

## Country fiche: SLOVENIA

### Position of civil society involved in the Roma Civil Monitor

#### SUBSTANTIVE POLICY AREAS

##### STRENGTHS/KEY ELEMENTS OF THE MS APPROACH

##### WEAKNESSES/GAPS/RECOMMENDATIONS

#### EDUCATION

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| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Pre-school and extra-curricular activities are organised in several multi-purpose centres in segregated Roma settlements on a project basis.</li> <li>• Measures supporting Roma pupils are financed from ESF and include teacher assistants, Roma educational incubators and extra-curricular activities. Such measures have shown to be effective in addressing the challenge of school absenteeism and achieving better school performance.</li> <li>• Legislation was amended to provide stronger support to schools educating Roma; they are eligible for additional funding for individual or group work with Roma children, lower number of students in a class, subsidies for meals, textbooks and excursions for Roma pupils.</li> <li>• Roma students engaged in teaching studies are supported with scholarships.</li> <li>• Implementation of the Adult Education Strategy includes provision of counselling and information activities for vulnerable groups of adults (including Roma), implementation of publicly recognised programmes for less educated or informal programmes to improve vulnerable adults' capabilities.</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• In several Roma settlements the inclusion of Roma in integrated kindergartens remains a problem, mainly because of financial barriers and lack of necessary transport to facilities.</li> <li>• The proportion of Roma children who are sent to special needs schools remains problematic (between 6-12%).</li> <li>• Roma school assistants are depending on project funding; moreover, they are limited to pre-school and primary education. This instrument should be extended to secondary education and receive sustainable funding.</li> <li>• Many Roma are not aware of the opportunity of applying for scholarships at secondary or tertiary education levels.</li> <li>• Training of professionals working with Roma pupils remains insufficient; only two seminars on the matter have been organised within regular teachers' training.</li> </ul> |
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#### EMPLOYMENT

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| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Mainstream public employment services are available to Roma jobseekers. Roma are explicit (but not exclusive) target group of several employment measures.</li> <li>• Roma (as other vulnerable groups) can participate in public works programme for 2 years (as opposed to 1 year for persons not belonging to vulnerable groups).</li> <li>• Employment service subsidises a higher share (95%) of wages of participants of public works programmes Roma population which include at least half of the long-term unemployed Roma.</li> <li>• There are adequate legal provisions against discrimination in access to employment.</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• There is no employment strategy for Roma in Slovenia, while this would be necessary to effectively tackle the problem of high unemployment among Roma.</li> <li>• Roma mainly participate in public works or general counselling, which does not effectively help reemployment in open labour market.</li> <li>• There are few appeals to enforce antidiscrimination laws in case of unequal treatment, probably due to lack of awareness.</li> </ul> |
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#### HEALTHCARE

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| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The NRIS aims to improve the health care services and bring them closer to Roma, to improve Roma health awareness. Several measures are planned to achieve these objectives targeting both Roma and medical professionals.</li> <li>• Health workers are supported by Roma assistants who also promote healthy lifestyle among the Roma population.</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Roma NGOs' experience shows that there is still a lot of measures lacking in the field of both healthy lifestyles and reproductive and women's health.</li> <li>• The biggest barrier to Roma access to healthcare is the lack of knowledge and understanding of complex medical language. Hiring more Roma assistants and training of medical professionals in working with marginalised groups could improve the situation.</li> </ul> |
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- A number of individual projects, many with international participation, were launched to improve the health of the Roma.

### HOUSING

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| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Important achievements were made regarding legalisation and improvements to the communal infrastructure of some Roma settlements.</li> <li>• The newly established dedicated governmental working group aims at resolving spatial issues; the prepared recommendations for the municipalities where Roma live to include Roma settlements in their spatial plans.</li> <li>• Legislation has been changed which might have a positive effect on further legalisation of Roma settlements.</li> <li>• Public tenders were implemented for co-financing of basic municipal infrastructure projects in Roma settlements.</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Lack of monitoring and evaluation or of clear budget lines of the relevant National Program of Measures 2017-2021 makes assessment of measures aimed at housing improvement difficult.</li> <li>• Most Roma housing is still below the minimum standard of living, without access to basic infrastructure, like lack of access to water - especially in the south-eastern part of Slovenia.</li> <li>• Irregularities of dwellings has allowed municipalities to refuse to provide clean water and sanitation. Central government does not intervene even if it could to address this problem in municipalities where local government is inactive.</li> <li>• Roma often face discrimination in renting private apartments, and there is a general lack of social housing.</li> <li>• Residential segregation and issues concerning lack of security of tenure persist.</li> </ul> |
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## HORIZONTAL MEASURES

### STRENGTHS/KEY ELEMENTS OF THE MS APPROACH

### WEAKNESSES/GAPS/RECOMMENDATIONS

#### ANTI-DISCRIMINATION

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| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• In 2016, the anti-discrimination legislation was amended, strengthening the role and independence of the Advocate of the Principle of Equality, providing him with investigative powers.</li> <li>• Equality policy focuses on Roma educational inclusion and increased access to preschool.</li> <li>• Projects targeting discrimination, segregation and integration are outsourced to civil society organizations, yet funded through governmental grants.</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Low rights awareness, mistrust and the costs of court cases deter Roma from taking legal action. Two cases concerning access to clean water is currently pending before the ECtHR.</li> <li>• Considerable share of Roma face forced eviction with little protection.</li> </ul> |
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#### FIGHTING ANTIGYPSYISM

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| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• In cases of organised protests against the Roma, the police force usually intervenes.</li> <li>• There is an optional subject in the 7th to 9th grade of primary education called 'Roma culture' for which teaching materials have been prepared by Roma. (Due to lack of qualified teachers and a lack of interest from Roma children, the subject is however offered in a limited number of schools.)</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Antigypsyism is not sufficiently addressed by the state. The term is rather unknown and Roma-targeted actions are not framed as efforts to address this specific form of racism. There is no research concerning the phenomenon of antigypsyism.</li> <li>• The government should support initiatives aimed at raising media's awareness on antigypsyism. Such initiatives should particularly focus on online media, which has an increasing number of readers and influence.</li> <li>• Reports of police brutality, over policing, ethnic profiling and discrimination against Roma rarely lead to effective investigations.</li> </ul> |
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#### ADDRESSING SPECIFIC NEEDS OF MOST VULNERABLE GROUPS AMONG ROMA

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| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• NRIS 2017-2021 in the field of health specifically targets on women and children, as the most vulnerable sub-groups</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• No measures have been adopted to address (explicitly) Roma LGBT+ issues, while Roma LGBT+</li> </ul> |
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among the Roma; focus is on awareness raising concerning sexual and reproductive health.

individuals may face a high level of hostility within their communities as well (thus may choose rather to hide).

## STRUCTURAL MEASURES

### STRENGTHS/KEY ELEMENTS OF THE MS APPROACH

### WEAKNESSES/GAPS/RECOMMENDATIONS

#### STAKEHOLDER INVOLVEMENT AT THE CENTRAL LEVEL

- Slovenia has adopted a special Roma Community Act setting a basic framework of Roma inclusion policy.
- Roma have opened several lines of dialogue with members of the parliament and various government bodies and commissions; they cooperate or at least communicate with political parties in all the relevant regions and throughout the political spectrum.
- Roma Community Council of the Republic of Slovenia was constituted in 2007 to represent the interests of Roma vis-à-vis public authorities.
- In 2016 with support from the Commission, the Office for Minorities of the Republic of Slovenia established a National Roma Platform.

- Official Roma inclusion policy targets only 'autochthonous Roma', Roma coming from other countries of former Yugoslavia are not targeted.
- Different from the Hungarian and Italian minority, Roma are not recognised as a national minority, but as a "minority community", which is entitled to the election of a minority representative only at the local level in those 20 municipalities where Roma are recognised as 'autochthonous communities'.

#### CIVIL PARTICIPATION AND EMPOWERMENT

- Roma National Council includes seven members elected every four years from among the Roma City Councillors and 14 members from the biggest Roma umbrella association, Roma Union Slovenia.
- One of the biggest and most recognisable organisations is the Forum of Roma city councillors, which connects Roma city councillors in 20 municipalities.
- Election participation has been decreasing both among the general population and among the Roma, especially the younger voters.
- In 20 (out of 212) municipalities recognising Roma as autochthonous community Roma have in addition to their vote in the general local elections also a vote for a local Roma Councillor.

- The composition of the Council has been criticised for not being representative of the whole Roma community and not being democratically elected (unlike the minority councils of the Hungarian and Italian communities). Roma Community Council is dominated by one big umbrella organisation.
- The distinction between 'autochthonous' and 'non-autochthonous' Roma has severe repercussions on the level of political participation of the Roma.

#### MAINSTREAMING OF ROMA INCLUSION AT THE LOCAL LEVEL

- In principle, only in 20 municipalities recognising Roma as autochthonous community, there are special Roma-targeted policies; in the other municipalities Roma are included in mainstream policies towards vulnerable groups.
- Competence to improve infrastructure within Roma settlements belongs to the municipalities; but the central government is also competent to intervene if a municipality fails to address issues around an irregular settlement.

- Roma councillors often do not enjoy majority support among the local Roma community, especially if the electorate feels that the Roma councillor represents only the particular interest of an individual (their own) Roma settlement.
- Central government's power to intervene if the local government is not acting is rarely invoked. The state should intervene and take responsibility.

#### DATA COLLECTION

- According to the 2002 census, 3,246 citizens in Slovenia declared to belong to the Roma minority, but experts estimate the number between 7,000 and 12,000, many of whom refuse to officially self-declare.

- Slovenia does not collect data disaggregated by ethnicity, thus there is little data on Roma besides the census.
- Also, Slovenia was not part of international surveys on Roma conducted by the United Nations Development



Programme (UNDP), World Bank, European Agency for Fundamental Rights (FRA), OSCE and others.

#### FUNDING FOR CIVIL SOCIETY

- One of the biggest sources of funding for Roma organizations in Slovenia is ESF.
- The largest projects concerning Roma inclusion in Slovenia are aimed at the development of infrastructure and are mostly implemented by local authorities and ministries.
- In Slovenia, a very small number of open calls are explicitly aimed at supporting Roma-targeted activities, although in the last year there is a positive trend.
- The lack of transparency of funding for Roma civil society is a cause for concern. The government plans to reform the system to make it more democratic, transparent and enable expression of various interests of the Roma minority.
- Roma also often lack education and expertise to fully participate in all available funding opportunities.

#### EXAMPLE OF PROMISING PRACTICE

Ministry of Economic Development and Technology and the Development Council of the South Eastern Slovenia Development Region signed a South-eastern Slovenia Development Partnership Agreement in November 2017, with the agreement on the implementation and financing of the spatial-planning arrangement of the Roma settlement Žabjak-Brezje, which is the project of the Novo mesto municipality. The project is currently being implemented and will be completed in 2020. The value of the project is 3.65 million euros, with the state contributing 3.1 million. This positive practice should be spread to as many Roma settlements as possible.

#### MOST IMPORTANT PRIORITIES TO BE ADDRESSED

- To legalise informal Roma settlements and to develop of basic amenities for all their inhabitants.
- To actively address the problem of residential segregation; housing intervention should be driven by desegregation aims.
- To collect of records on school attendance and success rates of Roma pupils and stronger work with Roma parents to achieve higher levels of preschool attendance.
- To systemise the position of Roma assistants at all levels of education (from preschool to primary school and high school levels), where needed by pupils/students. Systematic professional capacity building of Roma assistants and sustainability of the programme ensured by systemic funding (not dependent on projects).
- To develop an employment strategy for Roma, including adjustment of employment programmes to Roma needs with special focus on Roma women.