



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

**Prepared by:**  
Romanonet  
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and Consumers



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Civil society monitoring report on the implementation  
of the national strategic framework  
for Roma equality, inclusion, and participation  
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## LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

CSO	Civil society organisation
DSA	Digital Services Act
ERDF	European Regional Development Fund
ESIF	European Structural and Investment Funds
ESF+	European Social Fund Plus
EU	European Union
EURSF	EU Roma Strategic Framework
FRA	European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights
NRSF	National Roma Strategic Framework (also referred to as 'Strategy')
NRCP	National Roma Contact Point
OP	Operational Programme
OPE+/OPZ+	Operational Programme Employment Plus
OPJAK	Operational Programme Jan Amos Komenský
RCM	<a href="#">Roma Civil Monitor</a>
RRP	Recovery and Resilience Plan

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The current 'Strategy for Roma Equality, Inclusion, and Participation 2021–2030' (NRSF) has several strengths that contribute to partial and short-term improvements in key areas such as education, employment, and housing. Immediate support measures have led to increased school inclusion, providing more children with access to mainstream education. In the labour market, retraining programmes and financial incentives have helped individuals transition from the informal to the formal economy, improving their employment prospects. Financial and institutional support play a crucial role in these efforts, with funding allocated to enhance school conditions, implement retraining programmes, and invest in social housing initiatives. These measures demonstrate a commitment to addressing socio-economic disparities, even if only at a surface level, as they insufficiently address deeper systemic causes such as structural discrimination, prejudice, and insufficient political will to make lasting change. Additionally, the strategy has helped raise awareness of the challenges faced by Roma communities, bringing issues of segregation and discrimination into public discourse.

However, these efforts still have a limited impact. Systemic and lasting change would require more comprehensive reforms.

### Implementation of the NRSF

The Czech government conducted a mid-term review of the NRSF. The subsequent revision took place from June to December 2024 and was intended to adapt it to evolving social, economic, and legislative conditions, including the impact of COVID-19 and the war in Ukraine. Key updates include legislative adjustments, alignment with international recommendations, and refinements based on implementation experience. Specific improvements focus on education, housing, employment, and combating antigypsyism.

A significant step was the adoption of a formal definition of antigypsyism and stronger monitoring mechanisms.

However, challenges persist, including delays in implementation due to political hesitation, resource diversion to the Ukrainian refugee crisis, and gaps in employment and education outcomes. Monitoring and data collection efforts have been strengthened but remain insufficient. Despite existing frameworks for Roma participation, more effective engagement and representation in public institutions remain necessary to ensure meaningful inclusion and policy impact.

### Review of country situation by area

While the NRSF outlines key measures and sets important goals, its implementation faces significant challenges. Structural discrimination remains a major barrier, and many policies lack long-term impact due to weak enforcement, insufficient funding, and a lack of Roma participation in decision-making.

The NRSF includes measures to promote equal access to education, employment, and public services. It has created a framework, brought together key actors, and initiated several necessary activities. Nevertheless, there has not been a significant shift in addressing deep-rooted problems, such as segregation in education, the low level of trust among the Roma population in state institutions, or widespread hate speech in the public space. These phenomena continue to represent a serious obstacle to the full participation of Roma in Czech society.

Despite efforts to integrate Roma children into mainstream education, segregation persists, especially in certain regions. Measures such as providing teaching assistants and preschool support are in place but remain underfunded. Roma children still face high dropout rates (57%), partly due to poor school conditions and discrimination. EU-funded projects and CSO initiatives help mitigate these issues, but a systemic approach is lacking.

Roma employment remains precarious despite job subsidies and retraining programmes, as well as the very low unemployment rate and high demand for labour force. Structural barriers like educational segregation and employer discrimination persist. Many Roma remain in low-paid, unstable jobs or the informal economy. This is due to their low educational achievements as well as their indebtedness. Targeted support programmes for Roma workers and entrepreneurs are limited, and broad employment policies fail to address their specific challenges.

A law compensating victims of forced sterilisation took effect in 2022, but bureaucratic obstacles have hindered access. Roma health mediators were expected to bridge healthcare gaps, but the project has been

scaled back due to poor implementation. Access to healthcare remains an issue, particularly due to discrimination and the shortage of doctors in disadvantaged regions.

Efforts to reduce Roma housing segregation include social housing programmes and EU-funded projects, but implementation is slow and marred by administrative hurdles. Many Roma still live in segregated areas or 'social hostels' due to local government discrimination. Only 74% of planned housing projects have been completed.

Roma face unequal access to social benefits, partly due to discrimination by Labour Offices. A proposed reform aims to simplify the social benefits system but raises concerns about reducing support for vulnerable households. Limited funding for Roma CSOs restricts effective social work.

Institutional care reforms are gradually shifting towards family-based alternatives. A ban on placing children under three in institutions came into effect in 2024, with plans to extend it to children under seven by 2028. More data collection on Roma children in care is underway.

The Lety Holocaust Memorial opened in 2024, marking progress in recognising Roma history. However, support for Roma cultural projects remains insufficient, with professional productions struggling to obtain funding.

### Focus on key issues affecting Roma

Key measures focus on monitoring and evaluating antigypsyism, but challenges persist due to incomplete data and underreporting, often caused by victims' distrust in authorities. Despite efforts to improve crime statistics, hate-motivated cases remain under-documented, and there is no systematic analysis of court rulings on discrimination. Educational campaigns are crucial in countering stereotypes, yet long-term, targeted strategies are lacking. EU policies, including the Digital Services Act and the Code of Conduct against Illegal Online Content, aim to curb hate speech, but enforcement remains weak. Online platforms are urged to remove hate content, but their commitment is inconsistent. Roma representation in decision-making and their participation in government advisory bodies remain minimal. Stronger cooperation between the state, CSOs, and Roma activists is essential to effectively combat hate speech and prejudice in Czech society.

Persistent educational inequalities and segregation continue to affect Roma children in Czechia, despite legislative measures aimed at their inclusion. Key challenges include a low level of participation in preschool education, high dropout rates, and the continued segregation of Roma students, with 24% attending predominantly Roma schools. Barriers such as financial constraints, distrust of institutions, and insufficient support mechanisms—including teaching assistants and community mediators—limit progress. Flawed diagnostic methods frequently misclassify Roma children into lower-standard educational tracks, further restricting opportunities. Although programmes like free school lunches and financial aid exist, bureaucratic obstacles reduce their accessibility and effectiveness. A lack of systematic monitoring and long-term funding weakens efforts to address these issues. EU funds, while available, are often short-term and administratively complex, limiting their impact. To promote meaningful change, expanding preschool access, enforcing desegregation policies, increasing Roma representation in education, and ensuring stable funding for inclusive measures are crucial. Greater Roma participation in policy development and monitoring is essential to achieving lasting improvements.

Roma employment in Czechia remains a major challenge, with key barriers including labour market discrimination, low educational attainment, lack of retraining opportunities, and geographical isolation. Segregated communities and inadequate public transport further limit job access. Despite anti-discrimination laws and employer incentives, weak enforcement and administrative burdens hinder their effectiveness. The NRSF includes measures to improve Roma employment, but implementation is inconsistent. Retraining programmes remain inaccessible to many, and employer incentives are underutilised. Financial support for commuting is limited, and awareness campaigns to combat stereotypes have not been launched. Roma women, youth, and older workers face specific challenges, yet the strategy lacks targeted programmes for these groups. Roma entrepreneurs face challenges in accessing credit and navigating administrative hurdles. Without stable funding and stronger political commitment, short-term projects fail to create lasting change. A systematic, long-term approach is essential for meaningful integration into the labour market.

### Use of EU funding instruments

The EU funds support education, employment, social services, and housing initiatives for Roma communities significantly. However, specific challenges hinder their effective use. Bureaucratic inefficiencies and a lack of effective community involvement reduce the impact of these funded projects.

Roma grassroots CSOs are largely excluded from the implementation of EU funds due to administrative complexity, high co-financing requirements, and systemic barriers; most of the funding is absorbed by large institutions. Additionally, the Agency for Social Inclusion, responsible for coordinating Roma integration efforts, is criticised for inefficiency and excessive administrative costs, with little direct impact on Roma communities.

Despite these challenges, some positive developments exist, such as the PRO-ROMA call launched by the Ministry of Education, which supports projects of informal education for Roma children and the capacity-building of Roma and pro-Roma CSOs. Shifting funds toward community-led projects, simplifying grant processes, and ensuring Roma organisations have a stronger role in decision-making are ways forward.

# INTRODUCTION

## *National Roma strategic framework*

The 'Czech Strategy for Roma Equality, Inclusion, and Participation 2021–2030' (NRSF)<sup>1</sup> is a standalone strategy which was adopted by the government in 2021. It has an Action Plan, which underwent revision in 2024, which was adopted by the government in February 2025.<sup>2</sup> The NRSF's measures are reported on a yearly basis and published by the Office of the Government of the Czech Republic ('Office of the Government').<sup>3</sup> The NRSF is in alignment with the EU Roma Strategic Framework.

Roma civil society has actively participated in the development of the NRSF and is continuously included in consultations regarding its implementation and revision. The NRSF has defined ambitious goals and sets of measures that could be effective if duly implemented. However, major concerns remain about its effective implementation, as the latter is rather fragmented due to loose coordination and varying approaches to responsibilities throughout the relevant Ministries and other bodies.

## *About this report*

This report contains an overview of the state of NRSF implementation and mentions other policies relevant to Roma inclusion in Czechia. It proceeds to a deeper analysis of issues hindering development in the areas of education and employment and critically analyses the contribution of EU funds.

The findings build on knowledge gathered through the continuous involvement of the authors in public policies focused on and influencing the situation of Roma in Czechia, as well as on available literature and discussions amongst Roma CSO representatives. This report builds upon information from at least 15 interviews conducted by participating CSOs with representatives of public institutions. Furthermore, the draft report was made open for consultation within the RCM coalition, whose members had the opportunity to comment on it, and broader consultations with Roma civil society were conducted, thereby enhancing the validity of the findings.

The report was mainly prepared by RomanoNet, an umbrella organisation of Roma CSOs, which is in continuous dialogue with Roma CSOs and cooperates with public institutions on Roma-related issues. Members of RomanoNet were consulted about specific issues on which they possess topic-specific knowledge, and the chapter on hate speech was prepared by Romea, an organisation that has long-term experience monitoring the topic.

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<sup>1</sup> Government of the Czech Republic. *Czech Strategy of Equality, Inclusion and Participation of Roma (Roma Integration Strategy) until 2030*. 2021. Analytical Part available at: [https://www.vlada.cz/assets/ppov/zalezitosti-romske-komunity/aktuality/Strategie-rovnosti--zacleneni-a-participace-Romu-2021---2030---textova-cast\\_OK\\_2.pdf](https://www.vlada.cz/assets/ppov/zalezitosti-romske-komunity/aktuality/Strategie-rovnosti--zacleneni-a-participace-Romu-2021---2030---textova-cast_OK_2.pdf) ; and Task Part available at: [https://www.vlada.cz/assets/ppov/zalezitosti-romske-komunity/aktuality/05-Strategie-romske-rovnosti--zacleneni-a-participace-2021---2030---ukolova-cast\\_2.pdf](https://www.vlada.cz/assets/ppov/zalezitosti-romske-komunity/aktuality/05-Strategie-romske-rovnosti--zacleneni-a-participace-2021---2030---ukolova-cast_2.pdf)

<sup>2</sup> Government of the Czech Republic. *Czech Strategy of Equality, Inclusion and Participation of Roma (Roma Integration Strategy) until 2030. Revised version 2024*. 2025. Available at: <https://vlada.gov.cz/assets/ppov/zalezitosti-romske-komunity/III--Revidovane-zneni-SRI-vcetne-ukolove-casti.pdf>

<sup>3</sup> The latest monitoring report of January 2025 is available for the 2023 period: Office of the Government. *Informace o naplňování Strategie rovnosti, začlenění a participace Romů v roce 2023. [Information on the Implementation of the Roma Equality, Inclusion and Participation Strategy in 2023.]* Úřad vlády ČR, 2024. Available at: <https://vlada.gov.cz/cz/ppov/zalezitosti-romske-komunity/aktuality/informace-o-naplnovani-strategie-romske-integrace-2021-2030-v-roce-2023-216811/>

# 1. IMPLEMENTATION OF THE NRSF

## 1.1. Key developments and effectiveness of implementation

The NRSF as a standalone strategy was adopted by the Government of Czechia in 2021. It represents a significant shift, introducing specific targets and dedicated financial allocations aimed at improving the socio-economic conditions of the Roma population. It has an Action Plan, which was undergoing revision in 2024.

The NRSF's measures are reported on a yearly basis and published by the Office of the Government.

The NRSF is in alignment with the EU Roma Strategic Framework (EURSF). Roma civil society has participated actively in the NRSF's development and is continuously included in consultations concerning its implementation and revision.

The NRSF has defined ambitious goals and sets of measures which could be effective if duly implemented. However, major concerns remain about its effective implementation, as it is rather fragmented due to loose coordination and varying approaches to their responsibilities throughout the relevant ministries and other bodies.

### 1.1.1. Changes in the NRSF and action plan

The Czech government has conducted a mid-term review of the NRSF. The subsequent revision is the first planned update, as outlined in NRSF's Chapter 10 (Implementation of the Strategy), which anticipated two strategic revisions. The review aims to ensure that the NRSF remains relevant and responsive to changing social, economic, and legislative conditions. The revision process was conducted from June to December 2024 by the Office of the Government in cooperation with the CSO Romanonet. However, as of January 2025, the updated NRSF had not yet been adopted by the government.

The revised NRSF incorporates legislative updates and accounts for socio-economic shifts since its approval in May 2021. Key influencing factors include the lasting effects of the COVID-19 pandemic, which impacted Roma communities disproportionately, and the economic and social consequences of the war in Ukraine, particularly regarding the integration of displaced populations. The update ensures that these external factors are reflected in policy adjustments and funding allocations.

To align with international standards, the updated NRSF integrates recommendations from the European Commission<sup>4</sup> and the Council of Europe.<sup>5</sup> These include enhanced monitoring frameworks for Roma inclusion, strengthened efforts to combat antigypsyism, and adjustments to reflect international legal definitions. The revisions also ensure compliance with broader European Roma policy frameworks.

The revision process reviewed the implementation experience of the NRSF to date, leading to several refinements. Some measures were clarified to avoid ambiguity, and duplicative policies were eliminated to improve efficiency. However, the overall structure and objectives remain unchanged, as the government determined that the strategy has not yet been in place long enough to warrant the removal or addition of entirely new measures.

The revised NRSF enhances and refines the implementation of existing measures, rather than introducing a standalone action plan. This ensures continuity in policy execution while allowing for necessary adaptations based on changing circumstances.

In the following paragraphs, we summarise the main updates per NRSF's thematic parts:

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<sup>4</sup> See: European Commission. *Assessment report of the Member States' national Roma strategic frameworks (full package)*. 2023. Available at: [https://commission.europa.eu/publications/assessment-report-member-states-national-roma-strategic-frameworks-full-package\\_en](https://commission.europa.eu/publications/assessment-report-member-states-national-roma-strategic-frameworks-full-package_en)

<sup>5</sup> Commissioner for Human Rights of the Council of Europe. *Report Following her Visit to the Czech Republic from 20 to 24 February 2023*. 2023. Available at: <https://rm.coe.int/report-on-czech-republic-by-dunja-mijatovic-commissioner-for-human-rig/1680ac88cd>

**Emancipation, Support for Equality, Inclusion, and Participation:** A major update in this section is the conclusion of projects funded by EHP and Norway Grants. These adjustments were necessitated to align with new financial opportunities in the following programme period, highlighting the dependence of future activities on available funding mechanisms. Additionally, funding and operational frameworks for the Museum of Roma Culture and its Prague-based Centre for Roma and Sinti have been revised to ensure sustainability and better integration into national cultural policies.

**Antigypsyism:** Within the NRSF revision, the formal adoption of a working definition of antigypsyism (Government Resolution No. 233, April 10, 2024) has been incorporated, enhancing the ability to track and combat anti-Roma sentiment. This section also underwent terminology updates to align with international standards on hate crimes and prejudice-based violence. Additionally, restructuring within government advisory bodies and the establishment of the Government Commissioner for Roma Affairs were incorporated to improve governance and representation.

**Education:** Education-related measures have been updated to reflect legislative changes, particularly regarding social pedagogues, whose role has now been officially recognised and is in the process of being integrated into the education system. Another key focus is the enhancement of monitoring mechanisms for Roma students, specifically in response to the European Court of Human Rights' ruling in *D. H. and Others v. Czechia* of 13 November 2007,<sup>6</sup> which found systemic discrimination in Roma education placement. This includes the revision of diagnostic tools and methodologies that have historically led to the disproportionate placement of Roma children into special education programmes.

**Housing:** The most notable changes in this area stem from the proposed new Housing Support Act, which influences housing policies for vulnerable groups, including Roma. The strategy now includes new government projects such as Affordable Housing and Rental Housing to increase Roma access to stable and non-segregated housing. Additionally, the monitoring of residential segregation has been strengthened to provide a clearer picture of Roma living conditions and the effectiveness of housing policies.

**Employment:** Key updates in this section involve a reassignment of responsibilities between the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs and the Czech Labour Office, ensuring better coordination and funding allocation. Measures have been aligned with the Operational Programme Employment+, guaranteeing financial support for Roma employment initiatives. Additionally, a stronger emphasis has been placed on socially responsible public procurement, encouraging businesses and state institutions to integrate Roma employment considerations into their procurement policies.

**Health:** Health-related revisions primarily focus on compensation for victims of forced sterilisation, ensuring that affected individuals receive adequate support and that monitoring mechanisms remain in place beyond the expiration of the law on compensation for forced sterilisation. The government has also committed to formalising the role of Regional Health Support Centres and health mediators, expanding intercultural training for healthcare professionals, and implementing targeted programmes for Roma individuals struggling with substance dependency.

**Capacity and Resources:** Administrative updates have been made to align department names and responsibilities with recent government structural changes. The role of the Government Commissioner for Roma Affairs has been expanded, with an increased focus on engaging Roma representatives in decision-making processes. Additionally, to streamline operations and reduce administrative burdens, the frequency of the Report on the Status of the Roma Minority has been extended from annual to biennial reporting, while the annual Implementation Report on the Strategy remains unchanged. A new funding stream from the Czech Technology Agency is being explored to support these efforts starting in 2025.

### 1.1.2. Progress in implementation

The NRSF implementation has encountered several challenges, leading to delays in executing planned actions. Of the 155 measures in the strategy, by 31 December 2022, 59 measures (38%) had not been implemented, and 56 measures (36%) only partially. By 31 December 2023, the situation had slightly improved, but 44 measures (28%) remained unimplemented and 49 (31%) partially implemented.

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<sup>6</sup> Information and background documents on the judgement are available at: <https://www.errc.org/cikk.php?cikk=2945>



A significant factor contributing to these delays has been the COVID-19 pandemic, which hindered the rollout of initiatives. For instance, the implementation of measures related to the deployment of cultural mediators in schools was delayed. This disruption underscores the pandemic's broader impact on social integration efforts and the necessity of having adaptable strategies for unforeseen circumstances.

Moreover, according to the European Commission's report on the implementation of national Roma strategic frameworks from last September 2023,<sup>7</sup> the current level of ambition in implementing the NRSF in Czechia is insufficient to ensure that the minimum progress commensurate with the EU's 2030 targets is achieved. Particularly in the area of employment, the gaps have barely narrowed, indicating a need for more robust and effective measures to promote Roma inclusion in the labour market.<sup>8</sup> Beyond employment, other persistent problems hindering Roma integration in Czechia include segregation in schools and forced evictions from housing without adequate alternatives.

Despite official commitments, NRSF implementation in Czechia faces significant challenges that, according to the assessment of Roma civil society organisations, indicate limited political will to fully advance integration policies. While the human rights agenda and social inclusion are formally listed as strategic goals in the NRSF itself, the practical impact of measures remains limited, as evidenced by the persistent delays and insufficient implementation of many planned actions. The ongoing revisions of the NRSF, although leading to formal updates and the incorporation of European Commission recommendations, are hindered by insufficient practical reflection and inadequately fulfilled targets for concrete and profound changes, raising concerns about their full alignment with international recommendations and the genuine addressing of the socio-economic challenges faced by Roma communities.

The implementation of the NRSF has also been significantly affected by the ongoing conflict between Russia and Ukraine, which has redirected government priorities and resources toward assisting Ukrainian refugees. The Czech government has invested substantial effort into providing housing, employment support, and social services to newly arrived refugees, which has, in some cases, slowed the implementation of planned Roma inclusion measures. While Roma integration remains on the agenda, the allocation of financial and administrative resources to the refugee crisis has created additional challenges in relation to meeting the original timeline of the strategy. Ensuring that Roma communities are not further marginalised amid these shifting priorities will be critical for the successful execution of the NRSF.

### 1.1.3. Effectiveness of monitoring

Czechia has established both formal and informal monitoring mechanisms to oversee the implementation of its NRSF. Formal mechanisms primarily include the 'Committee for the Implementation of the Roma Integration Strategy', tasked with monitoring and evaluating the progress of the strategy's objectives and measures, and the 'Government Council for Roma Minority Affairs', which provides oversight and guidance within this monitoring framework. Informal mechanisms comprise the active engagement and monitoring by Roma civil society and CSOs, which complement official data through their reports and monitoring activities. The Committee for the Implementation of the Roma Integration Strategy and the Government Council for Roma Minority Affairs collaborate with various stakeholders, including governmental bodies, CSOs, and Roma community representatives, to gather comprehensive insights into the strategy's execution. A specific output of the Committee for the Implementation of the Roma Integration Strategy is meeting minutes; for instance, the minutes from the meeting of 21 March 2023 are publicly available. However, in 2023, the Committee met only once and adopted no resolutions.

Despite these established structures, concerns have been raised regarding the sufficiency and effectiveness of the monitoring setup. The RCM initiative has highlighted issues such as the vagueness of Roma-specific policies and a lack of rigorous monitoring of the effectiveness and impact of support measures for Roma communities. This suggests that while formal mechanisms exist, they may not be adequately capturing the nuances of implementation or addressing the specific needs of the Roma population, especially because they are not

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<sup>7</sup> See: European Commission. *Assessment report of the Member States' national Roma strategic frameworks (full package)*. 2023. Available at: [https://commission.europa.eu/publications/assessment-report-member-states-national-roma-strategic-frameworks-full-package\\_en](https://commission.europa.eu/publications/assessment-report-member-states-national-roma-strategic-frameworks-full-package_en)

<sup>8</sup> The Brussels Times. *Antigypsyism barrier for Roma integration in the EU labour market*. 29. 12. 2024. Available at: [https://www.brusselstimes.com/1371556/antigypsyism-barrier-for-roma-integration-in-the-eu-labour-market?utm\\_source=](https://www.brusselstimes.com/1371556/antigypsyism-barrier-for-roma-integration-in-the-eu-labour-market?utm_source=)



sufficiently capable of effectively utilising the newly introduced Roma-specific indicators in the NRSF and Operational Programmes, which are crucial for collecting ethnically disaggregated data and accurately assessing impact. The reasons for this inability include a lack of clear methodology for data collection, the unwillingness of communities to participate, and issues with defining who is Roma, which leads to inaccurate monitoring results and hinders the objective evaluation of the strategy's true impact. This lack of ability to fully leverage these indicators to evaluate progress in practice limits the depth and accuracy of monitoring.

In terms of the execution of planned monitoring activities, there have been instances when these have not proceeded as scheduled. For example, the Assessment Report of the Member States' national Roma Strategic Frameworks, issued by the European Commission in January 2023, indicates that some Member States, including Czechia, have faced challenges setting clear baselines and targets, which are essential for effective monitoring and evaluation. Although this Commission report notes initial challenges, Czechia has already set national targets corresponding to EU-level objectives and has quantitative targets for at least some EU-level objectives, particularly in education, the fight against antigypsyism and discrimination, and employment. Nevertheless, delays in establishing further foundational metrics and overall implementation have impacted the timely initiation and effectiveness of monitoring activities. Consequently, while the framework for monitoring exists, its practical application has encountered obstacles, leading to delays and potential gaps in assessing the NRSF's implementation.<sup>9</sup>

#### 1.1.4. Data collection

Czechia has recognised the importance of data collection for the effective implementation of the NRSF. To this end, a project entitled 'Creating a System for Quantitative Data Collection to Evaluate the Fulfilment of the Roma Integration Strategy'<sup>10</sup> was initiated and completed by the Research Institute of Labour and Social Affairs (RILSA). The aim of this project, supported by EEA Grants, was to establish a quantitative data collection system to better understand the situation of the Roma in Czechia and facilitate comparisons with the majority population. This pilot also investigated the potential takeover of regular Roma surveys by the FRA from a national institution. The main activities of the project included developing a methodology for data collection, implementing pilot data collection, analysing the collected data, and establishing a framework for regular data collection and evaluation.

The RILSA project conducted two field surveys (in 2022 and 2023/2024) with 1,549 and 1,268 respondents, respectively, representing a significant step towards addressing the long-term lack of ethnically disaggregated data. The methodology tracks approximately 170 indicators in areas such as education, labour market, health, housing, poverty, and discrimination. The methodology allows for comparison with general population data (e.g., Eurostat, Czech School Inspectorate, Statistical Yearbook of Czechia) across many socio-economic areas, including unemployment rates, early school leaving rates, at-risk-of-poverty rates, material deprivation, and feelings of discrimination.

Despite these benefits, the RILSA research has its limitations, which hinder its full utility for a comprehensive assessment of the NRSF's impact. The representativeness of the research is limited to respondents and is not directly transferable to households and children within the Roma population. Individuals living in residential facilities, in prison, or experiencing homelessness are excluded from the sample, meaning it does not reflect the situation of these vulnerable groups. For some data, such as income poverty, there is a large proportion of missing responses (up to 38.5%), which reduces accuracy. While the survey's methodology did provide a framework for collecting ethnic data, it is not fully applicable for collecting *all* necessary data across *all* monitored areas of the NRSF, thus limiting its comprehensive utility for assessing the impact of the strategy. This is because ministries such as the Labour Office of Czechia and the Ministry of Health cannot legally record the ethnicity of clients. For example, the Labour Office of Czechia cannot track the proportion of Roma among housing benefit recipients or among those supported to access the labour market, as the Employment Act and the Personal Data Processing Act do not permit the recording of ethnic origin. Similarly, the Ministry of Health does not possess data concerning the ethnicity of citizens for the purpose of monitoring health or discrimination in access to healthcare. In some cases, national data protection legislation further hinders the collection of such data.

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<sup>9</sup> European Commission. *Assessment report of the Member States' national Roma strategic frameworks*. 2023. Available at: [https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/HTML/?uri=CELEX%3A52023DC0007&utm\\_source=](https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/HTML/?uri=CELEX%3A52023DC0007&utm_source=)

<sup>10</sup> See: <https://esd.rilsa.cz/en/home/>

Among existing efforts to collect and use data, the map of residential segregation<sup>11</sup> is also utilised in various Actions within EU funds, mainly connected to investments in social housing. Its strengths lie in the use of a single, easy-to-understand indicator and the use of administrative data (on addresses of recipients of social assistance), which enables regular and low-cost updates. Moreover, the map provides a high level of territorial detail, facilitating targeted interventions at the municipal and sub-municipal levels. However, its main limitation is that it does not capture ethnic segregation (as administrative data do not contain information on the ethnicity of beneficiaries) and the fact that the map has not been updated since the end of 2020.

While these steps indicate a commitment to data-driven policy implementation, specific details regarding the implementation status of planned data collection activities, the establishment of appropriate baselines, and preparations for data collection envisioned in the NRSF are not explicitly provided in the available written sources. For the purpose of this report, these key details, which are not fully described in official documents, were obtained and analysed from interviews with relevant stakeholders and representatives of public institutions involved in data collection, with the aim of providing readers with a comprehensive overview.

## 1.2. NRSF's synergy with domestic and EU actions

The Czech Republic's NRSF is designed to align closely with both domestic policies and EU initiatives to promote Roma equality, inclusion, and participation.

### 1.2.1. Complementary policies

Domestically, the NRSF is systematically harmonised with cornerstone national strategies. Primarily, this includes the 'Strategic Framework for the Czech Republic 2030', adopted by Government Resolution No. 292 on 19 April 2017.<sup>12</sup> This framework, serving as an overarching document for all ministerial, regional, and local strategies, defines the long-term direction for improving the quality of life in the country and ensuring sustainable development across social, economic, and environmental aspects. The NRSF contributes to its objectives, including reducing long-term unemployment, decreasing the share of people at risk of poverty and social exclusion, ensuring equal access for individuals at risk of discrimination, fostering an inclusive education system, and reducing health inequalities.

In addition, the NRSF aligns with the 'Social Inclusion Strategy 2021–2030'. This national document comprehensively covers areas crucial for the social inclusion of all socially excluded persons and those at risk of social exclusion. The NRSF's complementarity with this strategy is vital and manifests in several ways.<sup>13</sup> The NRSF does not duplicate the general measures of the Social Inclusion Strategy, which are intended for all disadvantaged groups in the Czech Republic. Instead, it complements them with specific tools and interventions targeted directly at the Roma population. The NRSF focuses on addressing the unique socio-cultural, linguistic, and economic barriers that Roma often encounter, which general measures may not fully cover. The aim is to ensure that Roma, as a group facing cumulative and specific barriers, can effectively access and benefit from these mainstream services and programmes, thereby fully capitalising on their potential. For instance, in pre-school education, the NRSF supplements the general measures of the Social Inclusion Strategy with targeted financial support and capacity building for Roma children. In employment, the NRSF addresses persistent discrimination and low qualifications among Roma through specific programmes designed to facilitate their entry into the labour market.

Noteworthy is the government's decision to extend the operations of the Agency for Social Inclusion beyond 2025, maintaining its role within the Ministry for Regional Development. This move underscores the government's commitment to addressing social exclusion and aligns with the NRSF's goals of promoting equality and inclusion for marginalised communities, including the Roma population.<sup>14</sup>

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<sup>11</sup> Available at: [www.segregatce.cz](http://www.segregatce.cz)

<sup>12</sup> Office of the Government. *Updated Strategic Framework Czech Republic 2030 with a view to 2050*. 2024. Available at: <https://www.cr2030.cz/system/files/2025-05/updated%20strategic%20framework%20CZ%202030.pdf>

<sup>13</sup> Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs. *Social Inclusion Strategy 2021–2030 (3rd updated edition)*. 2023. Available at: [https://www.mpsv.cz/cms/documents/440532dd-4248-769a-f118-75f5185e960d/Social%2BInclusion%2BStrategy%2B2021%25E2%2580%25932030\\_aktualizace2023.pdf](https://www.mpsv.cz/cms/documents/440532dd-4248-769a-f118-75f5185e960d/Social%2BInclusion%2BStrategy%2B2021%25E2%2580%25932030_aktualizace2023.pdf)

<sup>14</sup> For more information see: [https://romea.cz/en/czech-republic/czech-government-decides-the-agency-for-social-inclusion-will-continue-beyond-2025-as-part-of-the-regional-development-ministry?utm\\_source=](https://romea.cz/en/czech-republic/czech-government-decides-the-agency-for-social-inclusion-will-continue-beyond-2025-as-part-of-the-regional-development-ministry?utm_source=)

Additionally, organisations like People in Need have been instrumental in advocating for fairer debt recovery practices. They have developed tools, such as the Index of Predatory Lending, to highlight unethical lending practices and have successfully lobbied for legislative changes, including the regulation of non-bank entities and the reduction of lawyers' fees in debt recovery cases.<sup>15</sup>

A crucial aspect of the NRSF's alignment with domestic policies is also its response to the European Court of Human Rights' (ECtHR) judgment in *D.H. and Others v. Czech Republic*. This judgment found systemic discrimination against Roma children in the Czech education system. The NRSF includes specific goals and measures (e.g., within Strategic Goal C – Education, Measure C.2.4 ) aimed at eliminating segregation, ensuring inclusive education, and preventing the misdiagnosis of Roma children that could lead to their placement in special schools. In this way, the NRSF actively contributes to redressing historical injustices and ensuring equal opportunities for Roma pupils in line with the Czech Republic's international obligations. The systematic interconnectedness of the NRSF with these domestic strategies is vital for achieving long-term and sustainable changes in the lives of Roma in the Czech Republic. It ensures that integration efforts are coordinated, comprehensive, and focused on the actual needs of the target group, rather than fragmented and ineffective initiatives.<sup>16</sup>

### 1.2.2. Alignment with EU actions

At the European level, the NRSF is systematically integrated within the ERSF, which for the first time set ambitious objectives and quantitative targets to be met by 2030, actively encouraging Member States to consistently translate these into their national frameworks. The Czech Republic has responded to this call by setting corresponding national targets that align with the EU-level objectives.<sup>17</sup> These national targets focus on key areas such as fighting and preventing antigypsyism and discrimination, reducing poverty and social exclusion, promoting participation, and increasing effective equal access to quality inclusive education, sustainable employment, healthcare, and adequate housing. Although challenges associated with setting clear baselines and targets for monitoring existed in the past,<sup>18</sup> the Czech Republic has overcome these challenges and fully aligned its national targets with European requirements.

Financially, the Czech Republic effectively utilises support from key EU programmes to implement its NRSF. These include the European Social Fund Plus (ESF+), the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF), and the Recovery and Resilience Facility (RRF). These financial resources are systematically allocated to projects aimed at comprehensively improving the socio-economic conditions of the Roma population, thereby ensuring that national efforts are significantly bolstered and supported by EU resources.<sup>19</sup> This financial synergy is crucial for the sustainability and scale of the implemented measures. Further details are provided in Chapter 4 of this report.

### 1.2.3. Addressing concerns of previous assessments

In response to previous assessments, including the 2022 RCM report on Czechia and evaluations by the European Commission, the Czech government has taken steps to address identified concerns in implementing

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<sup>15</sup> For more information see: [https://www.peopleinneed.net/what-we-do/social-work-in-the-czech-republic/specialist-social-counselling?utm\\_source=](https://www.peopleinneed.net/what-we-do/social-work-in-the-czech-republic/specialist-social-counselling?utm_source=).

<sup>16</sup> NRSF.

<sup>17</sup> European Commission. *Report from the Commission to the European Parliament, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions on the implementation of the National Roma Strategic Frameworks with regard to the EU Roma Strategic Framework for Equality, Inclusion and Participation and the Council Recommendation on Roma equality, inclusion and participation*. 2024. Available at: <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=COM:2024:422:FIN>

<sup>18</sup> See: European Commission. *Assessment report of the Member States' national Roma strategic frameworks (full package)*. 2023. Available at: [https://commission.europa.eu/publications/assessment-report-member-states-national-roma-strategic-frameworks-full-package\\_en](https://commission.europa.eu/publications/assessment-report-member-states-national-roma-strategic-frameworks-full-package_en)

<sup>19</sup> European Commission. *Report from the Commission to the European Parliament, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions on the implementation of the National Roma Strategic Frameworks with regard to the EU Roma Strategic Framework for Equality, Inclusion and Participation and the Council Recommendation on Roma equality, inclusion and participation*. 2024. Available at: <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=COM:2024:422:FIN>

its NRFS. Notably, the government has improved the national coordination of integration policies and enhanced cooperation between central and regional authorities. However, challenges persist, such as the need for reliable data disaggregated by ethnicity to effectively implement and assess Roma inclusion policies. Civil society organisations have highlighted this data gap as a significant barrier to progress. To address these issues, the government has initiated projects aimed at creating systems for quantitative data collection to evaluate the fulfilment of the Roma Integration Strategy. These efforts demonstrate a commitment to refining the NRFS by incorporating feedback from various stakeholders and assessments.

### **1.3. Roma participation in implementation and monitoring**

#### **1.3.1. Involvement of Roma CSOs in implementation**

Roma CSOs are actively involved in the implementation and monitoring of the NRSF. This collaboration is crucial for ensuring the relevance and effectiveness of integration policies, although both strengths and persistent challenges manifest in practice.

The establishment of the Committee for the Fulfilment of the Roma Integration Strategy is a significant example of the formal involvement of Roma CSOs. This committee includes representatives from state administration, local governments, and professional civil society organisations, ensuring that Roma voices are integral to discussions about the strategy's implementation.<sup>20</sup> Roma representatives are also actively involved in the working bodies of operational programmes (e.g., OP JAK, IROP, OPZ+), where they have the opportunity to influence the setting of calls and project designs.<sup>21</sup> For instance, in OP JAK, Roma representatives are members of the planning commission and the monitoring committee, and RomanoNet representatives are part of IROP's Working Teams for educational and social infrastructure. This involvement allows for direct influence on strategic direction and the allocation of European funds.

Furthermore, Roma CSOs are entrusted with specific activities and services within the NRSF. Grant programmes from the Government Office (e.g., 'Prevention of Social Exclusion and Community Work') and the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs (e.g., 'Support for Roma Minority Integration') directly support projects implemented by Roma CSOs, including social and field services, community work, educational programmes, and awareness-raising activities. In 2022, for example, the Government Office supported 18 applicants from CSOs with over 12 million CZK (485,000 EUR) for community work.<sup>22</sup> In 2023, the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs supported 34 CSO projects valued at 187.45 million CZK (7.58 million EUR), focusing on community work and community organising.<sup>23</sup> The organisations implementing these projects often operate directly in socially excluded localities and provide essential services that complement or supplement state and municipal capacities. An example is the support for Roma mentoring in supervising the execution of alternative punishments (i.e. non-custodial sentences), where grant titles from the Ministry of Justice and the Ministry of Interior enable the implementation of these services by Roma CSOs.<sup>24</sup>

Roma CSOs are also regularly informed about the details of activities implemented by other entities through the RomanoNet platform and their involvement in the Government Council for Roma Minority Affairs and other working groups, where they actively participate in discussions and have access to current reports and documents from ministries.<sup>25</sup> This platform serves as a key communication channel where information on implementation details and plans is shared, including reports from ministries, which are subsequently distributed among RomanoNet member organisations. This ensures a certain level of transparency and allows CSOs to voice their opinions on policy implementation.

Despite existing participation structures, assessments such as the RCM highlight persistent challenges, including the need for more effective involvement of Roma communities in decision-making processes and the necessity for improved data collection for accurate progress monitoring. It often happens that, even with formal

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<sup>20</sup> Government's report on NRSF implementation in 2022.

<sup>21</sup> Government's report on NRSF implementation in 2023, p. 28. et seq.

<sup>22</sup> Ibid., p. 25. et seq.

<sup>23</sup> Ibid., p. 26. et seq.

<sup>24</sup> Ibid., p. 51, 52. et seq.

<sup>25</sup> Government's report on NRSF implementation in 2022, p. 10. et seq.

participation in advisory bodies, the actual ability of Roma CSOs to influence strategic decisions is limited. For instance, while Roma representatives are invited to working meetings and grant evaluation committees, their proposals or comments concerning systemic changes or the allocation of financial resources may not always be fully implemented into final documents or calls. This is evidenced by the slow resolution of legislative barriers preventing targeted ethnic data collection, which reduces the potential for accurate monitoring of impacts on the Roma population. Despite participation in the Committee for the Fulfilment of the Roma Integration Strategy, which in 2023 met only once and did not adopt any resolutions, the real influence of Roma civil society on the ongoing management of strategy implementation remains limited.<sup>26</sup>

Another weakness is the insufficient systemic embedding and funding of certain initiatives led by Roma CSOs. Many projects are dependent on short-term grant calls, which hinders long-term planning and sustainability. An example is the Regional Health Support Centres, where the activities of Roma health mediators, despite being very effective in the field, are not systemically embedded, and there is a risk of insufficient funding after project completion. Similarly, although opportunities exist for funding Roma mentoring in supervising alternative sentences, applicants did not utilise this option in 2023, which may indicate insufficient awareness or administrative barriers.

In some areas, such as the participation of Roma in advisory and consultative bodies of ministries, shortcomings persist. For example, the Ministry of Interior and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs do not have Roma minority representatives in any advisory positions.

### 1.3.2. Roma in public institutions implementing the NRSF

The NRSF explicitly underscores the importance of Roma participation in its implementation. This involvement is not limited to civil society representatives but also targets the active participation of Roma directly within public institutions responsible for implementing Roma integration policies at the central, regional, and local levels.

At the national level, the key forums for Roma involvement are the Government Council for Roma Minority Affairs, which includes Roma representatives, ensuring their participation in policy discussions.

At the regional and municipal levels, coordinators for Roma affairs and Roma advisors in municipalities operate. In 2019, 157 Roma advisors worked in the Czech Republic, with an average workload of 0.11 FTE on the agenda of Roma participation and inclusion, which was assessed as insufficient, particularly in municipalities with socially excluded localities. These advisors and field workers play a crucial role in direct contact with Roma communities, helping to convey local needs to the public administration. In 2023, the Ministry of Interior recorded 83 police officers who gave presentations at 18 socially significant events related to minorities. A Roma inspector from the Czech Trade Inspection Authority also carries out some monitoring activities. These examples demonstrate the concrete employment of Roma within public administration.

Despite these formal structures and specific positive examples, Roma representation within public institutions responsible for implementing the NRSF remains limited. Reports from 2023 point to insufficient capacities within the Department for National Minorities and Roma Affairs of the Government Office, as well as in the secretariat of the Government Plenipotentiary for Roma Affairs, where no systematised positions exist. Although the Plenipotentiary was provided with four agreements on work activity for administrative support, the Government Office's budget for external workers has not been increased. The number of FTEs in the Government Council for Roma Minority Affairs' office has not been increased. This understaffing hinders effective coordination and implementation of the NRSF.

Some ministries, such as the Ministry of Health and the Ministry of Justice, apply an 'ethnically blind' approach, stating that their working bodies are primarily composed of experts without ethnic group preference, or they do not have ethnically disaggregated data. This means that Roma employees in these areas are not systematically monitored or specifically supported, which can hinder the full utilisation of the insights and experiences of Roma professionals in addressing community-specific challenges. Furthermore, in some departments, such as the Ministry of Interior and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, there are no Roma minority representatives in any advisory positions. Overall, it is evident that strengthening Roma inclusion in public sector

<sup>26</sup> Government's report on NRSF implementation in 2023, p. 122 et seq.



employment is essential for the successful implementation of the NRSF, requiring targeted strategies for the recruitment, retention, and career development of Roma professionals across all levels of public administration.

### 1.3.3. Roma participation in monitoring and evaluation

Roma CSOs and Roma representatives are involved in official monitoring processes through several channels. Information on the NRSF's implementation is annually provided for comment to members of the Government Council for Roma Minority Affairs, its committees, regional coordinators for Roma affairs, and other CSOs representing Roma civil society. This process allows Roma actors to comment on government reports and implementation data. In 2023, the text of the 'Information on the Fulfilment of the Strategy in 2023' was approved by the members of the Government Council for Roma Minority Affairs through a per rollam vote, indicating a certain level of their validation-related involvement.<sup>27</sup>

Roma representatives are also members of the Committee for the Fulfilment of the Roma Integration Strategy, established under the Government Council for Roma Minority Affairs, whose purpose is to monitor and evaluate the fulfilment of the NRSF's goals and measures. Although no CSO representatives are officially appointed to the Committee as organisational representatives, the Committee includes four civil society representatives. Roma also participate in working groups and advisory bodies at ministries, such as the Ministry of Education, Youth, and Sports, where they are invited to meetings of the methodological group for ethnic desegregation.<sup>28</sup>

Despite the aforementioned efforts, significant limitations hinder more meaningful and effective participation of Roma and Roma CSOs in monitoring and evaluating the NRSF. One of the key problems is the lack of funding and human resources for Roma CSOs, which limits their ability to conduct their own independent assessments and provide comprehensive input into government processes. Although materials are sent for comment, the actual influence of Roma CSOs on the ongoing management of strategy implementation remains limited. For example, the Committee for the Fulfilment of the Roma Integration Strategy met only once in 2023 and did not adopt any resolutions, reducing its effectiveness as a monitoring body.

It is unclear whether and to what extent Roma actors are involved in developing methodologies and indicators for ministerial monitoring, or whether they validate monitoring results beyond providing comments.

Roma CSOs also collaborate with the Agency for Social Inclusion (ASZ) and monitor its activities within the Monitoring Committee for the Activities of the Agency for Social Inclusion, which is part of the Government Council for Roma Minority Affairs.<sup>29</sup> However, the activity of this committee is limited, and it does not have the expected effect on the operations and direction of ASZ. Although the Monitoring Committee is informed about ASZ's activities, it lacks the authority to restrict its operations in cases where ASZ collaborates with municipalities that persistently—and notwithstanding ASZ's presence in the municipality—implement anti-Roma policies, such as discriminatory practices in housing. This absence of authority hinders an effective response to discriminatory practices at the local level and reduces the impact of monitoring on improving the situation in practice.

### 1.3.4. Contribution of the National Roma Platform to the NRSF implementation

Information regarding the reasons why the Czech Republic did not apply for funding from the EC to support the National Roma Platform (NRP) is derived from interviews with relevant stakeholders and representatives of public institutions involved in the implementation of the NRSF. The NRP is not explicitly defined as a standalone legal entity or a formal institution in the provided documents. Rather, it is referred to as a term that references a set of recommendations and priorities for strategy implementation that emerged from the collective efforts of Roma actors and organisations. At the national level, these voices and efforts are primarily coordinated by RomanoNet, an umbrella organisation of Roma civil society organisations, and the Government Council for Roma Minority Affairs (RVZRM), a governmental advisory body composed of Roma and state administration representatives.

The decision not to apply for financial support was made under the current government. Interviewees cited two primary factors that purportedly hindered the effort to secure external financial support for the platform's

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<sup>27</sup> Government's report on NRSF implementation in 2022.

<sup>28</sup> Government's report on NRSF implementation in 2023.

<sup>29</sup> Government's report on NRSF implementation in 2022.

initiatives. Firstly, the requirement for co-funding was an obstacle. As the Government Office of the Czech Republic, acting as the Strategy's coordinator, does not have a mandate to directly implement projects or manage external project funding for platforms of this type, nor do its existing budgetary allocations allow for the provision of such corresponding financial resources for external entities. Secondly, the Office of the Government allegedly faced limitations in increasing its workforce due to systematisation constraints, which restrict the creation of new positions or the hiring of additional staff. It is important to add that the RVZRM, although composed of Roma and state administration representatives, does not have its own budget designated for direct programme implementation or administrative support for initiatives like the National Roma Platform. Its funding depends on the Government Office's budget.

From an external perspective, such as that of civil society and international observers, these justifications may raise questions about the presence of genuine political will. Given the relatively low costs of co-financing (e.g., 10% of a budget that, even for a two-year period, could be in the tens or hundreds of thousands of EUR), securing these funds should not be an insurmountable obstacle for a country with a developed economy. This disproportion between the declared financial and personnel constraints and the perceived priority of supporting key integration platforms may be interpreted as a lack of sufficient political commitment.

## 2. REVIEW BY THEMATIC AREA

### 2.1. Fighting antigypsyism and discrimination

The NRSF has laid the foundation for a systematic approach to combating antigypsyism. It has created a framework, brought together key actors, and initiated several necessary activities. Nevertheless, there has not been a significant shift in addressing deep-rooted problems, such as segregation in education, the low level of trust among the Roma population in state institutions, or widespread hate speech in the public space. These phenomena continue to represent a serious obstacle to the full participation of Roma in Czech society.

The NRSF formulates well-targeted priorities, but their implementation is hampered by an insufficient pace of implementation, a lack of institutional coordination, and external political or social factors. There is time to correct this before 2030. To increase effectiveness, it will be necessary to step up the implementation of individual measures, complete outstanding tasks, ensure long-term sustainable financing, and put in place functional mechanisms for regular and transparent impact assessment.

At the same time, the government needs to integrate the antigypsyism agenda more consistently into mainstream public policies and strengthen the mandate of the coordination structures responsible for implementing the strategy. Without these steps, the NRSF risks remaining a declaratory framework with limited practical impact rather than an effective tool that could actually contribute to the equality and full inclusion of Roma in Czech society.

#### 2.1.1. Effectiveness of the NRSF in addressing the problems

Minimal progress may be observed between 2022 and 2023 in the implementation of measures aimed at combating antigypsyism. The total number of measures that were monitored remained the same in both years (22 measures), but the proportion of measures 'met', 'partially met' and 'not met' changed slightly:

	2022	2023
Implemented measures	9 (41%)	10 (46%)
Partially implemented measures	4 (18%)	5 (23%)
Not implemented measures	9 (41%)	7 (32%)

Although some improvement can be observed, almost one-third of the measures were still not implemented at all. The greatest progress was recorded in teacher training and mentoring programmes. On the other hand, measures aimed at monitoring discrimination, systemic changes in public administration and the judiciary, and the establishment of a committee against antigypsyism remain unfulfilled.

In 2023, the Ombudsman's Office received 28 complaints alleging discrimination on the grounds of Romani origin, an 11.1% increase from 2022, when 25 complaints were filed. The most frequent areas of discrimination were housing (14 complaints, i.e. 50%), employment (5 complaints, i.e. 17.9%), education (2 complaints, i.e. 7.1%) and social security (3 complaints, i.e. 10.7%).

The statistics on hate crimes against Roma continued to show no improvement in 2023.<sup>30</sup> Although the Czech Republic's police force updated its analytical documents, it failed to introduce a unified system of registering these crimes, a commitment made in 2019. Measure B.1.2 was therefore again only partially implemented. Judicial monitoring of discrimination remains a critical point of the NRSF. Measure B.1.3 on the monitoring of

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<sup>30</sup> For example, research by the Ombudsperson (2020) found that almost half (49%) of the hate speech that has been litigated in court is directed against Roma, most of it occurring via the social network Facebook. Although in 91% of cases (43 out of 47) the courts found the perpetrators guilty, this is a fraction of the true extent of the problem, as few instances reach the trial stage. The most common punishment (27 decisions) was suspended imprisonment (averaging 10 months) with a probationary period (averaging 24 months), followed by a fine (in ten decisions, averaging CZK 15,800) with a substitute sentence (averaging two months). Courts also imposed community service or forfeiture of property. Source: Ombudsman. *Nenávistné projevy na internetu a rozhodování českých soudů – Výzkum veřejného ochránce práv, 2020. [Hate Speech on the Internet and Czech Court Decisions – A Study by the Public Defender of Rights, 2020.]* 2020. Available at: [https://www.ochrance.cz/uploads-import/ESO/47-2019-DIS-PZ-Vyzkumna\\_zprava.pdf](https://www.ochrance.cz/uploads-import/ESO/47-2019-DIS-PZ-Vyzkumna_zprava.pdf)



judicial decisions was not implemented in 2022 or 2023. There is still no official mechanism to monitor court decisions on discrimination cases. The number of cases that have gone to court is not recorded.

Training for police officers on hate violence and discrimination was implemented in 2023. Twenty-five instructional and methodological training events were attended by 307 police officers, and three national ones were attended by 67 minority specialists. In contrast, the Labour Office did not conduct any training in this area in 2022 or 2023.

In the area of education, 2023 saw partial improvement. The issue of antigypsyism has been newly included in the updated curricula of faculties of education. Thus, measure B.2.7 was achieved, whereas it was only partially met in 2022. The establishment of a committee to combat antigypsyism (measure B.3.6) was not implemented in 2022 or 2023. Although the proposal of the committee was included in the strategic documents, the government did not take any action on this matter.

In 2023, the full implementation of Roma mentoring in the area of alternative (i.e. non-custodial sentences) sentencing (measure B.3.9) took place, which represents a significant shift from 2022, when the measure was only partially implemented. In 2023, 39 municipalities and 104 mentors were supported under mentoring programmes and 27 million CZK (1.09 million EUR) was allocated to the issue.

On the other hand, support for fighting antigypsyism within the state administration (measure B.3.10) remained unfulfilled in 2023. Although some ministries (e.g., the Ministry of Interior, the Ministry of Culture) include anti-discrimination measures in their codes of ethics, there was no systematic evaluation or monitoring of their effectiveness.

The Hatefree initiative (measure B.2.4) continued, reaching more than 4.1 million social media users in 2023. Published data show that 34 projects of CSOs in this area were supported in 2023, with three projects directly focused on monitoring hate speech against Roma. However, the initiative is scheduled to end in 2024.

Measures aimed at combating antigypsyism have long failed to be implemented due to a combination of political, institutional, and financial obstacles. The NRSF contains specific objectives and mechanisms, but implementation is unsystematic, and many measures remain at the planning level. Although Czechia has an Anti-Discrimination Act, which has been harmonised with EU law, sanctions against ethnic discrimination are rather sporadic.

One of the key problems is the lack of political will to enforce the measures. The adoption of strategies and action plans does not automatically guarantee their implementation. The government has been passive in implementing its commitments, and individual ministries have not adopted measures with the necessary priority, despite, for example, the definition of antigypsyism being adopted in April 2024.<sup>31</sup> However, this definition, taken from the framework of the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance, is not legally binding and is rather declaratory. It is necessary to add to this that the term 'antigypsyism' is not yet enshrined in the Czech legal order, not even in the Anti-Discrimination Act or the Misdemeanour Act, both of which, while providing for the prohibition of discrimination on the grounds of race, ethnic origin and other grounds, do not mention the specific term. Thus, legal means for sanctioning specific manifestations of antigypsyism are limited and often dependent on a broader interpretation of existing provisions.

Furthermore, it is still not possible to prevent the segregation of Roma children, and diagnostic assessment methods lead to their excessive inclusion in educational programmes with weaker educational outcomes.<sup>32</sup> Although the strategy promotes integration, schools are not sufficiently supported, and teachers are not adequately prepared to work with Roma pupils. Educational measures are still insufficient, as confirmed by research.<sup>33</sup> The adoption of antigypsyism in the curricula of faculties of education in 2023 is a step forward,

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<sup>31</sup> For the governmental press release, see: <https://vlada.gov.cz/cz/media-centrum/aktualne/vlada-dnes-jednohlasne-prijala-pravne-nezavaznou-definici-anticikanismu--212819/>

<sup>32</sup> For more information, see Nemec, Z. *On the segregation of Roma pupils in education*. Prague: Charles University, Faculty of Education, 2020.

<sup>33</sup> See: <https://www.paqresearch.cz/post/segregovane-skoly-najdeme-temer-v-kazdem-kraji-odpovednost-nesou-obce-potrebuji-ale-podporu-statu/>. PAQ Research+3

but this step will not ensure change unless it is followed by real steps to improve the quality of inclusive education.

Support for Roma employment faces persistent obstacles on the labour market. While retraining programmes exist, participants still face discrimination from employers. Although subsidy programmes are in place to support Roma employment, their impact is limited, as without structural changes in education and an active fight against discrimination, their results remain short-lived. Support for Roma entrepreneurship has not yet manifested itself on a wider scale, and there is no comprehensive strategy to support the economic self-sufficiency of the Roma community.

The NRSF repeatedly draws attention to discrimination against Roma on the housing market, which is manifested in the conclusion of lease contracts and access to municipal housing. Measure D.1.3 in both 2022 and 2023 set out to ensure equal access in the selection of tenants in municipal housing. In 2023, the Czech Trade Inspection Authority carried out inspections focused on compliance with the prohibition of discrimination, and in one case, discriminatory behaviour towards a Roma consumer was proven.

The lack of rigorous enforcement of existing measures means that the NRSF is, in many ways, a declarative document. The findings confirm that the implementation of measures against antigypsyism is failing mainly due to an unwillingness to make systemic changes. Although the strategy contains a number of necessary instruments, these instruments are not sufficiently used. Institutional fragmentation and the unclear competences of the different actors are another major obstacle. The problem of antigypsyism is more likely to be addressed by some parts of the state (e.g. the Ministry of the Interior or the Office of the Government), the Office of the Ombudsman, the police, academic institutions and the non-profit sector, but there is a lack of effective coordination between these actors. Thus, the responsibility for the implementation of the given measures is not clearly specified, which leads to a situation where some key tasks, such as systematic monitoring of hate crimes, are insufficient. The lack of a unified monitoring system makes it impossible to systematically evaluate the effectiveness of measures that are taken. Each institution collects and evaluates data in a different manner, resulting in the fragmentation of information and the inability to compare individual indicators. Ministries are unable to establish functional inter-ministerial cooperation and often avoid measures that would require deeper changes in established structures.

Political accountability for implementation is weak, institutions are not effectively coordinated, funding is insufficient and there is no comprehensive monitoring system that would allow for a transparent assessment of progress. Without these changes, the fight against antigypsyism cannot be expected to lead to real results.

### 2.1.2. Addressing the problems beyond the NRSF

The fight against antigypsyism (anti-Roma racism) is being carried out mainly at the legislative, institutional and educational level. In practice, antigypsyism is tackled using general tools against discrimination and extremism: the police and prosecutors prosecute hate crimes, the Ombudsman investigates complaints of discrimination, and the Ministry of Interior monitors extremism and runs prevention programmes.

In 2022, the police registered 20 hate crimes against Roma (a decrease from 33 in 2021), which accounted for approximately 13% of all extremist crimes. Sixty-one perpetrators were finally convicted of racially motivated hate crimes. As part of its agenda to prevent extremism, the Ministry of Interior also supports projects focused on inter-ethnic relations, such as workshops for police officers on Roma culture or awareness-raising campaigns (the Government has in the past supported, for example, the 'Roma are people like you' campaign).

A key institutional step was the establishment of the post of Government Commissioner for Roma Minority Affairs in 2021. The first Commissioner, Ms Lucie Fuková, took office in 2022. One of her tasks is to coordinate the fight against antigypsyism across ministries. Under her office, a Working Group on the Definition of Antigypsyism has been established, and a Committee on Antigypsyism has been set up in the Government Council for Roma Minorities, which brings together officials, experts and representatives of Roma civil society.

Furthermore, commemorative and memorial measures are being implemented, which indirectly target antigypsyism by acknowledging historical injustices against Roma: in 2022, the demolition of the pig farm in Lety u Písku was finally started, freeing up space for the Roma Holocaust Memorial. This symbolic step fulfilled a longstanding demand of the Roma and contributed to straightening out the narrative of Roma history. At the local level, some municipalities are organising Days of Romani Culture, festivals (e.g. Khamoro in Prague) or raising the Romani flag on Roma Day – these are also signals of support. The state also funds CSO projects aimed at combating prejudice: the 'Prevention of Social Exclusion and Community Work' programme of the

Office of the Government enables CSOs to implement community dialogue between Roma and the majority, educational events for officials, etc.

Finally, the RomanoNet platform of Roma associations, which was established in 2017 with the financial support of the state, coordinates advocacy and awareness-raising activities at the national level.

Anti-discrimination measures are mostly universal, aimed at combating racism and discrimination in general. Neither the Criminal Code nor anti-discrimination legislation specifically identifies Roma – they protect everyone from racial hatred or ethnic discrimination. For example, police forces have special units for extremism, and anti-Roma hatred falls within their remit; the Ombudsman deals with discrimination against Roma in the same way as discrimination against other ethnic groups. However, the term ‘antigypsyism’ itself was deliberately introduced into the political lexicon (including the NRSF) precisely so that the specifics of anti-Roma racism would be recognised and addressed in a targeted manner. The creation of a commissioner for Roma minorities and a relevant committee means that there is a platform directly dedicated to antigypsyism (which is not the case with other forms of hatred – we do not have, for example, a government commissioner for Islamophobia, etc.). This suggests that the state is taking a partially targeted approach in this area: monitoring specifically antigypsyism and devising measures ‘tailored’ to this type of prejudicial hatred. Examples include methodology for teachers on how to respond to antigypsyist stereotypes of pupils at school, and recommendations to media councils on how to sanction antigypsyist statements on air – such outputs are formulated separately, as the issue has its own particularities (long-entrenched stereotypes about ‘Gypsies’, etc.). Overall, however, the main tools (law, police) are universally deployed to combat all forms of racism. This is in line with the principle of equality – Roma do not have ‘privileged’ protection, but they should not be overlooked either. The current situation is therefore a mix: a universal framework complemented by ad hoc targeted initiatives under the auspices of a government commissioner.

The Czech legal order provides strong guarantees of protection against racial discrimination and violence. The punishment of hate crimes has improved in recent years, with police and courts more frequently classifying attacks on Roma as hate crimes and imposing unconditional sentences. This acts as a deterrent. Cooperation with the non-profit sector is also exemplary: organisations such as In IUSTITIA and Romea monitor manifestations of antigypsyism and provide support to victims, which the state follows up on (the police force has a programme of minority contact officers who work with Roma communities). The Minority Commissioner was able to initiate important steps within a short period of time – for example, pushing for government approval of a working definition of antigypsyism and launching a nationwide ‘Roma Roadshow’ (bringing together Roma, officials and police officers in the regions to discuss good practice and problems). The trend of a slight improvement in public opinion can also be seen as positive: the proportion of Czechs rating coexistence with Roma as “very bad” has fallen from 24% (2019) to 15% (2023), while the proportion of those who see coexistence as “rather positive” has increased. This suggests that open hatred is on the wane, perhaps thanks to education and greater media sensitivity. A good practice at the local level is hosting community events that break down barriers – e.g., joint youth sports tournaments involving both Roma and non-Roma children, or programmes such as ‘Get to Know Your Neighbour’, supported by some municipalities through subsidies from the Ministry of Culture and Education. The commemoration in Lety u Písku is also an example of when the state sent a clear signal to the Roma acknowledging historical injustice, which strengthens mutual trust.

The struggle against antigypsyism runs up against the extent of hidden prejudice in society. Although extremist violence has receded, latent negative attitudes persist – more than half of the population still evaluate coexistence with Roma negatively. These attitudes translate into discrimination in everyday life (see housing and employment) and are not easily broken down by legal means. A weakness is the low representation of Roma in public life – Roma are almost absent from politics (no MPs or senators, only a minimum of representatives), and few Roma work in the police, the authorities or in education. There is thus a lack of exemplary representation that would break down the stereotype ‘Roma = incapable of adapting’. The spread of misinformation and hate speech online, which is difficult to regulate, also poses a certain risk. During the 2022 municipal elections, fake anti-Roma leaflets disseminated by extremist entities appeared, which may have influenced voters’ attitudes. Similarly, on social media, various actors feed myths (e.g. about the abuse of benefits by Roma) without the state having an effective communication strategy against this. Political will is fluctuating – while the Commissioner and the Council of Government are active, anti-Gypsyism is still being voiced by some politicians (e.g. individual members of the parliamentary opposition questioning the Roma Holocaust or spreading blanket condemnations of Roma). Such speeches undermine government efforts and legitimise prejudice. The lack of data on discrimination is also a limitation: official statistics capture only a fraction of this and do not reflect the reality where discrimination is much more widespread but often unreported by victims. Without data, it is difficult to evaluate the effectiveness of awareness-raising

programmes or to design better-targeted campaigns. The risk for the future is that socio-economic difficulties (inflation, housing shortages) may again fuel antigypsyism – especially if exploited in a populist way.

## 2.2. Education

The NRSF sets out measures to reduce segregation in education, promote inclusion and increase the success of Roma pupils in further education. Specifically, Strategic Objective C (Education) of the NRSF seeks to reverse the persistent segregation of Roma pupils and improve their educational outcomes. The NRSF has defined basic objectives for increasing the participation of Roma children in pre-school education, eliminating discrimination and segregation in schools, ensuring the existence of reliable data on Roma pupils, strengthening the guidance system in the education system, raising the overall level of education of Roma, and supporting the development of teaching staff and meaningful leisure time for Roma children. These objectives build on the previous strategy and respond to the persistent problem of Roma pupils being disproportionately educated according to a reduced curriculum and separated from mainstream education. Despite the adopted strategies and legislative changes in the field of equal access to education, the phenomenon of the segregation of Roma children in schools persists in Czechia. Research reports confirm that the high concentration of Roma pupils in individual schools or classes results in so-called 'white flight', i.e. the departure of non-Roma pupils, which in turn deepens ethnic segregation and creates homogeneous collectives without internal diversity. According to a 2023 report by the Office of the Government of Czechia, Roma pupils make up more than 50% of the school population in 14% of all primary schools, with the highest concentration of such schools in the Moravian-Silesian, Ústí nad Labem and Karlovy Vary regions.<sup>34</sup> This disproportion increases the risk of unequal access to quality education and significantly reduces the chances of Roma pupils of moving on to further studies and subsequent employment in the labour market.<sup>35</sup> Moreover, expert studies point out that Roma children often end up in fields with lower performance requirements, not only because of their social disadvantage, but also because of institutionally entrenched mechanisms that promote the reproduction of inequalities.<sup>36</sup>

### 2.2.1. Effectiveness of the NRSF in addressing the problems

The NRSF responds to the above problems with several targeted measures. In the area of pre-school education, the NRSF has introduced specific objective C.1 "Increase the participation of Roma children in pre-school education". Measure C.1.1 mandates the creation of a systemic solution for the education of children from two to four years of age. In practice, the Ministry of Education has supported a number of projects and grants at the local level between 2022 and 2023. For example, in 2022, there was a call to increase the participation of children in pre-school education in the Karlovy Vary and Ústí nad Labem Regions, with an allocation of 20 million CZK, which could be used to pay for kindergarten meals and remove financial barriers to attendance.<sup>37</sup> Also, the state subsidy programme 'Support for the Integration of the Roma Minority' was used to finance activities to support the school readiness of Roma children and the involvement of their families. In 2023, it was assessed as 'partially implemented', as although targeted support is ongoing (9 projects, allocation of 20 million CZK), system-wide measures have not yet been developed. The introduction of a compulsory final year of kindergarten and the continued funding of teaching assistants and follow-up programmes are positive.

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<sup>34</sup> Qualified estimates of the proportion of Romani pupils conducted by the Ministry of Education are not conducted in all primary schools in the Czech Republic. They are limited only to schools and localities where an increased number of Roma children has been identified. Therefore, these estimates cannot be considered representative of the entire population of primary schools.

<sup>35</sup> Němec, Z. 'Raise your hands who will go to places where they don't feel recognized': on the segregation of Romani pupils in education. Charles University. 2020.

<sup>36</sup> Hoření, K. & al. Výzkumná zpráva: Analýza příčin vyššího podílu romských žáků vzdělávajících se dle RVP ZV UV ve třídách zřízených podle § 16 odst. 9 školského zákona a návrh souboru opatření pro oblast vzdělávání a další relevantní oblasti. [Research Report: Analysis of the Causes Behind the Higher Proportion of Roma Pupils Educated According to the Framework Educational Programme for Pupils with Mild Intellectual Disabilities in Classes Established Under § 16(9) of the Education Act, and a Proposal for a Set of Measures in Education and Other Relevant Areas.] Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports, 2023. Available at: [https://www.edu.cz/wp-content/uploads/2023/04/Final\\_Vyzkumna\\_zprava\\_§\\_16\\_9\\_MSMT\\_PAQ\\_STEM.pdf](https://www.edu.cz/wp-content/uploads/2023/04/Final_Vyzkumna_zprava_§_16_9_MSMT_PAQ_STEM.pdf)

<sup>37</sup> Information in Chapter 2 on the fulfilment of the NRSF action plan are taken from the 2022 and 2023 reports *Information on the implementation of the NRSF*, published by the Office of the Government.

Nevertheless, the participation of Roma children in kindergartens still does not reach the level of the majority population, mainly due to persistent financial and motivational barriers that can only be removed gradually.

In the area of primary education, the NRSF is taking steps to eliminate discrimination and segregation (specific objective C.2 "Eliminate discrimination and segregation of Roma in education"). Measure C.2.1 has introduced continuous monitoring of schools in fulfilling the principle of equal treatment. The Czech School Inspectorate, therefore, monitors and reports cases of unequal access on an annual basis. In 2022, the Inspectorate recorded nine cases of equal access violations in primary schools, four in secondary schools and eight in kindergartens, but none of these cases were explicitly classified as discrimination against Roma. In 2023, the Inspectorate recorded two cases of discriminatory job offers to teachers and investigated two complaints of the unequal treatment of Roma pupils, which were not confirmed. Measure C.2.1 is formally implemented as monitoring is ongoing, and the Czech School Inspectorate is ensuring remediation.

Another important step was the introduction of a segregation indicator: the number of schools with more than 34% Roma pupils. These data are obtained through qualified estimates by school principals, as the ethnicity of pupils is not officially recorded. However, these estimates are not universal – they are only made in selected schools and localities where higher numbers of Roma pupils have been identified.<sup>38</sup> In 2022, this indicator was included in the report on the implementation of the judgment of *D. H. and Others v. Czech Republic* and the measure was assessed as fulfilled. This has given the State a better overview of the extent of segregation, which is a prerequisite for its reduction.

Measure C.2.2 focused on the prevention of segregation by adjusting catchment districts and admission rules. The Ministry of the Interior followed up on a 2017 methodological recommendation that recommends that municipalities do not divide school districts in a way that concentrates socially disadvantaged children. Between 2022 and 2023, it also oversaw whether municipal ordinances are discriminatory. However, the Department of Education did not develop any new desegregation methodology in 2022. It was not until the end of 2023 that the first version of the 'Action Plan for Inclusive Education' was presented in response to the supervision of the Council of Europe, which foresees the development of a new methodology in 2024. The implementation of this measure was assessed as partial.

Under Measure C.2.3, the Ministry of Education began providing targeted support to the most disadvantaged schools in 2022 as part of the 'National Recovery Plan'. In the first wave, 256 schools were selected, and in 2023, a further 144 schools were added – many with a large proportion of Roma pupils. These schools received methodological and financial support, which can be considered a systemic measure responding to the low quality of education in schools with a concentration of Roma pupils. In 2023, the Agency for Social Inclusion prepared a project aimed at the desegregation of education to be implemented in 2024. At the same time, it provided methodological support to municipalities in planning measures under the call 'Action Planning in the Territory'.

Overall, the 2023 NRSF reports that 77% of education measures were met or partially met, an increase from the previous year. Nevertheless, systemic changes are progressing slowly. For example, the proportion of Roma pupils in light mental disability programmes has fallen from 39% in 2017 to 36.7% in 2019; however, some of these pupils have been transferred to the framework educational programme for pupils with modified outcomes, and the overall disproportion still exceeds a quarter of the school population.

## 2.2.2. Addressing the problems beyond the NRSF

Broader, inclusive reforms in education are underway, as well as targeted projects beyond the NRSF. The Ministry of Education administers subsidy programmes aimed directly at supporting Roma pupils. In 2022, it launched a call for proposals, 'Supporting the Integration of the Roma Minority', with an allocation of ~12.9 million EUR. It will focus on preschool education, cooperation between schools and families, support for the successful transition of Roma to secondary school and leisure activities. Under the programme, schools, CSOs

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<sup>38</sup> Hoření, K. & al. *Výzkumná zpráva: Analýza příčin vyššího podílu romských žáků vzdělávajících se dle RVP ZV UV ve třídách zřízených podle § 16 odst. 9 školského zákona a návrh souboru opatření pro oblast vzdělávání a další relevantní oblasti.* [Research Report: Analysis of the Causes Behind the Higher Proportion of Roma Pupils Educated According to the Framework Educational Programme for Pupils with Mild Intellectual Disabilities in Classes Established Under § 16(9) of the Education Act, and a Proposal for a Set of Measures in Education and Other Relevant Areas.] Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports, 2023. Available at: [https://www.edu.cz/wp-content/uploads/2023/04/Final\\_Vyzkumna\\_zprava\\_§\\_16\\_9\\_MSMT\\_PAQ\\_STEM.pdf](https://www.edu.cz/wp-content/uploads/2023/04/Final_Vyzkumna_zprava_§_16_9_MSMT_PAQ_STEM.pdf).



and municipalities could implement projects ranging from providing school assistants and tutoring to community programmes for parents. Another specific title is 'Support for Socially Disadvantaged Roma Pupils in Secondary Schools, Conservatories and Colleges', which is a scholarship and incentive programme for secondary and higher vocational students of Roma origin – it aims to improve academic performance, prevent dropouts and increase the number of Roma with a high school diploma. The Ministry of Education and Science has spent over CZK 2.2 million on it in 2022. It has supported dozens of students. In addition to these targeted programmes, more general support for socioeconomically disadvantaged children is also directed towards Romani pupils. In response to the impact of COVID-19, the National Recovery Plan<sup>39</sup> funded a large-scale tutoring programme, distributing CZK 1 billion between 2022 and 2023 to schools with a higher proportion of at-risk pupils. The Ministry of Education describes this move – i.e. providing additional resources to close the gap between schools – as one of the most significant new developments in the approach to Roma integration. The inclusive reform initiated in 2016 is also continuing: schools have pedagogical assistants, special educators or offer psychological support to children with special needs, which benefits Roma pupils (who often fall into the category of social disadvantage). An important measure was the introduction of a compulsory year of pre-school attendance from 2017 – this led to an increase in the attendance of Roma children in kindergartens before they enter Grade 1. Particularly in regions with a higher incidence of excluded localities (Ústí nad Labem and Karlovy Vary Region), the participation of Roma preschoolers increased significantly. Outside the framework of the NRSF, projects to support inclusion at the local level are also underway – for example, the ESIF Operational Programme Jan Amos Komenský funds school clubs, tutoring centres and mentoring, often implemented by non-profit organisations in excluded localities.

Education policy combines generally inclusive measures with complementary targeting. Mainstream integration in education does not follow ethnicity – support is defined by broader categories (socially disadvantaged pupil, pupil with a different mother tongue, pupil with special educational needs). This is to ensure that all who need help receive it, regardless of background. In practice, however, many of these instruments respond to situations specific to Roma children: for example, compulsory pre-school education targets children from disadvantaged backgrounds where participation in kindergartens has been low – and we know that the proportion of Roma children in kindergartens used to lag behind. Thus, the general inclusion measure fulfils a specific demand (increasing Roma participation in pre-school education). On the other hand, the Ministry of Education has also maintained explicitly Romani programmes (see subsidy titles above) where ad hoc support for the Romani community is needed – typically outreach work with families, scholarships for Romani high school students, or projects focused on Romani culture and language. These programmes are ethnically targeted and reflect the fact that Roma pupils may face different obstacles (e.g. lack of educated role models in the family, low expectations within their environment, language differences at an early age, etc.). Overall, however, there is a prevailing desire to integrate Roma within the mainstream education system – i.e. to support them together with other people with disadvantages, rather than to create separate solutions.

Czechia has a robust framework for inclusive education, which has been strengthened in recent years. The trend to invest more in schools with a larger proportion of disadvantaged pupils, which also helps Roma children to catch up, is positive. The compulsory final year of kindergarten has significantly increased the readiness of Roma children for primary school and contributed to a reduction in the number of deferrals or placements in special classes. Having Roma school assistants and mediators in some schools has proved to be a good practice – they facilitate communication with Roma parents and act as a bridge of trust. For example, elementary schools involved in the Roma pedagogical assistance projects (formerly under the CSO People in Need and now often under municipalities) report the better attendance of children and greater parental involvement. The Ministry of Education's subsidy programmes have enabled the creation of many innovative projects: for example, community centres at schools where parents tutor their children together, or Roma language and culture clubs for Roma pupils, which strengthen their identity and relationship to school. These activities, although small in scale, show the state's willingness to invest in the Roma minority as a whole, not just in anonymous categories. The functioning of the Museum of Roma Culture and its educational programmes on community history is also beneficial – it helps the majority and young Roma to learn about Romani history, thus breaking down stereotypes (overlapping with the fight against antigypsyism).

However, despite the described progress, segregation in education persists. The proportion of Roma pupils in schools or classes with modified curricula (formerly 'practical') has not significantly decreased over the last

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<sup>39</sup> See: [https://commission.europa.eu/business-economy-euro/economic-recovery/recovery-and-resilience-facility/country-pages/czechias-recovery-and-resilience-plan\\_en](https://commission.europa.eu/business-economy-euro/economic-recovery/recovery-and-resilience-facility/country-pages/czechias-recovery-and-resilience-plan_en)

five years. It is still the case that Roma children are disproportionately represented in segregated streams of education – according to earlier qualified estimates, they made up around 30% of pupils in practical schools, although Roma are estimated to comprise 3% of the population. The causes are complex (socio-economic disadvantage, spatial segregation and prejudice). The 2016 reform (amendment to the Education Act)<sup>40</sup> has only partially improved the situation. The low educational level of the Roma population is improving only slowly – the 2022 sample survey on the living conditions of Roma showed that the highest completed level of education of almost half of Roma adults is still primary school. The transition to secondary school is a critical point: many Roma pupils end up with only compulsory attendance. Dropout from secondary schools is common, and even those who enter apprenticeship courses often do not complete them. Here, scholarships and mentoring support help, but so far, to a limited extent (only hundreds of students a year). A weakness is the lack of impact evaluation – neither schools nor the state are allowed to record the ethnicity of pupils, so the real effect of measures on the Roma minority can only be assessed indirectly. For example, it is not known exactly how many Romani children have benefited from the post-COVID tutoring programme or from the newly funded school psychologists. School fatigue with projects is also a risk – inclusion is often perceived as an ‘extra’ agenda, and teachers may lack the support or motivation to address Roma pupils individually.

### 2.3. Employment

Despite some progress, the employment sector remains one of the weakest parts of the implementation of the NRSF. The NRSF has contributed to the creation of the necessary institutional background and the strengthening of some instruments, such as the regular monitoring of discrimination by the State Labour Inspection Office<sup>41</sup> and the reform of the labour offices' approach to the retraining of people without completed education.<sup>42</sup> Another important step was the extension of the mandate of the Committee on Roma Employment, which was transformed into the Committee on Employment, Health and Social Affairs in 2023, creating an opportunity for better coordination of measures between ministries.

However, some measures have not been implemented. There has been no independent research on discrimination against Roma in the labour market to update older findings and provide relevant data for policy-making. On the other hand, research on the economic activity of Roma women caring for young children was completed in 2023 and highlighted key barriers to labour market entry for this group, in particular, low skills and lack of access to childcare services.<sup>43</sup>

Major legislative steps, such as the adoption of the Social Enterprise Act and the establishment of the Social Enterprise Register, were not implemented by the end of 2023. Nevertheless, partial steps have been taken, such as the ‘Development of the Social Entrepreneurship Ecosystem’ project and the creation of a network of S-points, which provide advice to budding entrepreneurs even in excluded localities. The biggest weakness of the strategy remains the lack of targeted support for Roma in the framework of active employment policy. Labour offices and other institutions cannot record the ethnicity of applicants, so it is not possible to accurately assess the impact of individual measures on the Roma population. There is also a lack of specific programmes aimed exclusively at Roma, which weakens the impact of measures in competition with other groups.

In the future, therefore, it is necessary to focus on expanding targeted employment tools for Roma, for example, in the form of specialised counsellors at employment offices, subsidies for employers who hire people from excluded localities, strengthening scholarship and apprenticeship programmes for young Roma, and adopting the law on social entrepreneurship and related activities that will make this form of entrepreneurship attractive in the fields in which Roma work the most (e.g., construction, industry, services, etc.). It would also be advisable

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<sup>40</sup> The 2016 amendment available at: [https://msmt.gov.cz/uploads/skolsky\\_zakon.pdf](https://msmt.gov.cz/uploads/skolsky_zakon.pdf)

<sup>41</sup> In its reports, the Inspection Office publishes data on the number of cases of violations of Act No 435/2004 Coll. (Employment Act) and Act No 262/2006 Coll. (Labour Code) in relation to individual discriminatory grounds, including discrimination against Romani people. For example, in 2023, there were two cases of violations of the prohibition to make discriminatory employment offers, but no confirmed cases of violations of other provisions against Roma.

<sup>42</sup> Based on the methodological guidance of the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs, the Labour Office began to actively offer retraining courses to persons without a completed basic education. In 2022, 65 people completed these courses, and in 2023, the number was already 266 people.

<sup>43</sup> Sirovátka, T., Suchanec, T. *Romani women and their economic activity, related factors*. Research Institute of Labour and Social Affairs (RILSA). 2023.

to strengthen the collection of anonymised data to enable the effectiveness of individual instruments to be assessed on the basis of their actual impact.

### 2.3.1. Effectiveness of the NRSF in addressing the problems

Employment is one of the key areas of the NRSF. Roma continue to face disadvantages in the labour market, although there are no direct statistics on their employment, as ethnicity is no longer tracked in public records. The NRSF, therefore, focused primarily on the introduction of the systematic monitoring of discrimination<sup>44</sup> and on adjusting systemic measures in the field of active employment policy. The measure requiring the State Labour Inspection Office to monitor discrimination against Roma in access to employment was implemented for the first time in 2023 in both form and content. The Inspection Office identified two cases of discriminatory job offers directed against Roma, which were classified as violations of Section 12 of the Employment Act.<sup>45</sup> In addition, two complaints of unequal treatment in the workplace were investigated, but no discrimination was proven. In both proven cases, administrative proceedings were initiated to impose a sanction on the employer.

While the measure was assessed as partially met in 2022, it has already been formally met in 2023. The Labour Inspection Office has therefore introduced tools for the regular monitoring of discriminatory employment practices against Roma. On the other hand, the measure that was supposed to lead to updated research on discrimination against Roma in the labour market was not fulfilled by the end of 2023. The research was not carried out as a separate output, but incorporated into a broader representative survey of the Roma population, the results of which will be evaluated in the coming years. According to the Ministry of Labour, the measure aimed at enabling access to qualifications also for persons without completed primary education has been fulfilled. The Labour Office has issued a methodological instruction to actively include these persons in retraining courses. The accreditation system for most courses does not require more than primary education, which allows the participation even of candidates with low levels of education.

However, monitoring the effectiveness of support for Roma in active employment policy runs into legal limits. Labour Offices cannot track the ethnicity of their clients, and therefore, it is impossible to know how many Roma are actually participating in the programmes. In 2023, this measure was assessed as not met. The measure to analyse the effectiveness of active employment policy instruments was considered fulfilled through a research project of the Research Institute of Labour and Social Affairs. The analyses from this showed that while some instruments (e.g. community service) do help with labour market integration, they do not always lead to the permanent employment of Roma in the labour market.

In 2023, the Research Institute of Labour and Social Affairs completed research entitled 'Romani Women and Their Economic Activity, Related Factors' that analysed the causes of the low level of employment among Romani women. The study showed that the key barrier to their labour force participation was the care of children under the age of six. Furthermore, low-level education, young age and material deprivation contribute to the low employment rate. The majority of economically inactive Roma women are not actively seeking work because of these circumstances, in particular, the unavailability of childcare services.<sup>46</sup>

From an institutional point of view, the scope of the Committee on Roma Employment under the Government Council for Roma Minority Affairs was expanded in 2023. The Committee was transformed into the Committee on Employment, Health and Social Affairs, which allows for the more systematic linking of different policy areas concerning the Roma population and more effective coordination between ministries.

In the area of entrepreneurship support, the Social Enterprise Act, which was supposed to create a legal framework for inclusive social enterprises, was not adopted by the end of 2023. Although the draft went through an inter-ministerial comment procedure and was discussed by the Legislative Council of the Government, its approval could not be completed. As a consequence, the social enterprise register, which was to be part of the legislative measure, was also not introduced. Despite the lack of legislative anchoring of the

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<sup>44</sup> In the form of qualified estimates.

<sup>45</sup> Office of the Government. *Informace o naplňování Strategie rovnosti, začlenění a participace Romů v roce 2023.* [Information on the Implementation of the Roma Equality, Inclusion and Participation Strategy in 2023.] Úřad vlády ČR, 2021, p. 96. Available at: <https://vlada.gov.cz/cz/ppov/zalezitosti-romske-komunity/aktuality/informace-o-naplnovani-strategie-romske-integrace-2021-2030-v-roce-2023-216811/>

<sup>46</sup> Sirovátka, T., Suchanec, T. *Romani women and their economic activity, related factors.* Research Institute of Labour and Social Affairs (RILSA). 2023.



Social Enterprise Act, at least partial steps have been taken in this area. In April 2023, the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs launched the project 'Development of the Social Entrepreneurship Ecosystem', which includes a network of 'S-points' – regional centres that provide free advice to budding social entrepreneurs. These centres also operate in regions with a greater proportion of socially excluded localities, such as the Ústí and Moravskoslezský region, and can therefore also be used by Roma entrepreneurs or those considering entrepreneurship in the form of, for example, an integration enterprise.<sup>47</sup>

### 2.3.2. Addressing the problems beyond the NRSF

In the area of employment, Czechia does not have a separate 'Roma' programme alongside the NRSF, but uses a wide range of active employment and social inclusion policies that can benefit Roma. The Labour Office has implemented a number of projects funded by the Operational Programme Employment / Employment+, which target the long-term unemployed and residents of socially excluded localities. These projects are not ethnically defined, but in practice they also significantly involve Roma (they are among the over-represented among the long-term unemployed). In 2022, regional projects such as 'Together we can do it in the Ústí nad Labem Region', 'Back to work in the Liberec Region', 'New Chance in the Vysočina/Zlín Region', 'Transitional Employment in the Olomouc Region' and 'Life without barriers in South Moravia' were underway.<sup>48</sup> These projects combine counselling, motivation, retraining and subsidised jobs – participants undergo financial literacy training, job diagnostics, motivation courses and then the Labour Office provides them with a trial job or a socially useful job with a wage contribution. The aim is for the long-term unemployed to strengthen their work habits and gain experience. The Labour Office pays special attention to young people up to the age of 29 in the Youth Guarantee programme, as well as to women caring for children, people over 50, and people with a low level of qualifications. Roma are also more often represented in these groups. Another superstructural dimension is the support for social entrepreneurship. Until 2022, the Ministry of Labour implemented the project 'Support for Social Entrepreneurship in the Czech Republic Continues', which spread awareness and know-how about social enterprises. This creates an environment where CSOs and social enterprises create jobs for the disadvantaged, including Roma. For example, in the Moravian-Silesian Region, there is the SINEC 'Cluster of Social Innovations and Enterprises', which brings together ~60 social enterprises, and the newly established Roma Vision association focused on Roma employment. In the Pardubice Region, the social enterprise *Květná zahrada* [Flower Garden] works with young people from at-risk groups and the organisation *Šance pro tebe* [Chance for You] offers jobs primarily to Roma. In the Ústí nad Labem Region, Roma social enterprises operate in the cleaning and catering services sectors (e.g., *Zelený klíč*, *Masopust GASTRO*). These initiatives, although non-state, often receive support from public sources (subsidies from the Ministry of Labour, municipalities or EU funds). In addition to job creation, there are programmes to support the self-employment of disadvantaged people, such as the Labour Office's offer of retraining courses on 'Fundamentals of Entrepreneurship' (108 applicants completed them in 2022). Individual counselling in the field is also provided by Roma counsellors (as part of the ROMACT project and the agenda of the Agency for Social Inclusion) and by debt counsellors, who help to resolve foreclosures, a frequent obstacle to Roma entering work legally.

Employment policy is largely inclusive and universal. The vast majority of active employment policy instruments are not designed along ethnic lines. The state, therefore, has chosen socio-economic targeting: support is directed towards the long-term unemployed, the low-skilled, the young, those caring for children, people in material need, etc. This indirectly includes many Roma who often have these characteristics. For example, programmes in socially excluded localities are de facto aimed mainly at Roma communities without necessarily mentioning them, thus being geographically targeted interventions. However, the specific needs of Roma (e.g. discrimination in admission, inadequate qualifications due to segregated education, debt/execution barriers) are addressed rather marginally and through partnerships with the non-profit sector. State employment offices often work with Roma organisations that provide culturally sensitive counselling and motivation for Roma who have low trust in the authorities. These projects (typically supported by EU funds), while outside the framework of the government's strategy, build on its objectives in practice. Overall, the state favours mainstreaming:

<sup>47</sup> At the beginning of 2024, Law 468/2024 on Integrative Social Enterprise was approved.

<sup>48</sup> Office of the Government. *Zpráva o stavu romské menšiny v České republice za rok 2022. [Report on the Situation of the Roma Minority in the Czech Republic for 2022.]* Úřad vlády ČR, 2024, p. 92. Available at: <https://vlada.gov.cz/cz/ppov/zalezitosti-romske-komunity/aktuality/zprava-o-stavu-romske-mensiny-v-ceske-republice-za-rok-2022-212008/>

integrating Roma into general programmes for the disadvantaged instead of creating separate Roma employment programmes.

Czechia has a wide range of active employment policy instruments that are flexible and financially secure (a combination of the state budget and the European Social Fund). This approach helps reach different groups of the unemployed and provides them with comprehensive support. Projects in regions with high unemployment that integrate several components (counselling, training, subsidised employment) are examples of good practice. For instance, the 'Together we can do it in Ústí nad Labem Region' project helped dozens of people gain work experience during 1-3 months of part-time trial work. Similar 'Back to Work' projects in Liberec and 'New Chance' in Vysočina have also shown that individual guidance and motivation can activate the long-term unemployed (including Roma) and keep some of them in employment. Cooperation with municipalities is a strong point; Labour Offices coordinate their activities with municipal social departments, share information about clients, and can jointly address, for example, the availability of community service. Social enterprises are proving beneficial: i.e., employers who consciously hire disadvantaged people (often Roma) and combine an economic and social mission. In the Ústí nad Labem Region, for example, a network of cleaning service businesses has been set up employing middle-aged Roma women who would otherwise have no place on the labour market. The state supports this area (through advice and subsidies), which is a good strategy to reduce dependency on benefits. The fieldwork and case management introduced in some projects (e.g. career centres set up by CSOs with the support of the Labour Office) represent a modern approach – instead of one-off courses, long-term work is done with the client and their complex problems (debts, housing, childcare) are also addressed so that they can get into work. This reflects the understanding that the integration of Roma into the labour market requires individual-level, comprehensive support, not just traditional job placement.

The biggest weakness is the lack of direct targeting and evaluation regarding Roma. Because the programmes do not officially distinguish ethnicity, it is not known how many Roma participate and what successes they have had – there is a lack of data to evaluate effectiveness for this minority. This may result in some Roma 'dropping out' of support, e.g. those who do not fit the categorisations (they are not on the register of the Labour Office, even though they are working illegally) or those who do not apply for projects themselves out of mistrust. Discrimination in the labour market remains a problem: although the State Labour Inspection Office carries out inspections, direct complaints of ethnic discrimination are rare, and the incidence is low. Roma applicants often face an invisible barrier in that employers will not even invite them to interview out of prejudice. However, state policy does not offer tools to motivate employers to recruit Roma (e.g. no targeted incentives or quotas have been introduced). Foreclosures and debt affect a large proportion of the working-age Roma population, which discourages them from working legally (wages would be paid in instalments). While active employment policy instruments provide financial literacy and debt counselling, addressing foreclosures requires systemic changes (e.g. so-called "Grace Summers" – limited time periods during which public creditors waived penalties on debts and enforcement costs; or the insolvency reform). The low level of skills of many Roma is another limitation – retraining courses offered by the Labour Office partially address this, but do not compensate for the handicaps caused by low educational achievement. A structural risk is that in some regions (North-West, Moravia-Silesia), there are not enough jobs even for the qualified. This suggests the risk of the long-term unemployment of whole communities, which short-term projects will not solve. Finally, sustainability is a weakness: many project participants will not keep their jobs after the end of the subsidised phase. Integration programmes are often time-limited and lack follow-up support in companies (mentoring, gradual transition to full-time work, etc.). Without this, some Roma return to the Labour Office, which reduces the overall effectiveness of funds that are spent.

## 2.4. Healthcare

Discrimination in accessing healthcare and the impact of poverty and social exclusion on health are persistent major problems for Roma living in Czechia. The unavailability of healthcare is exacerbated by the fact that many Roma live in structurally disadvantaged regions in which access to healthcare is a general problem.

Although out-of-pocket payments for healthcare remain comparatively small in Czechia, the results of a sample survey, 'Report on the Socio-economic Situation of the Roma Population in the Czech Republic 2023/2024',<sup>49</sup> show that 25.3% of its respondents who were prescribed medicines with a co-payment in the last 12 months encountered at least one occasion when they did not take the medicine because they did not have the money

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<sup>49</sup> The report is accessible at: [https://katalog.vupsv.cz/fulltext/vz\\_556.pdf](https://katalog.vupsv.cz/fulltext/vz_556.pdf)

for the co-payment. The same survey also investigated unmet health service needs, which are significantly higher for Roma than for the general population (15.6% for the Roma population compared to 2.5% for the general population concerning general doctors and specialists, and 25.2% compared to 2.3% concerning dentists).

#### 2.4.1. Effectiveness of the NRSF in addressing the problems

A law on financial compensation for illegal forced sterilisations came into effect in January 2022.<sup>50</sup> However, barriers arose during the compensation process, and an amendment has been proposed to extend the deadline for compensation applications in order to facilitate effective redress.<sup>51</sup> The adoption of the law on compensation for forced sterilisation has been an important step not just because of the fact that it involves compensating individuals for their human rights violations, but also as an acknowledgement of historical injustices. Unfortunately, the compensation process did not reflect reality, and the Ministry of Health's approach did not enable most victims to seek redress.<sup>52</sup> Two thousand two hundred and sixty-six applications for compensation were lodged during the two-year period, of which the Ministry of Health favourably resolved 720.<sup>53</sup> CSOs which were assisting the applicants<sup>54</sup> have criticised the formalistic and user-unfriendly process. It was expected from the victims of forced sterilisations that they should secure evidence, and the Ministry anticipated that this would be straightforward to obtain. This approach was legally challenged, and the Supreme Administrative Court ruled that the Ministry's approach did not secure effective remedy; therefore, it recommended that the Ministry take an active role in identifying evidence and accept even less straightforward testimonies and evidence.<sup>55</sup> Further development depends on whether the deadline for applications will be extended.

Overall, the access of Roma to health care has not changed significantly since previous RCM reports, in which a more detailed description can be found.<sup>56</sup> The Ministry of Health's flagship initiative in this area should have been the Roma mediators project, which was implemented from 2018 to 2022.<sup>57</sup> However, the critique of its design and implementation is strong, and its continuation is on a much smaller scale than previously expected, as the follow-up project<sup>58</sup> focuses on education and awareness-raising activities rather than on addressing the main issues Roma face: discrimination and the unavailability of health care. The main critiques of the project include a lack of Roma participation in the design and subsequent management of the project, its ineffectiveness during the COVID-19 pandemic, and a strong focus on public health campaigns that did not align with the bigger and more urgent issues, primarily the inaccessibility of healthcare and related discrimination.

A recent case, which has also been addressed by the Commissioner for Roma minority affairs, illustrates the persisting discrimination Roma face when seeking health care – a paediatrician put up a sign in her office

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<sup>50</sup> Available at: <https://www.zakonyprolidi.cz/cs/2021-297>

<sup>51</sup> For further information see: <https://romea.cz/en/czech-republic/extension-of-compensation-for-the-forcibly-sterilized-opposition-proposes-amendment-govt-wants-a-paragraph-in-the-labor-code>

<sup>52</sup> See: <https://romea.cz/cz/domaci/primy-prenos-nova-analyza-ukazuje-na-problemy-s-odskodnenim-protipravne-sterilizovanych-zen-sledujte-zive-na-romea-tv>, and: <https://romea.cz/cz/domaci/pravnik-david-strupek-zakon-o-odskodneni-protipravnich-sterilizaci-prisel-pozde>

<sup>53</sup> See: <https://romea.cz/cz/domaci/ministerstvo-zdravotnictvi-eviduje-2266-zadosti-o-odskodneni-za-protipravni-sterilizace-bude-jich-vsak-zrejme-vice-lhuta-se-mozna-prodlouzi>

<sup>54</sup> The Office of the Government has supported the process with subsidies aimed at assisting applicants. CSOs have been disseminating information on the process, providing guidance, explaining the process, and assisting in completing the forms and compiling the required evidence.

<sup>55</sup> Available at: <https://www.nssoud.cz/aktualne/tiskove-zpravy/detail/nejvyssi-spravni-soud-vyjasnil-podminky-a-postup-pri-odskodnovani-protipravnich-sterilizaci>

<sup>56</sup> Mainly in the 2018 report.

<sup>57</sup> For more details, see the project's website at: <https://epoz.szu.cz/>

<sup>58</sup> For more details on the 'Promotion of Health in Families' project, which runs from 2023 to 2025, see: <https://szu.gov.cz/projekty-szu/podpora-zdravi-v-rodinach/>

reading: “In view of the increasing aggression of Roma, I am not registering them, with immediate effect.”<sup>59</sup> The mentioned case is not isolated and shows that more has to be done to tackle discrimination in health care.

Concerning particular NRSF measures, an accredited course for social field workers on interventions for addiction was developed under the Office of the Government. A course on Roma-specific social work for social workers in addictology should follow. The course is yet to start, but it is a promising practice in terms of fostering interdisciplinary cooperation and interventions focused on the Roma minority.

#### 2.4.2. Addressing the problems beyond the NRSF

Measures focused on increasing the availability of healthcare in general are important for improving access for Roma. The Ministry of Health, as well as health insurance companies and regional authorities, regularly announce incentives for doctors to open their practices in regions where healthcare is not sufficiently accessible. The general practitioners themselves are calling for reform to secure access to healthcare for all, stating that one million out of a total of eleven million inhabitants of Czechia are not registered with a general practitioner.<sup>60</sup>

### 2.5. Housing, essential services, and environmental justice

Strategic Goal D of the NRSF focuses on eliminating discrimination in the housing market, ensuring equal access to decent and affordable housing for Roma, and preventing homelessness. The Strategy includes four specific objectives (D.1-D.4) covering the areas of discrimination, accessibility and quality of housing, data collection and systemic support for settlement. Only a portion of the planned actions were accomplished between 2022 and 2023. A positive step was the launch of the OP Employment+ call for support for social housing with an allocation of CZK 500 million, which was open to CSOs without the need for partnership with municipalities. A measure aimed at monitoring modular housing remained completely unfulfilled. According to the Ministry of Regional Development and the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs, no resources have been allocated to analyse this practice. However, in some cities (e.g., Most), Roma families have been relocated to modular houses without an adequate assessment of the impact on their living conditions.

Despite partial steps, structural problems have still not been overcome: a large proportion of Roma continue to live in substandard housing, housing segregation in the form of housing in residential hotels or ethnically homogeneous houses is occurring, and the equal availability of municipal housing across towns and regions is not being ensured. The situation is made more difficult by the fact that Czechia has still not adopted a law on social housing, which makes a systemic solution impossible and shifts responsibility to municipalities without clear commitment and funding.

#### 2.5.1. Effectiveness of the NRSF in addressing the problems

The analysis of the implementation of the NRSF in 2022 and 2023 shows that the implementation of measures in the area of housing has been uneven. Although some activities have been initiated and financed from public funds, most measures have either remained at a formal level or have not developed into functional, systemic changes at all.

Measures aimed at eliminating discrimination in access to housing were implemented through inspections by the Czech Trade Inspection Authority, which tested discrimination in the accommodation market. In 2022, 157 inspections were carried out, and discriminatory practices were confirmed in 14 cases, while in 2023, 136 inspections were carried out, and discrimination was found in one case. One of the inspections, with the help of a Roma inspector, uncovered a hotel that refused to accommodate Roma (for which it was fined). This practice of situational testing is a good example of the use of a targeted tool to combat discrimination. Although these figures indicate some activity, the scope of testing is very limited and not linked to a wider strategy to ensure that discrimination in access to housing for Roma is eliminated in practice. There is also no systematic analysis of the impact of these measures on the position of Roma. Measures aimed at ensuring fair rules for the allocation of municipal housing have been partially implemented under the legal supervision of the Ministry

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<sup>59</sup> For the recently recorded case, see: <https://romea.cz/cz/domaci/romy-neregistruji-napsala-lekarka-v-asi-princip-kolektivni-viny-a-anticikanismus-jak-vysity-reaguje-vladni-zmocnenkyne-fukova-na-ceduli-v-ordinaci>

<sup>60</sup> For more information, see: <https://nasezdravotnictvi.cz/aktualita/vice-nez-milion-lidi-v-cesku-nema-sveho-praktika-a-bude-hur-varuji-prakticti-lekari-a-spousti-kampan-11-milionu-duvodu>

of the Interior over municipalities. In 2022, 85 municipalities were inspected, 41 of which were found to have rules in breach of the law. In 2023, 84 municipalities were inspected, and 17 were found to have problematic practices. In none of these cases was direct ethnic discrimination found, but no mechanism was in place to assess the impact of the rules on Roma.

The conditions for the use of publicly funded housing have been updated by the State Fund for Investment Support, which has introduced requirements for transparent and socially sensitive tenant selection into its subsidy programmes.<sup>61</sup> Although ethnicity is not officially tracked, and it is not possible to document how many Roma have actually occupied the related apartments, the procedures in place comply with basic principles of equal access.

Problematic forms of housing, such as container modules and emergency accommodation, have not been strategically addressed. The ministries have not adopted a system for monitoring these forms, despite repeated criticism by the Ombudsperson, for example, in relation to housing in Most or short-term housing, where the Ombudsperson considers the use of flats licensed for permanent housing for short-term accommodation to be circumventing the Building Act and recommends their re-licensing.<sup>62</sup>

Energy poverty has only partially been taken into account. The 'New Green to Savings Light'<sup>63</sup> programme was launched by the Ministry of the Environment and targeted low-income households, responding to the problem of energy poverty that also affects excluded communities. Yet, there is a lack of targeting of Roma households or areas of social exclusion. In this way, the strategy only fulfils part of its environmental justice commitments.

The monitoring of the housing situation of Roma has been carried out to a minimal extent thanks to support from Norwegian funds, which made it possible to carry out pilot field research. However, systematic data collection on Roma households in the area of housing at the national level is still lacking, which makes it impossible to accurately monitor progress in ensuring equal access to housing.

Support for housing retention and prevention of housing loss remains a work in progress. Although pilot 'Housing First' projects have been supported in selected cities and municipalities (e.g. Ústí nad Labem and Brno), there is not yet an integrated system to coordinate and finance these activities in the long term. Activities remain scattered and dependent on project funding.

Overall, most of the housing strategy measures were only partially implemented in 2022 and 2023. The Office of the Government repeatedly points to coordination problems, unclear responsibilities of individual ministries, lack of data and lack of capacity at central and local level. As a result of these problems, the impact of the Strategy on improving the housing situation of Roma remains limited and has not yet had a systemic impact.

### 2.5.2. Addressing the problems beyond the NRSF

The Czech state focuses to some extent on systemic changes and specific projects in the housing sector. The Ministry of Regional Development, in cooperation with the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs, is preparing a new law on housing support to create a systemic support system for obtaining and maintaining housing for people in housing need. This law also responds to international obligations, as the Czech Republic is required to address persistent shortcomings in the area of Roma housing, which have long been highlighted by the European Committee of Social Rights. For instance, in a decision from September 2024, the Committee once again condemned the Czech Republic for systemic discrimination against the Roma community in access to housing.<sup>64</sup> Beyond the framework of the NRSF, the Agency for Social Inclusion works to methodically support municipalities with excluded localities, helping them to prepare and implement social housing projects (e.g. in Písek, Liberec, Chomutov, Ostrava and Brno). Thanks to this, many towns have received subsidies for housing and have started evaluation processes that monitor the number of Roma who have moved in. In addition, the Ministry of Labour has piloted and financed projects such as Housing First (13 of them were supported in 2018-2022) and a follow-up project, 'Support for Social Housing and its Systemic Implementation' (OPZ+), has been

<sup>61</sup> Platform for Social Housing. *A brief summary of the main negative impacts of housing exclusion*. Brno. 2024.

<sup>62</sup> For more information, see: <https://www.ceska-justice.cz/2024/04/ombudsman-rekreace-ve-stavbach-pro-trvale-bydleni-je-obchazeni-zakona/>

<sup>63</sup> See: <https://novazelenausporam.cz>

<sup>64</sup> FEANTSA. *Ground-breaking decision against the Czech Republic on Roma housing rights*. Press release 21 January 2025. Available at: <https://www.feantsa.org/en/press-release/2025/01/21/?bcParent=27>



running since 2023. Another specific measure is the 'Houskeeper-Preventer' programme (funded under Crime Prevention), where caretakers from the local community (often Roma) are employed in municipal houses to prevent conflicts and maintain order. This programme supported ten projects in 2022 with a total subsidy of ~1.46 million CZK (59,000 EUR). The project was implemented using a total of 1.5 million CZK (61,000 EUR).

Housing policy is conceived in an inclusive manner, without ethnically defining beneficiaries. The forthcoming law on housing support and subsidy programmes targets people in housing need in general. This is in line with the principle that social housing should serve all vulnerable groups. However, Roma households are among the key target groups of these measures, as they are disproportionately affected by housing need. Some instruments take into account the specific barriers that Roma face indirectly. For example, the methodology of the Agency for Social Inclusion recommends that municipalities assess housing applicants individually and minimise blanket conditions (such as the obligation to be debt-free) that de facto disadvantage poor families. Discrimination against Roma in the housing market is addressed under general consumer protection and anti-discrimination law.

The current state approach focuses on systemic solutions – the drafting of the Social Housing Act promises a sustainable framework instead of the current project pilots. The active involvement of municipalities and the use of European funds (OPT/OPT+) to expand affordable housing and social housing services is positive. 'Housing First' projects have shown that immediate provision of housing to the most vulnerable families (often Roma) can be an effective route out of homelessness – e.g. the city of Brno is one of the pioneers of this model in the Czech Republic. A good example is also the 'Housekeeper-Preventer' programme, which not only provides employment for the long-term unemployed (see below), but also improves housing quality and safety in houses with previous problems.

A major weakness in Czech social housing policy is the lack of legal regulation of social housing. The long-delayed law on support in housing has not yet been adopted and will not take effect until 2026. Until then, there is no unified system of support: assistance depends on the willingness of municipalities and time-limited projects. Insufficient targeting of measures may lead to the specific needs of Roma families not being fully reflected. For example, the requirement of being debt-free or having a permanent residence to qualify for municipal housing falls heavily on poor Roma households, but few municipalities have adjusted their rules. Discrimination in the housing market persists – research indicates that almost half of Roma in socially excluded localities have been rejected when looking for housing. Prosecutions are relatively rare and rely on active control (there are few situations in which the victim themselves seek justice). The lack of affordable housing for large families and the rising cost of housing are also problems: an estimated 31.5% of the Roma population lives in so-called housing deprivation (overcrowded or inadequate housing, high costs), compared to around 9% of the majority population.<sup>65</sup> Another limitation is the lack of data – neither municipalities nor the state systematically track the ethnicity of housing applicants, so it is not known exactly how many Roma have obtained housing thanks to individual programmes (feedback exists only through partial surveys and coordinators' estimates).

## 2.6. Social protection

Roma in the Czech Republic are disproportionally affected by social exclusion, a fact described and analysed in various documents and also in previous RCM reports. However, an ethically blind approach to social issues prevails (for more details, see Chapter 3.3 on employment below). Besides this, Roma often face inappropriate behaviour from the Labour Office, which administers the payment of benefits, and thus unequal access to social protection. This issue was last recorded during the floods in the autumn of 2024.<sup>66</sup>

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<sup>65</sup> Office of the Government. *Zpráva o stavu romské menšiny v České republice za rok 2022. [Report on the Situation of the Roma Minority in the Czech Republic for 2022.]* Úřad vlády ČR, 2024, p. 31. Available at: <https://vlada.gov.cz/cz/ppov/zalezitosti-romske-komunity/aktuality/zprava-o-stavu-romske-mensiny-v-ceske-republice-za-rok-2022-212008/>

<sup>66</sup> For more information, see: <https://romea.cz/cz/domaci/reditel-uradu-prace-odmita-obvineni-z-nerovneho-zachazeni-s-romy-postizenymi-povodnimi-vladni-zmocnenkyne-fukova-ma-opacne-informace> and <https://romea.cz/cz/domaci/romove-v-ostrave-si-stezuji-na-nerovne-zachazeni-pri-poskytovani-pomoci-po-povodnich-urad-prace-celi-kritice-situaci-resi-vladni-zmocnenkyne-fukova>

Discriminatory treatment by the Labour Office was also documented through an academic experiment that covered the Labour Office's unemployment agenda. See Mikula, S. and Montag, J. *Roma and Bureaucrats: A Field Experiment in the Czech Republic*. Muni Econ Working Paper n. 2022-01. 2022.

### 2.6.1. Effectiveness of the NRSF in addressing the problems

The problems identified in the area of social protection are not directly tackled in the NRSF.

### 2.6.2. Addressing the problems beyond the NRSF

The biggest and most controversial issue is the Ministry of Labour's proposal for social benefits reform. This would help simplify a quite complex benefit system as it plans to unify some of the current ones, both social security benefits and benefits in material need. However, there are concerns that the social protection of the most vulnerable households, such as families with young children, single parents and retired women, would be in jeopardy.<sup>67</sup> The Ministry has not provided model calculations to present the projected impacts on household income, which further exacerbates concerns about the impact of the new system. Its critics also fear that the new social benefit system does not reflect current costs of living. The proposal is based on a minimum subsistence amount, which, even according to the Research Institute for Labour and Social Affairs, a public think tank, does not reflect the real cost of living. The proposal is facing strong backlash not only from CSOs but also from other Ministries, as well as from the Ombudsperson.

## 2.7. Social services

Social services are one of the main tools for the social inclusion of Roma. The Office of the Government is continuously supporting social and community work through grant schemes, and ESF+ calls exist that focus on Roma integration, community work and development as well as on the capacity building of Roma CSOs. Besides that, positions of social work and counselling in schools are being legally anchored, which will contribute to further linking the education system with social support.

### 2.7.1. Effectiveness of the NRSF in addressing the problems

The Office of the Government administers a subsidy programme called 'Prevention of Social Exclusion and Community Work'.<sup>68</sup> This is an important tool supporting Roma CSOs and enabling the Office of the Government to implement other NRSF measures, such as focusing the 2024 call on assistance with the process of compensation for forced sterilisations or the 2025 call on domestic abuse, health, and participation. The ESF+ has a call related to the integration of the Roma minority<sup>69</sup> and on the capacity building and professionalisation of Roma and pro-Roma CSOs.<sup>70</sup> Both calls are under the social inclusion priority.

Besides financial support for social work delivered to Roma, the NRSF includes objectives for the introduction and development of social work in education. This issue is being covered under the draft law on social workers, which explicitly defines the school as a place of social work, thus legally anchoring the position and realisation of the positions of the social workers in education.<sup>71</sup>

### 2.7.2. Addressing the problems beyond the NRSF

The Ministry of Labour is implementing the Social Inclusion Strategy (2021 – 2030).<sup>72</sup> In 2024, a three-year Action Plan was adopted and approved by the government. Its goals align with the NRSF, explicitly targeting the Roma as a key group, and coordination between the Labour Ministry and the NRCP for NRSF implementation is ongoing.

In 2024, an amendment to the Law on Social Services was approved, which foresees the adoption of a precise definition of social services with a national and supra-regional character. The Ministry of Labour now has a

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<sup>67</sup> For more details, see the analyses of the reforms by SPOT and Platform for Social Housing, available at: [https://socialnibydeni.org/wp-content/uploads/2025/01/Analyza-Davkova-reforma-%E2%80%93-hlavni-problemy-a-rizika\\_2025.pdf](https://socialnibydeni.org/wp-content/uploads/2025/01/Analyza-Davkova-reforma-%E2%80%93-hlavni-problemy-a-rizika_2025.pdf)

<sup>68</sup> For more information, see: <https://vlada.gov.cz/scripts/detail.php?pgid=943>.

<sup>69</sup> See: <https://www.esfcr.cz/vyzva-076-opz-plus>

<sup>70</sup> See: <https://www.esfcr.cz/vyzva-073-opz-plus>

<sup>71</sup> See: <https://odok.cz/portal/veklep/material/KORNDCLMWLV/>

<sup>72</sup> Available at: <https://www.mpsv.cz/strategie-socialniho-zaclenovani-2021-2030>

subsidy programme for social services whose scope of work extends beyond particular regions but plans to define more specifically under which conditions this would be possible in the future.<sup>73</sup>

Also, further changes to the laws on social services, health services and the public health insurance should enable the creation of social-health services and promises effective coordination between social and health services where needed.<sup>74</sup>

## 2.8. Child protection

The NRSF does not put enough emphasis on child protection, as also identified in the 2022 RCM report. Most goals and measures that are focused on the rights and well-being of children are listed under the topic of education. The most important change influencing child protection has occurred in the field of institutional care. Currently, most ethnic data are available for institutions operating under the Ministry of Education. The Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs has collected data on the ethnicity of children under three years old in institutional care; as of spring 2024, 52% of these children were of Roma ethnicity.<sup>75</sup> This data collection follows the 2023 decision of the European Committee of Social Rights. The Committee has ruled that the Czech Republic's failure to collect ethnic data on children in state care violates Articles 16 and 17 of the European Social Charter in conjunction with the prohibition of discrimination set out in the Charter's preamble.<sup>76</sup> Further ethnic data collection, notably concerning the number of Roma in Homes for People with Disabilities, should follow.

### 2.8.1. Effectiveness of the NRSF in addressing the problems

The NRSF has the goal to “strengthen support and prevention in families at risk and to provide conceptual solutions for foster family care”. This issue has been covered by a recent amendment to the Act on Social and Legal Protection of Children, which was approved in 2024.<sup>77</sup> As of 1 January 2024, the ban on placing children under the age of three in institutional care will be in effect in the Czech Republic. From 2028 onwards, there should be a ban on placing children up to the age of seven in institutional care. The law also extends support for foster care. The amendment introduces expanded support for families and children at risk, streamlines the responsibilities of municipal and regional authorities, and adjusts the system of foster care and adoption. It emphasises the importance of children's social inclusion, strengthens preventive and counselling services, and modifies the procedures for arranging adoption and foster placements. The amendment also clarifies the duties of authorities in monitoring child care and promotes interdisciplinary cooperation. For foster parents, the amendment introduces enhanced counselling support focused on educational, social, and legal aspects of child care. Municipalities and regional authorities are required to assist foster carers with the reintegration of children into the birth family and with addressing financial or social difficulties. It also introduces regular consultations about foster care with professionals, where foster children themselves may also participate. Foster parents who do not have a formal foster care agreement may be assigned mandatory training, specified by the local authority. Additionally, authorities are obliged to monitor the child's development in care and make regular home visits. In 2025, an amendment to the Law on the Execution of Institutional Care<sup>78</sup> should also be approved (this was approved by the Senate in January 2025), which allows for the provision of institutional care in apartments and family homes, even in smaller groups. It aims to make institutional care as similar as possible to the family environment.

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<sup>73</sup> Act No. 164/2024 Coll., amending Act No. 108/2006 Coll., on Social Services

<sup>74</sup> Act amending Act No. 108/2006 Coll., on Social Services, Act No. 372/2011 Coll., on Health Services, and Act No. 48/1997 Coll., on Public Health Insurance.

<sup>75</sup> For details, see: [https://www.mpsv.cz/documents/20142/225508/Zprava\\_o\\_DD3\\_2024\\_8000duvodu+a+MPSV.pdf/d6735cb4-0fa2-f137-d64c-071b50929163?t=1728372148506](https://www.mpsv.cz/documents/20142/225508/Zprava_o_DD3_2024_8000duvodu+a+MPSV.pdf/d6735cb4-0fa2-f137-d64c-071b50929163?t=1728372148506)

<sup>76</sup> For more details, see: [https://www.coe.int/en/web/european-social-charter/pending-complaints/-/asset\\_publisher/lf8ufoBY2Thr/content/no-190-2020-european-roma-rights-centre-errc-v-czech-republic](https://www.coe.int/en/web/european-social-charter/pending-complaints/-/asset_publisher/lf8ufoBY2Thr/content/no-190-2020-european-roma-rights-centre-errc-v-czech-republic)

<sup>77</sup> Available at: <https://www.zakonyprolidi.cz/cs/2024-242>

<sup>78</sup> Available at: <https://www.zakonyprolidi.cz/cs/2025-37>



### 2.8.2. Addressing the problems beyond the NRSF

An amendment to the Act on the Public Defender of Rights (Ombudsperson)<sup>79</sup> was promulgated in March 2015, establishing a dedicated Children's Ombudsperson. During 2025, an institution (organisationally linked to the existing Public Defender's office) focusing on children's rights, including in the area of discrimination, will be established,<sup>80</sup> thus strengthening child protection in Czechia.

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

During the NRSF 2024 revision, demands were raised by the Romani cultural CSOs to the Ministry of Culture to separate grant schemes for professional and amateur cultural productions. The fact is that Roma professional productions are perceived primarily through the ethnic lens and tend to be referred to national minorities' grant schemes, but the latter are designed for smaller projects without any distinction between amateur and professional productions. At the same time, although the financial support from the Ministry of Culture's subsidy programme is continuous, its amount does not reflect inflation and only marginally addresses the issue of support for professional Roma cultural productions. This is illustrated by long-term efforts to establish a professional Roma theatre, concerning which the Ministry of Culture remains dismissive. Advocates for a professional Roma theatre argue that a professional platform would enable more Roma to become professional artists and that Roma need to preserve and develop high culture (and current subsidies and policy measure focus more on amateur, folk, and pop culture), which is essential both for Roma to thrive and for the majority population to evolve in their attitudes toward Roma. More could also be done concerning the commemoration of important Romani days. Current events are primarily financed through projects and initiated by civil society; therefore, continuity is not secured on a long-term basis.

Roma arts, culture and history are promoted by the Czech state mainly through grant schemes aimed at Roma as a national minority. The Museum of Roma Culture remains the most important institution in this area.

### 2.9.1. Effectiveness of the NRSF in addressing the problems

The most significant event in the area of commemorating Romani history was the opening of the Holocaust Memorial to the Roma and Sinti in Lety u Písku in 2024. The Museum of Roma Culture, the most important public institution in this area, is undergoing organisational changes. First, it was considered to change its legal form from the current contributory organisation of the Ministry of Culture to a newly established form of public cultural institution. This raised concerns about the possible scope of its future activities.<sup>81</sup> Eventually, the institute of a guarantee board was introduced, which should provide new perspectives from outside the museum and strengthen oversight of its functioning. The measure was implemented recently, so it is necessary to wait a while for an assessment of its impact on the museum. Overall, Measure A.2.1 "Ensure support for the Museum of Romani Culture, a state-funded organisation, including funding for the management of the Roma Holocaust memorial sites in Lety u Písku and Hodonín u Kunštátu" is being implemented.

On the other hand, measures A.2.2. and A.2.3. "Establish a Roma and Sinti Centre in Prague" and "Ensure financial support for the Roma and Sinti Centre in Prague" are not being implemented. Although the process of establishing the Roma and Sinti Centre in Prague has begun, it has been halted due to construction problems, resulting in delays in project implementation.

The measure A.2.4 "Ensure support for the World Roma Festival Khamoro" is ongoing, although the Ministry of Culture's subsidies have not changed significantly over the years, and thus do not account for inflation.

The same applies to the implementation of Measures A.2.5 and A.2.6, "Maintenance of the Ministry of Culture's subsidy programmes to support the culture of national minorities" and "Maintaining the subsidy programme to support the use of the Romani language and the dissemination of information in the Romani language". The

<sup>79</sup> Available at: <https://www.psp.cz/sqw/historie.sqw?o=9&t=688>

<sup>80</sup> For more information, see: <https://deti.ochrance.cz/kdo/detskyombudsman/>

<sup>81</sup> The law's stated goal is to enable public cultural institutions to use multiannual finance plans. In general, big cultural institutions which are able to secure finances from different sources, such as the National Theatre, welcome the change. On the other hand, some museums and galleries are worried that, if their legal form were to change, it could lead to less stable financing. For more information see, e. g.: <https://plus.rozhlas.cz/nova-legislativa-o-verejnych-kulturnich-institucich-tesime-se-na-vicelete-9115099>

Ministry of Culture continues to implement subsidy programmes to support the integration of members of the Roma minority and promote the dissemination and reception of information in the languages of national minorities, as well as the cultural activities of members of national minorities living in the Czech Republic, with approximately the same amounts.

Measures A.2.7 and A.2.8, which cover the area of media (“Inclusion of Romani themes in public service media” and “Set a new scope of support for national minority projects in the field of media”) have not been significantly developed yet.

A significant step has been taken in the field of education to promote Roma culture and history, including the topics of Romani history and culture, through the revised ‘Framework Educational Programmes’ as part of their overall major revision.

### 3. FOCUS ON KEY PROBLEMS AFFECTING ROMA

#### 3.1. Hate Speech

##### 3.1.1. Effectiveness of the NRSF in addressing the problem

Hate speech is a persistent problem in Czechia. The NRSF is addressing it directly by monitoring its manifestations, building prevention based on the monitoring outcomes, and committing to improving statistics on hate crime against Roma. However, it is important to assess hate speech in the frame of broader related issues of discrimination, antigypsyism and lack of meaningful participation. The lack of Roma participation in decision-making processes and their low level of representation in consultative bodies creates space for expressing and spreading negative stereotypes and hate speech.

The NRSF's key measure, B.2.2. "Monitor hate speech against Roma", related to the specific area of combating hate speech, concerns the monitoring and evaluation of prejudicial speech and antigypsyism, including its public form (hate speech in the media, on social networks, etc.) and the monitoring of changes in attitudes towards Roma over time. This includes data collection and evaluation at the national level to identify trends and measure the effectiveness of policies and measures against discrimination. In practice, monitoring antigypsyism proves problematic as data on the incidence of prejudicial violence, discrimination, and hate speech is often incomplete. Many cases go unreported and are therefore not recorded in official statistics. A persistent problem is the fact that Roma victims are often reluctant to report bias-based attacks for fear of further stigmatisation because of distrust in institutions and bad previous experiences with the police (belittling, discouragement from filing criminal reports, ridicule, and intimidation) during the reporting of such attacks.

Currently, Measure B.1.2, "Refine statistics on hate crimes against Roma and in relation to Roma", is being partially implemented by the Ministry of the Interior and the police of the Czech Republic. Thus, more accurate statistics on crimes motivated by hatred against Roma should become available. This should be taken into account in the framework of the project for the development and innovation of crime statistics. The responsibility to refine statistics on hate crimes was anchored by the Resolution of the Government of the Czech Republic No. 495 of 8 July 2019 on the development and innovation of crime statistics.<sup>82</sup> The new resolution of the Government of the Czech Republic No. 118 of 15 February 2023 on the establishment of a project for the development and innovation of crime statistics has replaced the above-mentioned resolution. The new resolution imposed similar tasks as the repealed one. The fact that some cases remain unreported should also be addressed methodologically and in conjunction with expert organisations dealing with victims of bias-motivated violence (e.g. in IUSTITIA). Organisations that provide support services to victims of prejudiced violence (including hate speech) have their own statistics, research and relevant data from which it is possible to supplement the insufficient picture of the situation captured by police statistics.

The lack of monitoring of manifestations of antigypsyism in different areas (e.g. employment, education, housing, access to services, media) jeopardises follow-up action.

In this context, we would like to point out that, despite the recommendations and measures taken, no analysis has yet been carried out of the possibilities of monitoring court decisions in civil and criminal proceedings that concern discrimination and hate-related violence because of Roma origin. Additionally, a lack of measures against hate speech is publicly disseminated by politicians (on an ongoing basis or, for example, as part of election campaigns). Finally, the NRSF has not led to any follow-up on specific legal reforms or specific legislative initiatives to implement the NRSF measures related to fighting hate speech. Moreover, individual measures sometimes lack a clear link to budgetary resources.

Although in April 2024 the government adopted a definition of anti-Roma attitudes,<sup>83</sup> this is not a legally binding matter, so its meaning is more symbolic and indicative. The definition names specific forms of the

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<sup>82</sup> Available at: <https://www.odok.gov.cz/portal/services/download/attachment/2019/495/pdf/>

<sup>83</sup> Government Office. *Vláda dnes jednomyslně přijala právně nezávaznou definici anticikanismu [The government today unanimously adopted a non-binding legal definition of antigypsyism.]* Press release 10 April 2024. Available at: <https://vlada.gov.cz/cz/media-centrum/aktualne/vlada-dnes-jednohlasne-prijala-pravne-nezavaznou-definici-anticikanismu--212819/>

manifestation of racism (in both individual and systemic forms) that Roma face because of their ethnic origin, culture or lifestyle.

From our perspective, however, manifestations of antigypsyism also occur regarding which victims of various forms of prejudicial violence, including hate speech, should find help, i.e., with law enforcement authorities. In the government document that evaluates the implementation of the NRSF, it is explicitly stated that the implementation of Measure B.2.6 ("Ensure that law enforcement authorities report, in accordance with the legislation, on publicized cases of hate-motivated crimes against a certain group of persons, with an emphasis on the protection of victims, and declare their interest in dealing with the perpetrator's hate motive") is taking place. Nevertheless, we should note that when mapping hateful anti-Roma content, we found such posts, for example, in discussions on the social networks of the Czech Police without any apparent regulation and accessible to the public.

Educational awareness campaigns also have an irreplaceable role in the fight against hate speech and generally prejudicial violence, as they contribute to breaking down the distorted image of Roma that is constructed in the media and on social networks, in the rhetoric and agenda of many political groups and their specific representatives, and in outdated materials in school curricula, etc.

In order to bring about effective change, it is necessary to support long-term and targeted campaigns that include not only informing the public, but also actively involve Roma activists and artists who can present Roma culture and everyday life in an authentic and realistic light. It is also necessary to develop specific methodologies for measuring the effectiveness of these campaigns.

Although the NRSF defines clear objectives and measures for monitoring antigypsyism and combating prejudicial violence, their implementation faces several challenges at the national level. In order to achieve real change, it is necessary to strengthen cooperation between the state, media, CSOs and Roma activists, and to adopt a more integrated approach that focuses on long-term prevention and attitudinal change in Czech society and consistently sanctions all forms of prejudicial violence, including hate speech.

### 3.1.2. Synergy with other actions

In addition to the NRSF, which explicitly deals with the concept of antigypsyism as a form of racism (which also takes the form of hate speech), the Czech Republic has other national policies and strategies that directly or indirectly address hate speech and antigypsyism. In particular, however, these phenomena are situated within the broader context of combating racism, promoting equality, and developing digital skills. The most important is the 'Concept for Countering Extremism and Prejudicial Hate 2021-2026'. In this policy document, which falls under the Ministry of the Interior, the term "hate speech" appears in the Czech equivalent ("nenávistné projevy", hate manifestations). The document also deals with the phenomenon of prejudicial hate speech, and although it is distinguished from extremist speech in the text, it is made clear that the risks of prejudicial hate speech are similar in many areas to those posed by extremists and can take the form of open, publicly disseminated hate speech. The document also explicitly states that hate speech by perpetrators without an extremist background poses a new challenge.<sup>84</sup>

According to the European Commission, the toxicity of hate speech, including anti-Roma hate speech, has risen by 30% in less than a year – this figure is based on eight million online messages analysed in the EU between January and September 2023 – and 55% of respondents to a survey by the European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights (FRA) had been targeted more than three times in the EU between 2022 and 2023.<sup>85</sup>

Therefore, in the area of combating hate speech, including anti-Roma hate speech, the EU is adopting a number of policies and measures to improve the situation and protect individuals and groups at risk.

As pointed out by the European Parliament, for example in its resolution of 18 January 2024 on the proposal for a Council Decision on the extension of the EU list of criminal offences to include hate speech and hate crimes, combating hate speech and hate crimes, both online and offline, requires a multidimensional approach

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<sup>84</sup> For further information, see: [https://citizens.ec.europa.eu/tackling-hatred-society\\_cs](https://citizens.ec.europa.eu/tackling-hatred-society_cs)

<sup>85</sup> As stated in the *Concept for Countering Extremism and Prejudicial Hate 2021-2026*, p. 10. Accessible at: [https://www.dataplan.info/img\\_upload/7bdb1584e3b8a53d337518d988763f8d/koncepcie-2021-2026.pdf](https://www.dataplan.info/img_upload/7bdb1584e3b8a53d337518d988763f8d/koncepcie-2021-2026.pdf)

and various means of combating them, including criminal law, civil and administrative proceedings and other relevant policy or social measures.

Member States have committed to adopting legislation and measures that punish hate crimes, address underreporting and introduce or further develop capacity-building activities for law enforcement and judicial personnel. The Directive on combating racism and xenophobia (2008/913/JHA) obliges Member States to prosecute incitement to violence and hatred against racial and ethnic groups

The EP also points out that if the fight against hate speech and hate crimes is to be effective, it is essential to address the root causes, particularly widely held stereotypes about vulnerable minorities. Preventive measures, education (including digital education, literacy, critical thinking, and skills to promote a safe digital space), and systematic awareness-raising on these issues are key in this regard.

Within the framework of the strategy to combat online hate speech, the Code of Conduct against Illegal Online Content (2018) and the Digital Services Act (DSA) regulations, effective from February 2024, deserve to be highlighted, for example.

The Code calls on online platforms (e.g. Facebook, Twitter) to respond swiftly to hate speech, including anti-Roma hate speech. Platforms should actively remove hate content themselves and provide effective, easy-to-understand tools for ordinary users to report it.

The DSA regulation then makes online platforms responsible for illegal content, which includes hate speech, and obliges them to regulate and remove it. There is also a requirement for priority handling by the digital service provider of reports of illegal content that originate from a 'trusted reporter'. Despite this, however, ROMEA's experience, confirmed by other organisations such as SafeNet, a consortium of expert CSOs mapping social media feedback on hate content reporting, shows that much of this remains theoretical.

While this legal framework is a step in the right direction, there are legitimate concerns about whether platforms will be sufficiently engaged in preventing and eliminating hateful (not only) anti-Roma speech. Similarly, there are no uniform standards for defining hate speech in the online environment, and many platforms may be evading responsibility by failing to define such content or removing content in a questionable manner based on unclear rules.

#### *Ineffectiveness of efforts to regulate hate speech content online*

An example of how, despite 'trusted flagger' status, the necessary response from social networks was not forthcoming, and unclear procedures obscure the removal of hateful content, is the communication between Romea and a representative of the social network X/Twitter.

A comment was found by Romea online, stating: "... we don't want to include them. One gypsy on the street or in a school is manageable, but once there's a plural number of them, it's all fucked up." Romea reported the anti-Roma comment and received feedback that there had indeed been a violation of the rules. The account that posted the comment had been locked, with the understanding that until the comment was deleted, the account holder would no longer be able to comment, like, etc. However, the comment remained publicly visible to all users but the notifier; for Romea, the comment was 'hidden'. The author of the hateful comment could also add other posts. Even after notifying the platform that there had been no compliance with what the network X had committed to in its own rules, no remedy was provided.

While the EU encourages Member States to adopt strong anti-hate speech legislation, the reality in some countries shows that implementation and enforcement of such legislation is inadequate or remains 'on paper'. Many Member States, including the Czech Republic, still have problems with the effective enforcement of laws against hate speech and with sufficient protection of the Roma community from hate speech and attacks.

### 3.1.3. Roma participation

The NRSF and the Concept for Countering Extremism and Prejudicial Hate 2021-2026 declare the importance of the participation of Roma communities, but do not define specific mechanisms for their involvement in the management, control and evaluation of the measures. Furthermore, local authorities, on whom most of the concrete changes depend, are not systematically encouraged to participate in implementation.

### 3.2. Inequalities in education

Inequalities in education in Czechia, which continue to have a substantial impact on the lives of Roma, manifest themselves in the low level of participation of Roma children in preschool education, the segregation of Roma pupils in primary education and the limited access of Roma students to secondary or higher education. The lack of support mechanisms and short-term financing are among the most significant obstacles to implementing measures aimed at providing quality education for Roma.

#### 3.2.1. Main challenges with the education of Roma children

##### 3.2.1.1. *Low-level participation of Roma children in pre-school education*

The low level of participation of Romani children in preschool education has long been identified as one of the main problems contributing to their disadvantage. This problem has been repeatedly noted in monitoring reports on the implementation of the NRSF.<sup>86</sup> Despite the NRSF containing measures to increase the participation of Roma children in kindergartens, their effectiveness is deemed insufficient by the Ministry of Labour and the Ministry of Education. According to data presented in the government document *Information on the Implementation of the NRSF in 2023*, the participation of Romani children in preschool education remains significantly lower than that of the majority population. Despite the implementation of measures such as a compulsory final year of kindergarten and financial support for families, the situation has not improved substantially from previous years. Disparities in participation continue to be evident, especially in localities with a larger proportion of socially excluded Roma families, where problems with kindergarten capacity, economic barriers and distrust of educational institutions persist. In some regions, the attendance of Roma children in kindergartens remains significantly lower, confirming the persistence of structural inequalities.<sup>87</sup> The low level of participation of Romani children in preschool education remains a major obstacle, affecting their future success in the education system. Although the NRSF mentions measures such as support for community centres and financial assistance to families, implementation remains insufficient. The main problems include the limited coverage of programmes, low level of awareness among families and complex administrative processes that discourage target groups from using these tools.

One of the NRSF measures has been to support community centres focused on working with children and families from socially excluded localities. These centres are producing positive results in some localities, but their geographical coverage and capacity are limited. Reports indicate a lack of systematic support for the development of these centres in the areas where the need is greatest, particularly in the Ústí nad Labem and Moravian-Silesian regions.

Another critical factor in the low participation rate is the distrust of Romani parents in educational institutions, which is due to their historical experience with discrimination and segregation. The NRSF envisages the involvement of community workers and greater representation of Roma teachers, but their role is still insufficiently supported by the state. The low trust of Romani parents in the institutional education system remains a key factor affecting the participation of Romani children in preschool education. This mistrust stems from historical experiences of discrimination and segregation, which have significantly affected Roma communities and reinforced the sense of alienation from schools. Many Roma parents perceive the school environment as hostile or insensitive to their specific needs, which reduces their motivation to involve their children in the educational process from an early age. The next step of the NRSF in addressing this issue is to support cooperation between schools and Romani communities through mediators and community workers. Although some programmes have yielded positive results, their effectiveness is severely limited by the low number of Roma mediators and workers directly involved in these activities. There is a lack of systematic support for Roma community leaders who could play a key role in building trust between schools and parents. Without their greater involvement, many measures remain piecemeal and often ineffective.

Another problem is the lack of Romani teachers who could serve as role models and contribute to deepening understanding between schools and Romani communities. The presence of Roma teachers could significantly increase parents' trust in the institutional education system and improve the educational outcomes of Roma children. In this respect, it is worth noting that no statistics are kept on the number of Roma teachers that would make it possible to confirm or refute the above conclusion. Nevertheless, it can be argued that their

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<sup>86</sup> See previous RCM reports.

<sup>87</sup> *Information on the implementation of the NRSF in 2023*.



representation in schools is negligible (this is unofficially admitted by education experts, representatives of founders and CSOs), which hinders the effective transfer of Roma cultural awareness and knowledge into the educational process.

The NRSF also includes support for teachers through training on working with children from different socio-cultural backgrounds. The aim of these training programmes is to develop teachers' competences so that they can better respond to the specific needs of Roma children and their families. However, such training is often not sufficiently adapted to the specific problems of Roma communities and neglects the key role of Roma mediators in the educational process. Moreover, the underfunding of these programmes and the reluctance of some teachers to participate in them significantly reduce their effectiveness.

Teaching assistants play a crucial role in overcoming communication barriers and providing individual-level support to Romani children. However, the current situation shows that the number of teaching assistants is insufficient, making it difficult to provide effective support in many schools, especially in regions with a high concentration of Roma communities. Moreover, very few of these assistants come from Roma communities, which limits their ability to fully understand the specific needs of children and their families. The absence of Roma teaching assistants significantly weakens the potential of this measure and reduces its impact on the inclusion of Roma children in the education system.

The lack of a comprehensive system for ensuring long-term support for Romani communities also deserves criticism. There is a lack of coordinated strategies that take into account the needs of individual regions and involve Roma representatives in decision-making processes. Without the active participation of Roma communities, it is unrealistic to expect the creation of trust and improvement in the field of education.

### 3.2.1.2. Segregation in primary schools

The segregation of Romani pupils in primary schools in the Czech Republic remains a serious problem, and existing data confirm that the situation is improving only very slowly. According to a survey<sup>88</sup>, approximately one quarter of Roma pupils are educated in schools where they make up the majority of all pupils. This concentration is a consequence of spatial and social segregation and confirms the longstanding failure of policies designed to alleviate this inequality. The report also states that there is a lack of effective measures at the systemic level to reduce this concentration of Roma pupils. A PAQ Research analysis from 2022,<sup>89</sup> which focused on the education of Romani pupils in schools and classes under Section 16(9) of the Education Act, confirms the persistent disproportions. The study shows that Roma pupils are still over-represented in schools for pupils with mild mental disabilities, despite the fact that the amendment to the Education Act in 2016 was supposed to lead to a change in attitude and a strengthening of inclusion. According to PAQ Research, the lack of inclusion of Romani pupils in mainstream education is also linked to a lack of professional staff. For example, teaching assistants, who are supposed to help pupils overcome specific educational needs, have long been in short supply in regions with a high concentration of socially excluded localities. PAQ-STEM research shows that up to 40% of schools in these areas do not have enough teaching assistants, severely limiting their ability to support the education of Roma children.

The low level of involvement of Roma themselves in decision-making on education policies is another significant barrier. Roma communities are practically not involved in the management of the education system, which leads to the persistence of measures that are not in line with their real needs.<sup>90</sup> This lack of participation reduces trust in institutional structures and increases the distance between communities and schools.

In many localities, despite legislative commitments and formal measures, there is 'silent segregation'. This is manifested, for example, by the creation of separate classes within mainstream schools, where almost

<sup>88</sup> Mentioned in the research report 'On the Segregation of Roma Pupils in Education' (Němec, 2020).

<sup>89</sup> Hoření, K. & al. Výzkumná zpráva: Analýza příčin vyššího podílu romských žáků vzdělávajících se dle RVP ZV UV ve třídách zřízených podle § 16 odst. 9 školského zákona a návrh souboru opatření pro oblast vzdělávání a další relevantní oblasti. [Research Report: Analysis of the Causes Behind the Higher Proportion of Roma Pupils Educated According to the Framework Educational Programme for Pupils with Mild Intellectual Disabilities in Classes Established Under § 16(9) of the Education Act, and a Proposal for a Set of Measures in Education and Other Relevant Areas.] Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports, 2023. Available at: [https://www.edu.cz/wp-content/uploads/2023/04/Final\\_Vyzkumna\\_zprava\\_§\\_16\\_9\\_MSMT\\_PAQ\\_STEM.pdf](https://www.edu.cz/wp-content/uploads/2023/04/Final_Vyzkumna_zprava_§_16_9_MSMT_PAQ_STEM.pdf)

<sup>90</sup> See the research report 'On the Segregation of Roma Pupils in Education' (Němec, 2020).

exclusively Roma pupils are placed.<sup>91</sup> While this practice does not violate the letter of the law, it significantly contradicts its spirit, as it promotes segregation and leads to limited contact between Roma children and the majority population.

Measures taken at the European level are not sufficiently effective. Member States, including Czechia, continue to apply an approach that is described as the formal implementation of obligations without any real change in practice.<sup>92</sup> There is a lack of concrete tools to enforce desegregation measures and a lack of political will to implement systemic changes in an environment where segregation is often considered a 'natural' consequence of spatial arrangements or parental preferences.

School counselling facilities<sup>93</sup> and support measures<sup>94</sup> remain underfunded and understaffed. The lack of professional staff, such as school special educators, psychologists and career counsellors, prevents Roma pupils from receiving support appropriate to their needs. Thus, despite the existing legislative framework, the education of Roma pupils in the Czech Republic remains significantly unequal, both in terms of quality and access to educational opportunities.

Criticism must also be levelled at the failure of the European institutions. Although the European Union allocates funds to promote inclusion through funds such as the European Social Fund, this support is often fragmented and focused on short-term projects. There is a lack of long-term and systematic funding, and the European Commission's 2022 Education and Training Monitor report notes that the persistent lack of societal consensus on the benefits of inclusion and limited incentives for schools constrain opportunities for Roma pupils.<sup>95</sup>

Moreover, state policy in Czechia often focuses on general measures that fail to effectively address region-specific problems. An example is the support for community centres, which, although they lead to positive results in some localities, have a limited reach and their impact is not felt on a wider scale. Without an emphasis on targeted activities aimed at the most disadvantaged regions and the involvement of Roma communities themselves, significant gaps in educational outcomes between Roma pupils and their peers in the majority population will persist.

Finally, it must be stressed that if segregation is to be truly eliminated, the state and European institutions must take responsibility for their failures. Policies and measures must be results-oriented, promoting changes that reflect real needs, while strengthening the role of Roma as active participants in the process of change. Without this change, deep inequalities will continue to exist, threatening not only the future of Roma children but also general social cohesion.

Segregation in primary schools persists as a systemic problem. Despite legislative instruments supporting inclusion, their implementation is insufficient. Segregation not only limits the quality of education for Roma children but also contributes to deepening prejudice and social exclusion. Studies show that schools with high concentrations of Roma pupils achieve poorer educational results and fail to prepare pupils sufficiently for the transition to secondary school.

### 3.2.1.3. Limited access to secondary and higher education

The proportion of Romani pupils transitioning from primary to secondary education is still alarmingly low. Only 15% of Roma pupils complete secondary education programmes with a graduation diploma, compared to more

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<sup>91</sup> See, for example, the report '*Secondary Analysis: the Highlights of Czech Education*'. Czech School Inspection. 2023.

<sup>92</sup> For more information, see *ibid*.

<sup>93</sup> School counselling centres are institutions that provide educational and psychological support to pupils, parents and schools. These include school counselling centres, educational-psychological counselling centres and special education centres.

<sup>94</sup> Support measures are specific forms of support provided to pupils with special educational needs. They can take the form of, for example, a teaching assistant, adjustments to the content of education or the use of special aids.

<sup>95</sup> European Commission. *Education and Training Monitor 2022: Country analysis for Czechia*. Luxembourg: Publications Office of the European Union, 2022, p. 5. Available at: <https://op.europa.eu/en/publication-detail/-/publication/cd653a8f-66f4-11ed-b14f-01aa75ed71a1/language-en>



than 80% of the majority population.<sup>96</sup> This situation is the result of longstanding structural problems in the Czech education system, including persistent segregation and insufficient measures to support Roma pupils.

Economic barriers significantly affect Romani families' access to secondary education, as they often lack the financial means to cover the cost of school supplies, transportation, food and housing. Although there are scholarship programmes for Roma students, their reach is still limited. Evaluation reports show that these programmes often do not respond to the real needs of families and are not sufficiently promoted among Roma communities. Moreover, the lack of support activities such as mentoring and career guidance leads to a low level of motivation of students and hinders their successful transition to secondary school. Another critical problem is the lack of systemic diagnostic assessment services and career counselling in primary schools, which are key to directing Romani pupils to suitable secondary education options. Without these services, Roma pupils are often placed in lower levels of education, further limiting their opportunities. Segregation in primary schools directly affects the quality of education for Romani pupils and reduces their chances of successful admission to secondary school. Despite legislative commitments to desegregation, progress in this area has been minimal. The situation is further exacerbated by the reluctance of some local authorities to implement inclusive measures and persistent prejudice within majority communities. The absence of sufficient numbers of Romani teachers and teaching assistants in schools represents a missed opportunity to build trust between Romani families and educational institutions. Roma teachers and assistants could serve as role models for pupils and provide valuable cultural insights to improve communication and inclusion. However, their presence in schools is still negligible, and the state does not prioritise their recruitment or training.

While there are some positive examples of programmes aimed at supporting Roma students through scholarships and mentoring, these initiatives are often localised and underfunded. As a result, their wider impact is limited, and the potential for systemic improvement is not fully realised. The proportion of Romani pupils who complete secondary school is still significantly lower than that of the majority population. This difference is due to persistent segregation, the absence of targeted scholarship programmes and mentoring, and insufficient systemic support for the transition from primary to secondary education.

#### 3.2.1.4. Lack of support mechanisms and the impact of short-term financing

The Ministry of Education's 2023 report highlights the serious problems associated with the insufficient capacity and underfunding of school counselling facilities, which are key to working with children from different sociocultural backgrounds, including Romani pupils.<sup>97</sup> These facilities are essential for identifying educational needs and providing support to disadvantaged children. However, due to limited financial resources and inadequate staffing, they are unable to adequately meet the needs of all pupils who require their services. One of the most significant problems is the critical shortage of teaching assistants, who play a crucial role in ensuring inclusive education. Teaching assistants are responsible for supporting pupils who need individual attention and helping teachers effectively manage classrooms with children with different needs. The role of teaching assistants and teachers capable of responding effectively to the needs of Roma children is crucial not only in kindergartens but also at the next level of education. More than 40% of schools in regions with a higher proportion of socially excluded localities report a critical shortage of teaching assistants,<sup>98</sup> which severely limits the possibilities of providing quality and individualised support to pupils in an inclusive environment.

Especially during the transition from preschool to primary education, there is a notable decline in the level of support provided to children. If adequate assistance is no longer available in kindergarten, the child continues

<sup>96</sup> According to the *Information on the implementation of the NRSF 2023*.

<sup>97</sup> Czech School Inspectorate. *Výroční zpráva České školní inspekce za školní rok 2022/2023. [Annual Report of the Czech School Inspectorate for the 2022/2023 School Year.]* Česká školní inspekce, 2023, p. 172. Available at: <https://www.csicr.cz/cz/Dokumenty/Vyrocní-zpravy/Kvalita-vzdelavani-ve-skolnim-roce-2022-2023---vyr>

PEDAGOGICKÉ.INFO, 2023. MŠMT: Výsledky výzkumu „Vytvoření souborů nástrojů určených ke zjišťování potřeb regionálního školství“ [online]. 24. října 2023 [cit. 2025-07-23]. Dostupné z: <http://www.pedagogicke.info/2023/10/msmt-vysledky-vyzkumu-vytvoreni-souboru.html>

<sup>98</sup> Czech School Inspection. 2022. *Highlights of Czech Education: Selected Factors Influencing the Conditions, Course, and Outcomes of Education from the Perspective of Five Years of Secondary Analyses – Secondary Analysis*. Available at:

[https://www.csicr.cz/CSICR/media/Prilohy/2023\\_přilohy/Dokumenty/Sekundarni\\_analyza\\_Zajimavosti\\_ceskeho\\_vzdelavani\\_finalPT.pdf#](https://www.csicr.cz/CSICR/media/Prilohy/2023_přilohy/Dokumenty/Sekundarni_analyza_Zajimavosti_ceskeho_vzdelavani_finalPT.pdf#)

to primary school with weakened skills without a continuous support framework. This is particularly the case for children from Roma families who face language and cultural barriers as well as systemic distrust of institutions.<sup>99</sup>

Moreover, this lack of continuity of support between levels of education increases the risk of misplacement of children in special education, as described above. According to the Ombudsman, in some regions, Roma children are systematically included in educational programmes designed for pupils with mild mental disabilities, often on the basis of inadequate diagnostic assessment tools.

Ensuring a sufficient number of qualified teaching assistants and introducing systematic support for teaching staff is therefore a prerequisite for improving transitions between education levels and preventing segregation. Support for teachers should be linked to professional training that takes into account the specifics of working with Roma children, their language environment and family background. Otherwise, inequalities will be reproduced, the foundations of which are laid as early as pre-school age.

Another fundamental problem is the lack of assessment of the educational needs of Romani pupils. Ineffective and often biased diagnostic assessment processes lead to many Roma children being unnecessarily included in educational programmes for children with mild mental disabilities. This phenomenon, known as 'hidden segregation', has devastating effects on the educational and future employment opportunities of these children. According to the Ombudsperson's report, Roma children in some regions are enrolled in these programmes up to five times more often than their peers from the majority population. This practice not only violates the basic principles of equal access to education but also exacerbates educational inequalities and perpetuates cycles of poverty.

The Education Ministry's report also points out that the implementation of measures aimed at improving support for Romani pupils is proceeding very slowly and is often challenged by a lack of political will and funding. Although school counselling centres play a key role in identifying children's needs and providing adequate support, they are still underfunded and lack sufficient capacity to carry out their tasks effectively. As a result, many children who would benefit from support are not receiving it, negatively affecting their educational outcomes and future life trajectories.

In the context of inclusive education, it is also clear that state policy has long underestimated the need for a systematic and targeted approach to supporting Romani pupils. There is a lack of sufficient intervention to ensure equal opportunities and prevent children from being misplaced in inappropriate educational programmes. Measures designed to address this problem often remain on paper or are implemented on a limited scale, which does not lead to the expected results.

It is necessary for the state not only to increase funding for school counselling facilities and teaching assistants, but also to ensure that diagnostic processes are carried out transparently and objectively. Improving the conditions for the work of school counselling centres, increasing the availability of teaching assistants and introducing stricter control mechanisms for diagnosing educational needs are key steps that can help eliminate persistent inequalities and improve the educational situation of Roma pupils. Without these steps, the problem of insufficient funding and support will continue to persist and widen the educational gap between Roma children and their peers. The lack of support mechanisms, especially teaching assistants, school counsellors and other professionals, remains a critical problem. In many regions, these positions are underfunded and understaffed, so the needs of Roma pupils are not being met.

Another major obstacle to the effective implementation of the NRSF is the short-term nature of project funding. European and national funds focus on two-year or even one-year projects, which disrupts the continuity of activities and prevents long-term change. Changes within communities, especially in the field of education, require long-term and coordinated efforts that are incompatible with such short time horizons. Moreover, monitoring processes are often limited to formalities, and their results rarely contribute to policy or practical change. While the European institutions repeatedly stress the importance of monitoring, they do not put sufficient pressure on Member States to develop and implement effective evaluation systems. Without fundamental changes to evaluation and funding methods, the effectiveness of the NRSF will remain limited. Persistent problems such as segregation, the low level of participation of Roma children in education and the

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<sup>99</sup> PAQ Research. 2022. *Analysis of the reasons for the higher proportion of Roma pupils educated in schools and classes established under Section 16(9) of the Education Act*. Available at: [https://www.edu.cz/wp-content/uploads/2023/04/Final\\_Vyzkumna\\_zprava\\_§\\_16\\_9\\_MSMT\\_PAQ\\_STEM.pdf](https://www.edu.cz/wp-content/uploads/2023/04/Final_Vyzkumna_zprava_§_16_9_MSMT_PAQ_STEM.pdf)

short-term focus of projects cannot be resolved without a systematic and long-term approach that reflects the needs of Roma communities and ensures their active participation.

### 3.2.2. Effectiveness of the NRSF in addressing the problem

The NRSF is a basic document of Czechia aimed at eliminating inequalities in education and supporting the inclusion of Romani children in the education system. The document builds on the European framework and identifies key measures, including ensuring equal access to education, promoting inclusive schooling and preventing segregation. There have been several important changes in the Czech legislative framework that contribute to the fulfilment of these objectives. Among the most significant is the 2016 amendment to the Education Act, which introduced compulsory attendance in the last year of kindergarten and introduced a system of so-called support measures. This system has been complemented by a stronger role for school counselling centres and the greater use of teaching assistants. These measures have created the basis for the implementation of inclusive education, but their impact remains limited. Despite the declared goals and legislative changes, structural obstacles remain that prevent the effective inclusion of Romani children in mainstream education. As stated in the 2023 NRSF 'Implementation Monitoring Report', Roma children still face disadvantages and inequalities in access to quality education, especially at an early age, which is crucial for their future schooling.

The NRSF's goals in the area of education are in line with the identified needs of the Roma population. However, their implementation is very limited. Despite commitments to desegregate and promote inclusion, no substantial improvement has been achieved, as evidenced by the data from the evaluation report on the implementation of the NRSF. Current measures to support the education of Roma children are deeply ineffective, and major obstacles remain at all levels of the system. The main obstacles include the insufficient legislative anchoring of support measures, the weak effectiveness of monitoring mechanisms and the lack of coordination between key actors, including the state administration, local governments, schools and Roma communities. Persistent segregation and the absence of long-term stable and systematically funded programmes further exacerbate educational inequalities. Although the NRSF is conceptually sound in terms of content, its practical implementation on the ground faces a number of obstacles, and it has not yet achieved the expected results.

The lack of a coherent methodology for evaluating and monitoring the implementation of the NRSF is slowing down the NRSF's effectiveness in addressing the described challenges. This absence results in considerable subjectivity in assessing the achievement of strategic objectives, with different actors interpreting achievements in quite different ways. State-run institutions often present optimistic reports on the implementation of commitments, while civil society often points to a lack of tangible results and unfulfilled concrete actions. These differences not only undermine trust between key stakeholders but also prevent an objective picture of the actual effectiveness of the strategy. The NRSF evaluation at the state level is characterised by the lack of a clear and binding monitoring system that includes well-defined criteria, time milestones, and standardised procedures. This shortcoming results in assessments of progress in implementing the strategy being highly inconsistent and difficult to compare over time. Evaluation reports often rely on formal and quantitative indicators, such as the number of activities supported or organisations involved, without reflecting the actual impact on Roma communities or taking into account the experience of the target group.

Unlike foreign examples where both public institutions and independent expert platforms are systematically involved in the evaluation of strategies, in the Czech environment, the key responsibility for monitoring is left to individual officials or members of working groups without a uniform methodology. While the Monitoring Committee for the Activities of the Agency for Social Inclusion and the Committee for the Implementation of the NRSF exist, their functionality is limited – they lack executive authority, a structured framework for evaluation and are unable to ensure transparent and consistent monitoring of the impact of policies on the ground. Another problem is the limited capacity of civil society. CSOs, which could play a monitoring role and come up with opposing assessments, do not have sufficient financial and staff resources. They also lack access to relevant data and methodological support. As a result, monitoring is often limited to descriptive reports without analytical overlap and feedback, leading to adjustments in strategy implementation. This situation persists despite repeated calls for an independent and evidence-based monitoring system.

One of the most problematic aspects is the discrepancy between the NRSF's assessment and the actual situation of Roma communities. Research data, such as the 2021 survey by the European Union Agency for

Fundamental Rights,<sup>100</sup> clearly shows that the NRSF does not effectively address critical issues such as segregation in education, the low level of participation of Roma children in pre-school education and insufficient support for the transition to secondary school. These problems not only persist, but in some regions are actually getting worse, according to current data. The government report on the NRSF implementation states that 29.2% of Roma pupils were educated in schools established under Section 16 of the Education Act in 2022, with a slight increase in this proportion between 2021 and 2022 (from 29%), indicating continued structural segregation. Projects funded by European and national sources often lack long-term sustainability, leading to the premature termination of activities that could potentially lead to systemic change. This problem is also mentioned in the government report on NRSF implementation, which states that many projects lack continuity, lack systemic ownership of outputs and are terminated without follow-up measures. Projects funded by European and national sources often lack long-term sustainability, leading to the premature termination of activities that could potentially lead to systemic change.

An example of a measure being implemented in order to improve the educational conditions of Romani children is the provision of free school lunches. The aim of this measure is to remove financial barriers that prevent disadvantaged families from fully participating in pre-school and primary education. Free lunches not only ensure access to food but also increase school attendance and positively influence academic performance. A study shows that free meals significantly affect regular school attendance and improve educational outcomes for children from low-income families.<sup>101</sup> International examples confirm the effectiveness of this measure. In Finland, Sweden and Estonia, where free lunches are provided across the board to all children, positive impacts have been observed not only on attendance but also on pupils' health and social integration. According to the European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights,<sup>102</sup> this approach is considered a key tool for preventing social exclusion and educational failure. Furthermore, the 2019 'Let Them Eat Lunch' study<sup>103</sup> confirms that free lunches improve pupils' school performance, with this effect being most pronounced for children from socially disadvantaged backgrounds. In Czechia, there are programmes to support school meals, such as the 'School Lunch Programme', funded by the EU. However, these programmes have a limited reach. For example, in 2023, Women for Women—one of the main partners of the Ministry of Education—supported approximately 14,500 children through free school meal initiatives. Yet according to estimates, significantly more children are in need of such assistance, with some estimates suggesting the number could be in the hundreds of thousands.<sup>104</sup> PAQ research highlights that complex criteria and bureaucratic procedures often result in support not reaching all families in need. Another problem is the stigma associated with providing lunch only to selected children. This stigma has been observed abroad, for example, in Lithuania and Hungary, where children who received free lunches were often subjected to discrimination by their peers. To minimise this risk, it is recommended that a universal free meals system similar to those in Sweden or Slovakia should be introduced. Despite these measures, it should be stressed that free lunches are only one tool for addressing broader problems in the education system. Studies by the FRA and the Ombudsperson<sup>105</sup> show that key obstacles include persistent segregation, a low level of parental trust in institutions and a lack of support mechanisms. These problems require a comprehensive approach that links free lunches with other measures such as improving family awareness, ensuring access to quality education in areas with high concentrations of socially excluded people

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<sup>100</sup> FRA. (2021). Roma in 10 European Countries. Main Results. Publication Office of the European Union. Available at: [https://fra.europa.eu/sites/default/files/fra\\_uploads/fra-2022-roma-survey-2021-main-results2\\_en.pdf](https://fra.europa.eu/sites/default/files/fra_uploads/fra-2022-roma-survey-2021-main-results2_en.pdf)

<sup>101</sup> PAQ research. 2023. *The impact of providing free school lunches on the attendance and educational outcomes of children from low-income families.*

<sup>102</sup> FRA. 2020. *Coronavirus pandemic in the EU – impact on Roma and Travellers.*

<sup>103</sup> Kristin F. Butcher. 2019. *Let Them Eat Lunch: The Impact of Universal Free Meals on Student Performance.* National Bureau of Economic Research Working Paper No. 26162.

<sup>104</sup> Svoboda, M. *Přes 25 tisíc dětí dostalo obědy zdarma. Přibývá rodin, které je nemohou zaplatit. [Over 25,000 Children Received Free School Lunches. The Number of Families Unable to Afford Them Is Growing.]* Asociace krajských samospráv ČR, 3. July 2023. Available at: <https://www.asocr.cz/obsah/54/pres-25-tisic-deti-dostalo-obedy-zdarma-pribyva-rodin-ktere/333928>

Korbel, V., Zeman, J. & Škvřínák, M. *Free School Meals Have Proven Results. We Show How to Set Up the System in Czechia.* PAQ Research, 2024. Available at: <https://www.paqresearch.cz/post/obedy-zdarma-maji-prokazatelne-vysledky-navrhujeme-jak-system-nastavit-v-cesku/>

<sup>105</sup> See: Veřejný ochránce práv. 2020. *Zpráva o vzdělávání romských dětí v České republice.*

and strengthening the role of community centres. According to the analysis by PAQ Research,<sup>106</sup> the introduction of free meals for all children from low-income families would cost approximately 700 million CZK (28.44 million EUR) to 1.1 billion CZK (44.69 million EUR) per year, representing 0.35 – 0.55% of the regional education budget. These costs are negligible compared to the potential benefits, as improving children's educational outcomes can lead to long-term reductions in social inequalities and greater economic prosperity.

### 3.2.3. Synergy with other actions

Addressing problems beyond the NRSF is not a mere complement to existing strategies, but a necessary response to long-term systemic failures that affect Romani communities. The urgency of finding and deploying solutions is paramount, as many critical issues remain neglected or inadequately addressed within current strategic frameworks. These problems can no longer be postponed, as failure to address them will exacerbate inequalities, increase social tensions and undermine trust in institutional support.

A key argument reinforcing the need to address issues beyond the NRSF is the persistent ineffectiveness of existing measures. Persistent segregation in education, low employment rates and lack of affordable housing clearly show that existing strategies are not achieving the expected results. Roma communities continue to face marginalisation that is not only socially unjust but also economically unsustainable. Neglecting these problems creates long-term costs that affect the whole of society.

The urgency of implementing these measures is supported by the repeated recommendations of experts who point to the discrepancy between the stated objectives of the Strategy and the reality on the ground. One of the main shortcomings is the absence of a comprehensive approach that integrates the various strategies and programmes into a workable system. For example, educational measures aimed at supporting Roma children cannot be successful without addressing housing and employment problems. This lack of integration undermines the impact of individual activities and leads to a waste of financial and human resources.

These measures are justified by the principles of equality and social justice. Roma communities have the right to equal access to education, employment and housing, just like other citizens. Ignoring these rights is not only contrary to democratic values but also undermines overall social cohesion. Both the European Union and Czechia have made clear commitments to support disadvantaged groups, which often remain unfulfilled in the case of the Roma. It is therefore essential that the state and its institutions recognise the reality and adopt measures that respond to the real needs of Roma communities.

Key solutions that are not sufficiently developed in current strategies include the introduction of long-term funding mechanisms to replace short-term and fragmented projects. Without stable financing, sustainable progress cannot be expected. In addition, a binding legislative framework must be put in place to prevent inefficient management and enforce the implementation of measures such as school desegregation. Legislative support should be accompanied by an effective monitoring system to ensure transparency and evaluate the impact of individual measures.

Another crucial area is the involvement of Roma communities in the planning, implementation and evaluation of measures. The active participation of Roma in policy-making is essential to ensure the effectiveness and legitimacy of initiatives. Without their input, it is not possible to design measures that truly reflect their needs. This approach also strengthens trust in institutions and promotes social inclusion.

The urgent need to take these steps is further underscored by the fact that Romani communities face not only historical injustices but also current challenges related to economic and social change. The time to implement these measures is limited, and further delays could have serious consequences for society as a whole. Solutions beyond the NRSF are therefore not just an alternative, but a fundamental path towards creating a fairer and more cohesive society.

### 3.2.4. Roma participation

The participation of Roma and pro-Roma civil society organisations is an important factor in the implementation of strategies aimed at improving the status of Romani communities in Czechia. Their involvement is not only

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<sup>106</sup> Korbel, V., Zeman, J. & Škvřňák, M. *Free School Meals Have Proven Results. We Show How to Set Up the System in Czechia*. PAQ Research, 2024. Available at: <https://www.paqresearch.cz/post/obedy-zdarma-maji-prokazatelne-vysledky-navrhujeme-jak-system-nastavit-v-cesku/>



limited to the implementation of individual projects, but also includes participation in policy-making, the preparation of calls for proposals and the evaluation of programmes funded from public and European sources. In addition, representatives of the Roma minority have been invited to working meetings on the preparation of the PRO-ROMA call, which aims to create a platform for targeted funding for community-based interventions under the OP JAK. Similarly, the involvement of the Roma is specified in the case of OPZ+ calls (Specific Objective 2.3). In the framework of the PRO ROMA subsidy programme announced by OP JAK, Roma evaluators were involved in the evaluation of applications in 2023. Furthermore, a Roma representative was part of the selection committee in the call for proposals focused on the educational activities of national minorities. While this step has contributed to greater transparency and inclusivity in decision-making processes, it also shows that Roma involvement in evaluation and decision-making structures remains limited.

Similarly, the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs has appointed representatives of the Roma minority to its advisory bodies, in particular to the Commission for Social Inclusion and the Programme Partnership within the framework of OPZ+ (Specific Objective 2.3). These representatives participate in the discussion of project plans and calls for proposals under the priority aimed at supporting marginalised communities.

Despite these positive measures, it is important to note the lack of systematic data on what specific activities Romani organisations are implementing within the framework of the operational programmes and what impact their interventions are having. Most publicly available documents and evaluation reports focus rather on formal indicators (e.g. number of calls or allocated funds), while concrete examples of Roma organisations' participation in the field and their impact on target groups remain insufficiently captured.

The Supreme Audit Office has also criticised this state of affairs, warning in its report of the fragmentation of support, complex and bureaucratic challenges, and the lack of a system that would allow smaller organisations, including Romani organisations, equal access to funding. As a result, most funding ends up with large organisations, while community-anchored and experienced actors that could provide effective interventions in marginalised localities are often left without support. However, calls that target target groups from Roma communities are an insufficient part of the total volume of grant mechanisms. For example, Call No. 2.3 under OPZ+ saw a huge surge of applications, but due to the limited allocation, only a part of them could be supported. Smaller Roma organisations, in particular, were among those that were unable to implement their projects despite their need due to their limited absorption capacity and challenging conditions. Thus, in the current system, even well-prepared interventions end up failing because the evaluation system fails to adequately reflect their context and contribution on the ground and instead focuses only on the formal fulfilment of the applications and evaluates the quality of their content more than their contribution.

It follows that strengthening the role of Roma organisations must be a priority not only in terms of equal access, but also as a tool for improving efficiency. Roma organisations have experience and trust in communities, which is crucial for the sustainable impact of projects. It is therefore essential to improve the availability of data on their involvement and impact, to increase their capacity to design projects and to strengthen their involvement in all phases of policy implementation. Otherwise, organisations that are able to write a good project application but may lack real and visible results will be repeatedly supported, which will be reflected in the overall picture of changes in Roma integration. Again, there will be support for organisations that appear to be working with Roma, but which not only lack the confidence of the Roma themselves, but also have projects oriented around a paternalistic approach.<sup>107</sup>

### 3.2.5. Specific recommendations concerning education

- I. Segregation in education limits equal opportunities for Roma children. It is essential to promote legislative measures against segregation, supported by coordination between state authorities, local authorities and schools. Cooperation with Roma communities is also essential to ensure that measures reflect their needs. A study on the segregation of Roma pupils (2021) shows that 24% of Roma pupils attend schools where they are the majority, which negatively affects their educational outcomes.
- II. Involving Roma communities in the development of education policies and their participation in decision-making processes will ensure that the measures that are adopted better reflect their real

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<sup>107</sup> As the detailed content of the projects that have been submitted is not publicly available and only published in general terms, specific evidence regarding their focus or contribution cannot be provided. However, the author of this statement is part of the evaluation processes and therefore has direct experience with the process of assessing the quality and impact of these projects.

needs and cultural specificities. This approach will strengthen trust between schools and Roma families and promote an inclusive learning environment. For example, the PRO-ROMA call under the OP JAK focuses on supporting non-formal education for Roma children and youth and emphasises the importance of cooperation with Roma organisations.

- III. European funds should prioritise long-term and sustainable projects to support the inclusion of Roma children over short-term initiatives with limited impact. Emphasis should be placed on the transparent evaluation of the effectiveness of these funds. The European Commission (2022) recommends focusing on projects with long-term impact and sustainability.
- IV. Adequate funding is essential to ensure quality education for all children. Increased funding will enable schools to employ sufficient numbers of teaching assistants, school psychologists and other professionals needed to support Romani pupils. This will increase the ability of schools to effectively address the individual needs of pupils and contribute to their educational success.
- V. Diagnostic tools for identifying special educational needs are often grant-funded and voluntary, but many remain outdated and lack ethnic sensitivity. Their continued use risks misclassifying Roma children with mild intellectual disabilities, leading to inappropriate placement in special education, segregation, and limited access to mainstream schooling. Data from the Ombudsperson's Office shows Roma pupils are about ten times more likely to be educated under special education frameworks than their non-Roma peers. This disparity highlights the urgent need to revise and standardise assessment procedures and train counselling professionals in culturally sensitive methods. Studies for the Ministry of Education confirm that obsolete diagnostics are still in use, despite clear evidence of their negative impact. Critics argue this systemic failure constitutes institutional discrimination. If tools demonstrably cause harm, they should be withdrawn or subjected to strict regulation and immediate replacement. The European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights warns that diagnostics ignoring social disadvantage are both ineffective and unethical. The state's failure to enforce modern standards reflects a broader lack of accountability and political will. A 2022 research shows the need for the introduction of a uniform diagnostic methodology and training of professional staff to ensure adequate access to Roma children.<sup>108</sup> To effectively address this problem, it is essential that the state and its institutions stop tolerating ineffective approaches and actively promote the reform of diagnostic processes. The question must be asked: if we know that these tools are harmful, why are they still part of the education system? This is a question that the state and professional institutions must urgently answer.
- VI. Studying successful models of inclusive education in other countries can provide valuable insights for implementing effective strategies in the Czech environment. For example, some European countries have successfully implemented programmes aimed at integrating Roma children into mainstream schools, which has led to improved educational outcomes.<sup>109</sup>

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<sup>108</sup> Hoření, K. & al. *Výzkumná zpráva: Analýza příčin vyššího podílu romských žáků vzdělávajících se dle RVP ZV UV ve třídách zřízených podle § 16 odst. 9 školského zákona a návrh souboru opatření pro oblast vzdělávání a další relevantní oblasti.* [Research Report: Analysis of the Causes Behind the Higher Proportion of Roma Pupils Educated According to the Framework Educational Programme for Pupils with Mild Intellectual Disabilities in Classes Established Under § 16(9) of the Education Act, and a Proposal for a Set of Measures in Education and Other Relevant Areas.] Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports, 2023. Available at: [https://www.edu.cz/wp-content/uploads/2023/04/Final\\_Vyzkumna\\_zprava\\_§\\_16\\_9\\_MSMT\\_PAQ\\_STEM.pdf](https://www.edu.cz/wp-content/uploads/2023/04/Final_Vyzkumna_zprava_§_16_9_MSMT_PAQ_STEM.pdf)

<sup>109</sup> In Romania, for example, a ministerial order on desegregation has been issued requiring schools to integrate children from different ethnic groups and to regularly monitor for segregation. In the Netherlands, there is an emphasis on local community projects that not only involves monitoring the composition of classes but also actively promotes individualised educational approaches to avoid the segregation of pupils along ethnic lines. In Germany, schools regularly analyse data on school performance and the socio-economic composition of classes, which allows for early detection of possible segregation and targeted integration measures. Sweden has put in place a comprehensive monitoring system to ensure, through regular assessments, that every child has equal access to quality education, regardless of ethnic or social background. In Spain, some regions are experimenting with decentralised models, whereby schools are given greater autonomy to design inclusive programmes, which are then regularly evaluated by the Ministry of Education. These examples demonstrate that different European countries are finding their own effective ways to counter segregation and promote inclusive education, providing valuable insights for implementing similar measures in the Czech environment.

- VII. The long-term need for quality monitoring and evaluation of the measures, as highlighted in the NRSF, demonstrates its importance. However, actual changes reflecting this legitimate requirement are still minimal. There is still a lack of a comprehensive system of data collection and analysis that would enable the effective evaluation of the impact of measures that are implemented. Without good quality data, it is impossible to objectively assess whether the policies being implemented are actually improving the educational outcomes of Roma children. This problem is also evident in the European strategies, which emphasise the importance of monitoring but do not place sufficient emphasis on the mandatory introduction of evaluation systems in the Member States. Monitoring processes also often remain formal, and their results rarely contribute to real changes in policy or educational practice. To overcome this problem, it is necessary to increase funding, strengthen professional capacity and improve coordination between government institutions, schools and CSOs. In addition, it is essential to establish a solid legislative basis for monitoring. Instead of supporting long-term strategies, funding is often concentrated on short-term projects with limited impact. European institutions repeatedly stress the importance of monitoring, but do not put enough pressure on Member States to develop and implement effective evaluation systems. Another critical shortcoming is the low level of involvement of Roma communities in the monitoring process. Without their active participation, it is not possible to ensure that the results of evaluations correspond to the real needs and priorities of Roma families. Such participation could promote greater confidence in the education system and increase the effectiveness of the measures being implemented. Involving Roma communities would also help to prevent monitoring processes from being divorced from reality and ensure that they effectively address problems.
- VIII. The state must take an active role in promoting collaboration between schools, families and communities. This approach requires, in particular, increased funding for school counselling facilities and support programmes so that these institutions can address the specific needs of regions with high concentrations of socially excluded communities. Legislative measures should define clear obligations for schools to cooperate with communities and parents, including regular monitoring and evaluation of the effectiveness of these activities. The European Union can make a significant contribution by providing long-term financial support aimed at developing community programmes. EU funding, such as the ESF+, should focus primarily on systematic and sustainable projects supporting the inclusion of Roma children. The European Commission should oversee the effective use of these funds in the Member States and provide methodological guidance on the adoption of successful international models of school-community cooperation.

### 3.3. Employment

The employment of Roma in Czechia remains one of the most important problems whose solution is crucial not only for improving the living standards of Romani communities but also for their full socioeconomic integration into society. Stable, dignified and legal employment provides individuals not only with economic security, but also with access to quality housing, healthcare and education. At the same time, it contributes to social stability and removes factors that lead to deepening marginalisation. The importance of employment goes beyond the individual level – it also directly affects the overall social climate and contributes to reducing negative stereotypes and prejudices against Roma.

Civil society monitoring reports from 2018, 2019 and 2022, as well as the NRSF, provide a detailed look at the persistent barriers that prevent Roma from fully integrating into the labour market. These documents identify a number of structural and systemic issues that are deeply entrenched and require targeted and long-term efforts to address. The most significant barriers include labour market discrimination, over-indebtedness, low educational attainment, a lack of appropriate retraining programmes and limited access to employer support for the inclusion of Roma workers. These factors not only prevent Roma from fully participating in economic activities but also contribute to deepening their social exclusion and economic dependence.

The following analysis focuses on the persistent problems in the area of Roma employment, their causes and impacts, as well as an assessment of the effectiveness of the measures taken so far. The summary of the conclusions of the individual monitoring reports provides a comprehensive view of the state of implementation of the strategy, its results and shortcomings. This text also critically reflects on the extent to which the problems identified in previous monitoring cycles have been addressed and emphasises the understanding of the structural and systemic aspects that affect Roma employability.



### 3.3.1. Key barriers to the employment of Roma

The barriers to the employment of Roma have deep structural roots, which are reflected not only in the economic situation of individuals but also in their integration into wider society. The RCM monitoring reports have repeatedly highlighted several major obstacles to improving this situation.

The first problem is the persistent segregation of Roma communities, which directly affects Roma access to employment opportunities. Segregated localities, which are often located on the outskirts of cities or in geographically isolated areas, limit the ability of Roma to seek employment outside these areas. Weak access to transport and the lack of job opportunities in these locations increase unemployment rates. According to the 2022 NRSF monitoring, this isolation leads many Roma to resign themselves to looking for work outside their neighbourhood.

Another key issue is the lack of adequate education and skills. The low level of educational attainment limits the ability of Roma to enter the labour market and compete with the majority population. According to data contained in the 2018 and 2019 RCM monitoring reports, only a small percentage of the Roma population completes high school with a high school diploma, a basic requirement for many jobs.<sup>110</sup> This skills gap is the result of a longstanding, ineffective education system that fails to provide a level playing field for Roma students.

The problem of debt is closely linked to job insecurity and low incomes. Individuals facing job instability or financial insecurity often have to resort to loans to cover basic living costs. This financial pressure, in turn, increases stress levels, which can affect their work performance and jeopardise their retention in the labour market. In addition, excessive debt can limit opportunities for further professional development or investment in education, creating a vicious circle where financial insecurity prevents the attainment of stable and promising employment.

Another major obstacle is discrimination in the labour market, which was evident in all monitoring cycles. Employers often refuse to hire Roma because of prejudices and stereotypes, as confirmed by employer surveys. The 2022 NRSF Monitoring Report highlights that effective solutions to this problem are hampered by insufficient legislative protection and weak enforcement of anti-discrimination measures. Public organisations in Czechia have not yet demonstrated systematic and long-term strategies for the active employment of Roma, as confirmed not only by defined strategic frameworks but also by recent research and statistical analysis. For example, the official Social Inclusion Strategy 2021-2030 sets out objectives intended to promote equality and inclusion, but specific measures in the field of Roma employment are implemented in a rather fragmented manner. Furthermore, research conducted by the Research Institute of Labour and Social Affairs points to the persistent socio-economic exclusion of the Roma population, which translates into limited access to employment opportunities. Information on the implementation of the NRSF shows that measures aimed at promoting employment are not achieving the expected results. The statistics recorded in the 2023 Staff Analysis provide broader context about the Czech economy in which these problems are particularly evident. In addition, the economic developments and business analysis published in 2023 underline that without coordinated and long-term measures, Roma communities continue to face low employment rates and limited career opportunities.

### 3.3.2. Effectiveness of the NRSF in addressing the problem

The NRSF seeks to systematically improve employment conditions for Roma through legislative, educational and economic measures. Although the NRSF contains a number of instruments designed to contribute to the greater inclusion of Roma in the labour market, its implementation is problematic, according to available monitoring reports.

One of the key pillars of the NRSF is the goal of protecting Roma from discrimination in employment. The existing anti-discrimination law, which ensures equal treatment and prohibits discrimination on the basis of ethnic origin, should be supported by training programmes for employers and the enhanced monitoring of discriminatory practices. However, these measures have not been sufficiently implemented. Employers are not sufficiently informed about the legal consequences of discrimination and are still afraid of hiring Roma. Despite

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<sup>110</sup> For more information, see the 2018 and 2019 RCM reports, available at: <https://www.romacivilmonitoring.eu/countries/czechia/>

the existence of legislation, its enforcement remains weak, and many cases of discrimination are not properly investigated, undermining its effectiveness.

The NRSF assumed that improving access to legal aid would strengthen the ability of Roma to defend themselves against discrimination in the labour market. However, access to legal services is very limited, especially in regions with a high concentration of socially excluded communities, such as the Ústí nad Labem region.<sup>111</sup> In these areas, there is a lack of sufficient institutions and organisations to provide legal assistance in labour disputes. In addition, many Roma do not have sufficient awareness of their rights and defence options, which reduces the effectiveness of this measure. In Czechia, Roma organisations often do not have a specialised legal advice service specifically dedicated to employment and labour disputes. If there are organisations that provide basic legal assistance, they usually focus mainly on dealing with discrimination cases or providing housing-related advice. Specialist social counselling, which is carried out by some CSOs (e.g. Romodrom), is usually provided by social workers who lack legal training. This situation means that Roma often do not have access to adequate legal support and do not know how to properly defend their labour rights, which further complicates their integration into the labour market.

An integral part of the NRSF is the effort to eliminate negative stereotypes that represent a significant barrier to the employment of Roma. The strategy, therefore, involved implementing nationwide awareness campaigns to highlight the benefits of diversity to the public and employers and to help break down entrenched prejudices. However, no significant campaign has yet been implemented. This lack means that stereotypes about the unreliability and poor work ethic of Roma remain strongly entrenched in Czech society, further hindering their access to the labour market.

In addition to discrimination, Roma also face structural barriers that prevent them from obtaining stable employment. In areas with high unemployment and low job supply, such as the Ústí nad Labem and Moravian-Silesian regions, Roma often lack access to jobs that match their skills. The jobs available in these regions are predominantly low-skilled and often require flexibility in commuting.<sup>112</sup> The geographical isolation of Roma communities on the outskirts of cities and the lack of public transport to industrial zones limit the opportunities for Roma workers to apply for these jobs. The NRSF planned to support regional transport projects that would enable better connections between excluded localities and job centres. However, according to monitoring reports, these measures have been only partially implemented, and their impact on Roma employment remains negligible.

A new programme aims to improve the skills and professional competitiveness of the Roma community through active employment policies. In April 2023, the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs launched the project 'Development of the Social Entrepreneurship Ecosystem'. This project includes a network of 'S-points' - regional centres that provide free advice to budding social entrepreneurs. These centres are mainly located in regions with a higher proportion of socially excluded localities (e.g., in the Ústí nad Labem and the Moravian-Silesian regions), and their aim is to support not only start-up activities but also the development of integrative enterprises that can provide employment opportunities for Roma entrepreneurs. The measure reflects the need for an individualised and adaptable approach to the development of work competences as set out in the long-term strategic framework until 2030.

Support for Roma entrepreneurs is a key element of active employment policy. The Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs provides financial instruments, such as a grant to start self-employment and a bridging grant to cover operating costs, to help Roma entrepreneurs overcome initial financial barriers. At the same time, specialised retraining courses are organised, which focus on acquiring knowledge in the fields of taxation, accounting and commercial law. These courses are designed to provide the necessary support to individuals who want to develop their business activities in line with the changing requirements of the labour market, through a personalised approach that emphasises adaptation to new technologies and innovation.<sup>113</sup>

From June 2023, the project 'Guarantees for Youth' was launched under the OPZ+, which aims to support the entry into the labour market of candidates aged 15-29, including young Roma. In addition, economically inactive Roma women, especially those caring for pre-school children, are supported. The principle is to ensure that

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<sup>111</sup> As noted in the 2018 RCM report.

<sup>112</sup> *Job Vacancy Analysis with an Emphasis on Foreigners*. Ministry of Labour. 2023

<sup>113</sup> *Strategic framework of employment policy until 2030*. Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs. 2020

these individuals have access to targeted counselling and retraining tailored to their specific needs. However, it should be emphasised that in practice, professional social advice is often provided by social workers who lack legal qualifications, resulting in insufficient and comprehensive legal support. These measures aim at overcoming barriers to entry into employment and supporting the inclusion of the Roma community in the labour market, and their long-term effectiveness will be monitored through regular evaluations in the framework of the 2030 Strategy.<sup>114</sup>

Retraining programmes were to play a key role in integrating Romani people into the labour market and increasing their employability. The NRSF assumed that targeted retraining courses would help Roma overcome the barriers associated with having a low level of qualifications while enabling them to acquire skills relevant to labour market needs. In 2023, the Labour Office actually expanded the range of retraining programmes – including courses focused on basic and advanced digital skills, courses for craft and technical professions (e.g. welder, bricklayer, plumber), as well as retraining in the field of services, customer service and care for persons dependent on the help of another person. However, these courses are often held in larger cities or regional centres, which makes them difficult to access for Roma living in socially excluded or geographically isolated localities. In addition, many candidates face barriers related to transport, childcare or low digital literacy, which also prevent them from accessing information about the courses themselves. These factors undermine the effectiveness of the intended support and point to the need for more targeted and accessible education in regions where a higher proportion of marginalised people live. A fundamental problem is the fact that retraining programmes are not organised in the areas where the greatest concentration of the Romani population is located. In a number of regions, such as the Ústí nad Labem and Moravian-Silesian Regions, there are no retraining centres near socially excluded localities.<sup>115</sup> This means that Roma who are interested in acquiring new qualifications often have to commute to distant towns, which poses a financial and logistical challenge. Combined with the lack of public transport links, this makes it virtually impossible for many Roma to participate in retraining courses. Another critical shortcoming is the insufficient content of the retraining courses. Many of the courses are not relevant to the needs of the labour market, which leads to Roma having difficulty finding employment even after completing them. In some regions, for example, courses in craft professions are offered, but there is not enough demand for them in the area. Conversely, in sectors where there is a long-term labour shortage, such as social services or information technology, retraining programmes are not adapted to the specific needs of the Roma community. This mismatch between the supply of retraining and the actual requirements of the labour market significantly reduces its effectiveness. Furthermore, it appears that the Roma population is not sufficiently informed about the existence and conditions of retraining programmes. Information on the implementation of the NRSF by 2023 states that although the strategy envisaged targeted dissemination of information about retraining courses, this measure has not been implemented in practice. The absence of an information campaign and the low involvement of field social workers have led to a large part of the Roma population being unaware of these opportunities, which significantly reduces the number of participants in these programmes. Retraining programmes also face institutional barriers. State administrations and regional authorities often lack the necessary capacity and financial resources to effectively adapt retraining programmes to the needs of specific groups such as Roma. There is also a lack of systematic monitoring of the effectiveness of these courses, which means that there is insufficient data on how many retraining graduates have actually found employment. This lack of feedback has led to the programmes not being sufficiently adapted and remaining ineffective. Although the NRSF has correctly recognised the importance of retraining as a tool for increasing the employability of Romani people, its implementation faces a number of major obstacles. These include the limited availability of courses in regions with a higher proportion of the Roma population, the inadequacy of the content of some retraining courses in relation to current labour market needs, the low level of awareness of the target group and insufficient institutional support. These factors significantly reduce the effectiveness of retraining programmes. Without targeted efforts to make training offers more accessible, relevant and better communicated, their impact on Roma employment will remain limited.

Financial support for commuting has been proposed as a key tool to overcome the geographical barriers that prevent Roma from accessing employment. The NRSF envisaged that transport allowances would help to reduce the financial burden of commuting to work, particularly for Roma living in isolated locations where public

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<sup>114</sup> Ibid.

<sup>115</sup> According to the *Report on the socio-economic situation of the Roma population 2023/2024* (Šimíková et al., 2024).

transport links are inadequate. Although this mechanism exists, its implementation is insufficient, and its effectiveness remains limited, according to monitoring reports. Support for commuting is only implemented in a few pilot regions, which means that most Roma who would need this assistance are not eligible for it. These measures have been applied mainly in the Karlovy Vary and Ústí nad Labem regions, while they have not been implemented in other regions where Roma unemployment is also high. This selective approach reduces the overall effectiveness of the programme and exacerbates regional inequalities. Moreover, in areas with high levels of social exclusion, public transport is often underdeveloped, meaning that even the financial contribution to commuting may not be sufficient to enable Roma to get to work regularly. Most of these allowances only cover a certain period of time, usually a few months, which does not address the long-term problems of access to employment for Roma. Once the support ends, many Roma find themselves unable to continue to finance regular commuting, leading to a return to long-term unemployment. This approach does not address the structural problem of a lack of transport accessibility and only temporarily mitigates the negative effects of geographical isolation. A further problem is the administrative burden associated with the use of these benefits. Many Roma who would be eligible for support are unaware of it or fail to meet the complex administrative conditions. For example, in the Moravian-Silesian Region, it was found that only a small proportion of the Roma population met the formal conditions for receiving the transport allowance, despite the high demand for these incentives. The low level of awareness and complexity of the application process thus reduce the effectiveness of the whole measure. In terms of a systemic solution, it appears that financial incentives for transport are only a partial step and are not able to overcome long-term barriers to Roma employment on their own. A more effective alternative would be to systematically improve the transport infrastructure in socially excluded areas, which would enable better connections between Roma communities and employment centres. While the NRSF envisages the development of a regional transport policy aimed at integrating socially excluded localities into the wider transport system, implementation to date has been slow and ineffective.

The implementation of national awareness campaigns should have been one of the key tools to change the public perception of Roma and motivate employers to hire them more actively. The NRSF envisaged targeted campaigns that would reach not only the general public but also key actors in the labour market, including businesses, trade unions and state institutions. Although this intention was formulated as a priority measure in the document, its practical implementation has not yet taken place. This shortcoming is alarming, as empirical research confirms that stereotypical perceptions of Roma significantly affect their chances of gaining employment. Despite the declared goal of the NRSF to promote equal access to the labour market for Roma, no targeted and extensive information campaign aimed at employing Roma or promoting diversity in the workplace was implemented in 2023. The NRSF explicitly foresaw such a measure. The annual report on the implementation of the Strategy for 2023 states that none of the responsible ministries provided the basis for the fulfilment of this objective, and the measure therefore remained unfulfilled. At the same time, the lack of systematic efforts by public institutions as employers also persists. They should set an example in applying the principles of equality and diversity. For example, the NRSF proposed the use of socially responsible public procurement as a tool to promote Roma employment, but the relevant measure (E.5.6) was not evaluated at all in 2023, indicating that no concrete steps have been taken. This passive approach contributes to the persistence of negative stereotypes and prejudices that continue to make it difficult for Roma to access employment. As stated in the RCM report (2022), Roma job seekers often face automatic rejection regardless of their qualifications or experience. In contrast, some European countries, such as Spain, have demonstrated the effectiveness of targeted campaigns. Here, extensive media activities have been carried out under the *Acceder* programme, in cooperation with the private and public sectors, which have positively influenced the perception of Roma workers and led to an increase in their employment.<sup>116</sup> Negative stereotypes that associate Romani people with a poor work ethic, unreliability or lower qualifications continue to persist.<sup>117</sup> These prejudices are often widespread not only among employers but also among the general public, which makes it difficult to effectively implement other NRSF measures. Without an active campaign aimed at breaking down these myths, the employment situation for Roma cannot be expected to improve. The absence of strategies to address these prejudices is also evident from international comparisons. The evaluation report of the National Strategic Frameworks (2023) confirms that in most European countries where systematic campaigns to support minorities have been implemented, there has been a visible decrease in discrimination in the labour market. The awareness-raising activities that have been carried out in the past have often been limited to smaller local

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<sup>116</sup> Fundación Secretariado Gitano. 2022. *Programa Acceder: Informe de resultados 2021*.

<sup>117</sup> According to the *Report on the Socioeconomic Situation of the Romani Population 2023/2024* (Šimíková et al., 2024).

initiatives by CSOs, whose reach has been very limited. The Office of the Government acknowledges that, despite the existence of programmes aimed at promoting inclusion, there is a lack of a long-term and coordinated media strategy that would systematically work to eliminate deep-rooted prejudices. However, the Czech Republic still lacks any coordinated campaign of this kind. Although the NRSF recommends the creation of a media strategy that would include television, radio and internet campaigns aimed at raising awareness and changing the perception of Roma in society, it has not yet been implemented. In previous years, insufficient funds have been allocated for such projects,<sup>118</sup> which has led to the topic of Roma inclusion in the labour market remaining neglected in the public sphere. Experts say an effective campaign should not only include positive examples of Romani workers who have succeeded in various professions, but also focus on employers who give Romani people a chance and have had good experiences with them. It would also be important to involve key authorities such as state institutions, professional associations and the media, which have a significant influence on shaping public opinion. Campaigns that have combined positive examples of Roma in employment with the involvement of public institutions and media support have had a measurable impact on Roma employment and job stability.<sup>119</sup> Overall, the absence of national awareness campaigns significantly weakens the other measures of the strategy. If the prevailing negative attitudes of the public and employers towards Roma cannot be changed, then even legislative, economic or educational instruments will not have the expected long-term effect. The strategy is failing in this area mainly due to a lack of political will and financial support, which prevents a strong and coordinated approach to changing the public discourse on Roma in the labour market.

### 3.3.3. Synergy with other actions

Despite the existence of the NRSF, the problems of Roma employment in Czechia remain unaddressed to a sufficient extent. Although the NRSF contains measures aimed at promoting Roma employment, its implementation is insufficient and does not cover the key barriers that Roma face on the labour market. In addition, there are other factors that are not part of the NRSF that hinder the successful integration of Roma into the labour market.

One of the main problems is the lack of a strategic approach to working with specific groups of Roma, including women caring for children, young Roma who are leaving school, and the elderly. Current measures do not include sufficiently targeted programmes that reflect their specific needs and allow them easier access to employment. Another shortcoming is ineffective retraining programmes, which often do not respond to the needs of the labour market or the reality of Roma communities. Many graduates of these courses do not find employment because the skills they acquire do not match the demands of employers.

In the regions with the highest Roma unemployment, there is a lack of sufficient support and targeted programmes to address long-term unemployment in specific localities. Regional strategies are not sufficiently coordinated, and their reach is limited, meaning that Roma living in these areas remain excluded from the labour market. Furthermore, there is a lack of systemic support for Roma entrepreneurship to create long-term, sustainable employment opportunities. Roma entrepreneurs often face obstacles in obtaining credit, administrative complications and difficulties in entering the market, which limits their opportunities for economic self-sufficiency.

Another major problem is the lack of financial resources and political will to improve employment for Roma. Many EU-funded employment support programmes (OPZ+) lack long-term funding, resulting in their discontinuation or the inability to extend their impact to a larger number of people. Unless a systematic strategy with clearly defined measures is adopted to reflect the needs of Roma communities, their position in the labour market will remain weak.

It is essential that employment of Roma be addressed comprehensively, taking into account their different social and economic conditions, and that the implementation of measures be supported by adequate funding and coordination at both the regional and national levels.

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<sup>118</sup> Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs. 2023. *Overview of measures in the field of inclusion in the labour market*.

<sup>119</sup> Case study *Discrimination against Roma on the Labour market*. Papers in Regional Science 2011.



### 3.3.4. Roma participation

In Czechia, the involvement of the Roma community and Roma and pro-Roma organisations in the area of employment takes place primarily at the level of service provision, while their participation in strategic decision-making, the design of systemic measures, and the planning of regional policies remains very limited. Roma organisations play an important role in the implementation of support activities aimed at increasing the employability of Roma, but these are mostly partial project interventions with a limited scope and duration.

Roma and pro-Roma CSOs have long been dedicated to providing individual counselling, assistance in communicating with the Czech Labour Office, accompanying job seekers, and support in finding jobs. They also support the basic development of soft and practical skills needed for employment. Some of them establish cooperation with local employers, organise short-term job opportunities or provide retraining courses. Despite these activities, these organisations are not systematically involved in the development of employment policies and their expertise is not used in setting up programmes or evaluation mechanisms.

The Government Council for Roma Minority Affairs operates at the level of the state administration, which also includes the Committee on Employment. In 2023, this committee was expanded to include other areas, namely health and social issues, creating a new platform for linking multiple thematic areas relevant to Roma integration. While this change was intended to strengthen inter-sectoral coordination, in practice, it has led to a loss of thematic focus in the area of employment and a weakening of the specialised focus on Roma inclusion. In the new set-up, there is less scope for addressing employment policy issues in detail, and the direct influence of Roma organisations in shaping action in this area remains limited.

There are no permanent consultative structures at the regional level to ensure the involvement of Roma organisations in the planning and implementation of active employment policy. In some cases, Roma organisations participate in project partnerships within local action groups or community projects, but their involvement is rather partial, and they do not have a formal mandate to influence public policies.

Roma organisations are involved in the implementation of projects financed by EU funds, especially within the framework of the OPZ+ or the Integrated Regional Operational Program. They implement programmes aimed at increasing employability, motivating people to work, supporting work habits, or preparing clients to enter the labour market. Some organisations, such as IQ Roma servis, Romodrom, and Slovo 21, have many years of experience in implementing these activities. Their approach often involves a combination of individual social accompaniment, community work and cooperation with local employers. Nevertheless, the scope of these projects is limited and their reach falls far short of covering the needs of Roma communities in all regions.

At the same time, Roma themselves rarely participate in the preparation of programme calls or defining the conditions for support. In projects targeting women or young Roma, these groups are not actively involved in the design of the interventions and usually not even in their evaluation. For example, the 'Youth Guarantees' project lists young Roma as one of the target groups, but there is no documented participation of Roma youth in the design of this programme.

Overall, Roma and their organisations play an important role in the implementation of outreach and community work, but they lack direct access to decision-making processes in the area of employment. Their practical experience is not used to propose systemic changes, and participation remains largely formal or one-off. This weakens the effectiveness of employment policies and limits the ability to respond systemically to the needs of the Roma community.

## 4. USE OF EU FUNDING INSTRUMENTS

### 4.1. Conditions for EU funds implementation for Roma equality

In Czechia, EU funding to support Roma integration is primarily drawn from the European Social Fund Plus (ESF+) and the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF). These funds are key instruments for implementing the NRSF and provide funding in the areas of education, employment, social services and housing.

The ESF+ is implemented through two main national programmes: the 'Operational Programme Employment Plus' (OPZ+), whose managing authority is the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs, and the 'Operational Programme Jan Amos Komenský' (OP JAK), which falls under the Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports. Both programmes explicitly include objectives aimed at supporting the Roma minority. In the case of OPZ+, this is Specific Objective 2.3 "Support for the social inclusion of marginalised groups, including Roma", which is directly related to the European Commission's recommendation on strengthening the participation and improving the living conditions of Roma. This objective supports, for example, activities in the field of affordable housing, employability, community work or the development of social services. The OP JAK also includes a specific objective aimed at ensuring equal access to quality education for disadvantaged groups, with Roma children explicitly identified as one of the priority groups. The programme supports, inter alia, the establishment of social pedagogues, school assistants, the introduction of support measures, and the strengthening of cooperation between schools and families.

The ERDF is mainly used under the Integrated Regional Operational Programme (IROP), in particular to finance infrastructure projects in the areas of social housing, educational infrastructure and community development. The IROP includes activities that can positively affect the situation of Roma communities, for example, through the construction of community centres, kindergartens in socially excluded localities or the reconstruction of housing stock.

All of these programmes are national: calls are announced centrally, but project implementation takes place at the local and regional level. Managing authorities remain fully responsible for defining the calls and evaluating project applications. The OPZ+ focuses on social services, anti-poverty measures and education support. The OP JAK finances educational measures for socially excluded groups, including Roma children, to improve access to quality education.<sup>120</sup>

The Roma Thematic Condition (TEC 4.5) is a basic requirement of the European Commission for the effective use of EU funds to support Roma communities. This condition requires Member States to have a comprehensive and strategically integrated framework for supporting Roma that focuses on improving access to education, employment, healthcare and housing. In the Czech Republic, this condition applies primarily to the European Social Fund Plus (ESF+), with funding conditional on the introduction of inclusive measures and the establishment of effective monitoring mechanisms. ESF+ is the European Union's most important financial instrument for combating social inequalities, improving access to education and promoting employment. In the context of Roma integration, it focuses on measures that facilitate Roma inclusion in the labour market, promote inclusive education and finance social inclusion programmes. Although the European Union, through funds such as ESF+ and ERDF, provides significant funding to support Roma inclusion, their use in the Czech environment remains limited due to long-standing unaddressed systemic weaknesses. There is a lack of an effective link between strategic objectives and concrete measures financed by European funds. A strategy for Roma integration exists, but its implementation is only partial and often not linked to real support programmes.

Thematic condition 4.5 (TEC 4.5) requires Member States to have a functioning NRSF and to accompany it with concrete and measurable actions. Czechia formally fulfils this condition through the Strategy for Roma Equality, Inclusion and Participation 2021-2030, which is complemented by action plans. However, the problem remains that individual measures are not systematically implemented, and there are often no mechanisms to monitor their actual impact.

The calls for proposals under OPZ+, OP JAK and IROP mention support for inclusion, but only rarely do they contain targeted measures or measurable indicators aimed directly at the Roma population. Many of the

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<sup>120</sup> For more information, see: Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs. 2023. *Summary of evaluations of European funds for 2023*.

projects funded by these funds are not directly linked to the specific priorities set out in the NRSF. As a result, it is not possible to determine whether these projects are actually bringing about positive changes for Roma communities. The impact on the target group often remains unclear, making it impossible to assess the effectiveness of funds that have been spent.

If Czechia fails to demonstrate the effective implementation of Thematic Condition 4.5 in the long term, for example, due to a lack of results or lack of targeted impact measurement, this could lead to a reduction or suspension of EU funds in areas related to social inclusion. Such a development would jeopardise not only the integration of the Roma population but also the overall ability of Czechia to draw on and effectively use European resources. For this reason, it is important to ensure a clear link between the Strategic Objectives and the calls for European funds, to introduce a transparent system for monitoring the impact of projects on the Roma population, and to ensure that the selection and evaluation procedures for projects take into account the real needs of the target group. The long-term sustainability of Roma inclusion policy cannot be achieved without measurable results, greater transparency and direct community participation in the design and implementation of measures.

The OPZ+ clearly contributes to the fulfilment of TEC 4.5,<sup>121</sup> for example, community services, the employment of people disadvantaged on the labour market and the interventions of the Labour Office in regions with a higher concentration of socially excluded localities are supported. The OP JAK's Specific Objective 2.1 focuses on improving access to education and training, including for pupils from socially disadvantaged backgrounds. Measures include funding for school assistants, mentors, pedagogical support teams and scholarship programmes. The calls launched under this objective are thematically focused on eliminating educational inequalities, which include Roma children and youth.<sup>122</sup> In contrast, the IROP contributes to TEC 4.5 only indirectly by supporting infrastructure such as social housing, school facilities and community centres. Although these interventions can significantly improve the living conditions of Roma communities, the ERDF in Czechia does not contain any specific calls aimed exclusively at Roma, and therefore, resources cannot be quantified in a targeted way, even when assessing the impact on this target group.<sup>123</sup>

In terms of the management system, the implementation of the funds is based on national programmes, not regional ones, which allows for a wide coverage but also increases the need for targeted work with vulnerable groups at the local level. Both OPZ+ and OP JAK have thematically focused calls and allow for the implementation of long-term projects, including multi-year interventions led by schools, municipalities or CSOs. Nevertheless, as evaluation reports and independent audits point out, the real impact of these interventions on Roma communities cannot yet be comprehensively assessed, as there is no accurate record of the funds allocated according to the ethnicity of the beneficiaries, especially outside the thematic calls. For this reason, it is possible to quantify the benefits of EU funds for Roma communities only in calls that explicitly thematise Roma target groups, which occur almost exclusively in relation to OPZ+ and OP JAK. This situation limits the ability to comprehensively assess whether and how EU funds contribute to achieving equality for Roma in line with the requirements of Article 15 of Regulation 2021/1060/EU. Most of the projects aimed at Roma inclusion are implemented as part of broader social inclusion and anti-poverty measures that target multiple disadvantaged groups simultaneously. Operational programmes such as OPZ+ or OP JAK often list Roma among the target groups, but without explicitly tracking spending by ethnicity. Accurate quantification of the volume of funds intended directly to support Roma is possible only in the context of calls that are explicitly targeted at the Roma population, i.e., where Roma are listed as the only or main target group and where it is monitored how much of the allocation goes specifically to support them. In the Czech environment, such targeted support is only marginally present and concerns mainly some interventions within the OPZ+, for example, in the area of social services or community work. In the case of the IROP, there are currently no calls that are specifically targeted at the Roma population. The IROP mainly finances infrastructure measures – for example, housing, educational facilities or community centres – but without directly identifying the target group. Thus, while projects may have a positive impact on Roma, without a thematic focus and output indicators, it is not possible to demonstrate or quantify this impact. This situation makes it significantly more difficult to assess

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<sup>121</sup> For more information, see: Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs. 2021. *Operational Programme Employment Plus 2021-2027*.

<sup>122</sup> Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports. 2022. *Operational Programme Jan Amos Komenský - ex-ante evaluation update*.

<sup>123</sup> Ministry of Regional Development. 2021. *Methodological instruction for the preparation of the programming period 2021-2027*.



the impact of European investments on the Roma community and also complicates the fulfilment of Thematic Condition 4.5, which requires that it be possible to demonstrate that strategies and measures actually lead to an improvement in the situation of Roma. Improving the transparency of resource allocation and strengthening the ability to systematically monitor where European funding is going are therefore essential for the effective management of social inclusion policy.

The main problems associated with the implementation of EU funds in Czechia include complex administrative processes and high co-financing requirements, which make it difficult for smaller CSOs to access these resources. The semi-annual report on the implementation of EU funds<sup>124</sup> states that although the allocation of funds is in line with the objectives of the programming period, their effective use is hampered by administrative obstacles and the slow processing of applications. An evaluation of EU funds for 2023 carried out by the Czech Ministry for Regional Development has confirmed that EU funds were not sufficiently focused on the real needs of Roma communities.<sup>125</sup> Although there are programmes aimed at social inclusion, their structure and funding conditions reflect administrative priorities rather than the real needs of marginalised groups. The consequence of this set-up is the limited effectiveness of education, employment and housing projects, which contributes to the persistence of social inequalities.

According to the 'Report on Risks and Measures in the Use of EU Funds', the problem of unequal access to funding between large institutions and smaller CSOs persists.<sup>126</sup> CSOs play a key role in supporting Roma communities, but their capacity is often insufficient. Limited access to funding, lack of professional staff and strict administrative requirements prevent them from effectively using available EU funding. The predominant focus of support under calls for proposals is on applicants providing social services in accordance with the Social Services Act, which excludes many Roma organisations from support because their activities do not fall under this legislative framework. This approach overlooks the fact that many Roma working directly in the field do not meet the legal requirements, but have substantial experience and the trust of local residents in working with the community.

One of the key problems that has long affected the effectiveness of integration policies is the limited participation of Roma communities in decision-making processes. Although the strategies and action plans contain language emphasising 'community involvement', this principle is not consistently applied in practice. Most programmes and projects are designed from the top down, which means that decision-making takes place mainly at the level of state institutions and larger CSOs, while Roma organisations and Roma themselves are often only passive beneficiaries of measures, not their designers. The involvement of Roma communities in decision-making processes at the regional and municipal levels remains insufficient compared to their participation at the government level. Local authorities often have no systematic mechanisms for consultation with Roma representatives, which leads to strategies and projects that are not in line with the real needs of Roma communities. The absence of Roma representatives in key advisory bodies means that Roma cannot effectively influence the setting of calls for proposals and the implementation of policies at the regional level, nor is there a system of mechanisms to ensure the active participation of Roma in policy planning and implementation processes.

However, there have been some positive changes in recent years. The annual report on the implementation of the Partnership Agreement confirms that the managing authorities of some operational programmes, in particular OPZ+, have started to cooperate more with the CSO sector, which has led to improved communication and a reduction in the administrative burden for applicants.<sup>127</sup> This trend has contributed to a more effective consultation process and a better understanding of the specific needs of Roma communities. Nevertheless, there remains a gap between the success rate of large organisations and smaller Roma initiatives, pointing to the need not only to strengthen consultation but also to establish direct support mechanisms for the preparation of project applications and the administration of grants received.

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<sup>124</sup> Ministry of Finance of the Czech Republic. 2023. *Semi-annual report on the implementation of EU funds*.

<sup>125</sup> Ministry for Regional Development of the Czech Republic. *Summary of evaluations of European funds for the year 2023*.

<sup>126</sup> Ministry for Regional Development of the Czech Republic. *Report on risks and measures of implementation of EU funds*.

<sup>127</sup> Ministry for Regional Development of the Czech Republic. *Annual report on the implementation of the Partnership Agreement*.

The PRO-ROMA<sup>128</sup> call within the framework of the OP JAK, which created a specific instrument aimed at supporting educational activities in Roma communities, has contributed significantly to improving access to funding for smaller organisations. This programme supports the development of community centres, the training of teachers and pedagogical staff working with Roma children and direct support for pupils at risk of educational failure. However, the evaluation of OP JAK notes that the real impact of this initiative will depend on long-term funding and systematic support.<sup>129</sup> Another positive step was the introduction of simplified projects,<sup>130</sup> which reduced the administrative burden of applications and allowed a wider range of applicants, including smaller organisations, to access funds efficiently. Although the PRO-ROMA programme represents a significant shift towards the greater involvement of Roma organisations in funding educational measures, it currently remains the only targeted grant instrument of its kind. According to the annual report on the implementation of the Partnership Agreement, the lack of involvement of smaller organisations in the development of financial instruments is a persistent problem. In contrast to the OPZ+, where the Managing Authority tries to actively involve Roma organisations in consultations on programme settings, there is still room for extending support and adapting funding to the actual needs of organisations working directly in Roma communities.

The Agency for Social Inclusion was established as a key instrument for integrating socially excluded communities and improving their access to education, housing and employment. However, after more than ten years of operation, a fundamental question remains: what are the concrete results of its activities and are the huge public investments justified? The Agency's operating costs have reached more than CZK 1.5 billion since its creation, while the impact of its measures is minimal and often limited to formal strategy documents and consultations without direct impact on Roma communities.<sup>131</sup> The Agency's annual reports and external evaluations by the Ministry of Regional Development systematically confirm that the Agency for Social Inclusion focuses primarily on the development of methodological guidelines, action plans and strategies, not on concrete results on the ground.<sup>132</sup> In practice, this means hundreds of hours of meetings and analytical reports whose real benefit to excluded localities is questionable. According to the Supreme Audit Office, the agency's funding system is inefficient, unclear and lacks clear criteria for measuring the success of its interventions.<sup>133</sup> The Agency was involved in several calls for proposals under the OPZ and OPZ+, especially in the areas of support for social housing and employment in socially excluded localities. Yet, according to the annual reports on the implementation of the NRSF, the results of this support remain difficult to demonstrate. For example, the Agency has been involved in supporting municipalities in implementing the social housing concept, but its contribution has been limited mainly to analytical and consultative outputs without direct implementation of measures. For example, in 2022, the Agency provided consultancy support to 80 municipalities, with total expenditure on this activity amounting to approximately CZK 30 million per municipality.<sup>134</sup> Yet there is still no clear evidence that these funds have actually contributed to a significant improvement in the conditions of socially excluded localities. In the field of education, the Agency has methodically contributed to the development of inclusive approaches, especially through cooperation within the framework of Local Action Plans. However, segregation of Roma pupils in schools persists, and ESF projects to date have not had a significant impact on improving access to quality education. In its conclusions, the Supreme Audit Office draws attention to the inefficiency of some of the projects in which the Agency participated. In the framework of Audit Operation No. 18/28 concerning the implementation of the OPZ, it was found that a number of projects lacked measurable impact indicators, and in some cases, staffing costs well above the average wage were identified.<sup>135</sup> These findings suggest that the Agency's role as an implementing partner of EU funds requires a

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<sup>128</sup> Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports of the Czech Republic. 2024. *Call PRO-ROMA, OP JAK*.

<sup>129</sup> Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports of the Czech Republic. 2024. *Evaluation of OP JAK*.

<sup>130</sup> Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports of the Czech Republic. 2024. *Rules for applicants and beneficiaries of simplified OP JAK projects*.

<sup>131</sup> Ministry for Regional Development. 2021. *Annual Report of the Agency for Social Inclusion for 2020*.

<sup>132</sup> Ministry for Regional Development. 2023. *Final Report of the External Evaluation of the Agency for Social Inclusion*.

<sup>133</sup> Supreme Audit Office of the Czech Republic. 2023. *Report on the activities of the Agency for Social Inclusion*.

<sup>134</sup> Supreme Audit Office of the Czech Republic. *Audit conclusion of the audit operation No 18/28 - Funds earmarked for the implementation of measures under the Operational Programme Employment 2014-2020*.

<sup>135</sup> Supreme Audit Office of the Czech Republic. 2023. *Report on the activities of the Agency for Social Inclusion*.

thorough reassessment. It is recommended to move to performance-based funding, which would make the allocation of funds conditional on the achievement of concrete and measurable results. At the same time, it is advisable to redirect part of the expenditure from the administrative and methodological level to direct community interventions implemented in cooperation with local actors and the non-profit sector. Transparency, impact evaluation and the sustainability of results should be key criteria for the future involvement of the Agency for Social Inclusion in European funding.

#### **4.2. Roma civil society in EU funds implementation**

Roma civil society is becoming an increasingly significant actor in the implementation of EU funds, especially in the fields of social inclusion, education, and employment. Under the umbrella organisation RomanoNet, a number of organisations<sup>136</sup> are active in advocacy, project implementation, and monitoring the utilisation of EU funds. Although the involvement of these organisations has increased in recent years, fundamental problems persist that hinder a more effective use of available resources and limit their impact on Roma communities.<sup>137</sup>

Opportunities for Roma organisations to engage with EU funds have grown, especially through consultations and partnerships with public institutions, yet most funding still flows to larger entities, leaving Roma groups with limited direct access. Significant administrative burdens, complex applications, and co-financing requirements remain major barriers, particularly for smaller, grassroots organisations lacking stable financing and project management experience. Nevertheless, initiatives like the PRO-ROMA programme and projects under the OPZ+ demonstrate that when Roma organisations lead implementation, the outcomes are significantly more impactful for Roma communities.

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<sup>136</sup> For further details, see: [www.romanonet.cz](http://www.romanonet.cz)

<sup>137</sup> *Final Conclusions and Recommendations High Level Group*

## CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The evaluation of the implementation of the NRSF shows that some measures have produced partial results, but their overall impact remains limited. Many activities are carried out in isolation, without continuity or regular evaluation of whether they are actually working. While the NRSF envisages that Roma organisations will be involved in its implementation, in reality, these organisations have very limited access to resources and their participation is therefore rather symbolic.

Weak cooperation between the state administration and the non-profit sector is also a significant problem. There is a lack of a clear plan to measure the success of individual measures or a system to involve Roma themselves in evaluation and decision-making. There is no uniform way of collecting and evaluating information on what is actually working and what is not, which significantly reduces the effectiveness of the whole NRSF. In addition, Roma organisations often do not have the opportunity to participate in projects funded by public or European sources because these programmes are set up in such a way that they are not accessible to them. Small organisations and local initiatives thus have no chance of succeeding in tenders, which are often too complex and administratively demanding. Yet it is these organisations that work directly in communities and know their needs best. For the NR to have a real impact, the way it is implemented needs to change. The key is to better set up a system of support for Romani organisations, to simplify administration and to involve Roma themselves more in the planning and implementation of measures. Money should be allocated where it yields real benefits, not into complex bureaucracies and inefficient projects.

### *Recommendations to national authorities*

#### **1. Simplify grant and funding rules:**

- Review and simplify application procedures for grants and subsidies (e.g., under ESF+, OP JAK, national funding programmes), particularly by reducing administrative burdens (number of required annexes, complexity of budgets, length and difficulty of forms).
- Enable access to funding for small organisations without previous experience with large-scale projects – for example, by introducing simplified ‘small grants’ with minimal paperwork and no or very low co-financing requirements.
- Reconsider evaluation criteria for project proposals so they are not tailored exclusively to large, experienced applicants (e.g., requirements concerning organisational history, turnover, staff size).

#### **2. Ensure equal access to funding for different types of activities:**

- Extend funding to organisations that do not operate registered social services but focus on education, community development, housing, legal counselling, cultural activities, or anti-discrimination work – these areas should be funded on par with social services.
- Create dedicated calls or programmes targeting small and local Roma organisations working directly in communities.

#### **3. Provide methodological and capacity support:**

- Provide regular training, workshops, and individual consultations for Roma organisations in project management, application writing, financial management, and reporting.
- Introduce mentorship systems, where more experienced CSOs support smaller Roma initiatives with administration and project implementation.

#### **4. Reform the Agency for Social Inclusion:**

- Reduce emphasis on strategy drafting and administrative tasks; instead, strengthen direct fieldwork and hands-on support for local Roma organisations and communities.
- Organise regular consultations with Roma organisations to identify regional priorities and needs.

**5. Improve monitoring and evaluation systems:**

- Develop a unified methodology for data collection and assessment of the effectiveness of NRSF measures, incorporating qualitative feedback from Roma individuals and organisations.
- Publish evaluation results regularly and use them to adjust the strategy and concrete measures.
- Involve Roma organisations in all stages of evaluation – from defining indicators to interpreting findings.

**6. Improve the accessibility of public and EU programmes:**

- Reduce co-financing requirements in EU and national funding programmes, especially for small and emerging organisations.
- Ensure calls for proposals are understandable, written in plain language, and supported by continuous consultation services for applicants throughout the process.

*Recommendations to European institutions***7. Simplify EU funding rules:**

- Influence the Member States to simplify rules for ESF+, ERDF, and other funds to support the participation of small and emerging Roma organisations (e.g., by reducing co-financing requirements and administrative complexity, and enabling advance payments).
- Introduce special calls or programmes that specifically target small organisations working in Roma communities.

**8. Require regular evaluation with the participation of Roma:**

- Require Member States to carry out regular, transparent, and participatory evaluations of EU fund usage, including the mandatory involvement of Roma organisations in evaluation committees and working groups.

**9. Support capacity-building:**

- Fund programmes that build the capacities of Roma organisations (e.g., training, mentoring, exchange of experience, networking at the EU level).
- Ensure the availability of methodological resources and consultancy support in national languages.

**10. Create dedicated programmes for community-based organisations:**

- Develop EU programmes focused on supporting small and local Roma initiatives that have a direct impact on community life (e.g., in education, housing, health, and culture).

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## ANNEXE: LIST OF PROBLEMS AND CONDITIONS

### *Fighting antigypsyism and discrimination*

<b>Problems and conditions:</b>	<b>Significance:</b>	<b>Identified by strategy:</b>	<b>Measures to address:</b>	<b>Targets defined:</b>	<b>Details of NRSF implementation relevant to the problem:</b>
Antigypsyism is not recognised as a specific problem in national policy frameworks.	significant problem	identified and analysed sufficiently	appropriate	adequate but with room for improvement	<p>Adoption of a definition of antigypsyism, creation of a charter.</p> <p>The adoption of the definition is an important step, but the legislative impact is lacking.</p> <p>A mere definition without a legislative anchor does not have a widespread impact. Implementation of concrete measures is necessary.</p> <p>There is no systematic data on the impact of the definition on policy and decision-making.</p>
Prejudice against Roma	critical problem	identified and analysed sufficiently	adequate but with room for improvement	adequate but with room for improvement	<p>Anti-bias campaigns have been implemented, but there is a lack of evaluation.</p> <p>The effectiveness of campaigns is not sufficiently measured. There is a lack of evaluation of their impact on public opinion.</p> <p>Without long-term action and legislative support, the impact remains limited.</p> <p>There is a lack of aggregate data on the change in societal perception of Romani people following the implementation of these campaigns.</p>

Hate crimes against Roma	significant problem	identified and analysed sufficiently	appropriate	relevant targets well defined	<p>Increased focus on hate crimes, but so far, no direct changes in legislation.</p> <p>There is still insufficient protection for victims of hate crime. The police do not record the ethnicity of the victims.</p> <p>Without changes to the Criminal Code and clear procedures to protect victims, the impact is limited.</p> <p>In Iustitia reports (<a href="https://in-ius.cz/zpravy-o-predsudecnem-nasili/">https://in-ius.cz/zpravy-o-predsudecnem-nasili/</a>) provide partial data.</p>
Hate speech towards and against Roma (online and offline)	critical problem	identified and analysed sufficiently	adequate but with room for improvement	relevant targets well defined	<p>Introduction of mechanisms to report hate speech online, but without clear sanctions.</p> <p>Reporting mechanisms exist, but are often not used. Legal consequences for perpetrators are lacking.</p> <p>Reporting mechanisms exist, but are often not used. Legal consequences for perpetrators are lacking.</p> <p>Romani people are still a frequent target of hate attacks online without sufficient protection.</p> <p>In Iustitia reports, a chapter provides a partial overview of hate speech.</p>
Weak effectiveness of protection against discrimination	critical problem	identified and analysed sufficiently	appropriate	adequate but with room for improvement	<p>Increased awareness of discrimination, but no legislative changes to protect against it.</p> <p>Stronger sanctions and effective enforcement in cases of discrimination are still lacking.</p> <p>Without stronger legislative protection, discrimination remains a persistent problem.</p> <p>There are no comprehensive state statistics on discrimination against Romani people.</p>

## Education

Problems and conditions:	Significance:	Identified by strategy:	Measures to address:	Targets defined:	Details of NRSF implementation relevant to the problem:
Lack of available and accessible pre-school education and ECEC services for Roma	critical problem	identified and analysed sufficiently	appropriate	relevant targets well defined	<p>Some pre-school capacities have been increased, but not enough.</p> <p>The increase in capacity is a positive step, but system-wide measures are still lacking.</p> <p>Romani children continue to face barriers in accessing quality preschool care.</p> <p>Partial data from the analysis of the Ministry of Education, but comprehensive statistics are missing.</p>
Lower quality of pre-school education and ECEC services for Roma	significant problem	understood with limitations	adequate but with room for improvement	adequate but with room for improvement	<p>No major changes in the quality of preschool education have been recorded.</p> <p>Without targeted interventions, the quality of pre-school care remains uneven.</p> <p>The low quality of services in some localities hinders equal opportunities for Romani children.</p> <p>There is no detailed data on the quality of pre-school care for Roma children.</p>
Early leaving from secondary education	critical problem	identified and analysed sufficiently	adequate but with room for improvement	adequate but with room for improvement	<p>Increase in scholarship programmes for Roma students.</p> <p>Financial support helps, but is not sufficient to prevent early termination.</p> <p>Further measures are needed to support the retention of Romani students in education.</p> <p>The statistics on the number of school dropouts are not specific to Roma.</p>

Secondary education/vocational training disconnected from labour market needs	critical problem	understood with limitations	adequate but with room for improvement	adequate but with room for improvement	<p>Introduction of pilot programmes linking schools to the labour market.</p> <p>Linking with practice is a positive step, but still not enough.</p> <p>Without greater involvement of firms, the impact on employability remains limited.</p> <p>There is a lack of systematic data on the employment of Romani graduates on the labour market.</p>
Segregation of Roma pupils in education	critical problem	identified and analysed sufficiently	appropriate	appropriate	<p>Anti-segregation measures exist, but their effectiveness is limited.</p> <p>The segregation of Romani pupils is still occurring, especially in some regions.</p> <p>Without consistent monitoring and intervention, segregation remains a problem.</p> <p>Analyses of school statistics show an uneven distribution of Romani pupils.</p>
Increased selectivity of the education system, resulting in concentration of Roma or other disadvantaged pupils in educational facilities of lower quality.	critical problem	identified and analysed sufficiently	appropriate	appropriate	<p>No major changes in the system settings were noted.</p> <p>Without changes to the admissions rules, the problem will be exacerbated.</p> <p>Equal access to quality education remains limited.</p> <p>A lack of detailed data on the concentration of Romani pupils in lower-quality schools.</p>
Limited access to second chance education, adult education and lifelong learning.	critical problem	irrelevant	absent	absent	<p>Some programmes for Roma adults have been expanded.</p> <p>A positive step, but it still only affects a small part of the target group.</p> <p>Without wider promotion and accessibility, the effect remains limited.</p>

					There are no comprehensive statistics on Roma participation in these programmes.
Limited access to and support for online and distance learning if education and training institutions close, as occurred during the coronavirus pandemic.	critical problem	identified and analysed sufficiently	appropriate	appropriate	<p>No long-term measures were taken after the pandemic.</p> <p>A lack of sustained support for online learning for disadvantaged pupils.</p> <p>Without access to technology, inequality in education remains.</p> <p>A lack of data on digital accessibility for Roma pupils.</p>
Low level of students' digital skills and competences and limited opportunities for their development.	critical problem	identified and analysed sufficiently	appropriate	appropriate	<p>Some digital learning programmes have been introduced.</p> <p>Improvement has been slow and uneven.</p> <p>Unequal access to digital skills widens the gap.</p> <p>There is no systematic data on the digital literacy of Roma pupils.</p>
Low levels of digital skills and competences and limited opportunities for their development among adults.	critical problem	identified and analysed sufficiently	appropriate	appropriate	<p>Increased number of courses for adults, but no targeted support for Roma.</p> <p>Programmes help, but are not sufficiently accessible.</p> <p>Without access to adult education, the problem remains acute.</p> <p>There is no specific data on Roma participation in digital education.</p>
Weak representation of professional professions (e.g. school psychologist, special educator, teaching assistant, financial support for	critical problem	identified and analysed sufficiently	appropriate	appropriate	<p>The number of teaching assistants has been slightly increased, but there is still a shortage.</p> <p>The increase is a positive step, but it still does not match demand.</p> <p>Schools still do not have enough professional staff to support Romani pupils.</p>

teaching assistants, introduction of the position of social educator) and the change in the diagnostic tools carried out by professional departments.					Statistics on the number of teaching assistants, but without a detailed distinction for Roma.
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### Employment

<b>Problems and conditions:</b>	<b>Significance:</b>	<b>Identified by strategy:</b>	<b>Measures to address:</b>	<b>Targets defined:</b>	<b>Details of NRSF implementation relevant to the problem:</b>
Poor access to or low effectiveness of public employment services	significant problem	understood with limitations	present but insufficient	adequate but with room for improvement	<p>The introduction of some specialised programmes for Roma, but with limited reach.</p> <p>Employment services are not sufficiently adapted to the needs of the Roma community.</p> <p>Without more targeted support and an individual approach, the problem is persistent.</p> <p>There is a lack of detailed statistics on the effectiveness of employment services for Roma.</p>
Youth not in employment, education or training (NEET)	critical problem	irrelevant	present but insufficient	some targets but not relevant	<p>Some mentoring programmes for young Roma have been introduced.</p> <p>The programmes are beneficial but cover only a small part of the vulnerable group.</p> <p>Without more funding and support from schools and employers, the impact is limited.</p>

					There are no comprehensive statistics on Romani youth in the NEET group.
Poor access to (re)training, lifelong learning and skills development	significant problem	mentioned but not analysed sufficiently	present but insufficient	some targets but not relevant	<p>The offer of courses for adults has been increased, but without specific support for Roma.</p> <p>Access to education remains limited due to financial and social barriers.</p> <p>Without targeted incentives, interest remains low, and the problem persists.</p> <p>There is no specific data on Roma participation in retraining courses.</p>
Discrimination on the labour market by employers	critical problem	identified and analysed insufficiently	appropriate	relevant targets are well defined	<p>Increased awareness of discrimination, but no specific legislative changes.</p> <p>Still a lack of effective measures to protect Romani job seekers.</p> <p>Without stricter regulation and control mechanisms, the problem persists.</p> <p>There is a lack of systematic data on the extent of discrimination in the labour market.</p>
Primary labour market opportunities substituted by public work	significant	irrelevant	absent	absent	<p>Public works remain one of the main sources of employment for Roma.</p> <p>Without alternative programmes, the problem is not solved but perpetuated.</p> <p>Roma do not have sufficient opportunity to transition to the regular labour market.</p> <p>Partial data on Roma participation in community service (Labour Office).</p>



Barriers and disincentives to employment (e.g. indebtedness, low income from work compared to social income).	critical problem	understood with limitations	adequate but with room for improvement	adequate but with room for improvement	<p>Some measures have been introduced to counter the debt trap, but with limited effectiveness.</p> <p>Without a broader solution to foreclosures and incentives to work, the problem remains.</p> <p>For many Romani people, legal employment remains financially disadvantageous.</p> <p>A lack of comprehensive data on the impact of the debt trap on Roma employment.</p>
Lack of activation measures, employment support	critical problem	understood with limitations	adequate but with room for improvement	adequate but with room for improvement	<p>Some employment support programmes have been expanded.</p> <p>Programmes help, but are not sufficiently accessible and sustainable.</p> <p>Without broader coordination with the private sector, the effect is limited.</p> <p>Statistics on the success of activation measures are missing or incomplete.</p>

### 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 health services (including lack of resources to cover out-of-pocket health care costs).	significant problem	understood with limitations	adequate but with room for improvement	adequate but with room for improvement	<p>There have been no major changes in access to health care for socially excluded groups.</p> <p>Health services remain financially and geographically less accessible. Without targeted financial support, the situation will not change.</p> <p>Those most at risk are low-income Roma and residents of remote areas.</p>

					Statistics on health care utilisation by socioeconomic status are lacking.
Unrecognised historical injustices, such as forced sterilisation.	critical problem	identified and analysed sufficiently	appropriate	relevant targets are well defined	<p>In 2021, a law on compensation for victims of forced sterilisation was adopted, and several hundred women have already been compensated.</p> <p>Compensation is an important step, but some victims still lack the legal awareness or ability to file a claim.</p> <p>The move has helped some victims, but there are still challenges in awareness and access to redress.</p> <p>The Ministry of Health records the number of women compensated but lacks data on the long-term impact of this measure.</p>
Discrimination/anti-gypsyism in health care (e.g. segregated services).	significant problem	mentioned but not analysed sufficiently	adequate but with room for improvement	adequate but with room for improvement	<p>Several recommendations have been adopted, but no binding legislative changes have been introduced.</p> <p>Discrimination in health care is still present, especially in segregated localities.</p> <p>Without tougher sanctions for discrimination, the problem remains unaddressed for a long time.</p> <p>Isolated analyses, but no regular monitoring of discrimination in access to health care.</p>
Inequalities in measures to combat and prevent potential disease outbreaks in marginalised or remote localities.	critical problem	mentioned but not analysed sufficiently	present but insufficient	present but insufficient	<p>No specific measures targeting Roma communities have been implemented.</p> <p>Lack of preventive measures increases the risk of epidemics spreading in excluded localities.</p> <p>Marginalised groups are less likely to receive early health interventions.</p> <p>Statistics on the health status of Roma communities are not sufficiently detailed.</p>

Higher mortality rates in the middle-aged cohort compared to the general population	critical problem	irrelevant	absent	absent	<p>No targeted measures have been taken to reduce this disparity.</p> <p>High mortality rates are associated with poorer access to health care and a higher incidence of chronic diseases.</p> <p>Middle-aged Roma remain an at-risk group with limited access to prevention.</p> <p>Partial statistics on mortality differences by socioeconomic status.</p>
Low interest in health and a healthy lifestyle in Roma communities	critical problem	irrelevant	absent	absent	<p>Awareness campaigns are underway, but without a systemic solution.</p> <p>Programmes are useful, but without a long-term strategy, the situation will not improve significantly.</p> <p>Ignorance and lack of support for healthy lifestyles persist.</p> <p>There is no systematic data on changes in the lifestyle of Roma communities.</p>

### *Housing, essential services, and environmental justice*

<b>Problems and conditions:</b>	<b>Significance:</b>	<b>Identified by strategy:</b>	<b>Measures to address:</b>	<b>Targets defined:</b>	<b>Details of NRSF implementation relevant to the problem:</b>
Poor physical housing security (dilapidated or slum housing)	critical problem	understood with limitations	adequate but with room for improvement	adequate but with room for improvement	<p>Some reconstruction projects have been launched in socially excluded localities.</p> <p>The projects are at an early stage; their effectiveness cannot yet be fully assessed.</p> <p>So far, they are focusing on selected locations; the full impact is limited.</p> <p>The available data is limited to individual projects and their funding.</p>

Housing in segregated neighbourhoods	critical problem	identified and analysed sufficiently	appropriate	relevant targets defined	<p>No significant changes in the approach to the issue of segregated housing have been noted.</p> <p>Policies to end segregation are not effective enough.</p> <p>The problem affects thousands of families throughout the Czech Republic, especially in residential hotels and socially excluded localities.</p> <p>There are partial analyses, but there is a lack of full-scale data.</p>
Housing-related indebtedness at levels which may cause eviction	critical problem	identified and analysed sufficiently	adequate with room for improvement	adequate with room for improvement	<p>Some CSOs provide debt counselling.</p> <p>Counselling helps individuals, but systemic solutions are lacking.</p> <p>It particularly affects families with low incomes and unstable employment.</p> <p>The data is limited to clients of these organisations.</p>
Limited or lacking internet access	critical problem	understood and analysed sufficiently	appropriate	relevant targets well defined	<p>No major steps have been taken to improve internet accessibility in socially excluded localities.</p> <p>The digital divide between Roma communities and the majority population remains.</p> <p>The problem particularly affects rural and segregated areas.</p> <p>There is a lack of up-to-date data on internet availability in these areas.</p>

*Social protection*

Problems and conditions:	Significance:	Identified by strategy:	Measures to address:	Targets defined:	Details of NRSF implementation relevant to the problem:
<b>High at-risk-of-poverty rate and material and social deprivation</b>	critical	identified and analysed sufficiently	appropriate	relevant targets well defined	<p>Some income support and social integration programmes have been introduced.</p> <p>The effectiveness of these programmes is mixed; some groups remain at risk of poverty.</p> <p>Measures often do not reach all groups in need, especially marginalised communities.</p> <p>Available data suggest persistent inequalities in income and living conditions.</p>
<b>Income support programmes do not guarantee a minimum income for every household</b>	formally, not a problem since the law states the minimum income level, but the approach of the relevant governmental offices is often critically problematic	understood with limitations	adequate but with room for improvement	adequate but with room for improvement	<p>Some programmes have been revised to increase support for low-income households.</p> <p>Despite the revisions, support for some households remains insufficient.</p> <p>Changes do not always take into account the specific needs of all target groups.</p> <p>Analyses point to continued financial insecurity in some households.</p>
<b>Limited access to income support schemes (low awareness, administrative barriers, stigma)</b>	significant problem	understood with limitations	adequate but with room for improvement	adequate but with room for improvement	<p>Information campaigns and efforts to simplify administrative processes have been launched.</p> <p>Improvements are evident, but administrative burdens and stigma are still barriers.</p> <p>Some groups, especially the elderly and minorities, still face limited access.</p>

					Surveys show a persistent lack of awareness and concerns about the use of support.
<b>Ineffective eligibility rules (means testing, job search conditions)</b>	critical problem	understood with limitations	adequate but with room for improvement	adequate but with room for improvement	<p>The eligibility rules have been partially modified for greater flexibility.</p> <p>Adjustments have led to a slight improvement, but some of those in need still do not meet the conditions for support.</p> <p>Some vulnerable groups remain outside the reach of support due to strict criteria.</p> <p>Data suggest that a portion of the population in need is not accessing available programmes.</p>
<b>Low flexibility of income support programmes for addressing changing conditions of households</b>	critical problem	understood with limitations	adequate with room for improvement	adequate with room for improvement	<p>Some programmes have been adapted to respond more quickly to changes in household circumstances.</p> <p>Flexibility has increased, but not all programmes can respond effectively to sudden changes.</p> <p>Households with unstable incomes often face restrictions in support.</p> <p>Studies show the need for further improvements in the adaptability of programmes.</p>
<b>Discrimination by agencies administering income-support programmes</b>	critical problem	understood and analysed sufficiently	appropriate	relevant targets well defined	<p>Training and guidelines have been put in place for staff to reduce discrimination.</p> <p>Although there have been improvements, some cases of discrimination still persist.</p> <p>Minorities and marginalised groups continue to report negative experiences.</p> <p>Reports and studies document continuing problems in access to support.</p>

*Social services*

organisations	Significance:	Identified by strategy:	Measures to address:	Targets defined:	Details of NRSF implementation relevant to the problem:
<b>Limited quality, capacity and complexity of assistance provided by social services</b>	significant problem	irrelevant	absent	absent	<p>A review of the Social Services Act has been initiated, but capacity has not been increased.</p> <p>Changes in legislation have been slow, and effectiveness remains limited.</p> <p>Service capacities still do not match demand, affecting the most vulnerable groups.</p> <p>There is no detailed data on the actual coverage of clients' needs.</p>
<b>Inadequacy of debt resolution programmes (provision of counselling and financial support).</b>	significant problem	understood and analysed sufficiently	appropriate	relevant targets well defined	<p>The network of debt counselling centres has expanded, but financial support is limited.</p> <p>Counselling services help individuals, but there is no systemic solution to the debt trap.</p> <p>Low-income families and people in foreclosure do not always have access to sufficient assistance.</p> <p>Statistics on the use of debt counselling exist but are not comprehensive.</p>



*Child protection*

<b>Problems and conditions:</b>	<b>Significance:</b>	<b>Identified by strategy:</b>	<b>Measures to address:</b>	<b>Targets defined:</b>	<b>Details of NRSF implementation relevant to the problem:</b>
Child protection is not considered in the 2021+ Strategy	critical problem	identified and analysed sufficiently	appropriate	relevant targets well defined	<p>The 2021+ Strategy does not contain specific measures aimed at protecting Romani children. There have been no significant changes since 2022.</p> <p>The lack of specific measures means that the protection of Romani children is not being addressed in a systematic way.</p> <p>Roma children are not taken into account in the protection of their rights, which can lead to their needs being neglected.</p> <p>There is no specific data on the protection of Roma children within the strategy.</p>
Specific vulnerability of Roma children as victims of violence not considered	critical problem	identified and analysed sufficiently	appropriate	relevant targets well defined	<p>There have been no specific changes or specialised programmes.</p> <p>Without targeted measures, the situation will not improve.</p> <p>Romani children who become victims of violence do not have sufficient support and protection.</p> <p>There is no systematic data on the incidence of violence against Romani children.</p>
Segregated or discriminatory child protection services provided to Roma	critical problem	identified and analysed sufficiently	appropriate	relevant targets well defined	<p>In 2022, the European Commission called on the Czech Republic to end discrimination against Romani children in schools.</p> <p>The call has increased pressure on the government, but segregation in education still persists.</p> <p>The measures aim for systemic change, but many children continue to be educated separately.</p> <p>There are reports from the EC and the Ombudsman on ongoing discrimination.</p>

Large-scale and discriminatory placement of Roma children in early childhood care institutions	critical problem	identified with limitations	adequate but with room for improvement	adequate with room for improvement	<p>The Czech Republic has adopted an Action Plan to reduce the number of Romani children in special schools.</p> <p>The plan is positive, but implementation is slow, and impacts are not yet visible.</p> <p>It may reduce segregation, but concrete changes in schools will take several years.</p> <p>There are partial statistics on the reduction in the number of Romani children in special schools.</p>
Persistence of large-scale institutions rather than family-type arrangements	critical problem	identified with limitations	present but insufficient	adequate with room for improvement	<p>An amendment to the law on institutional education has been approved, abolishing infant institutions.</p> <p>The amendment is positive, but the transition to family care is a long-term process.</p> <p>The transition to family care can improve the situation of children in institutional care, but it depends on the support for foster care.</p> <p>There is data on the number of children in institutional care and their transition to foster families.</p>
Biased treatment of Roma youth by security and law enforcement	critical problem	mentioned but not analysed sufficiently	adequate with room for improvement	adequate with room for improvement	<p>There have been no fundamental changes in the security forces' approach to Romani youth.</p> <p>Mechanisms to control police interventions are not sufficient.</p> <p>Young Romani people are facing more frequent police checks and repression.</p> <p>There are no detailed analyses of the treatment of Romani youth by the police.</p>
Inadequate child/adolescent participation	significant problem	identified with limitations	adequate with room for improvement	adequate with room for improvement	<p>There are no new initiatives available to support the active participation of Roma children.</p> <p>Without targeted measures, Romani children remain without the opportunity to express their needs.</p>

					<p>Young Romani people do not have enough opportunities to influence decision-making on matters that affect them.</p> <p>No data are available on the participation of Romani children in youth organisations.</p>
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### *Promoting (awareness of) Roma arts, culture, and history*

<b>Problems and conditions:</b>	<b>Significance:</b>	<b>Identified by strategy:</b>	<b>Measures to address:</b>	<b>Targets defined:</b>	<b>Details of NRSF implementation relevant to the problem:</b>
Poor or insufficient awareness of the contribution of Roma art and culture to national and European heritage	critical problem	identified and analysed sufficiently	appropriate	relevant targets well defined	<p>In 2022, the Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports (MŠMT) published new educational materials about Romani history, traditions and contributions to Czech society.</p> <p>These materials can raise awareness of Romani culture among pupils and teachers.</p> <p>The introduction of these materials is a step in the right direction, but wider implementation and awareness raising are needed.</p> <p>The measures target pupils and teachers, but the wider public may be unaffected.</p> <p>Data on the use of these materials in schools is not yet available.</p>
Exclusion of Roma communities from national cultural narratives	critical problem	identified and analysed sufficiently	adequate with room for improvement	adequate but with room for improvement	<p>Compared to 2022, there has been no significant shift in the presentation of Romani culture in the media. Roma culture was presented in the programme 'O Roma Vakeren' and partly in other programmes about national minorities.</p> <p>Limited media coverage has had little impact on the inclusion of Roma communities in national cultural narratives.</p> <p>Current measures are not sufficient to overcome this problem.</p> <p>The measures have a limited impact and do not reach all target groups.</p>

					Specific data on the media representation of Romani culture is not available.
Roma history and culture are not included in school curricula and textbooks for Romani and non-Romani pupils	significant problem	identified and analysed sufficiently	adequate with room for improvement	adequate with room for improvement	<p>The Czech Ministry of Education has published new teaching materials for incorporating Romani history and culture into the teaching of various subjects.</p> <p>The materials can contribute to a better understanding of Romani culture among students.</p> <p>The introduction of these materials is a positive step, but their implementation depends on individual schools and teachers.</p> <p>The measures target pupils and teachers, but their impact depends on the level of uptake in schools.</p> <p>Data on the implementation of these materials in schools is not available.</p>
Insufficient commemoration of Roma history through the establishment of memorials, commemorative activities and the institutionalisation of data related to Roma history	significant problem	understood with limitations	adequate with room for improvement	adequate with room for improvement	<p>In 2024, a memorial was opened in Lety u Písku, commemorating the Romani victims of the Holocaust.</p> <p>The opening of the memorial is an important step toward recognising Romani history. This measure is important, but more initiatives are needed to commemorate Romani history more broadly.</p> <p>The measure has an impact on the general public and contributes to awareness of Romani history.</p>

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