



Civil society monitoring report
on the implementation of the national
strategic framework for Roma equality,
inclusion, and participation
in Latvia

Prepared by:
Centre for Education Initiatives
March 2025

Justice
and Consumers



EUROPEAN COMMISSION

Directorate-General for Justice and Consumers
Directorate D — Equality and Union Citizenship
Unit D1 Non-Discrimination and Roma Coordination

European Commission
B-1049 Brussels

Civil society monitoring report on the implementation
of the national strategic framework
for Roma equality, inclusion, and participation
in Latvia

Manuscript completed in March 2025

LEGAL NOTICE

The European Commission support for the production of this publication does not constitute endorsement of the contents which reflects the views only of the authors, and the Commission cannot be held responsible for any use which may be made of the information contained therein.

PDF	ISBN 978-92-68-26283-2	doi:10.2838/1500884	Catalogue number DS-01-25-082-EN-N
-----	------------------------	---------------------	------------------------------------

How to cite this report:

Roma Civil Monitor (2025) *Civil society monitoring report on the implementation of the national strategic framework for Roma equality, inclusion, and participation in Latvia*. Publications Office of the European Union, Luxembourg.

Luxembourg: Publications Office of the European Union, 2025

© European Union, 2025

Reuse is authorised provided the source is acknowledged and the original meaning or message of the document is not distorted. The European Commission shall not be liable for any consequence stemming from the reuse. The reuse policy of European Commission documents is implemented by Commission [Decision 2011/833/EU of 12 December 2011 on the reuse of Commission documents](#) (OJ L 330, 14.12.2011, p. 46).

The report was prepared by CSO Centre for Education Initiatives.

The report was prepared as part of the initiative "**Preparatory Action – Roma Civil Monitoring – Strengthening capacity and involvement of Roma and pro-Roma civil society in policy monitoring and review**" implemented by a consortium led by the Democracy Institute of Central European University (DI/CEU), including the European Roma Grassroots Organisations Network (ERGO Network), the Fundación Secretariado Gitano (FSG) and the European Roma Rights Centre (ERRC). The initiative was funded by the European Commission's Directorate-General Justice and Consumers (DG Just) under service contract no. JUST/2020/RPAA/PR/EQUA/0095.

The report represents the findings of the authors, and it does not necessarily reflect the views of the consortium or the European Commission who cannot be held responsible for any use which may be made of the information contained herein.

CONTENTS

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS	7
EXECUTIVE SUMMARY	8
INTRODUCTION	9
1. IMPLEMENTATION OF THE NRSF.....	12
1.1. Key developments and effectiveness of implementation	12
1.1.1. Changes in the NRSF	12
1.1.2. Progress in implementation.....	12
1.1.3. Effectiveness of monitoring	13
1.1.4. Data collection	14
1.2. NRSF's synergy with domestic and EU actions	16
1.2.1. Complementary policies.....	16
1.2.2. Alignment with EU actions	17
1.2.3. Impact of assessments	17
1.3. Roma participation in implementation.....	18
1.3.1. Involvement of Roma CSOs in implementation	18
1.3.2. Roma in public institutions implementing the NRSF	19
1.3.3. Roma participation in monitoring and evaluation	20
2. REVIEW BY THEMATIC AREA.....	21
2.1. Fighting antigypsyism and discrimination.....	21
2.1.1. Effectiveness of the NRSF in addressing the problems	21
2.1.2. Addressing the problems beyond the NRSF.....	22
2.2. Education	22
2.2.1. Effectiveness of the NRSF in addressing the problems	23
2.2.2. Addressing the problems beyond the NRSF.....	25
2.3. Employment	25
2.3.1. Effectiveness of the NRSF in addressing the problems	25
2.3.2. Addressing the problems beyond the NRSF.....	27
2.4. Healthcare	27
2.4.1. Effectiveness of the NRSF in addressing the problems	27
2.4.2. Addressing the problems beyond the NRSF.....	28
2.5. Social protection	28
2.5.1. Effectiveness of the NRSF in addressing the problems	28
2.5.2. Addressing the problems beyond the NRSF.....	29
2.6. Social services	29
2.6.1. Effectiveness of the NRSF in addressing the problems	30
2.6.2. Addressing the problems beyond the NRSF.....	31
2.7. Child protection.....	31
2.7.1. Effectiveness of the NRSF in addressing the problems	31
2.7.2. Addressing the problems beyond the NRSF.....	32
2.8. Promoting (awareness of) Roma arts, culture, and history	32
2.8.1. Effectiveness of the NRSF in addressing the problems	32
2.8.2. Addressing the problems beyond the NRSF.....	33
3. FOCUS ON KEY PROBLEM AFFECTING ROMA	34

3.1. Unjustified placement of Roma children in special education programmes	34
3.1.1. Effectiveness of the NRSF in addressing the problem	35
3.1.2. Synergy with other actions.....	35
3.1.3. Roma participation	36
4. USE OF EU FUNDING INSTRUMENTS	37
4.1. Conditions for EU funds implementation for Roma equality	37
4.2. Roma civil society in EU funds implementation	37
CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS	39
REFERENCES	42
ANNEXE: LIST OF PROBLEMS AND CONDITIONS	44

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

AIPY	Agency for International Programmes for Youth
CEI	Centre for Education Initiatives
CSB	Central Statistical Bureau of Latvia
EC	European Commission
ESF	European Social Fund
FRA	European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights
EU	European Union
EURSF	EU Roma Strategic Framework
LV	The Republic of Latvia
MoC	Ministry of Culture
MoES	Ministry of Education and Science
MoE	Ministry of Economics
MoF	Ministry of Finance
MoH	Ministry of Health
MoW	Ministry of Welfare
NEETs	Not in Education, Employment or Training (young people)
NGO	Non-Governmental Organisation
NRCP	National Roma Contact Point
NRSF	National Roma Strategic Framework
OMBO	Ombudsman's Office
OCMA	Office of Citizenship and Migration Affairs
RCM	Roma Civil Monitor
SEA	State Employment Agency
SIF	Society Integration Foundation

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Since 2022, the Roma policy in Latvia has been implemented within the framework of the National Roma Strategy, ensuring the continuity of this strategy until 2027.

Although a comprehensive study of the Roma situation has been conducted and improvements have been made to the monitoring of the implementation of the National Roma Strategic Framework (NRSF), the evaluation of the NRSF – ‘Plan for the Implementation of the Roma Strategic Framework for 2022-2023’ (hereinafter referred to as NRSF 2022-2023) was not carried out prior to the NRSF for the new period (2024-2027) was developed and approved.

Implementation of the NRSF

Based on conclusions from the previous Roma Civil Monitor (RCM) report, the following findings can be made regarding the progress of the NRSF 2022-2023:

- The participation of Roma civil society and experts in the implementation of the NRSF and in the use of EU funding programmes has not improved, nor have measures been developed or implemented to promote this participation.
- Several measures, including those recommended within the EU Roma Strategic Framework (EURSF) and incorporated into the NRSF 2022-2023, were not implemented due to insufficient funding and a lack of effective coordination. Out of the planned 31 measures, only one-third were implemented, meaning that the objectives, tasks, and performance indicators set by the NRSF 2022-2023 were only partially achieved.
- Considering various socio-economic factors – such as the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic, the war in Ukraine, and the rising cost of goods and services – the political prioritisation of Roma policy measures on the political agenda has diminished.

Review of country situation by area

During the implementation of the NRSF 2022-2023, progress was achieved in education and public awareness-raising. However, measures in the areas of employment, health, and housing were not implemented to the intended extent and did not contribute to improving the situation of the Roma community.

Focus on key issues affecting Roma

Within the NRSF 2022-2023 framework, only a few of the measures recommended by Roma civil society organisations were implemented. Representatives of Roma NGOs have highlighted that several Roma-targeted measures included in the NRSF 2022-2023 were not carried out due to insufficient funding, as well as ineffective cooperation and coordination. Additionally, the activities of Roma NGOs have not been adequately supported, and efforts to strengthen the capacity of these organisations have not been developed.

Use of EU funding instruments

The use of EU funding instruments for the implementation of the NRSF 2022-2023 was limited in scope. Most of the NRSF 2022-2023 activities were implemented within the framework of the project ‘Latvian Roma Platform’ co-funded by the EU programme ‘Rights, Equality, and Citizenship’. Roma students received educational support under the ESF project ‘Support for Reducing Early School Leaving – PuMPuRS.’ NEET Roma youth were supported through the ESF programme ‘Recovery Assistance for Cohesion and the Territories of Europe’ within the project ‘*PROTI un DARI!*’.

INTRODUCTION

According to statistical data provided by the Central Statistical Bureau of Latvia (CSB), at the beginning of 2024, 4,630 Roma were living in Latvia, making up approximately 0.3% of the total population.¹ Meanwhile, data from the Office of Citizenship and Migration Affairs indicates that 6,441 people of Roma ethnicity were registered in Latvia in 2024.²

Representatives of Roma NGOs argue that the actual number of Roma in Latvia is likely higher, as many Roma do not indicate their ethnicity in passports or other documents. Additionally, those who emigrate abroad for work or family reunification often do not officially notify the authorities of their departure.

National Roma strategic framework

The NRSF 2022-2023 was developed by the Ministry of Culture (MoC) in 2022, following the EU Council Recommendation on Roma Equality, Inclusion, and Participation (2021/C93/01) (hereinafter referred to as the EU Council Recommendation).³ Representatives from responsible sectoral ministries and Roma and non-Roma civil society organisations (CSOs) were involved in the drafting of the NRSF 2022-2023. However, prior to the approval of the NRSF 2022-2023, a targeted evaluation of the implementation of national Roma integration policy measures was not conducted. Roma inclusion policy was implemented as part of the National Identity, Civil Society, and Integration Policy coordinated by the MoC.

In August 2024, the Plan for the Implementation of Measures within the Roma Strategic Framework for 2024-2027 (hereinafter referred to as the NRSF 2024-2027) was approved.⁴ Its drafting was coordinated by an interinstitutional working group established by the MoC, which included specialists from responsible ministries, the Ombudsman's Office (OMBO), and eight representatives of Roma NGOs. However, Latvian municipalities were not involved in the development or discussion of the NRSF 2024-2027.⁵

The main goal of the NRSF 2024-2027 is to promote Roma participation in various aspects of social life, including education, employment, health, housing, civil society, and culture. The plan also aims to strengthen the capacity of the Roma community to engage in decision-making, increase Roma student participation in vocational education, improve employment rates among registered Roma unemployed persons and job seekers, and enhance public and professional understanding of Roma social inclusion, culture, and history. While the NRSF 2022-2023 planned 31 measures, only 17 measures are planned for implementation in the 2024-2027 period.⁶

Similar to the NRSF 2022-2023, the NRSF 2024-2027 includes both Roma-specific measures and integrated measures, where Roma are defined as one of the target groups in key areas such as education, employment, healthcare, and housing, alongside broader public awareness initiatives. A comprehensive evaluation of the NRSF 2022-2023 was not carried out before developing the NRSF 2024-2027. Challenges identified during the previous NRSF implementation period were not defined or addressed.

¹ <https://www.pmlp.gov.lv/lv/fizisko-personu-registra-statistika-2024gada>

² <https://www.pmlp.gov.lv/lv/media/11043/download?attachment>

³ The NRSF 2022-2023 was approved by the Cabinet of Ministers on 3 May 2022. <https://likumi.lv/ta/id/332093-par-planu-romu-strategiska-ietvara-pasakumu-istenosana-2022-2023-gadam>

⁴ <https://likumi.lv/ta/id/354561>

⁵ In order to promote Roma inclusion, the Latvian Association of Local Governments is also a member of the Consultative Council for Promoting Roma Participation. This was confirmed in the Ministry of Culture's (MoC) response to the State Audit Office of the Republic of Latvia regarding the submission of the final documents from the performance audit 'Is the policy in the field of social cohesion purposefully planned and implemented?' (*Par lietderības revīzijas 'Vai politika sabiedrības saliedētības jomā tiek mērķtiecīgi plānota un īstenota?'*), 14.02.2025. <https://lrvk.gov.lv/lv/getrevisionfile/29703-G3uLHTEsm2UUI7rTKKQzGRLU4JL1PTGD.pdf>

⁶ <https://www.km.gov.lv/lv/jaunums/valdiba-apstiprina-planu-romu-ieklausanas-un-lidzdalibas-pasakumiem-lidz-2027-gadam>

In 2023, a study on the situation of Roma in Latvia was conducted to assess their participation opportunities in key areas such as education, employment, and healthcare, as well as to examine the status of Roma NGOs and develop recommendations for improving cooperation between state and, municipal institutions, and NGOs.⁷ While the NRSF 2024-2027 states that this study's findings were considered when defining its outcomes and performance indicators, its recommendations were only partially reflected in the NRSF.

Unlike the previous plan, the NRSF 2024-2027 includes a requirement to submit an informative report to the Cabinet of Ministers on its implementation and impact⁸ – a requirement that was not present in the NRSF 2022-2023.

Public participation in the development of the NRSF 2024-2027 was limited to the involvement of the MoC's Advisory Council for Promoting Roma Participation, which officially includes only three Roma NGO representatives.⁹ The open call to the public, and particularly the Roma community, to submit proposals for the NRSF 2024-2027 was not published. The only option to review the draft of the NRSF 2024-2027 was through the Cabinet of Ministers' website. While a significant number of Roma NGO representatives were involved in drafting the NRSF 2024-2027, their proposals were only selectively reflected in the final set of measures, and in only a few cases was financial support planned for their implementation.

As the institution responsible for coordinating the implementation of the NRSF, the MoC regularly prepares an informative report on Roma participation measures implemented at the national level (the most recent report covered 2021 and 2022).¹⁰ Additionally, the MoC had planned to publish an evaluation of the 'Plan for the Implementation of Measures within the Roma Strategic Framework for 2022-2023' in January 2025.¹¹ However, as of February 2025, when this RCM report was being prepared, this evaluation report had not yet been made publicly available.

Based on the conclusions from the previous RCM report, the following observations can be made regarding the progress of the NRSF 2022-2023:

- The participation of Roma civil society representatives and experts in the implementation of NRSF and the utilisation of EU funding programmes has not improved. Furthermore, no measures have been developed or implemented to promote this participation.
- Several measures, including those recommended within the EURSF and incorporated into the NRSF 2022-2023, were not implemented due to lack of funding and insufficient coordination. As a result, the objectives, tasks, and performance indicators set by the NRSF 2022-2023 were only partially achieved.
- Due to various socio-economic factors – such as the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic, the war in Ukraine, and the rising costs of living – the issue of Roma inclusion has lost prominence on the political agenda.

About this report

This report has been prepared to analyse the process of developing and implementing the NRSF in Latvia. The report focuses on the implementation of the NRSF 2022-2023, the achievement of its objectives and outcome indicators, and the participation of Roma and pro-Roma NGO representatives and activists in both the implementation of the NRSF 2022-2023 and the development of sustainable Roma policy, including the

⁷ SIA Civitta Latvija. (2023). *Pētījums par romu situāciju Latvijā (Study on the Situation of Roma in Latvia)*. Ministry of Culture of the Republic of Latvia. <https://www.km.gov.lv/lv/media/35865/download?attachment>

⁸ Ministru kabinets. (27 August 2024). *Plāns romu stratēģiskā ietvara pasākumu īstenošanai 2024.–2027. gadam (Plan for the implementation of the Roma Strategic Framework for 2024–2027)*, Rīkojums Nr. 709, 4. punkts. <https://likumi.lv/ta/id/354561>

⁹ <https://www.km.gov.lv/lv/konsultativa-padome-0>

¹⁰ <https://www.km.gov.lv/lv/media/35070/download?attachment>

¹¹ Ministry of Culture of the Republic of Latvia. (February 2025). *Plāna romu stratēģiskā ietvara pasākumu īstenošanai 2022–2023. gadam izvērtējums (Evaluation of the Plan for the Implementation of the Roma Strategic Framework 2022–2023)*. <https://ppdb.mk.gov.lv/database/plana-romu-strategiska-ietvara-pasakumu-istenosanai-2022-2023-gadam-izvertejums/>

preparation of the NRSF 2024-2027. Attention is also given to how the monitoring of the NRSF 2022-2023 implementation was ensured, how the achieved results were evaluated, and how these findings were incorporated into the NRSF 2024-2027.

During the preparation of this report, structured, in-depth interviews were conducted with representatives of civil society (both Roma and non-Roma NGOs) and Roma mediators,¹² as well as officials from the municipal authorities of Ventspils and Jelgava.¹³ Additionally, a survey was conducted among responsible and co-responsible national government institutions.¹⁴

The preparation of this report was based on publicly available study and survey results, informational reports, policy development documents, and regulatory acts. The information was analysed and compiled by experts from the Education Initiatives Centre (CEI), who have over 20 years of experience advocating for the Roma community's right to equality.

Representatives of the CEI did not participate in the working group drafting the NRSF 2024-2027. However, the CEI is a member of the Advisory Council for Promoting Roma Participation (hereinafter referred to as the Roma Council), where discussions on the NRSF 2024-2027 took place.

¹² Representatives from Roma NGOs, including the NGO Roma Culture Centre ('*Romu Kultūras Centrs*'), the Society Integration Association '*ALTERNATIVAS*' (*Sabiedrības integrācijas biedrība 'ALTERNATIVAS'*), NGO '*Sāre Khetene*', the Jelgava City and District Roma NGO '*Čačune Roma*' (*Jelgavas pilsētas un novada romu biedrība 'Čačune Roma'*), and the international organisation 'International Roma Union' (*ārvalstu organizācija 'Starptautiskā Romu Apvienība'*), as well as representatives from the non-Roma organisation 'Latvian Women's NGOs Cooperation Network' (*biedrība 'Latvijas Sieviešu nevalstisko organizāciju sadarbības tīkls'*).

¹³ In these municipalities, long-term targeted support for the Roma has been provided, including the employment of Roma mediators, fostering cooperation between social services, schools, and Roma mediators, supporting the work of Roma teaching assistants, as well as organising Roma cultural events and supporting the activities of Roma NGOs. These cities have relatively large Roma populations.

For more information on the support provided to Roma by the Jelgava City Municipality and the Ventspils City Municipality, please see: Roma Civil Monitor. (2023). *Civil society monitoring report on the quality of the national strategic framework for Roma equality, inclusion, and participation in Latvia*. <https://romacivilmonitoring.eu/wp-content/uploads/2023/08/RCM2-2022-C4-Latvia-CATALOGUE.pdf>

¹⁴ Surveys were conducted with representatives from the Ministry of Culture (MoC), Ministry of Education and Science (MoES), Ministry of Welfare (MoW), Ministry of Health (MoH), and the Ombudsman's Office (OMBO). The survey was carried out using questionnaires based on an interview-question matrix.

1. IMPLEMENTATION OF THE NRSF

1.1. Key developments and effectiveness of implementation

Within the framework of the NRSF 2022–2023, various measures were implemented in education, fostering Roma participation and raising public awareness regarding Roma art, culture, and history. Most of these activities were carried out under the EU co-funded project ‘Latvian Roma Platform’, including continued support for Roma mediators working in Latvian municipalities, capacity-building activities for Roma women and youth, as well as events aimed at strengthening Roma civil society. These initiatives involved Roma NGO representatives, regional NGO support resource centres, and non-Roma NGOs advocating for various social groups.¹⁵

According to information provided by the MoC, co-responsible ministries, Roma activists, and municipal representatives who had been actively involved in Roma inclusion, it was concluded that no measures were implemented to promote the involvement of Latvian municipalities in Roma policy development and cooperation. Furthermore, several measures recommended in the EURSF and included in the NRSF 2022–2023 were not implemented – of the 31 planned actions, only one-third were carried out.

The Eurobarometer data from 2023 indicates that 23% of Latvian residents considered the national Roma inclusion policy to be effective, 27% viewed it as moderately effective, while 30% deemed it ineffective.¹⁶

1.1.1. Changes in the NRSF

According to the information provided by the MoC, the European Commission did not request any changes to the NRSF. No other modifications were made to the NRSF 2022–2023.¹⁷ The implementation of the NRSF 2022–2023 measures was affected by the war in Ukraine, initiated by Russia, which led to a significant increase in the prices of goods and services, requiring project implementers to make financial adjustments to ensure the successful execution of activities.¹⁸ However, the MoC did not specify which measures were directly impacted.

Economic conditions and inflation negatively affected the accessibility of healthcare services that are not covered by the state budget, particularly for low-income individuals, including Roma.¹⁹

In 2024, the NRSF 2024–2027 was drafted, the results and impact of the NRSF 2022–2023 on the Roma community had not been evaluated. The NRSF 2024–2027 was approved in August 2024 but there was no proper engagement with the NRSF for eight months, highlighting a lack of policy planning and coordination.

1.1.2. Progress in implementation

Although the MoC evaluates the implementation of the NRSF 2022–2023 positively,²⁰ several measures recommended in the EURSF and included in the NRSF 2022–2023 were not implemented – only one-third of the planned activities were carried out.²¹ For example, the following measures were not implemented:

¹⁵ No detailed information about the project's implemented activities starting from 2023 onwards is available on the MoC's website: <https://www.km.gov.lv/lv/latvijas-romu-platforma-vii-0>

¹⁶ European Commission. (2023). *Special Eurobarometer 535: Discrimination in the European Union* (p. 104). <https://europa.eu/eurobarometer/api/deliverable/download/file?deliverableId=88556>

¹⁷ Information provided by the MoC; response to the questionnaire (15 October 2024)

¹⁸ *Idem*.

¹⁹ *Idem*.

²⁰ *Idem*.

²¹ According to the information included in the ‘Report of the Impact Assessment of the NRSF 2022–2023’, 14 of the measures included in the NRSF 2022–2023 have been implemented, three measures have not been implemented, and for approximately 14 other measures, there is no relevant information available to verify their results and potential impact on the Roma target group.

Baltic Institute of Social Sciences. (2024). *Plāna romu stratēģiskā ietvara pasākumu īstenošanai 2022.–2023.gadam ietekmes izvērtējums (Impact Assessment of the Plan for the Implementation of Measures within the Roma Strategic Framework for 2022–2023)*. Riga, p. 7. <https://www.km.gov.lv/lv/media/49371/download?attachment>

- Educational initiatives for students and teachers on Roma history and culture within the national programme '*Latvijas skolas soma*' (Latvian School Bag).
- Improvement of the Roma history and art museum exhibition, including digitisation of museum's materials and ensuring public access, as well as public awareness initiatives, such as supporting a Roma radio broadcast programme and improving access to Roma-targeted information on social media.
- The pilot project to reduce Roma illiteracy, proposed by the Roma NGO '*Sāre Khetene*', was not implemented. No proposals were developed to improve literacy skills among Roma registered as unemployed at the State Employment Agency (SEA),²² nor was a pilot project involving the Roma target group carried out.
- Due to limited resources and low education levels among Roma, the 'Family Assistant Service' initiative, aimed at introducing and developing this service in municipalities, was not implemented.²³

One of the main reasons why measures were not implemented was the lack of funding.²⁴ However, representatives of Roma civil society, in interviews, identified additional factors, including:

- Insufficient planning of implementation measures.
- Lack of cooperation between Roma activists and representatives of state and municipal institutions.
- Insufficient political support and a lack of strong, data-based justifications to secure the necessary funding for the planned support measures under the NRSF 2022-2023.²⁵

The Roma Council has not been effectively used to strengthen Roma involvement in national policy development and implementation.²⁶ Proposals from Roma Council members have not been reviewed or discussed in relevant parliamentary ('*Saeima*') committees. It remains unclear whether the issues discussed at Roma Council meetings have any impact on the implementation of the NRSF.

In the 'Report on the Impact Evaluation of the NRSF 2022-2023' it is noted that the MoC as National Roma Contact Point (NRCP) does not have the mandate to oblige co-responsible ministries to implement targeted measures for Roma community, if such measures are not included in the respective ministry's agenda.²⁷

1.1.3. Effectiveness of monitoring

The NRSF 2022-2023 did not define a monitoring mechanism for its implementation or a procedure for assessing the effectiveness of the achieved results.

²² The Ministry of Welfare (MoW) informed that the pilot project was not implemented 'due to low interest among Roma'. Information provided by the MoW, response to questionnaire (24 October 2024).

²³ The provision of family assistant services in municipalities was intended to support the development of social skills among Roma families. This included evaluating the possibility of training Roma community members as family assistants to build trust between Roma families seeking this service and social services, and promote education and mentorship for Roma parents.

²⁴ Information provided by the MoC; response to questionnaire (15 October 2024)

²⁵ Interview with representatives of the NGO 'Roma Culture Centre' and the international organisation 'International Roma Union' (16 October 2024)

Interview with a representative of the Roma NGO '*Sāre Khetene*' and Roma mediator M. Avramenko (4 October 2024)

Interview with representatives of the Roma NGO The Society Integration Association 'ALTERNATIVAS', (11 October 2024).

Interview with a representative of the Latvian Women's NGOs Cooperation Network, (10 October 2024).

²⁶ https://www.km.gov.lv/lv/konsultativa-padome-0?utm_source=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.google.com%2F

²⁷ Baltic Institute of Social Sciences. (2024). *Plāna romu stratēģiskā ietvara pasākumu īstenošanai 2022.-2023.gadam ietekmes izvērtējums (Impact Assessment of the Plan for the Implementation of Measures within the Roma Strategic Framework for 2022-2023)*. Rīga, p. 42.

Information from co-responsible institutions regarding the implemented measures under the NRSF 2022–2023 is compiled in an informative report on Roma participation measures.²⁸ However, the latest available report covers 2021 and 2022,²⁹ and there is no report available for 2023. The informative report does not specify which support measures were implemented by Latvian municipalities in accordance with the NRSF 2022–2023.³⁰

However, the ‘Report on the Impact Evaluation of the NRSF 2022–2023’ was published in 2025 by the MoC.³¹ The NRSF 2024–2027 was developed and approved prior to the completion of this evaluation, which indicates that previous challenges, recommendations and problems were not strategically assessed or addressed in Roma policy development. The monitoring approach remains insufficiently transparent, inconsistent, and not focused on long-term sustainable results. A notable improvement in the NRSF 2024–2027 is the requirement to submit an informative report to the Cabinet of Ministers on its implementation and impact,³² a requirement that was not set for the NRSF 2022–2023.

The Ministry of Welfare (MoW) has not conducted an evaluation of the impact of the NRSF 2022–2023 measures on the Roma community, and no assessment has been carried out regarding the services provided by the State Employment Agency (SEA) to Roma unemployed persons.³³ Other co-responsible institutions, including the Ministry of Economics (MoE), Ministry of Education and Science (MoES), and Ministry of Health (MoH), have also not conducted such evaluations.

1.1.4. Data collection

Data collection on the situation of Roma in Latvia remains fragmented and primarily based on a qualitative approach in policy priority areas and informative reports on support measures implemented at the national and municipal levels. There is no systematic data collection on Roma conditions in key areas, which would help identify significant challenges and barriers and develop sustainable policies.

The main problematic issues facing Latvia's Roma community were identified in the 2023 study on Roma in Latvia, which also provided specific recommendations for:

- cooperation between state and municipal institutions and NGO;
- reducing Roma social exclusion and systematically improving support measures;
- enhancing Roma civil society activities and participation.³⁴

Although the findings and data from the 2023 study were used in the situation analysis of the NRSF 2024–2027, it is unclear whether the study's recommendations were directly incorporated into the support measures planned within the NRSF 2024–2027. Additionally, the 2023 study's data were not included in the outcome indicators of the NRSF 2024–2027, making it difficult to measure the direct impact of Roma policy planning.

In 2022, a study on improving the monitoring of the Roma Strategic Framework was conducted. It compiled available data on the Roma situation in Latvia, analysed the data's compliance with the indicators set by the

²⁸ https://www.km.gov.lv/lv/konsultativa-padome-0?utm_source=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.google.com%2F

²⁹ Information provided by the Ministry of Culture (MoC), response to questionnaire (15 October 2024).

³⁰ Under the NRSF 2022–2023, municipalities were designated as co-responsible institutions in only three measures: 1) Provision of family assistant services in municipalities, including: development of social skills for Roma families, building trust between Roma families and social services, education and mentoring for Roma parents. 2) Ensuring teacher assistants for Roma students in educational institutions where Roma children study, facilitating individualised collaboration with Roma parents. 3) Training opportunities for Roma mediators on topics such as sexual and reproductive health and prevention of substance abuse and addictive behaviours.

³¹ Baltic Institute of Social Sciences. (2024). *Plāna romu stratēģiskā ietvara pasākumu īstenošanai 2022.–2023.gadam ietekmes izvērtējums* (Impact Assessment of the Plan for the Implementation of Measures within the Roma Strategic Framework for 2022–2023). Riga. <https://www.km.gov.lv/lv/media/49371/download?attachment>

³² Ministru kabinets. (27 August 2024). *Rīkojums Nr.709 ‘Plāns romu stratēģiskā ietvara pasākumu īstenošanai 2024.–2027. gadam’, 4. punkts*. (Plan for the implementation of the measures of the Roma Strategic Framework for 2024–2027) <https://likumi.lv/ta/id/354561>

³³ Information provided by the MoW; response to the questionnaire (24 October 2024)

³⁴ SIA Civitta Latvija. (2023). *Pētījums par romu situāciju Latvijā* (Study on the Situation of Roma in Latvia). Ministry of Culture of the Republic of Latvia, p.17. <https://www.km.gov.lv/lv/media/35865/download?attachment>

FRA, and developed proposals for improving data collection on the monitoring of the Roma situation.³⁵ The 2022 study's report found that several FRA-recommended process and outcome indicators were either fully or partially applicable to Latvia's context.³⁶ The report recommended conducting a new study on the Roma community, incorporating questions from the 2015 study 'Roma in Latvia'³⁷ and adding indicators to measure both key outcome indicators³⁸ and optional ones.³⁹ As a result, the 2023 study on the Roma situation in Latvia was designed following both the 2015 study framework and the key indicators suggested in the 2022 study's report on Roma Strategic Framework monitoring.⁴⁰ In the Report on the Impact Evaluation of the NRSF 2022-2023 it is concluded that, out of the ten outcome indicators defined in the NRSF 2022-2023, five were not achieved, and for the remaining indicators, no information was available at the time of the assessment. The main reason cited for this failure was the setting of overly high expectations for rapid improvements in the Roma situation during the implementation of the NRSF 2022-2023, expectations that did not reflect the depth or complexity of the challenges faced by the Roma community.⁴¹

One of the key challenges in assessing the educational situation of Roma is the restriction on collecting and compiling data due to ethnicity being classified as sensitive personal data. According to the EU General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) 2016/679 and the Personal Data Processing Law, the processing of such data may pose risks to fundamental rights and freedoms.⁴² Data collection on Roma in the field of education is conducted through surveys, whereby questionnaires are sent to educational institutions and municipal education departments.⁴³ As part of the NRSF 2022-2023, the Ministry of Education and Science (MoES) conducted a Survey on measures to support and engage Roma students in preschool and primary education programmes. The collected data highlighted key issues in Roma education from the perspective of educational institutions.⁴⁴ However, Roma parents and NGOs advocating for equal access to education for Roma children are not surveyed on their needs and challenges regarding low participation and unequal opportunities in education. The NRSF 2022-2023 included a plan to develop a monitoring mechanism to track Roma children

³⁵ Baltic Institute of Social Sciences. (2022). *Pētnieciskā pakalpojuma sniegšana romu stratēģiskā ietvara īstenošanas monitoringa pilnveidošanai projekta 'Latvijas romu platforma VI' ietvaros [Provision of Research Services for the Improvement of Monitoring of the Implementation of the Roma Strategic Framework Project]*. Rīga, p. 3. <https://www.km.gov.lv/lv/media/31164/download?attachment>

³⁶ 15 out of the 19 key indicators included in the EU Roma Equality, Inclusion, and Participation Strategic Framework monitoring system proposal.

³⁷ Latvijas Fakti. (2015). *Romi Latvijā [Roma in Latvia]*. Rīga: Market and Social Research Centre 'Latvijas Fakti'.

³⁸ For example, 'Proportion of the population who feel discriminated against because they are Roma', 'Proportion of the population with limited access to health and social services', 'Children under 18 living in conditions of severe material deprivation', among others.

Baltic Institute of Social Sciences. (2022). *Research Report: Provision of Research Services for the Improvement of Monitoring of the Implementation of the Roma Strategic Framework Project*. Rīga: Baltic Institute of Social Sciences, p. 34.

³⁹ For example, 'Proportion of the population who have experienced hate-motivated harassment or physical assault in the past 12 months due to their Roma ethnicity', 'Proportion of the population who have felt discriminated against because of their Roma ethnicity in an educational institution, workplace, when receiving healthcare services, or when seeking housing, among others.

Baltic Institute of Social Sciences. (2022). *Research Report: Provision of Research Services for the Improvement of Monitoring of the Implementation of the Roma Strategic Framework Project*. Rīga: Baltic Institute of Social Sciences, p. 34-35.

⁴⁰ SIA Civitta Latvija. (2023). *Pētījums par romu situāciju Latvijā (Study on the Situation of Roma in Latvia)*. Ministry of Culture of the Republic of Latvia.

⁴¹ Baltic Institute of Social Sciences. (2024). *Plāna romu stratēģiskā ietvara pasākumu īstenošanai 2022.-2023.gadam ietekmes izvērtējums (Impact Assessment of the Plan for the Implementation of Measures within the Roma Strategic Framework for 2022-2023)*. Rīga, p. 7.

⁴² Information provided by the MoES; response to questionnaire (30 October 2024)

⁴³ *Idem*.

⁴⁴ Edurio. (2024). *Aptaujas rezultāti par pasākumiem romu izglītojamo atbalstam un iesaistei pirmsskolas un pamatizglītības programmas apgūvē (Survey on Measures to Support and Engage Roma Students in Preschool and Primary Education Programmes)*. Rīga, Latvia.

of preschool age and identify those not attending preschool institutions. However, in the responses provided during the research, the MoES did not confirm that such a monitoring system had been established.

The State Employment Agency (SEA) regularly collects data on unemployed Roma and the support measures provided to them. These data are submitted to the Ministry of Culture (MoC), as the National Roma Contact Point, upon request for reporting on the employment situation.⁴⁵ Among the performance indicators included in the NRSF 2024–2027 is the indicator ‘Proportion of long-term unemployed Roma’.

Data on the health status of the Roma target group are neither collected nor analysed. The Office of the Ombudsman (OMBO) regularly collects data on the situation of Roma in the field of legal protection by compiling complaints and conducting its own research.

1.2. NRSF’s synergy with domestic and EU actions

The NRSF 2022–2023 and the NRSF 2024–2027 were developed in accordance with the EU Council Recommendation, aiming to implement measures in a proportional and selective manner, in close cooperation with all relevant stakeholders, while aligning with national and EU legislation, available resources, and the Roma situation in Latvia. Similar to the NRSF 2022–2023, the implementation of the NRSF 2024–2027 measures is closely linked to the achievement of the goals and objectives set in Latvia’s National Development Plan 2021–2027,⁴⁶ as well as other sectoral policy planning documents.

The situation analysis and outcome indicators in the NRSF 2024–2027 are based on national and international studies and data provided by co-responsible institutions. Although it is stated that the outcome indicators were prepared with consideration of the Fundamental Rights Agency (FRA) indicator set for assessing EU Roma Strategic Framework (EURSF) progress, and the 2022 study on improving Roma framework monitoring, the NRSF 2024–2027 includes only a small number of the potential outcome indicators that could have been used.⁴⁷

1.2.1. Complementary policies

The NRSF 2022–2023 and the NRSF 2024–2027 measures in key areas have been implemented within the framework of sectoral policy guidelines.⁴⁸ However, these documents do not include targeted measures to promote Roma inclusion and participation.

Although the Plan for the Development of a Cohesive and Civically Active Society 2024–2027 states that the NRSF 2024–2027 and the Plan for Reducing Racism and Antisemitism 2024–2027 “will be complementary, focusing on preserving and developing minority cultural identity and [...] ensuring support for Roma participation and diversity awareness”,⁴⁹ the draft version of the Plan for Reducing Racism and Antisemitism 2024–2027 does not include specific measures to address Antigypsyism and Roma discrimination.⁵⁰

The NRSF 2024–2027 working group included representatives from various policy sectors, such as the Ministry of Culture (MoC), Ministry of Education and Science (MoES), Ministry of Welfare (MoW), Ministry of Health (MoH), Ministry of Education (MoE), Agency for International Youth Programmes (AIPY), State Employment Agency

⁴⁵ Information provided by the MoW, response to questionnaire (24 October 2024)

⁴⁶ <https://likumi.lv/wwwraksti/LIKUMI/NAP/NAP2027.PDF>

⁴⁷ Ministru kabinets. (2024). *Plāns romu stratēģiskā ietvara pasākumu īstenošanai nākamajām periodam no 2024. līdz 2027. gadam (Plan for the Implementation of the Roma Strategic Framework for the Next Period from 2024 to 2027)*, p. 5.

⁴⁸ The Guidelines for the Development of a Cohesive and Civically Active Society 2021–2027

The Education Development Guidelines for 2021–2027

The Public Health Guidelines 2021–2027

The Social Protection and Labour Market Policy Guidelines for 2021–2027

The National Industrial Policy Guidelines for 2021–2027

⁴⁹ <https://likumi.lv/ta/id/357419-saliedetas-un-pilsoniski-aktivas-sabiedribas-attistibas-plans-20242027-gadam>

⁵⁰ Ministru kabinets. (2024). *Plāns rasisma un antisemitisma mazināšanai 2024.–2027. gadam (Draft Plan for Reducing Racism and Antisemitism 2024–2027)*. Ministry of Culture, Rīga, p. 4.
https://tapportals.mk.gov.lv/legal_acts/5e555608-0a70-4b6d-9580-bc59779597d7

(SEA), and Office of the Ombudsman (OMBO), ensuring broad policy coverage. The state institutions designated as co-responsible for implementing the NRSF 2024-2027 include MoES, MoW, MoH, MoE, and the Society Integration Foundation (SIF).

1.2.2. Alignment with EU actions

The NRSF 2022-2023 and the NRSF 2024-2027 have been developed as targeted plans to improve the situation of Roma, taking into account the EU Council Recommendation and incorporating its proposals. The majority of Roma-targeted measures under the NRSF 2022-2023 and the NRSF 2024-2027 have been implemented within the framework of the project 'Latvian Roma Platform' co-funded by the EU programme 'Citizens, Equality, Rights, and Values'.

1.2.3. Impact of assessments

Regarding specific data on the number of Roma who have received support within mainstream measures in key policy areas, as previously noted in the RCM2 report, the 'Report of the Impact Assessment of the NRSF 2022-2023' highlights the problem of a lack of ethnic data, which prevents a detailed analysis of the accessibility of support measures specifically for Roma and comparisons with other beneficiaries. The main challenge is that responsible institutions are unable to collect data based on ethnicity, as this is considered sensitive information.⁵¹ As a result, it is not possible to determine whether the mainstream measures implemented under the NRSF 2022-2023 have improved the situation of the Roma community. This also significantly limits the ability to regularly assess and monitor changes in the situation of Roma in Latvia.⁵² However, despite several public institutions emphasising the challenges of collecting ethnic data, the Central Statistical Bureau (CSB) has compiled a separate dataset, 'Proportion and Characteristics of Roma', which provides information on age distribution, education level, employment, housing conditions, and household size.⁵³ The 'Report on the Impact Assessment' includes a recommendation that, in collaboration with the Roma community, data protection specialists, and CSB, potential solutions should be found to collect and use ethnic data for statistical purposes while ensuring compliance with data protection regulations.⁵⁴

An explanation is provided in the Report on the Impact Assessment of the NRSF 2022-2023 regarding the issue raised in the RCM2 report that many Roma civil society's proposals and initiatives were not included in the NRSF 2022-2023. After evaluating the submitted Roma proposals, the following conclusions were drawn:

- some proposals and initiatives were included in the NRSF 2022-2023 but in a modified form, leading to discussions regarding the interpretation of specific support measures;
- certain proposals and initiatives related to the provision of public services, the accessibility of which depends on state budget allocations and therefore cannot be influenced through the NRSF 2022-2023;
- some proposals and initiatives were found to contradict the fundamental principles of inclusion policy and could potentially contribute to the further social exclusion of the Roma community.⁵⁵

The problem identified in RCM2 report, the limited access of Roma civil society to mainstream measures due to a lack of capacity, as well as its limited ability to play an active role in the implementation of the NRSF, remains relevant. However, the involvement of Roma civil society in the drafting of the NRSF has improved.

In the Report on the Impact Assessment of the NRSF 2022-2023 it is concluded that "*Latvian public administration and municipal institutions show limited interest in addressing issues specific to the Roma community. As a result, several initiated Roma-supporting initiatives, when facing various obstacles, remain*

⁵¹Baltic Institute of Social Sciences. (2024). *Plāna romu stratēģiskā ietvara pasākumu īstenošanai 2022.–2023. gadam ietekmes izvērtējums* ((Impact Assessment of the Plan for the Implementation of Measures within the Roma Strategic Framework for 2022–2023). Rīga, pp. 7, 42.

⁵² *Ibid.*

⁵³ *Ibid.*

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*

⁵⁵ *Idem.* pp. 13-14

unimplemented".⁵⁶ Taking this conclusion into account targeted Roma policy measures should be introduced for specialists in public administration and municipal institutions, as well as for parliamentarians.

1.3. Roma participation in implementation

The drafting of the NRSF 2022-2023 involved three Roma NGOs,⁵⁷ as well as a Roma mediator from the Ventspils City Social Service. However, during the implementation of the NRSF 2022-2023, only one NGO, 'Roma Culture Centre', was actively involved.⁵⁸ A representative of this NGO stated that most of the proposed and planned measures were not implemented due to a lack of allocated funding.⁵⁹ Several Roma NGO representatives and Roma mediators participated in the implementation of the 'Latvian Roma Platform' project rather than organising their own initiatives.

Compared to the NRSF 2022-2023, the drafting of the NRSF 2024-2027 involved a broader range of civil society representatives, including Roma NGOs⁶⁰ and non-Roma NGOs that provide support to the Roma community.⁶¹ However, it is unclear how active and effective their participation was. Among all Roma NGOs involved in preparing the draft of the NRSF 2024-2027, only the initiatives of the 'Roma Culture Centre' and the Roma women's association 'Sāre Khetene' were included in the NRSF, provided that the planned funding is allocated.⁶²

1.3.1. Involvement of Roma CSOs in implementation

Within the NRSF 2022-2023 only a few measures proposed by the Roma civil society organisations were implemented. Representatives of Roma NGOs have highlighted that several planned measures under the NRSF 2022-2023 were not carried out due to a lack of funding, insufficient interinstitutional cooperation, and inadequate coordination.⁶³

Representatives of Roma NGOs' emphasise that the NRSF should better reflect the needs of the Roma community and include support measures based on proposals from the Roma civil society, targeting a broader range of Roma beneficiaries and ensuring regional coverage. Several Roma initiatives were not sufficiently discussed or approved within the NRSF framework, which has significantly reduced the motivation of Roma stakeholders to actively engage in its implementation.⁶⁴

The involvement and participation of Roma civil society organisations in the NRSF implementation depend on the capacity and professional skills of Roma NGOs, their experience in civil society development, and their

⁵⁶ *Idem*, pp. 44.

⁵⁷ The NGO Roma Culture Centre ("Romu Kultūras Centrs"), the Society Integration Association 'ALTERNATIVAS' (*Sabiedrības integrācijas biedrība 'ALTERNATIVAS'*), and the international organisation 'International Roma Union' (*ārvalstu organizācija 'Starptautiskā Romu Apvienība'*).

⁵⁸ Information provided by the MoC; response to questionnaire (15 October 2024)

⁵⁹ Interview with representatives of the NGO 'Roma Culture Centre' (16 October 2024)

⁶⁰ Representatives of NGO Roma Culture Centre ('*Romu Kultūras Centrs*'), the Society Integration Association 'ALTERNATIVAS' (*Sabiedrības integrācijas biedrība 'ALTERNATIVAS'*), NGO 'Sāre Khetene', the Jelgava City and District Roma NGO 'Čačune Roma' (*Jelgavas pilsētas un novada romu biedrība 'Čačune Roma'*), Latvian Gypsy Members' Association and Supreme Gypsy Council ('*Latvijas Čigānu biedru apvienība un augstākā čigānu padome*'), Kraslava Roma Association ('*Krāslavas romu biedrība*'), Latvian Gypsy Health Centre MĀNUŠS ('*Latvijas čigānu veselības centrs MĀNUŠS*'), Jēkabpils Roma Association 'ŠATRA' ('*Jēkabpils romu biedrības 'ŠATRA'*'), and the international organisation 'International Roma Union' (*ārvalstu organizācija 'Starptautiskā Romu Apvienība'*).

⁶¹ Latvian Women's NGOs Cooperation Network (*biedrība 'Latvijas Sieviešu nevalstisko organizāciju sadarbības tīkls'*), Latvian Human Rights Centre ('*Latvijas Cilvēktiesību centrs*'), Association of Youth Organisations 'IMKA Latvija' (*Jaunatnes organizāciju apvienība 'IMKA Latvija'*), Creative Association for Youth 'TREPEŠ' (*Radošā apvienība jauniešiem 'TREPEŠ'*).

⁶² <https://likumi.lv/ta/id/354561>

⁶³ Interview with representatives of the NGO 'Roma Culture Centre' (16 October 2024)

⁶⁴ Interview with a representative of the Roma NGO 'Sāre Khetene' and Roma mediator M. Avramenko (4 October 2024)

Interview with representatives of the Roma NGO 'The Society Integration Association 'ALTERNATIVAS' (11 October 2024)

cooperation with non-Roma NGOs. The NRSF 2022–2023 planned to provide annual support for regional NGOs, including Roma NGOs, through capacity-building activities, promoting cooperation between NGOs, and fostering dialogue with municipal and state institutions. These efforts were intended to enhance Roma NGOs' ability to effectively participate in implementing the NRSF 2022–2023. According to the report, in 2021–2022, only one project application was submitted under the 'NGO Fund' support programme for activities aimed at the Roma community; however, it was ultimately not approved.⁶⁵ Under the Minority NGO Participation Promotion Programme, initiatives were planned across Latvia's regions to support the development and sustainability of minority NGOs, including Roma NGOs, and to strengthen cooperation between different minority NGOs and their interaction with the broader society. However, there is no available information on the support provided to Roma NGOs under this programme in 2021 and 2022, nor has data been compiled on the measures implemented in 2023.⁶⁶

The 2023 study on the situation of Roma in Latvia found that Roma NGOs lack interest in applying for funding through project competitions and other support programmes, and that they do not have the necessary capacity to attract funding.⁶⁷ The study recommended that, in order to implement a targeted support mechanism for Roma NGOs, a stable source of funding should be ensured to provide long-term motivation for NGO staff. This would allow Roma NGOs to actively contribute to cultural heritage preservation, community advocacy, and decision-making processes.⁶⁸ Roma NGO representatives also point out that many support projects and programmes are practically inaccessible to Roma NGOs due to a lack of capacity and experience, or because the available funding is too limited to effectively implement initiatives.⁶⁹

The NRSF 2024–2027 states that in 2024, at least one Roma community empowerment event will take place in each region of Latvia. However, the plan does not specify the involvement of Roma NGOs in organising these events, nor is public information available on where they were held. There are concerns that Roma NGOs do not have equal opportunities compared to other minority organisations, as Roma do not receive support from a country of origin, unlike other minority groups. Additionally, the capacity level of Roma NGOs is often low, making it difficult for them to compete for funding with other minority NGOs. The NRSF 2024–2027 does not mention any additional support measures to promote Roma NGO participation.

1.3.2. Roma in public institutions implementing the NRSF

Since 2017, the Department of Cohesive Society Policy under the MoC has employed a Roma project assistant within the framework of the 'Latvian Roma Platform' project. This assistant helps facilitate and strengthen communication with Roma activists, including youth and children, by engaging them in project activities and providing support to Roma mediators.

The MoC Roma Council officially includes three Roma NGO representatives.

The President of the International Roma Union, Normunds Rudevičs, is a member of the Ministry of Education and Science's (MoES) Advisory Council on Minority Education Issues.⁷⁰ He provides the council with information on cooperation with the Roma community, as well as on matters relating to Roma culture and history.

No Roma representatives are involved in the advisory councils or committees of the Ministry of Welfare (MoW).⁷¹

⁶⁵ Kultūras ministrija. (2023). *Pārskats par romu līdzdalības veicināšanas pasākumiem 2021. un 2022. Gadā (Report on Measures to Promote Roma Participation in 2021 and 2022)*. Riga, p. 32.

⁶⁶ *Ibid.*

⁶⁷ SIA Civitta Latvija. (2023). *Pētījums par romu situāciju Latvijā (Study on the Situation of Roma in Latvia)*. Riga, p. 34.

⁶⁸ *Ibid.*

⁶⁹ Interview with representatives of the Roma NGO 'The Society Integration Association 'ALTERNATIVAS' (11 October 2024)

⁷⁰ The Advisory Council on Minority Education is a collegial advisory body.

⁷¹ Information provided by the MoW; response to questionnaire (24 October 2024)

1.3.3. Roma participation in monitoring and evaluation

The NRSF 2022-2023 does not specify Roma participation in the monitoring and evaluation of its implementation. The only mechanism in place is the involvement of Roma NGOs in the Roma Council, where information is provided on the measures implemented under the NRSF 2022-2023.

However, according to the information set in the 'Report of the Impact Assessment of the NRSF 2022-2023', in-depth interviews were conducted with representatives of four Roma NGOs.⁷²

Roma mediators were also involved in the preparation of the 2023 study on the Roma situation.

⁷² Romu kultūras centrs, Latvijas romu sieviešu biedrība 'Sāre khetene', Jelgavas pilsētas un novada romu biedrība 'Romanu Drom' ('Way of Roma'), Jēkabpils romu biedrība 'ŠATRA'

Baltic Institute of Social Sciences. (2024). *Plāna romu stratēģiskā ietvara pasākumu īstenošanai 2022.-2023.gadam ietekmes izvērtējums (Impact assessment of the Plan for the Implementation of the Roma Strategic Framework 2022-2023)*. Rīga, p. 47.

2. REVIEW BY THEMATIC AREA

2.1. Fighting antigypsyism and discrimination

The NRSF 2022-2023 aimed to achieve the following outcome indicators:

- reduce the proportion of persons unwilling to work with Roma in the same workplace from 27.2% in 2021 to 20% in 2024;⁷³
- reduce the proportion of people who would object to having Roma as neighbours from 29% in 2021 to 22% in 2024;
- reduce the proportion of people who believe that Roma cannot be trusted from 42% in 2021 to 35% in 2024;
- reduce the proportion of people who consider discrimination against Roma to be widespread from 35% in 2021 to 30% in 2024.⁷⁴

Since 2022, no surveys or studies have been conducted to determine whether these planned indicators have been achieved.⁷⁵ The NRSF 2024-2027 situation analysis on Roma is based on 2022 data, while outcome indicators still rely on 2021 data. Additionally, the NRSF 2024-2027 has set the same target indicators for 2027 as those planned for 2024 under the NRSF 2022-2023, with one exception: the proportion of people who would object to having Roma as neighbours, which was planned to decrease to 22% in 2024, is now set to decrease further to 20% by 2027.⁷⁶ This suggests that the progress envisioned under the NRSF 2022-2023 has not been achieved.

According to 2022 data, tolerance levels toward Roma are lowest in the workplace and the education system.⁷⁷ Additionally, the general public most frequently identifies ethnicity as the primary ground for discrimination, with Roma being the most commonly mentioned group experiencing discrimination.⁷⁸

2.1.1. Effectiveness of the NRSF in addressing the problems

As part of the NRSF 2022-2023 implementation, measures were taken to reduce prejudice and stereotype-based attitudes toward Roma. However, these efforts have been insufficient to bring about a significant change in societal attitudes. No actions were implemented to analyse hate crimes and hate speech (both online and offline) against Roma or to reduce such incidents. The Ombudsman's Office carried out an awareness campaign planned under the NRSF 2022-2023, titled 'Ethnicity is an Opportunity. Roma - One of Us', and published video

According to the Eurobarometer 2023 data, 15% of persons in Latvia feel uncomfortable to work with Roma in the same workplace.

European Commission. (2023). *Special Eurobarometer 535: Discrimination in the European Union*, p. 104.
<https://europa.eu/eurobarometer/api/deliverable/download/file?deliverableId=88556>

⁷⁴ According to the Eurobarometer 2023 data, 31% of persons in Latvia believe that discrimination on the basis of being Roma is widespread, *ibid*.

⁷⁵ The latest data on public attitudes towards Roma was published in 2022.

SIA 'Berg Research'. (2022). *Sabiedriskās domas aptauja par sabiedrības izpratni par diskriminācijas aspektiem* (Public Opinion Survey on Public Understanding of Aspects of Discrimination). Riga, p. 29.
<https://www.lm.gov.lv/lv/media/22110/download?attachment>

⁷⁶ <https://likumi.lv/ta/id/354561>

⁷⁷ SIA 'Berg Research'. (2022). *Sabiedriskās domas aptauja par sabiedrības izpratni par diskriminācijas aspektiem* (Public Opinion Survey on Public Understanding of Aspects of Discrimination). Riga, p. 16

⁷⁸ *Idem*, p. 8

stories showcasing Roma inclusion in education and employment.⁷⁹ In addition, within the 2024 OMBO awareness campaign 'Ignite Your Empathy', a series of broadcasts were published to challenge societal stereotypes against various groups, including episodes about Roma featuring active Roma community members.⁸⁰ According to the MoC report, in 2022, the OMBO engaged a Roma consultant who provided consultations to Roma community members on various issues, including situation analysis.⁸¹

The NRSF 2024-2027 includes plans for a public awareness campaign to improve understanding of Roma culture, history, daily life, and other related issues. The NGO 'Roma Culture Centre' also plans to launch a campaign to combat antigypsyism. However, no other measures to address antigypsyism or discrimination are included in the plan. Although previous efforts by the OMBO engaged Roma representatives in promoting good practices and reducing stereotypes, the NRSF 2024-2027 does not include any new OMBO initiatives. There is no assurance that the measures outlined in the NRSF 2024-2027 will effectively change negative public attitudes toward Roma, particularly in employment and education. This suggests that antigypsyism is still not recognised as a specific issue within national policy.

2.1.2. Addressing the problems beyond the NRSF

No information available on activities addressing such issues beyond the NRSF.

2.2. Education

Summarising the available data, the overall educational situation of Roma has improved. According to the 2023 study on the Roma situation in Latvia, the proportion of Roma children who have completed compulsory basic education (grades 1-9) has increased.⁸² However, compared to the general population, the proportion of Roma lacking primary education remains significantly higher than the national average.⁸³ Compared to 2015, the proportion of Roma who have completed basic education has increased from 34% in 2015 to 39.4% in 2023.⁸⁴ The number of Roma students who did not complete compulsory basic education has also decreased – in the 2023/2024 school year, the proportion of Roma students failing to complete basic education did not exceed 7.5% of the total Roma student population,⁸⁵ whereas the NRSF 2022-2023 target for 2024 was 6%. Additionally, the number of Roma children enrolled in special education programmes has declined. In the 2023/2024 school year, 24% of Roma students were in special education programmes,⁸⁶ compared to the NRSF 2022-2023 target of 20% by 2024.

The Ministry of Education and Science's (MoES) survey on support measures for Roma students in preschool and primary education identified several key challenges in Roma education: early school dropout,⁸⁷ frequent

⁷⁹ <https://www.tiesibsargs.lv/news/informativa-kampana-tautiba-ir-iespeja-romi-vieni-no-mums/>, video is available <https://www.youtube.com/@latvijasrepublikastiesibs6518/videos>

⁸⁰ <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xXr406gTcx4&list=PLUZ8frvmPyHPP1XUhYqVJMhDmEoJ9GqiO&index=2>

⁸¹ Latvijas Republikas Kultūras ministrija. (2023). *Pārskats par romu līdzdalības veicināšanas pasākumiem 2021. un 2022.gadā* (Report on Measures to Promote Roma Participation in 2021 and 2022). Rīga, p. 43.

⁸² SIA Civitta Latvija. (2023). *Pētījums par romu situāciju Latvijā* (Study on the Situation of Roma in Latvia). Latvijas Republikas Kultūras ministrija, p. 41.

⁸³ *Idem*.

⁸⁴ *Idem*, p. 42.-43

⁸⁵ Information provided by the MoES; response to questionnaire (30 October 2024)

According to the latest available monitoring data, the results of the 2014-2020 guidelines on the proportion of Roma early school leavers have almost been achieved.

SIA Civitta Latvija. (2023). *Pētījums par romu situāciju Latvijā* (Study on the Situation of Roma in Latvia). Latvijas Republikas Kultūras ministrija, p. 39.

⁸⁶ Edurio. (2024). *Aptaujas rezultāti par pasākumiem romu izglītojamo atbalstam un iesaistei pirmsskolas un pamatizglītības programmas apgūvē* (Survey on Measures to Support and Engage Roma Students in Preschool and Primary Education Programmes). Rīga, Latvia.

⁸⁷ In the 2023/2024 school year, 44 students, representing 8% of the total number of students, were re-enrolled in the same class; 25% of the total number of students were Roma students who had an extended school year.

unexcused absences, a low level of awareness among Roma parents of the importance of education, and a lack of family support for continuing education.⁸⁸ Survey data indicate that the main reasons for early school dropout among Roma students are low recognition of educational needs (48%) and lack of family support for continuing education (38%). Only 7% of educational institution representatives believe that the absence of Roma teacher assistants is a key factor in early school dropout.⁸⁹ However, the survey does not clarify whether the presence of a Roma teacher assistant would significantly improve the dropout situation, or whether school leadership understands the benefits of having a Roma teacher assistant, given their limited knowledge and experience in this area.⁹⁰

In addition, 70% of surveyed educational institutions stated that municipalities effectively identify and motivate Roma children to attend school, while 45% reported successful cooperation with Roma parents.⁹¹ However, it is unclear how effective these identification and motivation efforts have been, which methods were used, and what specific outcomes were achieved. The study highlights that, compared to national averages, cultural differences within the Roma community influence education, such as the preference of Roma parents to raise their children at home for as long as possible, thereby delaying preschool enrolment. This hinders children's adaptation to preschool, primary school, and the overall education process.⁹² According to an analysis by the OMBO, one of the biggest issues is that many Roma children do not attend preschool before reaching mandatory school age, which significantly affects their ability to integrate successfully into later stages of education.⁹³

2.2.1. Effectiveness of the NRSF in addressing the problems

Although the overall educational situation of Roma has improved, indicating that the measures implemented under the NRSF have contributed to Roma education, the outcome indicators set out in the NRSF 2022-2023 were not fully achieved.

The NRSF 2022-2023 included a planned provision of teacher assistants for Roma students in educational institutions, aimed at facilitating individualised cooperation with Roma parents, but this was not fully implemented. While it is recognised that Roma teacher assistants and Roma mediators significantly improve Roma student engagement, reduce unexcused absences and early school dropout, and enhance Roma families' understanding of the importance of education, during the NRSF 2022-2023 implementation period, only one Roma teacher assistant was employed (at Ventspils Pārventa Primary School), and only a few Roma mediators actively collaborated with schools to promote Roma student participation (in Ventspils City and Viļaka City).⁹⁴ Approximately 64% of surveyed educational institution representatives considered cooperation with Roma mediators to be successful.⁹⁵

⁸⁸ Edurio. (2024). *Aptaujas rezultāti par pasākumiem romu izglītojamo atbalstam un iesaistei pirmsskolas un pamatizglītības programmas apgūvē* (Survey on Measures to Support and Engage Roma Students in Preschool and Primary Education Programmes). Rīga, Latvia.

⁸⁹ *Idem*.

⁹⁰ Such practice of the Roma teacher assistant is developed in many EU countries as one of the best Roma inclusion measures in education area. For example, <https://www.cedefop.europa.eu/en/tools/vet-toolkit-tackling-early-leaving/resources/guide-roma-school-mediatorsassistants>, <https://eurydice.eacea.ec.europa.eu/news/serbia-enhancing-support-roma-students-through-pedagogical-assistance>

⁹¹ Edurio. (2024). *Aptaujas rezultāti par pasākumiem romu izglītojamo atbalstam un iesaistei pirmsskolas un pamatizglītības programmas apgūvē* (Survey on Measures to Support and Engage Roma Students in Preschool and Primary Education Programmes). Rīga, Latvia.

⁹² SIA Civitta Latvija. (2023). *Pētījums par romu situāciju Latvijā* (Study on the Situation of Roma in Latvia). Latvijas Republikas Kultūras ministrija, p. 54

⁹³ Information provided by the OMBO; response to questionnaire (23 October 2024)

⁹⁴ The NRSF 2022-2023 planned to increase the number of Roma mediators and teacher assistants working in Latvian municipalities to 12 by 2024.

⁹⁵ Edurio. (2024). *Aptaujas rezultāti par pasākumiem romu izglītojamo atbalstam un iesaistei pirmsskolas un pamatizglītības programmas apgūvē* (Survey on Measures to Support and Engage Roma Students in Preschool and Primary Education Programmes). Rīga, Latvia.

The MoES acknowledges that a key challenge is finding suitable Roma candidates with the necessary education to work as teacher assistants. However, no measures have been implemented to promote opportunities for Roma to become teacher assistants at the local level. For example, no meetings have been organised with potential Roma candidates in municipalities with relatively high Roma populations to explain the responsibilities of Roma teacher assistants, their practical involvement, required skills, and opportunities for skill development. Additionally, no exchange of best practices has been facilitated between municipalities to encourage Roma recruitment and strengthen cooperation with local Roma activists and civil society representatives.

During the implementation of the NRSF 2022-2023, no regular meetings were held between Roma mediators, teacher assistants, education department representatives, and Roma parents to improve Roma students' access to education, particularly in preschool and primary education.

The NRSF 2022-2023 set a performance indicator requiring that 30 Roma students receive support under the ESF project 'Support for Reducing Early School Leaving' – 'PuMPuRS' by 2024.⁹⁶ Although during the implementation of the NRSF 2022-2023, the MoES took measures to prevent early school dropout among Roma at all education levels and to promote their return to education and the labour market, including ensuring Roma students and parents had access to this project's support, it remains unclear how many Roma students received this support. According to survey results, 56% of surveyed education institution representatives positively evaluated the support available to Roma students, while 11% stated that the support was ineffective, as Roma students continued to miss school without valid reasons.⁹⁷ The survey data does not provide insights into how Roma students and their parents perceive the availability and effectiveness of this support.

Although the NRSF 2022-2023 aimed to increase Roma youth motivation to pursue higher education by allowing Roma students from large families to receive scholarships under the 'Studēt gods' ('Studying for honor') programme, it is impossible to evaluate the effectiveness of this measure since Latvian higher education institutions do not track students' ethnicity.⁹⁸

Compared to the NRSF 2022-2023, key performance indicators related to Roma education have not been included in the NRSF 2024-2027.

The NRSF 2024-2027 continues with the same educational support measures as in the NRSF 2022-2023. However, a positive development is that the NRSF 2024-2027 situation analysis acknowledges that some municipalities, for example, Jelgava City and Ventspils City municipality,⁹⁹ plan support measures for Roma parents and their children who are not enrolled in preschool on time, helping them adapt to school culture and learn Latvian. Additionally, the NRSF 2024-2027 includes specific measures to support Roma students, such as developing cooperation with parents and educating them to reduce early school dropout, and providing individual support for students when needed. These initiatives align with the Education Development Guidelines 2021-2027,¹⁰⁰ which aim to ensure an inclusive education approach at all levels. The plan also outlines priority measures for Roma student support, such as:

- strengthening cooperation between municipalities, schools, teachers, and parents to identify Roma students at risk of dropping out early and provide them with individualised support;

⁹⁶ General information about the project is available in Latvian, no specific information available about Roma. <http://www.pumpurs.lv/lv/par-projektu>

⁹⁷ Edurio. (2024). *Aptaujas rezultāti par pasākumiem romu izglītojamo atbalstam un iesaistei pirmsskolas un pamatzglītības programmas apgūvē* (Survey on Measures to Support and Engage Roma Students in Preschool and Primary Education Programmes). Rīga, Latvia.

⁹⁸ Latvijas Republikas Kultūras ministrija. (2023). *Pārskats par romu līdzdalības veicināšanas pasākumiem 2021. un 2022.gadā* (Report on Measures to Promote Roma Participation in 2021 and 2022). Rīga, p. 38.

⁹⁹ For example, a notable best practice was implemented at Ventspils Pārventa Primary School, where a Roma teacher assistant was introduced. This assistant helped Roma children integrate into the learning process, overcome language barriers, and better understand study materials. A particularly significant aspect was collaboration with Roma parents who are illiterate, ensuring better support for their children's education. Latvijas Republikas Kultūras ministrija. (2023). *Pārskats par romu līdzdalības veicināšanas pasākumiem 2021. un 2022.gadā* (Report on Measures to Promote Roma Participation in 2021 and 2022). Rīga, p. 15.

¹⁰⁰ <https://likumi.lv/ta/id/324332-par-izglitiba-attistibas-pamatnostadnem-20212027-gadam>

- expanding the role of Roma mediators in education;
- developing the practice of Roma teacher assistants in schools.

2.2.2. Addressing the problems beyond the NRSF

The OMBO's study 'The Situation of Roma in Latvia' found that the COVID-19 pandemic, during which education was largely provided remotely, had a particularly negative impact on the education of Roma children. Several municipalities reported challenges with remote learning and the difficulties faced by Roma families in using digital technologies.¹⁰¹ However, this issue was neither identified nor addressed through the NRSF 2022-2023 or any other support policies. Additionally, the 2023 study on the situation of Roma in Latvia did not analyse the impact of COVID-19 on Roma access to fundamental rights, nor did it provide recommendations for improving the situation.

Many key issues in Roma education identified in the previous RCM2 report have only been partially addressed. Notably, there has been no analysis of how Roma students would be supported if schools were closed, nor have specific measures been introduced to enhance the skills and competencies of Roma children and their parents.

2.3. Employment

The 2023 study on the situation of Roma in Latvia found that the majority of Roma are long-term unemployed, a significantly higher proportion compared to the general population in Latvia. Additionally, most registered unemployed Roma have an education level below primary education.¹⁰² The NRSF 2024-2027 identifies a positive trend compared to 2015, when long-term unemployed Roma made up nearly half (49.7%) of all unemployed Roma. In contrast, by 2023, this number had decreased to 43.9%.¹⁰³ However, widespread stereotypes in Latvian society portray Roma as unreliable workers, contributing to discrimination in the labour market. Survey data indicate that 27.2% of the population would not want to work alongside Roma in the same workplace.¹⁰⁴ Regardless of their level of education, Roma individuals report experiencing the most discrimination in the labour market,¹⁰⁵ which limits their job opportunities and reduces their motivation to pursue education.

2.3.1. Effectiveness of the NRSF in addressing the problems

Within the project 'Latvian Roma Platform', Roma mediators in municipalities (Balvi, Jūrmala, Ventspils, and Jelgava) actively promoted Roma participation in the labour market and worked to address employment issues, including collaborating with the SEA to support unemployed Roma.¹⁰⁶

Although the number of long-term unemployed Roma has decreased, it did not meet the target set in the NRSF 2022-2023, which aimed for 35% of all unemployed Roma by 2024. These figures indicate that the support

¹⁰¹ Information provided by the OMBO; response to questionnaire (23 October 2024)

¹⁰² SIA Civitta Latvija. (2023). *Pētījums par romu situāciju Latvijā (Study on the Situation of Roma in Latvia)*. Latvijas Republikas Kultūras ministrija, p.p. 57-58.

¹⁰³ Latvijas Republikas Kultūras ministrija. (2024). *Plāns romu stratēģiskā ietvara pasākumu īstenošanai 2024.–2027. gadam (NRSF 2024–2027)*, p. 7. <https://likumi.lv/ta/id/354561>

¹⁰⁴ Kaprāns, M., Mieriņa, I., & Saulītis, A. (2021). *Starpkultūru stereotipi un aizspriedumi Latvijā [Intercultural stereotypes and prejudices in Latvia]*. Rīga: Latvijas Universitātes Filozofijas un socioloģijas institūts. https://www.integration.lv/uploads/files/informativie-materiali/lu_petijums_sapc.pdf

¹⁰⁵ SIA Civitta Latvija. (2023). *Pētījums par romu situāciju Latvijā (Study on the Situation of Roma in Latvia)*. Latvijas Republikas Kultūras ministrija, p. 60.

¹⁰⁶ Latvijas Republikas Kultūras ministrija. (2023). *Pārskats par romu līdzdalības veicināšanas pasākumiem 2021. un 2022.gadā (Report on Measures to Promote Roma Participation in 2021 and 2022)*. Rīga, p. 16.

Interview with a representative of the Roma NGO 'Sāre Khetene' and Roma mediator M. Avramenko (4 October 2024)

Interview with representatives of the Jelgava City and District Roma NGO 'Čačune Roma' and Roma mediator A. Janavičute (17 October 2024)

measures implemented under the NRSF 2022-2023 were not sufficiently effective achieving the planned targets.

The SEA regularly provides registered Roma job seekers with individual support in job searching, including consultations with employment agents, personalised career guidance on the labour market situation, and information on available job opportunities.¹⁰⁷ Registered unemployed Roma frequently participate in active employment measures, such as training programmes, temporary public works, non-formal education, and competitiveness-enhancing activities etc.¹⁰⁸ According to the 2023 study on the Roma situation, Roma job seekers are satisfied with the services provided by the SEA.¹⁰⁹ However, a detailed evaluation of the SEA services for unemployed Roma has not been conducted.¹¹⁰

Although unemployed Roma have access to the SEA support and employment programmes, the participation of illiterate Roma remains ineffective, as they are unable to engage in the SEA activities due to their lack of reading and writing skills. Low motivation and other socio-economic barriers also restrict their access to these services. To address this issue, the NRSF 2022-2023 planned a SEA pilot project to improve Roma literacy skills, but this initiative was never implemented. The reasons indicated by the public institutions as to why the activity was not carried out included low interest among Roma,¹¹¹ along with other obstacles related to various administrative procedures and the specific conditions of the target group (proximity to the training location, limited financial resources in Roma families, focus on childcare at home).¹¹² However, a Roma mediator who proposed this initiative reported that the pilot project failed due to a lack of understanding of the target group's specific needs, insufficient coordination, and ineffective collaboration between Roma activists and the SEA.¹¹³ In addition, no targeted approach was developed to inform and engage the Roma community in the pilot project. The pilot project locations were not selected based on the needs of the target group.¹¹⁴ The training procurement process did not list Roma as a specific target group, nor did it allocate funding for Roma participation. Furthermore, no Roma representative was involved in efforts to inform and motivate illiterate Roma to enrol within the project.¹¹⁵ No consultations with Roma representatives were held to discuss the challenges of implementing the pilot project.

Although NEET Roma youth¹¹⁶ were regularly involved in the ESF+ project 'PROTI un DARI!', additional measures are necessary to increase Roma participation in this project. For example, collaboration between Roma mediators, activists, project mentors, and coordinators could help to better engage more NEET Roma youth.

Despite the persistent challenges in Roma employment, the NRSF 2024-2027 includes only two measures to promote Roma employment and labour market inclusion: 1) Access to individualised career support will be

¹⁰⁷ In 2022, 189 individual career consultations were provided to registered Roma unemployed people. Latvijas Republikas Kultūras ministrija. (2023). *Pārskats par romu līdzdalības veicināšanas pasākumiem 2021. un 2022.gadā* (Report on Measures to Promote Roma Participation in 2021 and 2022). Riga, p. 40.

¹⁰⁸ Latvijas Republikas Kultūras ministrija. (2023). *Pārskats par romu līdzdalības veicināšanas pasākumiem 2021. un 2022.gadā* (Report on Measures to Promote Roma Participation in 2021 and 2022). Riga, pp. 40-41.

¹⁰⁹ SIA Civitta Latvija. (2023). *Pētījums par romu situāciju Latvijā* (Study on the Situation of Roma in Latvia). Latvijas Republikas Kultūras ministrija, p. 59.

¹¹⁰ Information provided by the MoW; response to questionnaire (24 October 2024)

¹¹¹ *Idem*.

¹¹² Baltic Institute of Social Sciences. (2024). *Plāna romu stratēģiskā ietvara pasākumu īstenošanai 2022.–2023. gadam ietekmes izvērtējums* (Impact Assessment of the Plan for the Implementation of the Roma Strategic Framework for 2022–2023). Riga, p. 44.

¹¹³ Interview with a representative of the Roma NGO 'Sāre Khetene' and Roma mediator M. Avramenko (4 October 2024)

¹¹⁴ Municipalities with no or few Roma residents, and organisations that have no experience working with Roma, apply to participate in the pilot project. Interview with I.Ielīte – a representative of the Latvian Women's NGOs Cooperation Network (10 October 2024)

¹¹⁵ *Idem*.

¹¹⁶ In 2022, 23 NEET Roma young people were involved, but since the start of the project, a total of 37 NEET Roma young people have been involved. Data is provided for young people who have indicated their nationality, and it is identifiable.

provided by the SEA to registered unemployed individuals, including Roma. 2) The ESF+ project 'PROTI UN DARI 2.0' will implement activities to increase NEET youth motivation, including Roma, to foster their access to education and the labour market.¹¹⁷ There is a clear need to revise and expand the NRSF 2024-2027 with additional measures to promote Roma employment, taking into account the findings of the 2023 study and EU Council Recommendation.¹¹⁸

Many key employment issues identified in the previous RCM monitoring report were only partially addressed. There remains a lack of targeted employment support measures for Roma, particularly illiterate Roma. Access to lifelong learning and skills development has not been improved or simplified, and no actions have been implemented to combat discrimination against Roma in the labour market.

2.3.2. Addressing the problems beyond the NRSF

No information available.

2.4. Healthcare

The 2019 report, prepared within the ESF project 'Inclusive Labour Market and Poverty Risk Research and Monitoring', highlights that inequality in healthcare among Roma is linked to cultural differences, poverty-related issues, and low literacy levels.¹¹⁹ Life expectancy data for Latvia indicate that the Roma community has the shortest life expectancy among all population groups.¹²⁰

Survey data suggest a need for informational and educational activities on the importance of contraception for health protection. These initiatives should be adapted to the cultural characteristics and traditional beliefs of Roma to ensure that information is communicated in an accessible and effective manner.¹²¹ The study identifies key challenges:

- Roma show a lack of interest or motivation to participate in health-related activities;
- restricted access to information sources for Roma due to their limited interaction with the majority of the society;
- local-level engagement is crucial for improving health awareness within the Roma community.

2.4.1. Effectiveness of the NRSF in addressing the problems

In Ventspils Municipality, a Roma mediator regularly provides support to Roma regarding health promotion and disease prevention, ensuring that Roma families can access healthcare services, including state-funded medical care. The Roma mediator also collaborates with NGOs and family doctors to facilitate access to healthcare.¹²²

¹¹⁷ Latvijas Republikas Kultūras ministrija. (2024). *Plāns romu stratēģiskā ietvara pasākumu īstenošanai nākamajām periodam no 2024 (Plan for the Implementation of the Roma Strategic Framework for the Period 2024–202)*. Rīga, pp. 12–13.

¹¹⁸ [https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/LV/TXT/PDF/?uri=CELEX:32021H0319\(01\)](https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/LV/TXT/PDF/?uri=CELEX:32021H0319(01))

¹¹⁹ Baltic Institute of Social Sciences. (2019). *Ikgadējs nabadzības un sociālās atstumtības mazināšanas rīcībpolitikas izvērtējums (t. sk. izvērtējums par nevienlīdzību veselības aprūpē un nevienlīdzību mājokļa pieejamības jomā) (Annual Evaluation of Poverty Reduction and Social Exclusion Policy (Including the Evaluation of Inequality in Healthcare and Housing Accessibility))*. Rīga, pp. 219, 337.

http://petijumi.mk.gov.lv/sites/default/files/title_file/Nabadz_soc_atstumt_mazin_ricibpol_izvertejums_Zinojums.pdf

¹²⁰ SIA Civitta Latvija. (2023). *Pētījums par romu situāciju Latvijā (Study on the Situation of Roma in Latvia)*. Latvijas Republikas Kultūras ministrija, p. 88.

¹²¹ *Ibid.*

¹²² Interview with a representative of the Roma NGO 'Sāre Khetene' and Roma mediator M. Avramenko (4 October 2024).

Latvijas Republikas Kultūras ministrija. (2023). *Pārskats par romu līdzdalības veicināšanas pasākumiem 2021. un 2022.gadā (Report on Measures to Promote Roma Participation in 2021 and 2022)*. Rīga, p. 23.

The NRSF 2022–2023 measure ‘Roma Participation in Health Promotion Training’ was not implemented. This initiative aimed to enable Roma mediators to participate in health promotion training to disseminate health-related information within the Roma community, particularly regarding sexual and reproductive health, and the prevention of substance abuse and addictive behaviours.¹²³ This measure has been postponed to the NRSF 2024–2027. The MoH has stated that this measure will be implemented under the EU Cohesion Policy Programme 2021–2027, within Specific Objective 4.1.2, which focuses on improving equal access to quality, sustainable, and cost-effective healthcare, health promotion, and disease prevention services.¹²⁴ The measure will be carried out within the framework of the ESF+ project No. 4.1.2.1./1/24/I/001 ‘National-Level Health Promotion and Disease Prevention Measures’.¹²⁵

No additional support measures for Roma health promotion have been included in the NRSF 2024–2027. This raises concerns that the challenges identified in the 2015 and 2023 studies on the situation of Roma in Latvia¹²⁶ have not been fully addressed under the NRSF 2022–2023 and are only partially planned in the NRSF 2024–2027.

2.4.2. Addressing the problems beyond the NRSF

No information available on activities addressing the problems beyond the NRSF.

2.5. Social protection

The 2023 study found that Roma are among the high-risk groups exposed to poverty and are identified as one of the most socially vulnerable groups.¹²⁷ Additionally, social benefits remain a significant source of income for many Roma.¹²⁸ A 2021 assessment concluded that Roma are among the recipients of the Guaranteed Minimum Income (GMI) benefit who have low levels of education and, in many cases, receive this support across multiple generations, reinforcing this practice as a form of socialisation strategy.¹²⁹ The situation is further exacerbated by societal prejudices, with the widespread belief that Roma place a burden on the social security system and contribute to increased crime rates.¹³⁰ Although Roma are identified as a target group in the Social Protection and Labour Market Policy Guidelines 2021–2027,¹³¹ the document notes that data on specific groups, such as Roma, are only partially available and are not systematically analysed.¹³²

2.5.1. Effectiveness of the NRSF in addressing the problems

The NRSF 2022–2023 did not include targeted social protection measures for Roma, as these were implemented within the general social protection policy framework.¹³³ These measures were part of municipal

¹²³ Information provided by the MoH; response to questionnaire (25 October 2024)

¹²⁴ *Idem*.

¹²⁵ <https://www.vm.gov.lv/lv/4121-nacionala-meroga-veselibas-veicinasanas-un-slimibu-profilakses-pasakumi>

¹²⁶ SIA Civitta Latvija. (2023). *Pētījums par romu situāciju Latvijā (Study on the Situation of Roma in Latvia)*. Latvijas Republikas Kultūras ministrija, pP. 64–71.

¹²⁷ *Idem*, p. 8.

¹²⁸ *Idem*, p. 73.

¹²⁹ Baltic Institute of Social Sciences. (2021). *Ikgadējs nabadzības un sociālās atstumtības mazināšanas rīcībpolitikas izvērtējums (t.sk. padziļināts izvērtējums par GMI saņēmēju iztikšanas stratēģijām) (Annual Evaluation of Poverty Reduction and Social Exclusion Policy (Including in-depth Evaluation of Subsistence Strategies of GMI Recipients))*. Rīga, pp. 288, 294, 315.

¹³⁰ Kaprāns, M., Mieriņa, I., & Saulītis, A. (2021). *Starpkultūru stereotipi un aizspriedumi Latvijā (Intercultural Stereotypes and Prejudices in Latvia)*. Rīga: Latvijas Universitātes Filozofijas un socioloģijas institūts. https://www.integration.lv/uploads/files/informativie-materiali/lu_petijums_sapc.pdf

¹³¹ Ministry of Welfare of the Republic of Latvia. (2021). *Social Protection and Labour Market Policy Guidelines for 2021–2027, Section 12: Evidence-Based Policymaking, Subsection 1.*

¹³² <https://likumi.lv/ta/id/325828-par-socialas-aizsardzibas-un-darba-tirgus-politikas-pamatnostadnem20212027-qadam>.

¹³³ In general, in the social policy area, social assistance is provided to residents regardless of their ethnic origin; that is, social benefits, such as housing benefits, are available to any person who meets certain criteria.

social services, primarily involving support from social services, educational institutions, the probation service, and child protection authorities. Such measures were implemented at both national and municipal levels, but without specifically addressing the Roma target group or their unique needs. In general, Roma families have better access to social protection services in municipalities where Roma mediators are active and where there is cooperation between social services, Roma community activists, and NGO representatives.

The NRSF 2022-2023 planned to develop the family assistant service in municipalities, including promoting social skills among Roma families and training Roma family assistants to build trust between Roma families and social services. However, the family assistant service was neither implemented¹³⁴ nor evaluated. There was no assessment of the service's effectiveness for Roma families, and no monitoring of the situation of socially disadvantaged Roma families was conducted. According to the opinions of the respondents interviewed for the Report on the Impact Evaluation of the NRSF 2022-2023, the reason for this situation is that the Roma population, in general, has a low level of education and does not meet the selection criteria for training.¹³⁵

Similarly, the NRSF 2024-2027 does not include any targeted social protection measures for Roma.

2.5.2. Addressing the problems beyond the NRSF

No information available on activities addressing the problems beyond the NRSF.

2.6. Social services

Roma community representatives acknowledge that social services and, in particular, social benefits are the primary source of income for Roma families at risk of poverty and in need of social assistance (those classified as low-income or disadvantaged households). These Roma families are highly dependent on the national social system and municipal social services.¹³⁶ Compared to 2017, municipal social service support for Roma has increased by 22%.¹³⁷

Although data suggests that Roma are well informed about social services available at the municipal level, their lack of education prevents them from fully understanding the procedures for accessing these services, which hinders their ability to use them.¹³⁸ For this reason, it is crucial for municipal institutions, including social service employees, to develop strong communication skills when working with Roma families, as well as a willingness to assist them and build relationships based on trust. 21% of social service employees regularly

SIA Civitta Latvija. (2023). *Pētījums par romu situāciju Latvijā (Study on the Situation of Roma in Latvia)*. Latvijas Republikas Kultūras ministrija, p. 73.

¹³⁴ According to the 'Report on the Impact Evaluation of the NRSF 2022-2023', only one Roma trained as a family assistant.

Baltic Institute of Social Sciences. (2024). *Plāna romu stratēģiskā ietvara pasākumu īstenošanai 2022.–2023. gadam ietekmes izvērtējums (Impact Assessment of the Plan for the Implementation of the Roma Strategic Framework for 2022–2023)*. Rīga, p. 52.

¹³⁵ Baltic Institute of Social Sciences. (2024). *Plāna romu stratēģiskā ietvara pasākumu īstenošanai 2022.–2023. gadam ietekmes izvērtējums (Impact Assessment of the Plan for the Implementation of the Roma Strategic Framework for 2022–2023)*. Rīga, p. 52.

¹³⁶ SIA Civitta Latvija. (2023). *Pētījums par romu situāciju Latvijā (Study on the Situation of Roma in Latvia)*. Latvijas Republikas Kultūras ministrija, p. 73.

¹³⁷ Labklājības ministrija. (2023). *Profesionāla sociālā darba attīstība pašvaldībās: ex-post pētījums. Starppziņojums par sociālo dienestu vadītāju un sociālā darba speciālistu viedokļiem par sociālā darba praksi ietekmējošiem institucionāliem un profesionāliem faktoriem mērījumiem un to analīzi (Development of Professional Social Work in Municipalities: Ex-post Study. Interim Report on the Opinions of Heads of Social Services and Social Work Specialists Regarding Institutional and Professional Factors Affecting Social Work Practice, Measurements, and Their Analysis)*. Rīga, p. 16.

<https://www.lm.gov.lv/lv/media/22689/download>.

¹³⁸ SIA Civitta Latvija. (2023). *Pētījums par romu situāciju Latvijā (Study on the Situation of Roma in Latvia)*. Latvijas Republikas Kultūras ministrija, p. 75.

work with Roma, but only 12% feel confident and prepared to assist these families.¹³⁹ Only 4% of social workers have received training in the past five years on working with Roma as a client group.¹⁴⁰ In addition, Roma respondents feel that social service employees do not explain social services clearly, making it difficult to access the available benefits.¹⁴¹ According to the 2023 study, in the past three years, 27% of Roma reported situations where state or municipal officials failed to provide information about social benefits in simple language. However, this figure represents a significant improvement since 2015, when 47% of Roma had this complaint.¹⁴²

2.6.1. Effectiveness of the NRSF in addressing the problems

It is not possible to assess how the measures included in the NRSF 2022–2023 that aimed to improve Roma access to social services and enhance social work have actually contributed to improving the social situation of Roma, as these measures were not specifically targeted at Roma. For example, there was no targeted measure to involve Roma community members in the provision of family assistant services in municipalities; nor were any initiatives implemented to train Roma community members, including Roma family members, in family assistance and social skills to improve their access to social services. Additionally, no awareness-raising or motivation-building activities were carried out to increase Roma participation in social support programmes.

One report states that municipalities with large Roma populations have been outsourcing the family assistant service for several years. However, there is no available data on how many Roma families benefit from this service, as municipalities do not specifically target Roma families in its provision.¹⁴³

According to the same report, in 2021 and 2022, only 13 Roma families across eight municipalities received family assistant services. In only two municipalities were the service provided by a Roma assistant.¹⁴⁴ No evaluation was conducted or planned to assess the effectiveness of the family assistant service for Roma families. Furthermore, no monitoring was carried out to analyse the situation of socially disadvantaged Roma families. In some municipalities with relatively large Roma populations (such as Jelgava City and Ventspils City), the family assistant service is provided by a Roma mediator employed by the Social Services Department and funded by the MoC's project. This approach facilitates access to low-income Roma families, ensures the provision of necessary social assistance, and helps reduce the risks of social exclusion and discrimination.¹⁴⁵

Within the project 'Latvian Roma Platform', seven Roma mediators worked in municipalities to collaborate with social services, aiming to improve Roma access to social services and strengthen social protection.¹⁴⁶

In 2023, a methodological guide titled 'Methodological Material for Social Work in a Diverse Society' was developed, providing recommendations for working with the Roma community.¹⁴⁷

¹³⁹ Labklājības ministrija. (2023). *Profesionāla sociālā darba attīstība pašvaldībās: ex-post pētījums* (Development of Professional Social Work in Municipalities: Ex-post study). Rīga, p. 72.

¹⁴⁰ Labklājības ministrija. (2023). *Profesionāla sociālā darba attīstība pašvaldībās: ex-post pētījums* (Development of Professional Social Work in Municipalities: Ex-post study). Rīga, p. 131.

¹⁴¹ SIA Civitta Latvija. (2023). *Pētījums par romu situāciju Latvijā* (Study on the Situation of Roma in Latvia). Latvijas Republikas Kultūras ministrija, p. 75.

¹⁴² *Ibid.*

¹⁴³ Latvijas Republikas Kultūras ministrija. (2023). *Pārskats par romu līdzdalības veicināšanas pasākumiem 2021. un 2022.gadā* (Report on Measures to Promote Roma Participation in 2021 and 2022). Rīga, p. 34.

¹⁴⁴ *Idem*, pp. 29–30.

¹⁴⁵ *Idem*, pp. 16,19.

¹⁴⁶ Balvi County Municipality, Jurmala City Municipality, Ventspils City Municipality, Jelgava City Municipality, Daugavpils City Municipality, Riga City Municipality, etc.

¹⁴⁷ Labklājības ministrija. (2023). *Metodiskais materiāls sociālajam darbam daudzveidīgā sabiedrībā* (Methodological Material for Social Work in a Diverse Society). Rīga., <https://www.lm.gov.lv/lv/metodiskie-materiali-0:https://www.lm.gov.lv/lv/media/22683/download?attachment>

2.6.2. Addressing the problems beyond the NRSF

Beyond the NRSF 2022-2023, significant problem identified in the area of social protection measures for Roma was the impact of COVID-19 on socially disadvantaged Roma families and their access to social services.¹⁴⁸

However, the issues highlighted in the previous RCM monitoring report regarding social services and social protection were not fully addressed. Furthermore, the NRSF 2024-2027 does not include targeted measures to improve Roma access to social services, enhance the skills of social service professionals in working with the Roma target group, or strengthen cooperation between social workers and Roma mediators. Additionally, no study on the effectiveness of social services for Roma families was conducted under the NRSF 2022-2023, nor is such a study planned under the NRSF 2024-2027.

2.7. Child protection

A large proportion of surveyed Roma consider their children's or grandchildren's ability to learn to read and write, as well as attend kindergarten, to be highly important.¹⁴⁹ However, approximately one-quarter of Roma children do not attend kindergarten. Roma highlighted the following reasons for children not attending preschool: lack of proficiency in the Latvian language; unfavourable attitudes from other children; Roma children's unwillingness to integrate into the preschool environment.¹⁵⁰ The 2023 study found that Roma children with weak Latvian language skills face difficulties integrating into the education process and socialising. To support gradual integration into education, it is essential to provide Roma teacher assistants, who can also help maintain communication between the school, the child, and the parents.¹⁵¹

2.7.1. Effectiveness of the NRSF in addressing the problems

The NRSF 2022-2023 and the NRSF 2024-2027 do not specifically include child protection measures for Roma children, as these are implemented within the general policy framework, despite the EU Council Recommendation suggesting otherwise. These measures are part of the municipal social services, which primarily involve support from social services, schools, probation services, child protection authorities, and collaboration with Roma mediators, teacher assistants, and Roma NGOs.

Within the project 'Latvian Roma Platform', seven Roma mediators in municipalities collaborated with Roma families to facilitate Roma children's access to education and partially ensure the protection of children's rights by working with child protection authorities, social services, and social housing commissions. Starting in 2024, the project 'Latvian Roma Platform' has also supported local Roma youth initiatives in cities such as Valmiera, Jūrmala, and Sabile. These initiatives were developed through the Latvian Roma Youth Practical Workshop 'SĀRE KHETENE'.¹⁵² Additionally, NEET Roma youth have been regularly involved in the 'PROTI un DARI!' project.¹⁵³

¹⁴⁸ The NGO Latvian Women's NGOs Cooperation Network implemented a European Gender Equality Alliance funded project to mitigate the impact of COVID-19 by strengthening local women's organisations and Roma community activists. <https://sadarbibastikls.lv/lv/dzimumu-lidztiesibas-alianse-eiropa-pieskir-dotaciju-sieviesu-sadarbibas-tiklam> <https://sadarbibastikls.lv/lv/iekartojam-biroju-romu-mediatoriem-jelgava>

¹⁴⁹ SIA Civitta Latvija. (2023). *Pētījums par romu situāciju Latvijā (Study on the Situation of Roma in Latvia)*. Rīga, p. 45.

¹⁵⁰ The study indicates that "Parents have experienced discrimination both from representatives of educational institutions and from parents of other children, especially during class meetings. It has been more of a hidden discrimination, so parents have tried to avoid attending school or its events in order to reduce their children's association with the Roma ethnicity."

SIA Civitta Latvija. (2023). *Pētījums par romu situāciju Latvijā (Study on the Situation of Roma in Latvia)*. Rīga, p. 47, 49.

¹⁵¹ SIA Civitta Latvija. (2023). *Pētījums par romu situāciju Latvijā (Study on the Situation of Roma in Latvia)*. Rīga, p. 36.

¹⁵² <https://www.km.gov.lv/lv/jaunums/romu-jauniesi-lidzdalibas-iniciativa-aicina-sabiedribu-veicinat-dzivnieku-labturibu-valmierā>

¹⁵³ In 2022, 23 NEET Roma youth were involved, and since the project began, a total of 37 NEET Roma youth have been involved. Data is provided for young people who have indicated their nationality and it is identifiable.

The Jelgava City Municipality, in collaboration with the CEI, has been operating the 'TOY' play library for several years, providing Roma children and families with skill development activities and consultations on various social and everyday issues.¹⁵⁴ The Ventspils City Municipality has supported the Roma NGO 'Sāre Khetene' by allocating space for a Roma children and family support centre.¹⁵⁵ Since 2024, the Roma NGO has been implementing the project 'Roma Families – Learning and Growing Together!', which aims to reduce prejudice against Roma and promote social inclusion. As part of this initiative, informal Latvian language and life skills training have been provided.¹⁵⁶

2.7.2. Addressing the problems beyond the NRSF

No information available on activities addressing these problems beyond the NRSF.

2.8. Promoting (awareness of) Roma arts, culture, and history

2.8.1. Effectiveness of the NRSF in addressing the problems

In the framework of the NRSF 2022–2023 several awareness-raising events on Roma culture and history were organised. As part of the project 'Latvian Roma Platform' educational activities on Roma culture and history were organised at local and regional levels, with a special focus on the Roma genocide during World War II. For example, the exhibition of 'Roma in Latvia' on Roma history and culture,¹⁵⁷ a digital art exhibition in 2022 by the Latvian Roma artist and poet Kārlis Rudevičs, as well as the art exhibition 'Art of Gipsy' by the Roma artist Ornella Rudeviča.¹⁵⁸ These events helped promote Roma culture and reduce stereotypes and prejudices in society. All of these initiatives were implemented by the NGO 'Roma Cultural Centre'.

Additionally, an International Roma Culture Festival has been organised annually to increase public understanding of Roma cultural heritage and reduce negative stereotypes.¹⁵⁹ However, the festival's organisational costs were covered by budgetary funds allocated for unforeseen expenses, making long-term planning and sustainability difficult. According to the festival organisers this situation does not allow for sustainable planning or appropriate implementation of the event.¹⁶⁰ The NRSF 2024–2027 plans to continue supporting this initiative but notes that its implementation will require additional funding.

In 2024, a commemoration event for Roma genocide victims was held in Sabile (Talsi Municipality), attended by both Roma youth and elderly members of the Roma community.¹⁶¹ An informational booklet titled 'The Right to Remember - A Handbook for Youth Education on the Roma Genocide' was translated into Latvian and published.¹⁶²

Some municipalities have supported Roma NGOs in organising cultural and informational events. For example, the Jelgava City Municipality provides annual support for activities dedicated to International Roma Day, as well as other events.¹⁶³

However, several planned measures under the NRSF 2022–2023 were not implemented:

¹⁵⁴ Interview with the Deputy Chairperson of the Jelgava City Council R.Vectirāne (25 October 2024)

¹⁵⁵ The aim of the Roma NGO 'Sāre Khetene' is to promote the well-being of Roma families and their involvement in the labour market and education, as well as the participation of Roma women in public life, and to provide support in professional growth and career development. Interview with the Head of the Social Service of the City of Ventspils U.Lapskalne-Alksne (4 November 2024)

¹⁵⁶ <https://www.sif.gov.lv/lv/media/6588/download?attachment>

¹⁵⁷ <http://www.romucentrs.lv/>

¹⁵⁸ <http://www.romucentrs.lv/>

¹⁵⁹ <http://www.romucentrs.lv/roma-world-festiv257ls.html>

¹⁶⁰ Interview with representatives of the NGO 'Roma Culture Centre' (16 October 2024)

¹⁶¹ https://www.talsunovads.lv/lv/jaunums/sabile-notiks-pasakums-romu-genocida-upuru-pieminai?utm_source=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.google.com%2F

¹⁶² <https://www.km.gov.lv/lv/media/34131/download?attachment>

¹⁶³ Interview with the Deputy Chairperson of the Jelgava City Council R.Vectirāne (25 October 2024).

- The initiative to include information about Roma history and culture in school curricula and textbooks was not implemented. For example, the '*Latvijas Skolas Soma*' (Latvian School Bag) programme did not incorporate Roma history, and students and teachers did not visit the Roma History and Art Museum to learn about Roma heritage. Representatives of the Roma Cultural Centre stated these initiatives have been postponed to the NRSF 2024-2027.¹⁶⁴
- No financial support was provided for the digitisation of the Roma History and Art Museum's exhibition materials or for the creation of a virtual museum website. Additionally, Roma radio broadcasts, proposed by the Roma Cultural Centre, were not funded or implemented.

2.8.2. Addressing the problems beyond the NRSF

No information available on activities addressing the problems beyond the NRSF.

There is a lack of commemorative activities for Roma genocide victims, nor is there a specific place designated to commemorate them. The initiative of the Roma Cultural Centre to establish a monument in the centre of Riga City to commemorate Roma genocide victims and create an educational centre for Roma history and culture has not been financially approved by the state and Riga City Municipality.

¹⁶⁴ Interview with representatives of the NGO 'Roma Culture Centre' (16 October 2024).

3. FOCUS ON KEY PROBLEM AFFECTING ROMA

3.1. Unjustified placement of Roma children in special education programmes

The OMBO has identified the unjustified placement of Roma children in special education programmes as one of the most significant issues.¹⁶⁵ According to the 'Report on the Impact Assessment of the NRSF 2022–2023', Roma activists agree that for some Roma children, special education programmes are not necessary. The main issue when Roma children start school is their insufficient Latvian language skills, rather than intellectual developmental disorders. As a result, these children face significantly limited opportunities for further education and career development right from the start.¹⁶⁶ The 2022 study, 'Roma Situation in Latvia', highlighted that in Jūrmala City and Tukums Municipality, an unusually high number of Roma children were enrolled in special education programmes. This raised concerns that Roma children and their parents are being unnecessarily advised to place them in programmes designed for students with various developmental disorders.¹⁶⁷ In its recommendations from the 'Roma Situation in Latvia' study and in an official letter, the Ombudsman urged the MoES to review and provide information on the work of municipal pedagogical-medical commissions regarding the potentially unjustified placement of Roma children in special education institutions or inappropriate special education programmes. The MoES's response to the Ombudsman has not been made publicly available.

These findings are supported by data from the MoES: in 2017, 34.2% of Roma students attending educational institutions were enrolled in special primary education programmes. Within the framework of the NRSF 2022–2023 support measures were planned to reduce this figure to 20% by 2024.¹⁶⁸ Although by the 2023/2024 academic year, this number had decreased to 24%, the target was not fully achieved.¹⁶⁹ There is no available data on whether the high percentage of Roma children placed in special education programmes has decreased in certain municipalities. A representative of the OMBO noted that a percentage-based reduction does not necessarily address the regional problem of a disproportionately high number of Roma children being placed in special education institutions.¹⁷⁰

In the study 'Roma Situation in Latvia' special focus is placed on the assessment of how Roma children's education in special education institutions was organised, such as whether Roma teacher assistants were available to support children in Roma language, and whether the pedagogical-medical commissions included a person who could communicate with the child in the Roma language.¹⁷¹ The MoES informed that the process of reforming the pedagogical-medical commissions is started. The National Centre for Education conducted a survey of municipal pedagogical-medical commission members, focusing on how the assessment process for Roma children is carried out. The results of the survey show that language barriers were not a determining factor in placing Roma children in special education programmes. Additionally, the State Pedagogical-Medical

¹⁶⁵ According to the Ombudsman's Office (OMBO), "The unjustified education of any child in special education programmes for children with mental disabilities is a critical problem and requires an immediate solution" (OMBO, 2024).

¹⁶⁶ Baltic Institute of Social Sciences. (2024). *Plāna romu stratēģiskā ietvara pasākumu īstenošanai 2022.–2023.gadam ietekmes izvērtējums* (Impact assessment of the Implementation Plan of the Roma Strategic Framework for 2022–2023). Riga, p. 19. <https://www.km.gov.lv/lv/media/49371/download?attachment>

¹⁶⁷ Ilves, A., Freiberga, K., & Dragune, K. (2022). *Romu situācija Latvijā* (The situation of Roma in Latvia). Riga: Ombudsman's Office of the Republic of Latvia, p. 25. https://www.tiesibsargs.lv/wp-content/uploads/2022/07/romu_situacija_latvija_2022_1648646871.pdf

¹⁶⁸ Kultūras ministrija. (2022). *Plāns romu stratēģiskā ietvara pasākumu īstenošanai 2022.–2023. gadam, 4. nodaļa 'Pasākumi plāna mērķa sasniegšanai'* (National Roma Strategic Framework 2022–2023, Chapter 4 'Measures to achieve the goal of the plan'). Riga.

¹⁶⁹ Edurio. (2024). *Aptaujas rezultāti par pasākumiem romu izglītojamo atbalstam un iesaistei pirmsskolas un pamatzglītības programmas apguvē* (Survey on Measures to Support and Engage Roma Students in Preschool and Primary Education Programmes). Riga, Latvia.

¹⁷⁰ Information provided by the OMBO; response to questionnaire (23 October 2024)

¹⁷¹ Ilves, A., Freiberga, K., & Dragune, K. (2022). *Romu situācija Latvijā* (The situation of Roma in Latvia). Riga: Ombudsman's Office of the Republic of Latvia, p. 22–24, 50.

Commission stated that their information system does not allow for the ethnic identification of Roma students, and that Roma families rarely challenge assessment results.¹⁷² On the other hand, a representative of the OMBO noted that parents are responsible for their child's education and development and have the right to choose the school their child attends. Some Roma families agree to their children attending special education institutions because of their social and financial difficulties (in special education institutions children get free meals, transportation, and face reduced academic requirements).¹⁷³ This means that financial barriers of Roma parents should be addressed in the process of reducing the placement of Roma children in special education programmes by including certain necessary measures in the NRSF.

3.1.1. Effectiveness of the NRSF in addressing the problem

In the NRSF 2022-2023, a measure was planned to raise awareness among municipal pedagogical-medical commission representatives regarding Roma social inclusion, to ensure that special education programmes in special education institutions would only be recommended to Roma parents after the use of appropriate testing methods designed to ensure objectivity and prevent discrimination.¹⁷⁴ However, the MoES has not provided precise information on whether such appropriate testing methods were introduced or whether awareness-raising activities were conducted under the NRSF 2022-2023. These measures have now been postponed to the NRSF 2024-2027.¹⁷⁵ To assess the implementation of municipal pedagogical-medical commission reforms, their impact on Roma children, and the introduction of appropriate testing methods, the CEI invited a representative of the State Education Development Agency (SEDA) to report on these issues at the discussion event on Roma participation in education 'AME IZGLĪTĪBĀ 2025' (WE IN EDUCATION). This event was attended by Roma civil society activists. The SEDA representative stated that a set of appropriate testing methods is currently being developed and is planned for implementation in 2027. Additionally, in 2026, the State Chancellery plans to launch a reform of municipal pedagogical-medical commissions to update the existing system for assessing children's abilities. The main elements of the reform include: a) Reorganisation of municipal pedagogical-medical commissions; b) Screening assessments for all children aged 1-6; c) Creation of a 'green corridor' for children with acute developmental issues.

3.1.2. Synergy with other actions

The Ventspils City Pedagogical-Medical Commission stated that, when assessing Roma children, a Roma mediator and a Roma teaching assistant from Ventspils Pārventa Primary School are invited to attend the meetings. Given the positive results of this example of good practice, it is important to involve Roma mediators in other municipalities and increase the participation of Roma teacher assistants in schools where at least ten Roma children are enrolled. As of 2025, in Latvia, Roma mediators currently operate in only seven out of 42 municipalities, and there is only one Roma teacher assistant working in the school.

During the discussion event 'AME IZGLĪTĪBĀ 2025' organised by the CEI within the framework of the RCM2 project, representatives from schools with the highest number of Roma students that manage special education programmes (Jūrmala City Primary School, Tukums 3rd Primary School, and Ventspils Pārventa Primary School) participated to share their experiences of working with Roma children and engaging with their parents. The long-standing support practice involving a Roma teaching assistant, Roma mediator, and a social psychologist implemented by Ventspils Pārventa Primary School to integrate Roma children into general education, was presented as an example of best practice for other schools on how to provide high-quality, inclusive education for Roma pupils within mainstream education.

¹⁷² Information provided by the OMBO; response to questionnaire (23 October 2024).

¹⁷³ Because accommodation and meals in special educational institutions are free, transportation expenses and teaching materials are paid for, thus the financial side is fully covered.

¹⁷⁴ Kultūras ministrija. (2022). *Plāns romu stratēģiskā ietvara pasākumu īstenošanai 2022.–2023. gadam, 4. nodaļa 'Pasākumi plāna mērķa sasniegšanai' (National Roma Strategic Framework 2022–2023, Chapter 4 'Measures to achieve the goal of the plan')*. Rīga, 4.10. measure, <https://likumi.lv/ta/id/332093-par-planu-romu-strategiska-ietvara-pasakumu-istenosanai-2022-2023-qadam>

¹⁷⁵ Kultūras ministrija. (2022). *Plāns romu stratēģiskā ietvara pasākumu īstenošanai 2022.–2023. gadam, 4. nodaļa 'Pasākumi plāna mērķa sasniegšanai' (National Roma Strategic Framework 2022–2023, Chapter 4 'Measures to achieve the goal of the plan')*. Rīga, 4.7.measure, <https://likumi.lv/ta/id/354561>

3.1.3. Roma participation

Roma civil society activists, including Roma mediators and NGO representatives,¹⁷⁶ participated in discussion events on Roma participation in education, 'AME IZGLĪTĪBĀ 2025', organised by the CEI in 2023 and 2025. They shared their opinions and provided specific recommendations:

- Develop user-friendly informational materials that clearly explain the main principles and procedures of municipal pedagogical-medical commissions, including the rights of Roma parents to appeal decisions and how to do so. These materials should be written in plain, accessible language to ensure understanding by all community members.
- Ensure that members of municipal pedagogical-medical commissions, Inclusive Education Support Centres, and Special Education Development Centres receive training on Roma culture and social characteristics (including the economic factors that influence Roma parents' decisions to place their children in special schools or programmes). This training initiative should be coordinated and implemented by SEDA in collaboration with the MoES, the Cross-Sectoral Coordination Department of the State Chancellery, local municipalities, Inclusive Education Support Centres, Special Education Development Centres, and Roma mediators.
- The screening data on Roma children's abilities, collected within the framework of the municipal pedagogical-medical commission reform, should be systematically included in the national Roma education monitoring system. Such sensitive data should be used solely for the purpose of objectively assessing the actual situation and for developing effective, evidence-based support policies aimed at enhancing educational outcomes for Roma children and reducing their placement in special education programmes.
- To encourage Roma individuals to pursue roles as Roma mediators and teacher assistants, local-level meetings should be organised by municipalities, inviting active Roma community members to gain insight into the operations of social services and schools, particularly in relation to support provided to socially excluded Roma families. These meetings should also provide clear information about the roles, responsibilities, and practical impact of Roma mediators and teacher assistants.
- The sustainable support for the involvement, training, and employment of Roma teacher assistants and Roma mediators is crucial for developing an inclusive approach to integrating Roma children into mainstream education and significantly reducing the number of Roma children in special education programmes.

¹⁷⁶ Roma NGO 'Sāre Khetene', Roma NGO Jelgava City's and County's Roma Association 'Čačune Roma', the Society Integration Association 'ALTERNATIVAS', non-Roma NGO - 'Women's NGOs Cooperation Network of Latvia', non-Roma NGO 'TREPES'.

4. USE OF EU FUNDING INSTRUMENTS

4.1. Conditions for EU funds implementation for Roma equality

The EU Cohesion Policy Programme 2021-2027 includes support for social cohesion, including strengthening self-organisation, collaboration, and participatory skills, particularly for social groups with low participation rates, such as Roma. Specifically, it provides support for Latvian NGOs to ensure their effective and sustainable operation, including regional NGO support centres, minority and Roma NGOs, and capacity-building initiatives for advocacy and participation.¹⁷⁷ However, in the NRSF 2024-2027, the EU Cohesion Policy Programme 2021-2027 is only mentioned in relation to the Specific Support Measure 4.2.3.4, which focuses on facilitating NEET youth integration into education and employment (Project No. 4.2.3.4./1/24/I/001).

In several policy areas, EU-funded support programmes are not specifically targeted at any ethnic group. For example, in the field of education, the planned programmes for ethnic minorities do not include specific measures for Roma communities.¹⁷⁸ In the implementation of EU-funded projects in the labour market, social inclusion, and social protection policies, Roma and pro-Roma NGOs are not systematically involved. However, Roma are included as one of the target groups in ESF+ projects implemented by the MoW to combat discrimination based on ethnicity.¹⁷⁹ Similarly, EU-funded projects in the health sector do not specifically target Roma inclusion and participation. However, in certain initiatives, Roma are included among populations at risk of poverty, social exclusion, and territorial marginalisation.¹⁸⁰

4.2. Roma civil society in EU funds implementation

According to the information provided by the Ministry of Culture (MoC), Roma and pro-Roma NGOs have participated in EU-funded projects both as participants and as implementers of specific activities or service providers. However, there is no public available information on which specific projects they have been involved in.¹⁸¹

The MoC has not actively promoted the involvement of Roma and pro-Roma NGOs in EU-funded projects related to Roma issues, except for EU projects directly implemented by the MoC. The MoC states that it complies with the Law on Prevention of Conflict of Interest, follows EU funding guidelines for open project calls, and adheres to principles of transparent governance. The MoC explains that no NGO, including Roma NGOs, receives preferential treatment in the evaluation of open project competitions.¹⁸²

Despite the fact that Roma NGOs have limited operational capacity, lack experience, and have limited social and human resources to compete with non-Roma NGOs in preparing EU project applications, fulfilling

¹⁷⁷ 4.3.4. Specific Support Objective 'Promote Active Inclusion to Promote Equal Opportunities, Non-Discrimination and Active Participation, as well as Improve Employability, in Particular for Disadvantaged Groups'. <https://likumi.lv/ta/id/327732-par-eiropas-savienibas-kohezijas-politikas-programmu-2021-2027-qadam>

¹⁷⁸ For example, in the 2021-2027 EU funding planning period, it is planned to implement Measure 4.2.3.1 'Integrated 'School-Community' Cooperation Programme for Reducing the Risk of Social Exclusion in Educational Institutions', which aims to promote civic participation, support work with emigrants, immigrants, and ethnic minorities, and engage parents, families, and other community members to reduce social exclusion and the risk of early school dropout. Additionally, Measure 4.2.3.2 'Expanding Access to Extracurricular Education, Leisure Activities, and Childcare Services for Students at Risk of Social Exclusion and Children with Special Needs' will provide support for students by organising thematic day camps during school holidays, offering educational programmes on minority ethnic cultures, and practicing literacy skills in minority languages.

¹⁷⁹ Information provided by the MoW; response to questionnaire (24 October 2024)

¹⁸⁰ Measure 4.1.2.1. 'National-Scale Health Promotion and Disease Prevention Measures' (Regulation No. 694 of 28.11.2023)

Measure 4.1.2.2. 'Implementation of Health Promotion and Disease Prevention Measures for the Local Community' (Regulation Nr. 448 of 09.07.2024.). https://www.lm.gov.lv/lv/situacijas-raksturojums-0?utm_source=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.google.com%2F

¹⁸¹ Information provided by the MoC; response to questionnaire (15 October 2024)

¹⁸² *Idem*.

requirements, and implementing initiatives, no support or coordination measures have been introduced to strengthen Roma organisations' ability to participate in EU funding programmes.

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Evaluating the progress achieved under the NRSF 2022-2023 and based on conclusions from the previous RCM report, it can be concluded that:

- The participation of Roma civil society and experts in the implementation of the NRSF and the access to EU funding programmes has not improved, nor have measures been developed or implemented to strengthen this participation.
- Several planned measures, including those recommended within the EURSF and included in the NRSF 2022-2023, were not implemented due to a lack of funding and inadequate coordination - out of 31 planned actions, only one-third were carried out, meaning that the goals, objectives, and outcome indicators set in the NRSF 2022-2023 were only partially achieved.
- Due to multiple social and economic factors - including the aftermath of the COVID-19 pandemic, the war in Ukraine and the rising costs of goods and services - the importance of Roma support issues has declined on the political agenda.

Since 2022, Roma policy in Latvia has been implemented within the framework of the National Roma Strategic Framework (NRSF), ensuring its continuity until 2027. The NRSF 2024-2027 has been approved, with its preparation involving responsible state institutions and representatives from eight Roma NGOs. However, municipalities were not involved in its development or discussion. The scope of planned support measures has been reduced - while the NRSF 2022-2023 initially included 31 planned actions, the NRSF 2024-2027 foresees only 17 measures.¹⁸³ From ten outcome indicators defined in the NRSF 2022-2023, five were not achieved¹⁸⁴ and for the remaining indicators, no information was available at the time of the assessment.

The Report on the Impact Evaluation of the NRSF 2022-2023 was published only in March 2025. No public event was organised to present or discuss the findings and challenges of this evaluation report, and no press release was issued by the MoC. Prior to drafting the NRSF 2024-2027, an in-depth evaluation of the NRSF 2022-2023 was not conducted, and the challenges that emerged during its implementation were not addressed. Several unimplemented measures from the NRSF 2022-2023 were simply postponed to the NRSF 2024-2027. It is planned that a report on the implementation and impact assessment of the NRSF 2024-2027 will be submitted to the Cabinet of Ministers - a requirement that was not included in the NRSF 2022-2023.

Although the 2023 study's results and data on the Roma situation have been incorporated into the NRSF 2024-2027 situation analysis, it remains unclear whether the support measures are truly based on this study's findings. The study's recommendations were only partially taken into account when drafting the set of measures for the NRSF 2024-2027.

Compared to the NRSF 2022-2023, the number of outcome indicators in the NRSF 2024-2027 has been halved, and certain key areas are not reflected in the indicators. While efforts have been made to improve the monitoring of the Roma strategy's implementation - including compiling available data and analysing its compliance with the indicators recommended by the FRA - the NRSF 2024-2027 indicators do not incorporate all the data recommended in the evaluation.¹⁸⁵

¹⁸³ <https://www.km.gov.lv/lv/jaunums/valdiba-apstiprina-planu-romu-ieklausanas-un-lidzdalibas-pasakumiem-lidz-2027-gadam>

¹⁸⁴ Baltic Institute of Social Sciences. (2024). *Plāna romu stratēģiskā ietvara pasākumu īstenošanai 2022.-2023.gadam ietekmes izvērtējums (Impact assessment of the Implementation Plan of the Roma Strategic Framework for 2022-2023)*. Rīga, p. 7.

¹⁸⁵ Baltic Institute of Social Sciences. (2022). *Pētījuma ziņojums 'Pētnieciskā pakalpojuma sniegšana romu stratēģiskā ietvara īstenošanas monitoringa pilnveidošanai projekta 'Latvijas romu platforma VI' ietvaros' (Research Report 'Provision of Research Services for Improving the Monitoring of the Implementation of the Roma Strategic Framework within the Project 'Latvian Roma Platform VI')*. Rīga.

Recommendations to national authorities and municipalities

1. To the NRCP: The 'Report on the Impact Evaluation of the NRSF 2022-2023' includes conclusions, proposals, solutions, and recommendations, which must be taken into consideration for the development of the NRSF for next period.
2. To the NRCP: The NRSF should include specific measures that directly enhance opportunities for Roma and ensure better access to support programmes, projects, and initiatives, such as housing subsidies to support home ownership for families, and social scholarships under the '*Studēt gods*' ('*Studying for honor*') programme, etc.
3. To the NRCP: Given that specific data on Roma beneficiaries is available in several cases,¹⁸⁶ it is necessary to ensure the systematic collection of data on Roma participation in other support programmes as well, while strictly adhering to anonymity and fundamental principles of personal data protection.
4. To the NRCP: Establish a targeted support mechanism for Roma NGOs and provide stable, long-funding for their activities, enabling these organisations to operate sustainably, both in preserving cultural heritage and in advocating for community interests and participating in decision-making.
5. To the NRCP: Create a 'Resource Map' as a comprehensive overview of support measures for the Roma community, aiming to strengthen and optimise access to essential support services for Roma individuals.
6. To the MoES and the NRCP: Ensure the employment of Roma teacher assistants for Roma students in schools: 1) Organise consultations between schools, education departments, and Roma mediators to discuss the benefits of Roma teacher assistants, develop an appropriate model for recruiting and training potential Roma teacher assistants, and allocate the necessary resources. 2) Prepare informative materials in plain, accessible language outlining the role and responsibilities of Roma teacher assistants, and distribute these widely within municipalities and Roma communities.
7. To the MoES and the NRCP: In collaboration with Roma and non-Roma NGOs, enhance Roma students' participation in vocational education and assess their educational opportunities - for example, the support available through the State Agency for Social Integration and the project '*PROTI UN DARI 2.0*'. A Roma engagement strategy should be developed.
8. To the MoES: In a process of developing the assessment of Roma children's access to compulsory preschool education and monitoring the state of Roma education, the opinions of Roma parents, Roma teacher assistants, and Roma mediators should be included regarding the needs, opportunities, and circumstances that would improve Roma children's participation in education and school attendance. The monitoring of Roma education should include not only statistical data but also information on the quality of support measures, accessibility of education and the guarantee of Roma children's right to education.
9. To the MoES: In the implementation of the general reform of pedagogical-medical commissions, special attention should be given to Roma children, who are disproportionately placed in special education institutions compared to other children.
10. To the MoES and the NRCP: To enhance cooperation with students' parents, support parental education, and reduce early school dropout among Roma students, the practice of employing Roma teacher assistants should be further developed. This includes assessing the provision of individualised support for Roma students, taking into account the social and economic circumstances of Roma families, ensuring access to necessary learning materials, including technical equipment, and addressing the education level and skills of parents to support their children with schoolwork.

¹⁸⁶ For example, the number of unemployed Roma who have received support from the SEA, education monitoring data on Roma students, the number of NEET Roma who have received support from the project '*PROTI UN DARI*', etc.

11. To the MoES: When planning support measures for Roma in the field of education, it is essential to consider the recommendations from the 2024 survey on support and engagement measures for Roma students in educational programmes.¹⁸⁷ These include: raising Roma parents' awareness and sense of responsibility regarding their children's regular school attendance; providing family mentors to assist Roma families in supporting their children's education and in creating a conducive home learning environment; offering support for Roma children to learn the Latvian language; educating teachers about Roma culture, and more.
12. To the MoW and the MoH: It is necessary to review and expand the NRSF 2024-2027 with new and appropriate measures to promote Roma employment and healthcare, taking into account the results of the 2023 study and the recommendations of the EU Council Recommendation.
13. For municipalities: Representatives of state or municipal institutions (social workers, family assistants, social pedagogues, etc.) should provide information in plain language to Roma families, especially those with low-income status, regarding social services and social protection opportunities.
14. For municipalities: Ensure training is provided for state and municipal institution specialists on service provision methods for Roma community members. For example, it is recommended to foster cooperation with Roma mediators and Roma NGO representatives to better understand Roma social and cultural specifics and needs of the Roma community.

Recommendations to the civil society

15. Active Roma community members, including NGO representatives, Roma mediators, and teacher assistants, should strengthen cooperation with social service providers, educational institution staff, and other social support professionals to explain the needs of Roma families, their social situation, and the barriers they face in accessing services. Additionally, they should promote best practices within the Roma community, highlighting the importance and benefits of Roma mediators and teacher assistants.

¹⁸⁷ Edurio. (2024). *Aptaujas rezultāti par pasākumiem romu izglītojamo atbalstam un iesaistei pirmsskolas un pamatizglītības programmas apgūvē* (Survey on Measures to Support and Engage Roma Students in Preschool and Primary Education Programmes). Rīga, Latvia.

REFERENCES

List of interviews

Interviewee	Organisation/ institution	Date	Format
<i>Roma civil society and activists and non-Roma NGOs</i>			
Roksana Rudeviča	Director of Roma NGO - Roma Culture Centre ('Romu Kultūras Centres')	16 October 2024	In person interview
Normunds Rudevičs	President of Roma NGO - The foreign organisation 'International Roma Union' (ārvalstu organizācijas 'Starptautiskā Romu Apvienība' pārstāvniecība)	16 October 2024	In person interview
Ēriks Kleins	Member of the Society Integration Association 'ALTERNATIVAS' ('Sabiedrības integrācijas biedrība 'Alternativas')	11 October 2024	Online video interview (Zoom)
Malda Avramenko	Head of Roma NGO 'Sāre Khetene', Roma mediator and family assistant of Ventpils Social Service	4 October 2024	Online video interview (Zoom)
Anžela Janavičute	Head of Roma NGO 'Jelgava City's and County's Roma Association' 'Čačune Roma' ('Jelgavas pilsētas un novada romu biedrība 'Čačune Roma')	17 October 2024	Online video interview (Zoom)
Inete Ielīte	Chairman of the Board of non-Roma NGO – 'Women's NGOs Cooperation Network of Latvia' ('Latvijas Sieviešu nevalstisko organizāciju sadarbības tīkls')	10 October 2024	Online video interview (Zoom)
<i>Public authorities with responsibility in key areas</i>			
Ilona Jekele	Head of Cohesive Society Policy and Civil Society Unit, the Ministry of Culture (MoC), NRCP	15 October 2024	Questionnaire, email
Aija Krečko	Senior Expert, Department of Education, the Ministry of Education and Science (MoES)	30 October 2024	Questionnaire, email
Evija Kūla	Deputy Director of the Department of Social Policy Planning and Development, the Ministry of Welfare (MoW)	25 October 2024	Questionnaire, email
Laura Boltāne	Head of the Cross-Sectoral Policy Department, the Ministry of Health (MoH)	25 October 2024	Questionnaire, email
<i>National equality body</i>			
Anete Ilves	Head of the Anti-Discrimination Department, the Ombudsman's Office (OMBO)	23 October 2024	Questionnaire, email
<i>Regional and local authorities in key regions</i>			
Rita Vestirāne	Deputy Chairperson of the Jelgava City Council for Social Affairs, Health and Culture	25 October 2024	Online video interview (Zoom)
Una Lapskalne-Alksne	Head of the Social Service of the City of Ventpils	4 November 2024	Online video interview (Zoom)

Key policy documents and reports

Baltic Institute of Social Sciences. (2021). *Ziņojums 'Ilgadējs nabadzības un sociālās atstumtības mazināšanas rīcībpolitikas izvērtējums (t.sk. padziļināts izvērtējums par GMI saņēmēju iztikšanas stratēģijām)'*. Rīga.

Baltic Institute of Social Sciences. (2022). *Pētnieciskā pakalpojuma sniegšana romu stratēģiskā ietvara īstenošanas monitoringa pilnveidošanai projekta 'Latvijas romu platforma VI' ietvaros*. Rīga. <https://www.km.gov.lv/lv/media/31164/download?attachment>

Baltic Institute of Social Sciences. (2024). *Plāna romu stratēģiskā ietvara pasākumu īstenošanai 2022.-2023.gadam ietekmes izvērtējums*. Rīga. <https://www.km.gov.lv/lv/media/49371/download?attachment>

- Centre for Education Initiatives. (2022). *Civil Society Monitoring Report on the Quality of the National Strategic Framework for Roma Equality, Inclusion, and Participation in Latvia*. Rīga.
- Civitta Latvija. (2023). *Pētījums par romu situāciju Latvijā*. Rīga.
<https://www.km.gov.lv/lv/media/35865/download?attachment>
- Council of the European Union. (2021). *Council Recommendation of 12 March 2021 on Roma Equality, Inclusion and Participation*. (2021/C93/01). https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=OJ%3AJOC_2021_093_R_0001
- Edurio. (2024). *Aptaujas rezultāti par pasākumiem romu izglītojamo atbalstam un iesaistei pirmsskolas un pamatzglītības programmas apguvē*. Rīga.
- European Commission. (2023). *Special Eurobarometer 535. Discrimination in the European Union*. <https://europa.eu/eurobarometer/api/deliverable/download/file?deliverableId=88556>
- Ilves, A., Freiberga, K., & Dragune, K. (2022). *Roms situācija Latvijā*. Rīga: Tiesībsargs.
https://www.tiesibsargs.lv/wp-content/uploads/2022/07/romu_situacija_latvija_2022_1648646871.pdf
- Kaprāns, M., Mieriņa, I., & Saulītis, A. (2021). *Starpkultūru stereotipi un aizspriedumi Latvijā*. Rīga: Latvijas Universitātes Filozofijas un socioloģijas institūts. http://fsi.lu.lv/userfiles/Ethnic%20stereotypes_SAPC.pdf
- Labklājības ministrija. (2023). *Profesionāla sociālā darba attīstība pašvaldībās: ex-post pētījums*.
<https://www.lm.gov.lv/lv/media/22689/download>
- Latvijas Fakti. (2015). *Romi Latvijā*. Rīga: Tirgus un sociālo pētījumu centrs.
https://www.km.gov.lv/sites/km/files/romi_latvija_petijums_lv1.pdf
- Ministru kabinets. (2021). *Izglītības attīstības pamatnostādnes 2021.–2027. Gadam*.
<https://likumi.lv/ta/id/324332-par-izglitiba-attistibas-pamatnostadnem-20212027-gadam>
- Ministru kabinets. (2021). *Nacionālās industriālās politikas pamatnostādnes 2021.–2027.gadam*.
<https://likumi.lv/ta/id/321037>
- Ministru kabinets. (2021). *Par Eiropas Savienības kohēzijas politikas programmu 2021.–2027. gadam*
<https://likumi.lv/ta/id/327732-par-eiropas-savienibas-kohezijas-politikas-programmu-2021-2027-gadam>
- Ministru kabinets. (2022). *Pārskats par romu līdzdalības veicināšanas pasākumiem 2021. un 2022.gadā*.
<https://www.km.gov.lv/lv/media/35070/download?attachment>
- Ministru kabinets. (2022). *Plāns romu stratēģiskā ietvara pasākumu īstenošanai 2022.–2023.gadam*.
<https://www.vestnesis.lv/op/2022/88.2>
- Ministru kabinets. (2024). *Plāns rasisma un antisemitisma mazināšanai 2024.–2027.gadam (projekts)*.
https://tapportals.mk.gov.lv/legal_acts/5e555608-0a70-4b6d-9580-bc59779597d7
- Ministru kabinets. (2024). *Plāns romu stratēģiskā ietvara pasākumu īstenošanai 2024.–2027. Gadam (Rīkojums Nr.709)*. <https://likumi.lv/ta/id/354561>
- Ministru kabinets. (2024). *Plāns romu stratēģiskā ietvara pasākumu īstenošanai 2024.–2027.gadam*.
<https://likumi.lv/ta/id/354561>
- SKDS & Berg Research. (2022). *Sabiedriskās domas aptauja par sabiedrības izpratni par diskriminācijas aspektiem*. <https://www.lm.gov.lv/lv/media/22110/download?attachment>
- Valsts kontrole. (2025). *Revīzijas ziņojums 'Saliedētas sabiedrības politika – neskaidra un nekoordinēta'*.
<https://lrvk.gov.lv/lv/getrevisionfile/29703-TrunR1typeFUQLmyE62yFTRi0VBDd3T-.pdf>

ANNEXE: LIST OF PROBLEMS AND CONDITIONS

Fighting antigypsyism and discrimination

Problems and conditions:	Significance:	Identified by strategy:	Measures to address:	Targets defined:	Details of NRSF implementation relevant to the problem:
Antigypsyism not recognised as a specific problem in national policy frameworks	Significant problems	Identified and analysed sufficiently	Appropriate	Relevant targets well defined	<p>The NRSF 2022-2023 aimed to achieve the following outcome indicators - reducing the proportion of residents who:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - would not want to work in the same workplace as Roma; - would have objections to Roma living as their neighbours; - believe that Roma cannot be trusted; - consider discrimination against Roma people to be widespread. <p>Since 2022, no surveys or studies have been conducted to determine whether these planned outcome indicators have been achieved. The NRSF 2024-2027 plans to implement an awareness campaign to enhance public understanding of Roma culture, history, and way of life. Additionally, the NGO 'Roma Cultural Centre' intends to carry out a campaign to reduce anti-Roma sentiment. However, no other measures aimed at combating anti-Roma discrimination and prejudice have been planned.</p>
Prejudice against Roma	Significant problems	Identified and analysed sufficiently	Appropriate	Adequate but with room for improvement	As part of the implementation of the NRSF 2022-2023, measures have been taken to reduce prejudice and stereotype-based attitudes toward Roma. However, it must be concluded that these efforts have not been sufficient to determine a significant change in public attitudes. For example, the OMBO carried out the planned public awareness campaign 'Nationality is an Opportunity. Roma – One of Us' and published video stories highlighting Roma inclusion in education and employment.
Hate crimes against Roma	Irrelevant	Mentioned but not analysed sufficiently	Present but insufficient	Adequate but with room for improvement	No measures were implemented to analyse hate crimes and hate speech (both online and offline) against Roma or to reduce their manifestations.
Hate speech towards and against Roma (online and offline)	Minor problems	Mentioned but not analysed sufficiently	Present but insufficient	Adequate but with room for improvement	
Weak effectiveness of protection from discrimination	Significant problems	Mentioned but not analysed sufficiently	Appropriate	Adequate but with room for improvement	The OMBO plans to provide support for Roma in terms of legal protection and non-discrimination (offering consultations and the possibility to file complaints). However, no specific measures for the protection of Roma rights are planned in the NRSF 2024-2027.

Education

Problems and conditions:	Significance:	Identified by strategy:	Measures to address:	Targets defined:	Details of NRSF implementation relevant to the problem:
High dropout rate before completion of primary education	Significant problems	Identified and analysed sufficiently	Adequate but with room for improvement	Adequate but with room for improvement	During the implementation of the NRSF 2022-2023 Roma mediators and Roma teacher assistant have fostered better collaboration with students' parents and enhanced parental education to reduce early school dropout rates among Roma students. Individual support was provided to students when needed. However, the NRSF 2022-2023 did not ensure regular meetings between Roma mediators, teacher assistants, representatives of education departments, and Roma parents to improve access to education, particularly at the preschool and primary school levels. The planned provision of Roma teacher assistants in schools attended by Roma children was not fully implemented - only one Roma teacher assistant was involved during the implementation period, and only a few Roma mediators actively collaborated with educational institutions to support Roma children's inclusion. ¹⁸⁸ The NRSF 2024-2027 aims to expand this practice in other municipalities with a high proportion of Roma residents. Under NRSF 2022-2023, support was provided to Roma students through the ESF project 'Support for Reducing Early School Dropout' ('PuMPuRS'). However, survey data does not clarify how many Roma students received such support or how Roma community members and parents perceive the accessibility and effectiveness of this assistance.
Early leaving from secondary education	Critical problems	Mentioned but not analysed sufficiently	Present but insufficient	Some targets but not relevant	
Misplacement of Roma pupils into special education	Significant problems	Mentioned but not analysed sufficiently	Adequate but with room for improvement	Adequate but with room for improvement	The number of Roma children enrolled in special primary education programmes has decreased – 24% of all Roma students in the 2023/2024 academic year. However, the target set in the NRSF 2022-2023 was not achieved. There is no available data on whether municipalities with a high number of Roma children in special education programmes have seen a reduction in these figures. A reform of pedagogical-medical commissions has been initiated, a survey of municipal pedagogical-medical commissions' members to assess their work, with particular attention to how evaluations of Roma children, are conducted. However, the testing methods planned under the NRSF 2022-2023 have not been implemented, and awareness-raising activities have not been organised; these initiatives have been postponed to the NRSF 2024-2027.

¹⁸⁸ In the framework of the NRSF 2022-2023 it was planned to increase the number of Roma mediators and teacher assistants working in Latvian municipalities to 12 people by 2024.

CIVIL SOCIETY MONITORING REPORT ON THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE NATIONAL ROMA STRATEGIC FRAMEWORK
in Latvia

Limited access to second-chance education, adult education, and lifelong learning	Significant problems	Mentioned but not analysed sufficiently	Adequate but with room for improvement	Adequate but with room for improvement	The pilot project planned under the NRSF 2022-2023 for improving literacy skills among Roma adults was not implemented for several reasons. There was no targeted approach for informing and engaging Roma, and suitable implementation locations for the target group were not selected. Additionally, no consultations were held with Roma representatives to discuss the challenges of implementing the pilot project.
Limited access to and support for online and distance learning if education and training institutions close, as occurred during the coronavirus pandemic	Significant problems	Mentioned but not analysed sufficiently	Present but insufficient	Some targets but not relevant	Under the NRSF 2022-2023, no analysis was conducted, nor was a support mechanism developed for Roma in cases where educational institutions are closed. Additionally, no specific support measures were provided to enhance the competency levels of Roma children and parents. Such measures are also not included in the NRSF 2024-2027.
Low level of digital skills and competences and limited opportunities for their development among pupils	Significant problems	Mentioned but not analysed sufficiently	Adequate but with room for improvement	Some targets but not relevant	
Low level of digital skills and competences and limited opportunities for their development among adults	Significant problems	Mentioned but not analysed sufficiently	Adequate but with room for improvement	Some targets but not relevant	
Roma children of preschool age (1.5 to 4 years old) do not attend educational institutions, which hinders their successful inclusion into further education process.	Significant problems	Mentioned but not analysed sufficiently	Adequate but with room for improvement	Adequate but with room for improvement	The results of the 2023 study on Roma situation shows the need for increased awareness and education among Roma parents regarding the importance of education, particularly in municipalities with a high Roma population. Under the NRSF 2024-2027, certain municipalities plan to provide support measures for Roma parents and children who have not been enrolled in preschool on time, helping them adapt to school and learn the Latvian language.

Employment

Problems and conditions:	Significance:	Identified by strategy:	Measures to address:	Targets defined:	Details of NRSF implementation relevant to the problem:
Poor access to or low effectiveness of public employment services	Significant problems	Mentioned but not analysed sufficiently	Adequate but with room for improvement	Adequate but with room for improvement	The lack of literacy skills is the most critical barrier to accessing various services, significantly impacting Roma people's inclusion in the labour market and society. Under the NRSF 2024-2027, it is planned that every year, registered unemployed individuals at the SEA, including Roma, will have the opportunity to receive individualised career support.
Youth not in employment, education or training (NEET)	Significant problems	Mentioned but not analysed sufficiently	Adequate but with room for improvement	Some targets but not relevant	Although NEET Roma youth have been regularly involved in the ESF project 'PROTI un DARI!', additional measures are needed to provide better access to this project support. For example, cooperation between Roma mediators or activists and project mentors is necessary.
Poor access to (re) training, lifelong learning and skills development	Significant problems	Mentioned but not analysed sufficiently	Present but insufficient	Some targets but not relevant	The NRSF 2022-2023 did not improve or simplify Roma access to lifelong learning and skills development. The planned pilot project for improving literacy skills among Roma adults was not implemented for several reasons. A suitable approach for informing and engaging Roma was not developed, appropriate implementation locations for the target group were not selected, and no consultations were held with Roma representatives to discuss the challenges of implementing the pilot project. This measure is not planned under the NRSF 2024-2027.
Discrimination on the labour market by employers	Significant problems	Understood with limitations	Present but insufficient	Some targets but not relevant	Targeted measures to eliminate discrimination against Roma in the labour market were not implemented in the framework of the NRSF 2022-2023. This measure is not planned under the NRSF 2024-2027.
Barriers and disincentives to employment (such as indebtedness, low income from work compared to social income)	Significant problems	Mentioned but not analysed sufficiently	Adequate but with room for improvement	Some targets but not relevant	The family assistant service was not implemented in the framework of the NRSF 2022-2023 due to a lack of resources and the critical issue of illiteracy, and low educational attainment.
Lack of activation measures, employment support	Significant problems	Mentioned but not analysed sufficiently	Present but insufficient	Some targets but not relevant	Although the number of long-term unemployed among the Roma has decreased, it has not reached the target indicator set by the NRSF 2022-2023. The support measures implemented under the NRSF 2022-2023 were not sufficiently effective in achieving the planned objectives to the intended extent.

Healthcare

Problems and conditions:	Significance:	Identified by strategy:	Measures to address:	Targets defined:	Details of NRSF implementation relevant to the problem:
Poor supply/availability of healthcare services (including lack of means to cover out-of-pocket health costs)	Minor problems	Mentioned but not analysed sufficiently	Present but insufficient	Some targets but not relevant	Survey data has shown that it is necessary to provide informative and educational activities on the importance of contraceptive methods for health protection. These activities should be adapted to the cultural specifics and traditional beliefs of the Roma community to ensure that the information is conveyed in an accessible manner. The study identified challenges, including a potential lack of interest and motivation among some Roma to participate in health-related activities. Limited interaction with society outside their community and restricted access to information sources also hinder their awareness. Therefore, enhancing information dissemination within the Roma community at the municipal level is crucial. The planned health-related measures under the NRSF 2022-2023 were not implemented. Only in Ventspils municipality does a Roma mediator regularly provide support in health promotion and disease prevention, ensuring Roma families' access to healthcare services, including state-funded services, by collaborating with NGOs and family doctors. ¹⁸⁹
Limited access to health-related information	Significant problems	Understood with limitations	Present but insufficient	Adequate but with room for improvement	
Poor access to preventive care (vaccination, check-ups, screenings, awareness-raising about healthy lifestyles)	Significant problems	Understood with limitations	Present but insufficient	Adequate but with room for improvement	The measure included in the NRSF 2022-2023, 'Roma Participation in Health Promotion Training', was not implemented. This initiative aimed to provide Roma mediators with the opportunity to participate in health promotion training to disseminate information within the Roma community on health literacy improvement, including sexual and reproductive health, as well as the prevention of substance use and addictive behaviours. This measure has been postponed to the NRSF 2024-2027. ¹⁹⁰ According to research data, the most significant health-related issues in the Roma community are access to dental services, timely doctor visits, and knowledge and understanding of sexual and reproductive health. The NRSF 2024-2027 includes a measure to enhance Roma community's knowledge of sexual and reproductive health.
Poor access to sexual/reproductive healthcare and family planning services	Significant problems	Understood with limitations	Present but insufficient	Adequate but with room for improvement	

¹⁸⁹ Interview with a representative of the Roma NGO "Sāre Khetene" and Roma mediator M. Avramenko (04.10.2024).

¹⁹⁰ Information provided by the MoH, 25.10.2024. response to the questionnaire

Social protection

Problems and conditions:	Significance:	Identified by strategy:	Measures to address:	Targets defined:	Details of NRSF implementation relevant to the problem:
High at-risk-of-poverty rate and material and social deprivation	Significant problems	Mentioned but not analysed sufficiently	Present but insufficient	Some targets but not relevant	The NRSF 2022-2023 did not include targeted social protection measures for the Roma, as these were implemented within the general social protection policy framework. ¹⁹¹ These measures were part of the social services provided by municipalities, primarily involving support from social services, educational institutions, probation services, and guardianship authorities. No provision or evaluation of the family assistant service was carried out, meaning there was no assessment of its effectiveness for Roma families. Additionally, no monitoring of the situation of socially disadvantaged Roma families was conducted. The NRSF 2024-2027 does not include targeted social protection measures for the Roma.
Limited access to income support schemes (low awareness, barrier of administrative burdens, stigma attached)	Significant problems	Mentioned but not analysed sufficiently	Present but insufficient	Adequate but with room for improvement	

Social services

Problems and conditions:	Significance:	Identified by strategy:	Measures to address:	Targets defined:	Details of NRSF implementation relevant to the problem:
Limited access to social services: low awareness of them, low accessibility, (e.g., due to travel costs) or limited availability	Significant problems	Mentioned but not analysed sufficiently	Adequate but with room for improvement	Adequate but with room for improvement	It is not possible to determine whether the measures included in NRSF 2022-2023 to improve Roma access to social services and social work development have effectively improved their social situation, as these measures were not specifically targeted at Roma. Within the NRSF 2022-2023, there was no targeted promotion of Roma community members' involvement in providing family assistant services at the municipal level. Additionally, no measures were implemented to develop family assistant skills, enhance social skills, or improve access to social services for Roma community members. Awareness-raising and motivation-building activities related to Roma participation in social support programmes were also not carried out.
Services providers do not actively reach out to those in need	Significant problems	Mentioned but not analysed sufficiently	Adequate but with room for improvement	Adequate but with room for improvement	

¹⁹¹ In general, in the social sphere, social assistance is provided to residents regardless of their ethnic affiliation, that is, social benefits, such as housing benefit, are available to any person who meets certain criteria. *Pētījums par romu situāciju Latvijā*, Rīga: SIA "Civitta Latvija", 2023., 73.lpp.

CIVIL SOCIETY MONITORING REPORT ON THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE NATIONAL ROMA STRATEGIC FRAMEWORK
in Latvia

Limited ability of social services to effectively work together with other agencies (e.g., public employment service) to help clients	Significant problems	Mentioned but not analysed sufficiently	Adequate but with room for improvement	Adequate but with room for improvement	The NRSF 2024-2027 does not include measures to improve Roma access to social services or enhance the social service skills and social work specialists regarding the Roma target group through collaboration with Roma mediators. Neither the NRSF 2022-2023 nor the NRSF 2024-2027 includes a planned study on the effectiveness of social services provided to Roma, including their access to social services, social protection, and child protection. Compared to 2017, the support provided by municipal social services to Roma has increased by 22%. Although data indicates that Roma are well informed about social services available at the municipal level, a lack of education prevents them from fully understanding the procedures for accessing these services, thereby limiting their accessibility. ¹⁹²
Limited access to income support schemes (low awareness, barrier of administrative burdens, stigma attached)	Significant problems	Mentioned but not analysed sufficiently	Present but insufficient	Adequate but with room for improvement	

Child protection

Problems and conditions:	Significance:	Identified by strategy:	Measures to address:	Targets defined:	Details of NRSF implementation relevant to the problem:
Activities aimed at strengthening parental responsibility and skills not available or not reaching out to Roma parents	Significant problems	Mentioned but not analysed sufficiently	Adequate but with room for improvement	Some targets but not relevant	The NRSF 2022-2023 and the NRSF 2024-2027 do not include specific child protection measures for Roma children, as these are implemented within the framework of general policies, despite the recommendations outlined in the EU Council Recommendation. These measures are part of the social services provided by municipalities, which primarily include support from social services, schools, probation services, guardianship authorities, and cooperation with Roma mediators, teacher assistants, and Roma NGOs.

¹⁹² Pētījums par romu situāciju Latvijā, Rīga: SIA "Civitta Latvija", 2023., 74., 75.lpp.

Promoting (awareness of) Roma arts, culture, and history

Problems and conditions:	Significance:	Identified by strategy:	Measures to address:	Targets defined:	Details of NRSF implementation relevant to the problem:
Poor or lacking awareness of the general population of the contribution of Roma art and culture to national and European heritage	Significant problems	Identified and analysed sufficiently	Appropriate	Adequate but with room for improvement	As part of the NRSF 2022-2023, several awareness-raising events on Roma culture and history were organised. For example, within the framework of the project 'Latvian Roma Platform' educational events on Roma culture and history were held at local and regional levels, with special attention given to the Roma genocide during World War II. Additionally, an exhibition titled 'Roma in Latvia' on Roma history and culture in Latvia was established and organised. The International Roma Culture Festival was held annually, promoting public understanding of Roma cultural heritage and helping to reduce negative stereotypes about Roma.
Exclusion of Roma communities from national cultural narratives	Significant problems	Identified and analysed sufficiently	Appropriate	Adequate but with room for improvement	
Romani history and culture not included in school curricula and textbooks for both Roma and non-Roma students	Significant problems	Identified and analysed sufficiently	Appropriate	Adequate but with room for improvement	Several planned measures were not implemented within the NRSF 2022-2023. For example, the initiative to include information on Roma history and culture in school curricula and textbooks was not carried out. Additionally, students and teachers did not visit the Roma History and Art Museum to learn about Roma history and culture. These initiatives have been postponed to the NRSF 2024-2027. The digitisation of the Roma History and Art Museum's exhibition materials and the creation of a virtual museum website were not financially supported. Additionally, Roma radio broadcasts were not provided.
Romani history and culture not included in school curricula and textbooks for both Roma and non-Roma students	Significant problems	Identified and analysed sufficiently	Appropriate	Adequate but with room for improvement	In 2024, a commemorative event for the victims of the Roma genocide was organised, attended by both Roma youth and elderly Roma individuals. The NRSF 2024-2027 includes educational events on Roma history, with a particular focus on the Roma genocide during World War II.

HOW TO OBTAIN EU PUBLICATIONS

Free publications:

- one copy:
via EU Bookshop (<http://bookshop.europa.eu>);
- more than one copy or posters/maps:
from the European Union's representations (http://ec.europa.eu/represent_en.htm);
from the delegations in non-EU countries (http://eeas.europa.eu/delegations/index_en.htm);
by contacting the Europe Direct service (http://europa.eu/europedirect/index_en.htm) or calling 00 800 6 7 8 9 10 11 (freephone number from anywhere in the EU) (*).

(*) The information given is free, as are most calls (though some operators, phone boxes or hotels may charge you).

Priced publications:

- via EU Bookshop (<http://bookshop.europa.eu>).



Publications Office
of the European Union

ISBN 978-92-68-26283-2 doi:10.2838/1500884