people) resettled in new housing stock.

## IMPACT OF HEALTH CARE POLICIES ON ROMA

Health inequalities and barriers to health care services are one of the main factors contributing to the social exclusion of Roma communities. According to the National Study on Roma Communities (2014),<sup>25</sup> 51 per cent of Roma people aged 16 and over indicated they did not use any contraceptive method and 60 per cent had their first child when they were 20. It should also be noted that of the surveyed households, only 25 per cent of the individuals were over 35 years of age and the proportion of individuals in the age group 0-29 years was always higher than the proportion present in the following age groups, demonstrating an average life expectancy lower than the national average. This situation had already been noticed in a study carried out in 2009 by EAPN Portugal,<sup>26</sup> the health situation of Roma communities in Portugal is deficient compared to the remaining Portuguese population. In this sense, it is important to emphasise the following aspects:

- Respiratory diseases have an important prevalence among these communities. These are diseases that are related to poor habitability conditions.
- No prevention practices (fundamentally in matters such as family planning, gynaecological diseases, oral health, among others), since Roma communities perceive health as absence of disease. Therefore, they only resort to health services when symptoms occur, with the consecutive limitations and disabilities. In general, the concept of prevention is difficult to put into practice.
- Lack of health education in order to alter some behaviours and attitudes.
- Absence of healthy lifestyles, such as food (inadequate diet, unbalanced diet) and lack of regular physical exercise, reflected in the high percentage of individuals overweight and at risk of obesity.
- Clear health inequalities between the Roma population and the general population have been observed in all above-mentioned aspects.

Therefore, in the context of the ENICC, actions have been developed to fight the health inequalities existing in these communities, including materials adapted to these communities and information/awareness-raising actions on early maternity, pediatric follow-up, healthy eating habits, among others.<sup>27</sup>

### Ensuring equal access to public health care services

In terms of access to health care, it appears that there is a certain relationship of proximity between the health services and Roma communities, since about 92 per cent of respondents state that all members of their household have a general practitioner and 50.5 per cent are followed by the general practitioner weekly or monthly.<sup>28</sup>

It is equally important to work with Roma communities as far as health education. In this sense, one should mention the *Latchim Sastipen* (Good Health) campaign, developed by

<sup>25</sup> MENDES, Maria Manuela, et. al; Estudo Nacional sobre as Comunidades Ciganas, Lisbon, High Commissioner for Migrations, 2014: [http://www.poatfse.qren.pt/upload/docs/Documentos/estudo\\_ennic.pdf](http://www.poatfse.qren.pt/upload/docs/Documentos/estudo_ennic.pdf)

<sup>26</sup> VICENTE, Maria José; As Comunidades Ciganas e a Saúde: um primeiro retrato nacional, Oporto, EAPN Portugal, 2009. This study was carried out nationwide under the project Roma Communities and Health: review of the European situation (2007-2009), funded by the European Union under the programme PHEA – Public Health Executive Agency. This project involved the following countries: Portugal, Spain, Romania, Czech Republic, Bulgaria and Greece

<sup>27</sup> 2016 ENICC Implementation Report, Lisbon, ACM, 2017 : [https://www.acm.gov.pt/documents/10181/52642/FENICC\\_Relat%C3%B3rio+Execu%C3%A7%C3%A3o\\_2016.pdf/55f8ffb5-50bc-490e-b56c-3a5994d748b6](https://www.acm.gov.pt/documents/10181/52642/FENICC_Relat%C3%B3rio+Execu%C3%A7%C3%A3o_2016.pdf/55f8ffb5-50bc-490e-b56c-3a5994d748b6)

<sup>28</sup> MENDES, Maria Manuela, et. al; Estudo Nacional sobre as Comunidades Ciganas, Lisbon, High Commissioner for Migrations, 2014 : [http://www.poatfse.qren.pt/upload/docs/Documentos/estudo\\_ennic.pdf](http://www.poatfse.qren.pt/upload/docs/Documentos/estudo_ennic.pdf)

*Associação Letras Nómadas* in 2016.<sup>29</sup> This campaign consists of six sketches<sup>30</sup> combining humour and information, provided by health professionals, seeking not only to prevent risk behaviours, promote reflexion and raise awareness among Roma communities to health care and a healthy lifestyle, but also, and above all, to increase the average life expectancy of Roma communities. The idea for the *Latchim Sastipen* (Good Health) campaign was born and awarded in the first Social Entrepreneurship Bootcamp, promoted by the Roma Communities Support Office (GACI) of ACM, in close collaboration with IES – Social Business School. The project was implemented with funding from ACM, under FAPE – National Strategy Support Fund for the Integration of Roma Communities (ENICC).

### Fight against discrimination and antigypsyism in health care

There are situations of discrimination and lack of knowledge on the part of health professionals, and there is a need to invest in the creation of reflexion groups for health professionals in order to promote access for these communities to the health services and to pay attention to the specificities they present. These reflexion groups could also promote specific training on the characteristics and cultural aspects of Roma communities, preferably with elements of the community itself.

It is also important to emphasise the relevance of including intercultural mediation experiences in hospitals and health centres. The experience of the Dona Estefania Paediatric Hospital (in Lisbon) depicts the importance of a socio-cultural mediator to ease communication between health professionals and Roma communities and consequently their access to existing health resources, reducing cultural barriers and increasing knowledge of the needs felt by the aforementioned community. *"Being a mediator is an asset for Roma users and the hospital. The mediator is a communication facilitator, a link. I as mediator call people to responsibility. If people are not from Lisbon and need support or help concerning food, for example, I talk to nurses to signal this situation with the social worker. In religious terms, for example, if they need spiritual support and are not from Lisbon, I speak with a pastor from Lisbon to come here and pray."*<sup>31</sup> In this sense, it is important to invest in mediation practices and in training health professionals, and to invest in reference professionals in order to obtain a closer follow-up and a relationship of trust.

<sup>29</sup> This project was developed under FAPE – National Strategy Support Fund for the Integration of Roma Communities promoted by ACM – High Commissioner for Migrations. This programme has the following aims: promoting the fight against discrimination and raising awareness in public opinion, promoting training on citizenship, encouraging active community participation of Roma communities, promoting knowledge on Roma history and culture and other actions that directly help achieve the targets defined in the priorities established by ENICC

<sup>30</sup> <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8TG5yAUepI8>

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Sim34pYelnk>

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3lWi5bYv8k8>

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=a3g6oQFYP0w>

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FwRL7S7QDsk>

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bRVwO1ZUKhc>

<sup>31</sup> Vicente, Maria José; Singular do Plural; EAPN Portugal, 2016, p. 42

## EDUCATION

### Access to quality preschool education

Most children up to 5 years of age attend preschool. It should be noted that the Social Insertion Income itself had an impact.<sup>32</sup> Although many parents did not value the school, there was an increase in children attending educational centres (kindergartens, kindergarten, schools) as a result of the contract inherent to this measure. This is for the general society as well as for Roma people.

This measure is considered effective due to the fact that the insertion contract includes some objectives that the family and the beneficiary of the measure must achieve during the period of the monetary benefit. One of the main areas covered in this contract is school attendance at all levels of education, with a significant impact on the frequency of pre-school. This contract is monitored by social workers and the families must comply with otherwise they will face the suspension of the monetary benefit.

### Improving quality of education until the end of compulsory schooling

At educational level, Roma communities have very high rates of dropout and school failure and express difficulties in adapting to the education system. According to the national study, 15.5 per cent of the responding population are illiterate; about 30 per cent did not complete the 1<sup>st</sup> cycle or ever attended school, approximately 39 per cent completed basic education only, 2.5 per cent secondary education and only 6 per cent the 3<sup>rd</sup> cycle.<sup>33</sup> It is also the case that Roma women have lower schooling levels than Roma men.

Another study developed by the Directorate General for Education (2016-2018) "The school profile of the Roma Community"<sup>34</sup> shows that more and more Roma children are enrolled in preschool, that the 1<sup>st</sup> cycle<sup>35</sup> is practically guaranteed but that there is a break in school attendance from the 1<sup>st</sup> to the 2<sup>nd</sup> cycle and from the 2<sup>nd</sup> to the 3<sup>rd</sup> cycle. The study shows that there still are difficulties among these communities (school failure), but there is already greater participation in preschool and curricular enrichment activities. It also shows that there are already Roma children (specially females) in the 3<sup>rd</sup> cycle of primary and secondary education. However, it is acknowledged by the decision-makers and policy makers that there are a lot more to do to achieve greater participation of Roma children in these schooling levels (2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> cycles).

Although there is a regulation defining compulsory schooling for all children and young people aged 6 to 18,<sup>36</sup> there still is early school dropout by Roma children. The Fifth Portugal Report of the European Commission against Racism and Intolerance states that

<sup>32</sup> It is a political measure consisting of assistance aimed at protecting people in a situation of extreme poverty, formed by a financial instalment to guarantee satisfaction of their basic needs and an insertion programme including a contract (set of actions established in accordance with the characteristics and conditions of the household of the applicant for the instalment, aimed at gradual social, labour and community insertion of its members. See: <http://www.seg-social.pt/rendimento-social-de-insercao>

<sup>33</sup> Manuela Mendes; Olga Magano; Pedro Candeias, National Study on Roma Communities, Lisbon, OBCIG, December 2014, p.172

<sup>34</sup> "School Profile of the Roma Community", offering a set of statistical tables about Roma community pupils enrolled in the school year 2016/2017, in public schools of the Ministry of Education, see: <http://www.dgeec.mec.pt/np4/906.html>

<sup>35</sup> The Basic Education comprises three cycles: 1<sup>st</sup> Cycle: grades 1-4 (age 6-10); 2<sup>nd</sup> Cycle: grades 5-6 (age 10-12); 3<sup>rd</sup> Cycle: grades 7-9 (age 13-15). Secondary Education consists of: grades 10-12 (compulsory schooling - 18 years).

<sup>36</sup> Law no. 85/2009, establishing the mandatory school regime and enshrining universal preschool education for children from age 5, see: [http://www.dge.mec.pt/sites/default/files/EInfancia/documentos/lei\\_85\\_2009.pdf](http://www.dge.mec.pt/sites/default/files/EInfancia/documentos/lei_85_2009.pdf)

the situation of Roma children is worrying because 90 per cent of children leave the education system between 10 and 12 years of age.<sup>37</sup> However, it should be noted that school dropout is more visible among girls. This is explained by fact that women bear the honour of families and the continuity of cultural identity. As such, some Roma families believe that taking girls off school prevents loss of cultural identity, as it is girls that bear cultural preservation. In some situations, the Public Prosecutor's Office and some judges choose to close in most cases processes of school dropout and absenteeism, claiming Roma culture as a factor of maladjustment and shock with the institutions of school education.

In this sense, on the occasion of the International Day of the Roma (8 April 2014), after several judicial rulings, the Consultative Group for the Integration of Roma Communities (CONCIG)<sup>38</sup> issued a statement claiming that education is a fundamental right and that it is possible to reconcile the right to education and the right to cultural identity. Despite this guidance, in 2018 the General Competence Court of Fronteira, in the District of Portalegre, proposed dismissing a situation of school dropout by a 15-year-old girl who attended 7<sup>th</sup> grade, alleging discouragement to attend school, being Roma and of having to observe tradition,<sup>39</sup> a situation denounced by Roma associations and by social institutions advocating the right to education.

### Fight against discrimination and antigypsyism in education

Despite the definition of measures to support the schooling of Roma children, these were not adequately implemented, there being situations of discrimination and greater difficulty in accessing school and guaranteeing their rights. The existence of situations of segregation has several forms, ranging from clear and evident segregation to more covert segregation through educational measures to remedy situations of disadvantage or specific needs of these children, like, for example, classes for Roma children only. Going back to the school year 2015/2016, there was a school in the city of Tomar that had formed a class with Roma children only, from 7 to 14 years old. This is not acceptable since it causes segregation. The school board claimed that students had a history of school failure. Parents were outraged by the creation of this class and reported the situation in the media and in relevant spheres. The High Commissioner for Migration intervened, demanding that at the end of the year students be distributed in regular classes. In Moura, in that same year, the school grouping also had the intention of forming ethnic groups in their schools; however, the challenge from Roma parents and the municipal mediator was paramount to deter the creation of such classes.

In the case of schools with Roma children only, such as the 1<sup>st</sup> Cycle Basic School of Meães (in Famalicão), there is no intention from the school. This is a process going on gradually since some schools are inserted in socio-geographic areas mostly inhabited by the Roma population and this reality is also mirrored in schools. In other situations, and due to the existence of negative representations of Roma communities, non-Roma parents transferred their children to other schools despite the mandatory enrolment, provided in

<sup>37</sup> European Commission Against Racism and Intolerance, Fifth Report on Portugal, approved on June 19<sup>th</sup>, 2018, published on 2 October 2018, see: <https://rm.coe.int/fifth-report-on-portugal-portuguese-translation-/16808de7db>

<sup>38</sup> The Consultative Group for the Integration of Roma Communities (CONCIG) has the mission of supervising and monitoring the National Strategy for the Integration of Roma Communities (ENICC), see: <https://www.acm.gov.pt/pt/grupo-consultivo-para-a-integracao-das-comunidades-ciganas>

<sup>39</sup> Article in the newspaper *Público*: <https://www.publico.pt/2018/09/05/sociedade/noticia/tribunal-de-fronteira-aceita-abandono-escolar-de-rapariga-cigana-1842986>

national legislation, in the school area of residence of households at the level of basic education.<sup>40</sup>

In this context it is important to present an initiative developed in Viseu at the school of Paradinha, a school that only received Roma children residing in the social district located near the school. However, a group of non-Roma parents from preschool decided to enrol their children at the Paradinha school to wage on an inclusive school. This will be brought about the project Paradinha – School and Community,<sup>41</sup> which aims to put an end to the separation between preschool and the 1<sup>st</sup> cycle, reduce absenteeism and failure, reinforcing pedagogical capacity and waging on quality education. Thus, the school of Paradinha is no longer a school attended by Roma children only, and there is currently interaction between different cultures (Roma children and non-Roma children).

Bearing in mind this context, in recent decades alternative education programmes have been created by government initiative: the TEIPS<sup>42</sup> – Priority Intervention Educational Territories Programme and the PIEFS<sup>43</sup> (Integrated Education and Training Programme). These programmes aim to reduce social and educational inequalities. However, in some territories Roma children/youths are referred to these programmes thus promoting their segregation and not having the desired effect (school success) as these programmes focus on alternative curricular trajectories that do not offer the same knowledge and prestige as regular education.

It is also important to mention that other teaching modalities have been adopted by schools or on the initiative of Roma families themselves, namely distance learning<sup>44</sup> (this modality of education differs from the rest, by providing a context of distance learning for the 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> cycles of basic education and secondary education, aimed at diverse audiences who do not find in the classroom an adequate response to the characteristics of family mobility or others resulting from personal situations of a temporary nature). Many of these schools have a high number of Roma students, usually reaching more than 50 per cent of children. These schools present high rates of absenteeism and especially school failure.

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

Still in the context of policies to fight the inequalities of these communities in education, it is also important to mention two programmes: the *Opre* (support Roma students in higher education) and *Escolhas* (Choices) programmes (to support children and young people from socially vulnerable contexts who attend primary and secondary education).

<sup>40</sup> Normative Order n.º.6/2018 – establishing procedures for enrolment and respective renewal and standards applicable in the distribution of children and pupils, see: <https://dre.pt/pesquisa/search/115093805/details/normal?l=1>

<sup>41</sup> Article in the newspaper *Público*: <https://www.publico.pt/2018/10/28/sociedade/reportagem/escola-janao-so-ciganos-1848819>

<sup>42</sup> Presently implemented in 137 groups of schools/ungrouped schools located in economically e socially disfavoured territories, marked by poverty and social exclusion, where violence, indiscipline, school dropout and failure are especially apparent. Among the central aims of the programme are prevention and reduction of early school dropout and absenteeism, reduction of indiscipline and promotion of educational success for all students.

<sup>43</sup> It is a social-educational and formative measure for inclusion, temporary and exceptional in nature, applicable to youths aged 15 to 18 that are at risk and/or danger of school and social exclusion after exhausting every other measure for school integration). It aims to favour observance of mandatory school and social promotion, granting school capacity for 2<sup>nd</sup> and/or 3<sup>rd</sup> cycle).

<sup>44</sup> Ordinance no. 85/2014 of April 15<sup>th</sup> (D. R. n.º 74, Series I of 2014-04-15, see: [http://www.dge.mec.pt/sites/default/files/EDistancia/port\\_85\\_2014.pdf](http://www.dge.mec.pt/sites/default/files/EDistancia/port_85_2014.pdf)

The *Opre* programme is an initiative aimed at young higher education students<sup>45</sup> of Roma communities with the aim of fighting early dropout by allocating 30 university scholarships and a set of training, mentoring and monitoring measures for these young scholarship holders and their families. It is funded by ACM (under the *Escolhas* programme). Developed in partnership with the *Escolhas* programme, *Associação Letras Nómadas* and the Portuguese Youth Network for Equal Opportunities between Women and Men.<sup>46</sup>

The *Escolhas* programme<sup>47</sup> is a nationwide government programme, created in 2001, promoted by the Presidency of the Council of Ministers and under the High Commissioner for Migration – ACM, whose mission is to promote the social inclusion of children and young people from vulnerable socio-economic contexts, aiming at equal opportunities and strengthening social cohesion. This project also includes Roma children; note that 80 of the 112 projects developed in the 6<sup>th</sup> generation of this programme have Roma communities as target audiences, supporting inclusion and school success.

It should also be noted that one of the review of the objectives of the National Strategy for the Integration of Roma Communities (November 2018), focuses on promoting and strengthening the capacity of schools for integration and educational success of children and young Roma in primary and higher education through the establishment of mechanisms for monitoring and follow up the situation of Roma children and young people in the education system, implementation of mechanisms to encourage access to and permanence of young Roma in secondary education and training of educational agents.<sup>48</sup>

Despite the progress that Portugal has achieved in the area of education with Roma communities, we argue that school needs to work with the community as a whole, including families, social institutions and the educational community, valuing respect for cultural diversity and the different cultures that exist in the school environment. For example, school curricula do not include the history of Roma communities; however there is a national strategy of education for citizenship (ENEC)<sup>49</sup> based on a set of rights and duties that must be present in the citizen education of children and youths, so that in the future they become adults with a civic conduct that privileges equality in interpersonal relationships, integration of difference, respect for human rights and appreciation of concepts and values of democratic citizenship. This strategy aims to promote the development of competences with three-dimensional impact: individual civic attitude: in interpersonal relationships and in social and intercultural relationships.

<sup>45</sup> This programme is accessible to youths from Roma communities living in the national territory that are enrolled in a homologated higher education course and have been approved in most subjects/curricular units of the preceding school year.

<sup>46</sup> The *Opre* programme arises from a project developed by civil society involving a Roma association (Project *Opré Chavalé*) that then became public policy.

<sup>47</sup> <https://www.programaescolhas.pt/apresentacao>

<sup>48</sup> Resolution of the Council of Ministers n.º. 154/2018 – Approves the revision of the National Strategy for the Integration of Roma Communities 2013-2022, see: <https://dre.pt/web/guest/home/-/dre/117142874/details/maximized>

<sup>49</sup> <http://www.dge.mec.pt/estrategia-nacional-de-educacao-para-cidadania>

## RECOMMENDATIONS

### Employment

- It is important to create strong links between measures (namely as far as vocational training) and the real labour market needs. There are a lot of training offers that are inadequate to respond to the labour market demands. It is also important to create effective training on the job so at the end of the internships, the trainees are integrated where they did training.
- Raising awareness of public opinion in general and employers in particular about prejudices and discriminatory practices towards the Roma community, waging on the publicising of “success cases” and/or “reference cases”.
- Revitalise the traditional activities of Roma communities, promoting equal opportunities for people in situations of social disadvantage, access to and participation in professional life.
- Promote entrepreneurship and training that enables business and self-employment opportunities.

### Housing and essential public services

- To achieve an effective impact on the conditions of habitability of Roma communities in this programming period (2014-2020). It is important that this issue be a priority in operational programmes and axes of intervention, waging on the complementary nature of the funds.
- Define plans for the eradication of tents and camps, promoting access to dignified and integrated dwellings in the urban network, preventing ghettos and exclusion.
- Convert the needs identified locally in solutions included in housing policies; building on integrated and participatory approaches and in the reinforcement of information, proximity referral and monitoring.
- Housing policies should be promoted by the competent authorities, and implemented in adequate and viable spaces, with sufficient infrastructure for their proper functioning, guided by the principle of creating opportunities for inclusion any form of restriction on access to housing for reasons of racial or ethnic discrimination should be fought.
- Adapting good experiences to the specificities of local contexts and the heterogeneity of families, relying on the involvement of the Roma population in the identification/fulfilment of their needs and expectations and with the involvement of stakeholders in fulfilling their social inclusion obligations.

### Health care

- Promote intercultural mediation in the field of health, because in Portugal there are several experiences of mediation but with higher incidence in the field of education. Include pilot experiences of intercultural mediation in health services will enable us to work with Roma communities as far as health education and the proper use of health services. Therefore, it is important that the Directorate General for Health wage on training mediators and integrate them into the different structures of the national health system.
- Invest in training health professionals on cultural diversity. In order to obtain effective intervention with Roma communities, proximity between professionals and these communities should be promoted, trying to create a relationship of trust and empathy in order to demystify existing stereotypes and prejudices. To

this end, it is important to develop a continued work of awareness-raising of all health professionals through multicultural training.

- Identify reference professionals in order to obtain closer follow-up and a relationship of trust. In situations of greater intimacy, the health professional must be of the same sex as the user in order to facilitate communication and prevent constraints. It is also relevant to promote exchanges between the team of health professionals in order to break the gender issue, since some Roma women feel inhibited before a male physician.

## Education

- School is indispensable in this process of fighting racist and discriminatory attitudes and must involve all agents (parents, teachers, students, employees, etc.). In particular, it must be a model of multicultural education, where history and mutual respect of citizens of different origins are taught. The conception of school as an institution open to immediate social realities and the conception of the educational process as a set of active, social and participatory experiences for students, where integrated development is valued, makes school one of the agents in fighting and preventing this and other social problems. Helping overcome deeply rooted prejudices and ignorance, school programmes should be based on the cultural, religious and linguistic diversity of the populations in attendance, developing literacy programmes and training actually accessible to populations for their cultural differences.
- Presentation and dissemination of "reference" or "success" cases in order to show to society in general and to Roma communities that there are other realities in Roma communities, notably in access to employment and education.
- Roma cultural mediators that work in cooperation with the teacher and individually with the children and make the connection between the school and those in charge of education.
- Teachers' training – development of attitudes facilitating intercultural relationship and historical and cultural knowledge of the different ethnic groups in attendance.
- Development of forums and discussion spaces to allow sharing knowledge, feelings, experiences with people from different cultures, in order to promote a common dialogue and find shared values for coexistence and common solutions to overcome obstacles.
- To encourage participation of the whole community in general and, in particular, of parents and families of students (fostering the school-family relationship).

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