



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

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for Roma equality, inclusion, and participation
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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

CLLD	Community Led Local Development
CoE	Council of Europe
COR	County Office for Roma
CSO	Civil Society Organisation
DG JUST	Directorate General Justice and Consumers
DIR	Department for Interethnic Relations
EU	European Union
EURSF	EU Roma Strategic Framework
FRA	Fundamental Rights Agency
GIRP	General Inspectorate of the Romanian Police
GSG	General Government Secretariat
ICIMES	Interministerial Committee for the Implementation, Monitoring, and Evaluation of the Strategy
MAIA	Ministry of Administration and Internal Affairs
MARD	Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development
MC	Ministry of Culture
MCS	Ministerial Commission for Roma
MDPWA	Ministry of Development, Public Works, and Administration
MEd	Ministry of Education
MFYEO	Ministry of Family, Youth, and Equal Opportunities
MFE	Ministry of Foreign Affairs
MH	Ministry of Health
MIEP	Ministry of Investments and European Projects
MJ	Ministry of Justice
MLSS	Ministry of Labour and Social Solidarity
MS	EU Member States
NAE	National Agency for Employment
NAEOWM	National Agency for Equal Opportunities between Women and Men
NCFA	National Cultural Fund Administration
NAR	National Agency for Roma
NAPRCA	National Authority for the Protection of the Rights of the Child and Adoption
NARECA	National Agency for Real Estate Cadastre and Advertising
NCCD	National Council for Combating Discrimination
NCPR	National Roma Contact Point
NCRC-RK	National Centre for Roma Culture Romano Kher
NEETs	Not in education, employment, or training
NGO	Non-Governmental Organisation
NIS	National Institute for Statistics
NPRSD	National Programme for Reducing School Dropout
NRIS	Strategy for the Inclusion of Romanian Citizens Belonging to the Roma Minority for the Period 2015 – 2020
NRRP	National Recovery and Resilience Plan
NRSF	Strategy for the Inclusion of Romanian Citizens Belonging to the Roma Minority for the Period 2022-2027
OPAC	Operational Programme Administrative Capacity
OPHC	Operational Programme Human Capital
OPEE	Operational Programme Education and Employment
OPISD	Operational Programme Inclusion and Social Dignity
PA	People's Advocate
RCM	Roma Civil Monitoring
SEE	Southeast Europe
SIIR	Integrated Information System on Education in Romania
TWG	Technical Working Group

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Since the adoption in 2022, the Romanian National Roma Strategic Framework (NRSF) has not yet proven to be a success story, while the EU Roma Strategic Framework (EURSF) has not been able to influence the status of such an important public policy in Romania.

The NRSF's entire implementation process is relatively slow, bureaucratic. It may be defined as a well-designed written process, driven by forces that do not seem to have the Roma issue on the public agenda, while the democratic, political and economic context of Romania is not a facilitating one.

While the NRSF outlines ambitious goals, its implementation is hindered by poor coordination, insufficient funding, and bureaucratic obstacles. Key issues like discrimination, housing, employment, and education require stronger political will, increased resources, and effective institutional cooperation to ensure meaningful progress in Roma inclusion.

No changes were made to the NRSF or its plan of measures, including objectives, measures, responsibilities, and budgets. Currently, the proposed changes by the line ministries are not yet available. They were scheduled for discussion in 2025, but the government change will further delay this process. .

The 2022 NRSF is repeating the previous mechanism of implementation, which has never proven successful. The state structure's administrative memory is stronger than the new approach proposed by the Roma CSOs - sectoral national programmes, with clear targets, responsibilities, and budget allocations.

The political turmoil at the end of 2024 and the late nomination of the new government will not bring the Roma issue to the public agenda. Romania is facing a high level of GDP deficit, and any cuts are expected in the area of public spending.

The European Commission's (EC) focus on working with the National Contact Point for Roma (NCPR), as a general approach at EU level, may be a losing game, the 'contact point' being just a point of contact, with no real connection to the real life of the Roma communities. Moreover, the status of the NCPR in relation to the NRSF and the relevant ministerial structures is low, with a team in constant change and without a clear representation of the Roma ethnicity.

The existence of the National Agency for Roma (NAR) as a governmental structure is somewhat in contradiction with the model promoted by the NCPR at the European level. The position of the NAR within the governmental hierarchy is a difficult one, and needs another energy level, a redesigned role in relation to the line ministries. The NAR efforts should also be acknowledged in relation to the Roma movement in Romania, even if the presence of the Roma CSOs as members of the Interministerial Committee for Implementation, Monitoring, and Evaluation of the Strategy (ICIMES) or Thematic Working Groups remains at an observatory level.

Implementation of the NRSF

The National Roma Strategic Framework (NRSF) 2022-2027, adopted on 28 April 2022, aims to improve the inclusion of Roma, introducing new measures to address gaps in previous strategies and accelerate progress in social inclusion. The setting up of the ICIMES immediately after the adoption of the NRSF was a positive development, followed by the creation of the initial eight (extended to ten) Thematic Working Groups and the Ministerial Commissions for Roma within the line ministries. The European Commission's evaluation (January 2023) on the NRSF status highlighted that Romania's commitments did not sufficiently reflect the needs of the Roma population, requiring quantifiable targets, measurable indicators, budget allocations, as well as the need to integrate gender and youth issues in the implementation of the measures undertaken through the NRSF.

Fragmented coordination and communication among institutions, difficulties in data collection and reporting, as well as gaps in the engagement of authorities and institutions at the local level, also represent challenges in implementing the NRSF. NAR developed a standardised reporting system aiming at better coordination. The lack of authority at the local level hinders effective strategy enforcement due to legal constraints and community reluctance, and collecting ethnic-specific data remains a challenge.

The implementation of the NRSF is supported by a series of national strategies and policies developed in relevant areas, which reflect some of the objectives and priorities set out in the NRSF. These documents highlight the need for increased complementarity between sectoral strategic plans and the measures included

in the NRSF, contributing to an integrated approach to the problems of the Roma community. The measures implemented in the NRSF are mainly in line with the actions and priorities of the EURSF¹ and comply with the requirements of the thematic enabling condition, which calls for a national strategic policy framework for Roma inclusion. NRSF reflects EU priorities in several key areas, such as education, employment, health, housing, and combating discrimination.

Roma civil society organisations (CSOs) were consulted in strategy planning but face barriers in ongoing participation in NRSF implementation, monitoring and evaluation due to resource limitations. At the same time, the National Roma Platform (NRP) was intended to facilitate collaboration, but it lacks effectiveness due to staffing and engagement issues.

The participation of Roma CSOs as observers in the ICIMES meetings is a positive development. Still, their presence is also needed in the Thematic Working Groups (TWGs), where they could provide significant input. While the NRSF introduced promising reforms, financial constraints, weak institutional coordination, and a lack of clear implementation mechanisms have slowed progress. Greater commitment, inter-agency cooperation, and local authority empowerment are necessary for meaningful Roma inclusion.

Review of country situation by policy area

In the area of antidiscrimination and antigypsyism, the NRSF includes several measures to combat discrimination and hate speech, but the enforcement has been weak, with limited sanctions for hate speech. Coordination between institutions is cumbersome, yielding minimal results due to significant difficulties in establishing a common working framework, planning actions and activities, and budgetary allocation.

The lack of a transparent monitoring methodology and an efficient collaboration mechanism among institutions is highlighted, as is the need for a genuine partnership between institutions and civil society. Blockages caused by insufficient resources, the lack of specialists in key areas (e.g., legal) and limited funding, without a transparent budgetary allocation for implementing measures, have been identified. Many actions are reported as being 'on paper' without a real impact, and campaigns and initiatives are rare and poorly coordinated.

In the Education area, the NRSF promotes inclusive education for Roma children through scholarships, mentoring, and monitoring school segregation. While over 25,000 Roma students benefited from dropout reduction programmes, segregation, and dropout rates remain high. Initiatives like special admissions in high schools and police education on Roma history show progress, but teacher training and infrastructure improvements are insufficient. The absence of mandatory Roma history courses further highlights disparities. Despite general progress in school achievement among the Roma, significant challenges remain. School dropout continues to be a major problem, with thousands of Roma children and young people outside the education system, as Eurostat is reflecting the situation at the EU level, Romania being at the top of the list with 16.4% early school leavers.² The lack of adequate educational infrastructure in isolated and segregated communities affects equitable access to education. Although school mediators have been trained and employed, their number is insufficient in relation to the needs of the communities.

The employment rates of the Roma are low, with only 41% of Roma aged 20-64 employed in 2021, compared to 71% for the general population in Romania and are in a declining trend. Roma women and youth face severe challenges, with many resorting to informal labour. The low level of skills and the limited access to information, advice and training represent a significant challenge to which institutions and actors in the labour market must respond in an integrated and anticipatory manner. Vocational training programmes are underfunded in the state budget, and legislative measures to incentivise Roma employment have stalled due to the larger economic situation in Romania. European funding opportunities, especially under European Social Fund+, were in the contracting and implementation phase starting 2024/2025.

¹ European Commission. (n.d.). *National Roma Strategic Frameworks: Commission Assessment and Implementation Reports*. Available at: https://commission.europa.eu/strategy-and-policy/policies/justice-and-fundamental-rights/combating-discrimination/roma-eu/roma-equality-inclusion-and-participation-eu/national-roma-strategic-frameworks-commission-assessment-and-implementation-reports_en

² Eurostat. (2024). *Early School Leavers Down to 9.5% in 2023*. Available at: <https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/web/products-eurostat-news/w/ddn-20240523-1>

Many Roma lack access to health insurance and medical services. Studies show high morbidity rates, poor maternal health, and low vaccination coverage, in line with the lower life expectancy of the Roma compared to Romania's population. The Ministry of Health has expanded community healthcare teams, increasing the number of health mediators, but discrimination remains a barrier to access. Ethnic data collection remains controversial, complicating efforts to measure progress. Some funding is allocated for integrated healthcare services, but the impact remains limited.

Many Roma families live in informal settlements without basic utilities, facing overcrowding and poor sanitation. These conditions exacerbate social exclusion and limit access to other fundamental rights, including health and education. Lack of access to running water, electricity and sanitation disproportionately affects women and children, who face additional health and safety risks. Poor housing conditions also contribute to the stigmatisation of Roma communities, reducing their chances of social and economic integration. Evictions continue without proper relocation support. Social housing projects are underfunded, and coordination among authorities is weak. At the same time, infrastructure expansion efforts have mainly ignored marginalised Roma communities, including the informal settlements, which represent a complex combination of systemic neglect and extreme poverty. A stronger commitment from the authorities is needed, along with adequate financial resources, effective monitoring mechanisms and close collaboration with civil society.

Roma poverty rates are increasing, with 78% at risk of poverty compared to the national average of 23%. Social assistance programmes exist, but fail to lift Roma families above the poverty line. The minimum inclusion income (VMI) provides some support but does not effectively integrate beneficiaries into the labour market. Structural barriers such as discrimination and limited employment opportunities persist.

Roma children are overrepresented in institutional care due to poverty, inadequate housing, and parental migration, while the institutionalised children face discrimination and identity denial. Child protection measures in the NRSF are weak, with no clear strategy to address issues like early marriage, abuse, or trafficking. The EU urges stronger protections, but implementation is lacking.

Governmental efforts to promote Roma culture include initiatives such as the Roma Theatre, the Roma Museum, and the Institute for Research and Conservation of Roma Culture and History, which are still in the process of development. However, financial support is inconsistent, and many cultural projects are implemented by non-Roma organisations. Limited funding and delays in key projects hinder cultural recognition and inclusion. Despite some progress, Roma identity remains underrepresented in mainstream cultural and educational frameworks.

While the NRSF has introduced some important initiatives, implementation remains weak due to limited coordination, funding shortages, and bureaucratic inefficiencies. Addressing these gaps requires more substantial institutional commitment, better collaboration between government and Roma-led organisations, and sustained financial investment.

Focus on key issues affecting Roma

Roma communities often face poor living conditions due to residential segregation, living in informal and illegal settlements, without proper land ownership documents and a general lack of infrastructure. Local authorities marginalise many settlements, and efforts to improve housing through national programmes remain limited. Bureaucratic obstacles further hinder progress in social housing, while its allocation to vulnerable families remains the responsibility of local public authorities, who complain about the lack of resources for such investments, the limited number of social housing units available at local level, but also about local legal provisions (Local Council) that are responsible to establish the criteria for their allocation. Most of the time, the scores obtained by Roma families are far from those that would enable them to be granted housing.

Access to early childhood education for Roma children remains inadequate, particularly in rural areas. Poor infrastructure, limited funding, and a lack of trained educators contribute to lower school participation. Within the NRSF, the issue of the quality of preschool education for Roma children is absent, both in analysis and implementation. There are complex family situations, generated by material shortages (clothes and shoes, snacks and supplies), the family's lack of interest in this stage of the educational process, the fact that parents are abroad for intermittent periods, and children stay with less interested relatives, etc.

Despite antidiscrimination laws, antigypsyism remains a major issue in Romania. Hate speech, particularly online, targets Roma youth. The Romanian Parliament enacted a law³ which outlines measures to prevent and combat antigypsyism. Still, critiques have emerged regarding its effectiveness, particularly concerning its capacity to address systemic issues such as school segregation, forced evictions, and environmental racism. Additionally, the law has been criticised for not adequately defining antigypsyism in collaboration with Roma activists and scholars. With all the efforts of the National Council for Combating Discrimination, the institutional responses remain weak, and the Roma civil society organisations have struggled to gain political traction in combating discrimination.

High unemployment and economic exclusion continue to affect Roma communities in Romania. Public employment services are often inaccessible due to administrative barriers and discrimination. Although the minimum inclusion income programme was introduced in 2024, it places pressure on beneficiaries to secure employment without providing adequate support, while Roma women face additional challenges due to low education levels and traditional gender roles.

Roma communities continue to face severe exclusion due to ineffective implementation, lack of funding, and minimal Roma representation in decision-making. Structural barriers remain, particularly in housing, education, and employment.

Use of EU funding instruments

In Romania, the NRSF establishes a framework for utilising European funds in projects that aim to promote social inclusion, education, health, or combat discrimination against Roma. However, its implementation faces obstacles, among others, administrative inefficiencies, lack of accurate ethnic data, lack of Roma-targeted measures and limited access for Roma organisations. Projects are often elaborated in a rather opportunistic manner by experts who lack a thorough understanding of Roma issues, and subsequently implemented by organisations that lack sufficient expertise in relation to Roma communities.

The allocation of EU funds for Roma-related priorities should include civil society organisations, in general, and Roma organisations, in particular, in the overall monitoring and tracking of progress (e.g., through monitoring committees or other formal structures). Instead, Roma NGOs have limited involvement in decision-making regarding EU funds. While some organisations participate in monitoring committees, their influence is minimal. Government initiatives, such as the 'Evaluation of Roma Inclusion Measures' Project and the 'ROMA PLATFORM' aim at improving monitoring, but engagement with Roma civil society remains weak.

While EU funding has the potential to improve Roma inclusion, ineffective implementation, weak Roma participation, and lack of transparency limit its impact. Stronger collaboration, improved monitoring, and targeted funding for Roma-led initiatives are essential for genuine progress.

³ Romania. (2021). *Law No. 2/2021 Regarding Some Measures to Prevent and Combat Antigypsyism*. Available at: <https://legislatie.just.ro/Public/DetaliiDocument/235923>

INTRODUCTION

National Roma strategic framework

On 28 April 2022, the Romanian Government adopted the NRSF for the period 2021-2027,⁴ as a stand-alone strategic document, following the EU Roma Strategic Framework (EURSF).⁵ Even if there was a significant effort of the Roma civil society organisations to promote a new approach of the NRSF, their public policy approach based on a paradigm shift by proposing the creation of national sectoral programmes as a mechanism for financing measures and the involvement of the Roma community in all stages relevant to public policies for Roma, the new adopted NRSF is following the same path as the previous versions of the Roma strategies, with the same type of implementation/monitoring/evaluation mechanism, with multitude of priorities, objectives, measures, and without a precise budgeting of the plan of measures, relying mainly on European Union funding.

Since its adoption in 2022, there have been no changes to the strategy and plan of action, despite the Interministerial Committee for the Implementation, Monitoring, and Evaluation of the Strategy (ICIMES) requesting proposals for changes to the NRSF at its November 2024 meeting. At the time of finalising this report, such proposals had been collected but no changes had been adopted yet.

Two governmental reports were presented on the progress in implementing the NRSF, the first in April 2023⁶ and the second in April 2024.⁷

Starting in 2024, the most relevant Roma and pro-Roma NGOs have been present in the ICIMES meetings; still, they are not part of the TWG activities.

As presented in the 2022 RCM report,⁸ the NRSF has introduced new and ambitious elements in the field of combating discrimination, hate speech, and hate crimes; however, these were considered insufficient or insignificant compared to the extent of antigypsyism in Romania by the report's authors. From this perspective, there are no significant changes, even though the TWG on discrimination appears to be the most active one. As mentioned, the NRSF did not have any changes after adoption, and the measures regarding Roma women, children, youth, disability, the elderly etc. remain unrepresented, not responding to the call of the EURSF. For the future NRSF version, it is necessary to make adjustments for a more effective approach to the topic.

Collaboration with Roma civil society organisations must also be improved, especially through extending the participation of Roma organisations as members of the TWGs, where the main decisions regarding the NRSF are made.

Sectoral strategies were developed for the period 2020 - 2027 and beyond. Our assessment of the NRSF in 2022 highlighted the need to establish specific Roma-related indicators in the relevant sectoral strategies. However, this is a circular issue, as sectoral strategies refer to the NRSF, and vice-versa. Implementing the

⁴ Romania. (2022). *Government Decision No. 560/28 April 2022, published in the Official Gazette No. /5 May 2022, for the Approval of the 'Strategy for the Inclusion of Romanian Citizens Belonging to the Roma Minority for the Period 2022-2027'*. Available at: <https://sgg.gov.ro/1/wp-content/uploads/2023/12/RAPORT-1.pdf>

⁵ European Commission. (2020). *EU Roma Strategic Framework for Equality, Inclusion and Participation*, COM(2020) 620 Final. Available at: <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=CELEX:52020DC0620>

Council of the European Union. (2021). *Council Recommendation on Roma Equality, Inclusion and Participation* [2021/C93/01] of 12 March 2021. Available at: https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=OJ%3AJOC_2021_093_R_0001

⁶ Romanian Government. (2023). *Monitoring Report on the Implementation of the Strategy for the Inclusion of Romanian Citizens Belonging to the Roma Minority – 2022*. Available at: <https://sgg.gov.ro/1/wp-content/uploads/2023/12/RAPORT-1.pdf>

⁷ Romanian Government. (2024). *Monitoring Report on the Implementation of the Strategy for the Inclusion of Romanian Citizens Belonging to the Roma Minority – 2023*. Available at: <https://sgg.gov.ro/1/wp-content/uploads/2024/09/RAPORT>

⁸ Roma Civil Monitor. (2022). *Civil Society Monitoring Report on the Quality of the National Strategic Framework for Roma Equality, Inclusion, and Participation in Romania*. Publication Office of the European Union. Available at: <https://romacivilmonitoring.eu/wp-content/uploads/2023/07/RCM2-2022-C1-Romania-FINAL-PUBLISHED-CATALOGUE.pdf>

sectoral strategies adopted over the last few years is, for sure, impossible given the combined budgets of those strategies are unbearable for the current state budget and EU funds allocations.

Therefore, they are merely a declaration without a foundation in the country's economic capacity, which suffers from a high level of deficit, reaching around 9% of GDP, the highest at the EU level. In fact, funding for the NRSF remains unclear, as Ministries are not able to present clear-cut numbers on the budgets allocated and spent on NRSF measures. In the present context in which the Romania's budget deficit was mounting during 2024 (around 8.5%), with several rounds of elections (local, EU, Parliament, Presidency) were making the public expenditure unhealthier, therefore cuts in the public spending will be operated during 2025 and beyond.⁹ We expect that the Roma issue will not be on the prominent position on the public governmental agenda.

About this report

The report was prepared as part of the initiative 'Preparatory Action – Roma Civil Monitoring – Strengthening capacity and involvement of Roma and pro-Roma civil society in policy monitoring and review' funded by the European Commission, Directorate-General for Justice and Consumers, as part of a larger approach of the EC to support the participation of the Roma organisations in the NRSF processes at national and international levels. This is the second report concerning the RCM initiative, focused on the actual status of implementation of the NRSF in Romania, other RCM thematic reports being also elaborated on digital inclusion, housing desegregation, Roma, and energy poverty).¹⁰

Methodology

The report follows the guidelines provided by the RCM consortium, and five of the Romanian coalition's organisations participated in the process.¹¹ For the documentation of the report, both public policy documents and public normative acts (decisions, ministerial orders, laws, EU documents, strategies), as well as documents prepared by civil society organisations or other researchers (surveys, programmes, projects, reports,) were used.

However, there is a certain scarcity of documents available on the actual implementation of the NRSF. Nevertheless, the team managed to collect the most relevant ones, including documents from national and international public authorities, as well as independent reports, expert opinions, and research in the field. Based on the team's previous experience, coalition members discussed and agreed on the distribution of tasks, including interviews with relevant stakeholders and drafting sections of the report.

A total of 20 interviews (face-to-face, telephone, e-mail or online) were conducted in various formats that were acceptable for the interviewees, including online/ face-to-face/ written, covering a diversity of central and local/ regional public bodies, as well as experts, researchers, and important representatives of Roma non-governmental organisations. There was a certain level of reluctance by ministerial representatives to accept interviews and express their points of view, sometimes promising written material that was never delivered. We used a simple informed consent form to obtain their permission to record and subsequently transcribe the interview, as well as to use their data (name, institutional affiliation) and to cite their relevant answers in the report.

Due to the varying English language levels of the contributors, the initial version of the report was prepared in Romanian. Subsequently, the report was translated into English to ensure a unified style. The preparation of the different sections required the coordinator's collaboration with each contributor, based on the already existing experience, in a genuinely learning approach.

⁹ Romania. (2024). *Government Emergency Order No. 156 of December 30, 2024, Regarding Some Fiscal-Budgetary Measures in the Field of Public Expenditure for the Substantiation of the General Consolidated Budget for 2025, for the Amendment and Completion of Some Normative Acts, as Well as for the Extension of Some Deadlines*. Available at: <https://legislatie.just.ro/public/DetaliiDocument/293109>

¹⁰ See: <https://romacivilmonitoring.eu/news/> for examples of new RCM thematic reports

¹¹ The following Roma NGOs participated: Resource Centre for Roma Communities, DANROM Association, SASTIPEN – Roma Centre for Health Policies, O Del Amenca – Roma Cultural Centre, ACEDO – Association Centre for Education and Human Rights and ÎMPREUNĂ – Community Development Agency.

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1. IMPLEMENTATION OF THE NRSF

1.1. Key developments and effectiveness of implementation

The Strategy for the Inclusion of Romanian Citizens belonging to the Roma minority for the period 2022 – 2027, adopted on 28 April 2022 (NRSF) was developed according to the Romanian public policy regulation¹² for governmental strategies, as an umbrella document for addressing strategic gaps and stimulate progress in key areas of social inclusion of the Roma.

1.1.1. Changes in the NRSF and action plan

As of the time of writing this report, no changes have been made to the NRSF. However, it is expected that a series of changes to the NRSF will be made in 2025, following the last meeting of the ICIMES on 29 November 2024, which requested that ministries submit proposals by the end of 2024 regarding the changes they intend to make to the strategic document. At the time of finalising the present report, in June 2025, the proposed changes and improvements had just been collected at the level of NAR and ICIMES. Still, they were not taken into consideration for adoption by the Government. It is worth mentioning that after the general election process in 2024, the new government was installed on 23 June 2025.¹³

1.1.2. Progress in implementation

The Interministerial Committee for the Implementation, Monitoring and Evaluation of the Strategy (ICIMES)¹⁴ was established in May 2022, with the goal of coordinating and monitoring the implementation of the NRSF measures, ensuring the active participation of all ministries and central institutions with responsibility for implementing the NRSF.

According to the 2024 report on the NRSF,¹⁵ there has been limited progress in implementation, and further efforts are needed at the institutional level, including a shift away from the passive approach of some Thematic Working Groups (TWGs). Additionally, at the local level, better communication and coordination are more than necessary. Dialogue with civil society organisations and the academic environment should be implemented at all levels.

ICIMES activities are conducted through TWGs, which include line Ministries and central institutions with responsibilities in the implementation of the measures assumed in the Action Plans.¹⁶ The purpose of these TWGs is to analyse the issues encountered in the implementation of the measures, to propose solutions and to accelerate the progress of the strategy. According to Iulian Stoian,¹⁷ a NAR representative, the TWGs are key structures for interdisciplinarity, ‘the engines of the NRSF’, which were designed at the recommendation of civil society organisations. These organisations are now invited in the ICIMES meetings as observers.

The following Thematic Working Groups (WGTs) were set-up initially:

1. Working Group on the Right to Housing;

¹² Romania. (2022). *Government Decision No. 379/2022 on Approval of the Methodology for Elaboration, Implementation, Monitoring, Evaluation and Updating of Governmental Strategies*. Available at: https://sgg.gov.ro/1/wp-content/uploads/2022/04/HG-nr.-379_2022-elaborare-strategii.docx

¹³ Government of Romania. (n.d.). *First Meeting of the Ilie Bolojan Cabinet*. Available at: <https://gov.ro/en/news/first-meeting-of-the-ilie-bolojan-cabinet>

¹⁴ Romania. (2022). *Decision of the Prime Minister No. 336/26.05.2022, Published in the Official Gazette of Romania on May 26, 2022*.

¹⁵ Romanian Government. (2024). *Monitoring Report on the Implementation of the Strategy for the Inclusion of Romanian Citizens Belonging to the Roma Minority – 2023*. Available at: <https://sgg.gov.ro/1/wp-content/uploads/2024/09/RAPORT.pdf>

¹⁶ Romanian Government. (2023). *Annual Progress Report on the Implementation of the Romanian Government's Strategy for the Inclusion of Romanian Citizens Belonging to the Roma Minority for the Period 2022–2027, Reporting Period May 2022 – April 2023*. Available at: <https://sgg.gov.ro/1/wp-content/uploads/2023/12/RAPORT-1.pdf>

¹⁷ Interview with Iulian Stoian, representing the National Agency for Roma (NAR), 18 November 2024.

2. Working Group on the Right to Education and Cultural Identity;
3. Working Group on the Right to Health;
4. Working Group on the Rights of the Child;
5. Working Group on Entrepreneurship and Jobs;
6. Working Group on Intra-Community Mobility;
7. Working Group on Combating Discrimination;
8. Working Group on Promoting Legislative Amendments.

Moreover, in addition to the eight thematic working groups initially established for the implementation of the strategy, two new thematic working groups were created on: (1) For the Prevention and elimination of school segregation and (2) The rights of Roma women and girls, which directly support the implementation of the measures provided for in the NRSF.

However, there are significant differences between the TWGs and the responsible Ministries regarding the progress made in implementing the NRSF. Iulian Paraschiv,¹⁸ President of NAR, describes these results by praising the Ministry of Interior's involvement in coordinating the TWG on Combating Discrimination, while expressing disappointment in the results of the other line ministries. The CNCD representative's perspective reflects frustration with the lack of progress and the need to make additional efforts on her own to advance specific initiatives. She also emphasises that reliance on individual engagement can compromise the continuity of projects, especially if key people leave their current positions. As such, when institutional mechanisms are weak or inconsistently applied, the sustainability of interventions often depends disproportionately on personal dedication rather than structured, systemic follow-up.

However, the implementation of the NRSF is affected by challenges related to financing, coordination, engagement and monitoring. The lack of a transparent monitoring methodology and an efficient collaboration mechanism among institutions is highlighted by interviewees, primarily Roma experts and NGO representatives, as is the need for a genuine partnership between institutions and civil society. Blockages caused by insufficient resources, the lack of specialists in key areas (e.g., legal) and limited funding, without a clear budgetary allocation for implementing measures, have been identified. Many actions are reported as being 'on paper' without a real impact, and campaigns and initiatives are rare and poorly coordinated. For example, information campaigns and research were proposed to monitor discrimination, but these did not materialise.

The same conclusion is also stated in the progress report on the NRSF during the period May 2023 - April 2024, which emphasises that the only TWG actively involved in the implementation of the Strategy is the Working Group for Combating Discrimination, coordinated by the Ministry of Interior.

The report also highlights the limited progress in implementing the NRSF, despite notable efforts to achieve the objectives related to access to education, combating discrimination, and preserving and promoting Roma cultural heritage and identity. Fragmented coordination and communication among institutions, difficulties in data collection and reporting, as well as gaps in the engagement of authorities and institutions at the local level, also represent challenges in implementing the NRSF.¹⁹ Regarding the difficulties at the local level, Iulian Paraschiv adds, "That is the big problem. ... if at the level of central institutions, we have levers through which we meet, discuss, allocate resources, and things are moving in a good direction in certain areas, at the local level there is local autonomy, and there [...] are no levers through which the National Agency for Roma or the ministries can put any sort of pressure".

1.1.3. Effectiveness of monitoring

ICIMES coordinates the monitoring of the NRSF through plenary meetings and thematic working groups. At the time of the adoption of the NRSF, the monitoring report prepared by Roma Civil Monitor²⁰ identified the lack of budget, targets, and quantifiable indicators as a significant shortcoming in the overall content of the NRSF.

¹⁸ Interview with Iulian Paraschiv, President of the National Agency for Roma, Co-chair of ICIMES, 18 November 2024.

¹⁹ *Ibidem*.

²⁰ Roma Civil Monitor. (2022). *Civil Society Monitoring Report on the Quality of the National Strategic Framework for Roma Equality, Inclusion and Participation in Romania* (Romanian version). Available at: https://romacivilmonitoring.eu/wp-content/uploads/2023/05/RCM2-2022-C1-Romania-final_RO.pdf

In this regard, ICIMES organised a series of bilateral meetings with representatives of the line Ministries to establish solutions. The NAR submitted reporting templates to the Ministries for data collection and analysis on the implementation of the NRSF measures, the pursuit of the objectives, budgets and targets set for each area.²¹ Efforts were made to involve and convince the relevant Ministries, as described by Iulian Stoian:²²

“There was an effort in the first year after the adoption to keep the hot topic on the agenda of the Ministries [...], basically a tour that we organised with the support of the Ministry of Investments and European Projects in which we held tripartite meetings between the NAR, Ministry of European Investments and Projects, and the line Ministry to discuss and persuade [...] Basically, we had to assemble some cogwheels so that the mechanism would work and I would say that it works relatively well”.

Two governmental reports were presented on the progress in implementation of the NRSF, the first in April 2023²³ and the second in April 2024.²⁴ During 2022, the main results reported were included the setting up establishment of the ICIMES structure, the Ministerial Commissions for Roma and the eight initial ICIMES Thematic Working Groups. ICIMES is co-chaired by one Secretary of State, nominated by the Prime Minister, and the President of the National Agency for Roma, with the secretariat being overseen by the NAR. The report issued in April 2024 presented the main results of the TWGs, as well as brief information on the NRSF measures' level of implementation, along with details of certain activities implemented across the country by various public structures.

It is worth noting that, starting in 2024, the most prominent Roma and pro-Roma NGOs have been participating in the ICIMES meetings; however, they are not currently part of the TWG activities. The conclusions of the second-year report on the progress in implementing the NRSF²⁵ presented a limited level of progress, requiring more active involvement from governmental structures in identifying solutions for the implementation of the NRSF. Advancing the NRSF implementation requires a more active participation from the TWGs, including more frequent meetings, with the pioneer being the TWG on combating discrimination, which has proven to be the most active one. Collaboration with Roma civil society organisations must be intensified and ethnic data collection should be brought to the attention of ICIMES and TWGs.

In September 2024, the office of the Prime Minister began evaluating the Plan of Measures contained in the annexe to the NRSF to update it, based on the responses received from Dragoş Hotea, co-president of ICIMES.²⁶

²¹ Romanian Government. (2023). *Annual Progress Report on the Implementation of the Romanian Government's Strategy for the Inclusion of Romanian Citizens Belonging to the Roma Minority for the Period 2022–2027, Reporting Period May 2022 – April 2023*. Available at: <https://sqg.gov.ro/1/wp-content/uploads/2023/12/RAPORT-1.pdf>

²² Interview with Iulian Stoian, representing the National Agency for Roma, 18 November 2024, Bucharest

²³ Romanian Government. (2023). *Annual Progress Report on the Implementation of the Romanian Government's Strategy for the Inclusion of Romanian Citizens Belonging to the Roma Minority for the Period 2022–2027, Reporting Period May 2022 – April 2023*. Available at: <https://sqg.gov.ro/1/wp-content/uploads/2023/12/RAPORT-1.pdf>

²⁴ Romanian Government. (2024). *Annual Progress Report on the Implementation of the Romanian Government's Strategy for the Inclusion of Romanian Citizens Belonging to the Roma Minority for the Period 2022–2027, Reporting Period May 2023 – April 2024*. Available at: <https://sqg.gov.ro/1/wp-content/uploads/2024/09/RAPORT.pdf>

²⁵ *Ibidem*.

²⁶ Information conveyed in writing by the office of Secretary of State Dragoş Hotea, President of ICIMES

The annual progress reports on the implementation of the NRSF for the period May 2022 – April 2023,²⁷ and for the period May 2023 – April 2024²⁸, respectively, prepared by the NAR and the Chancellery of the Prime Minister, show that the NRSF has been reflected in various government strategies and policies, including:

- the National Plan for Recovery and Resilience (PNRR)²⁹
- the National Programme for Local Development (PNDL)³⁰
- the National Plan for Reducing School Drop-out (PNRAS)³¹
- the National Cadastre and Land Registry Programme (PNCCF)³²
- the Social Housing for Roma Communities³³
- the Strategy for combating antisemitism, xenophobia, radicalisation, and hate speech, the National Strategy for promoting equal opportunities and treatment between women and men and preventing and combating domestic violence³⁴

1.1.4. Data collection

NAR has developed a standardised reporting mechanism (reporting template) that includes targets, budgets, specific indicators and the status of implementing measures. The Ministries responsible for the implementation of the NRSF collect the necessary data from subordinate institutions at the county and local level, which will be used to complete the reporting template.³⁵

A Ministerial Commission for Roma is established at the level of each Ministry to monitor the implementation of sectoral measures under institutional responsibility. At the county level, monitoring is carried out through the Mixed Working Groups (consisting of representatives of local public administration, decentralised or deconcentrated institutions, experts, and local CSAs). There has been considerable progress in data monitoring and collection in education, for example, through the implementation of a monitoring system in 842 schools to prevent school dropout and segregation, as well as an increase in the number of Roma students registered in the Integrated Information System on Education in Romania (SIIR).

On the other hand, collecting ethnic data remains a challenge due to the lack of a clear legal framework and the reluctance of Roma communities to assume their ethnic identity, which limits monitoring efforts. The Ministry of Development, Public Works, and Administration (MDPWA) and the Ministry of Health report data on beneficiaries without mentioning their ethnicity, and in the area of employment, the report on the implementation of the NRSF, May 2022 - April 2023, notes that “in this area, too, there are difficulties in

²⁷ Romanian Government. (2024). *Annual Progress Report on the Implementation of the Romanian Government's Strategy for the Inclusion of Romanian Citizens Belonging to the Roma Minority for the Period 2022–2027, Reporting Period May 2022 – April 2023*. Available at: <https://cancelarie.gov.ro/wp-content/uploads/2024/02/RAPORT-ANUAL-CU-PRIVIRE-LA-PROGRESUL-INREGISTRAT-IN-IMPLEMENTAREA-STRATEGIEI-GVERNULUI-ROMANIEI-DE-INCLUZIUNE-A-CETATENILOR-ROMANI-APARTINAND-MINORITATII-ROME-PENTRU-PERIOADA-2022-2027-SNIR.docx>

²⁸ Romanian Government. (2024). *Annual Progress Report on the Implementation of the Romanian Government's Strategy for the Inclusion of Romanian Citizens Belonging to the Roma Minority for the Period 2022–2027, Reporting Period May 2023 – April 2024*. Available at: <https://sgg.gov.ro/1/wp-content/uploads/2024/09/RAPORT.pdf>

²⁹ Romanian Government. (n.d.). *PNRR – National Recovery and Resilience Plan Portal*. Available at: <https://mfe.gov.ro/pnrr/>

³⁰ Romanian Ministry of Development, Public Works and Administration. (n.d.). *PNDL – National Local Development Programme*. Available at: <https://www.mdlpa.ro/pages/pndl>

³¹ Romanian Ministry of Education. (n.d.). *PNRAS – National Programme for Reducing School Dropout*. Available at: <https://www.edu.ro/etichete/pnras>

³² National Agency for Cadastre and Land Registration. (n.d.). *PNCCF – National Programme for Cadastral and Land Book Registration*. Available at: <https://www.ancpi.ro/pnccf/>

³³ Romania. (2008). *Government Decision No. 1237/2008 on Improving Access of the Roma Communities to Decent Housing*. Available at: <https://legislatie.just.ro/Public/DetaliuDocument/98136>

³⁴ Romanian Government. (2021). *Annex 1 – Indicators for Monitoring the Implementation of Public Policy Documents*. Available at: <https://sgg.gov.ro/1/wp-content/uploads/2021/05/ANEXA-1-4.pdf>

³⁵ Interview with Iulian Paraschiv, President of the National Agency for Roma, Co-chair of ICIMES, 18 November 2024

collecting data due to the reluctance of Romanian Roma citizens to declare their ethnicity”.³⁶ Although significant progress has been made in the monitoring mechanism, there are delays and gaps that need to be addressed through more effective coordination, additional investments and better defined data collection mechanisms.

1.2. NRSF’s synergy with domestic and EU actions

1.2.1. Complementary policies

The implementation of the NRSF is supported by a series of new national strategies and policies developed in relevant areas, which align with the objectives and priorities outlined in the NRSF. These documents highlight increased complementarity between sectoral strategic plans and the measures included in the NRSF, contributing to an integrated approach to the problems of the Roma community.

Some of the relevant national strategies and policies mentioned by the interviewed respondents are:

1. National Strategy for Preventing and Combating Antisemitism, Xenophobia, Radicalisation and Hate Speech (2024-2027)³⁷ – this strategy includes measures aimed at preventing discrimination and hate speech, aspects particularly relevant for combating prejudice against minorities.
2. National Strategy for Promoting Equal Opportunities and Preventing Domestic Violence (2022-2027)³⁸ – this strategy provides a framework for supporting disadvantaged women and girls in the context of the multiple vulnerabilities they face.
3. Strategy for reducing early school leaving³⁹ – this strategy includes specific interventions for vulnerable communities, including for Roma children’s access to quality education.
4. National Strategy for the Protection and Promotion of the Rights of the Child (2023-2027)⁴⁰ – this strategy addresses the needs of children from disadvantaged communities, including Roma social exclusion.
5. National Strategy for Social Inclusion and Poverty Reduction for the period 2022—2027⁴¹
6. National Strategy Against Trafficking in Persons for the period 2024-2028

These strategies include specific measures tailored to Roma and support the integration of Roma needs into broader policies. For example, the measures on access to education provided for in the NRSF are closely linked to the Strategy for Reducing Early School Leaving, and interventions on equal opportunities and combating domestic violence are directly aligned with the NRSF.

³⁶ Romanian Government. (2024). *Annual Progress Report on the Implementation of the Romanian Government’s Strategy for the Inclusion of Romanian Citizens Belonging to the Roma Minority for the Period 2022–2027, Reporting Period May 2022 – April 2023*. Available at: <https://cancelarie.gov.ro/wp-content/uploads/2024/02/RAPORT-ANUAL-CU-PRIVIRE-LA-PROGRESUL-INREGISTRAT-IN-IMPLEMENTAREA-STRATEGIEI-GUVERNULUI-ROMANIEI-DE-INCLUZIUNE-A-CETATENILOR-ROMANI-APARTINAND-MINORITATII-ROME-PENTRU-PERIOADA-2022-2027-SNIR.docx>

³⁷ Romanian Government. (2024). *Annex 1 – Monitoring Indicators for the Implementation of Public Policy Documents (May 2024)*. Available at: <https://sqq.gov.ro/1/wp-content/uploads/2024/05/ANEXA-1-12.pdf>

³⁸ Ministry of Labour and Social Protection. (2021). *Annex 1 – National Strategy on Social Inclusion and Poverty Reduction (Including Contributions from ANDPDCA and CNPP)*. Available at: https://www.mmuncii.ro/j33/images/Documente/MMPS/Transparenta_decizionala/09032021Anexa_1_SNESVD_cu_ANDPDCA_CNPP_29_01.pdf

³⁹ Ministry of Education. (n.d.). *Strategy on Reducing Early School Leaving in Romania*. Available at: <https://edu.ro/strategia-privind-reducerea-p%C4%83r%C4%83sirii-timpurii-%C8%99colii-%C3%AEn-rom%C3%A2nia>

⁴⁰ Romanian Government. (2014). *Strategy for the Protection and Promotion of the Rights of the Child 2014–2020*. Available at: <https://copii.gov.ro/1/wp-content/uploads/2021/08/Strategia-copii-2014-2020.pdf>

⁴¹ Ministry of Labour and Social Protection. (2022). *National Strategy on Social Inclusion and Poverty Reduction 2022–2027*. Available at: <https://mmuncii.ro/j33/index.php/ro/minister-2019/strategii-politici-programe/6562-sn-includiune-sociala-2022-2027>

However, as a Roma civil society (NGO) representative argues, Roma issues are not sufficiently integrated into larger sectoral strategies. Examples are the National Strategy on Social Inclusion and Poverty Reduction for the Period 2022 – 2027 or the National Employment Strategy 2021 – 2027, which have very few references to the challenges faced by the Roma population. This lack of consideration of the specific needs of Roma reduces their effectiveness and relevance, and in the broader context of the growing extremism and anti-Roma sentiments at both national and European levels, the lack of specific policies that would genuinely include Roma in public strategies and policies exacerbates their marginalisation and discrimination.

While the integration of the Roma dimension into national policies represents significant progress, challenges persist, as described by representatives of the responsible institutions. Effective implementation is often limited by the lack of effective coordination among strategies and insufficient financial resources earmarked exclusively for the NRSF. In addition, the shared responsibility at local, county and national levels remains a source of fragmentation in the implementation of measures.

1.2.2. Alignment with EU actions

The measures implemented in the NRSF are mainly in line with the actions and priorities of the European Union (EU). The strategy was developed taking in consideration of the EURSF and reflects the EU's priorities in several key areas, including education, employment, health, housing, and combating discrimination. The integration of the gender and youth dimensions into the NRSF's measures is a clear example of alignment, with Romania creating thematic working groups to promote the rights of Roma women and girls, in line with European recommendations.

Romania seems to comply with the EU principle of involving civil society, by collaborating with Roma and pro-Roma NGOs in the planning, implementation and monitoring of the NRSF, as it is stated in the NRSF text, reflecting the commitment to include the voices of the Roma community in the decision-making process, as requested by the EU, but this is not followed by explicit action, remaining instead at a declarative level.

Progress reports submitted to the Commission highlight the extent to which the implemented actions contribute to the objectives set at the European level.

On the other hand, the NRSF benefits from financial support through the European Social Fund (ESF) and other European resources, which demonstrates the integration of European priorities into national inclusion plans. These funds are used for education, health, housing, and employment projects dedicated to Roma communities, thus strengthening coherence with the EU's strategic directions.

However, certain challenges persist in implementing the measures. Although Romania complies with EU guidelines, there are delays in implementing some of the measures due to limited administrative capacity at the local level and insufficient budgeting. The EU has underlined the importance of establishing clear budgets for NRSF measures, which remains an area for improvement.

1.2.3. Addressing concerns of previous assessments

The Assessment report of the Member States' NRSFs, prepared by the European Commission and published on 9 January 2023,⁴² highlights that "the commitments undertaken by Romania do not sufficiently reflect the significant needs of the Roma population, given the proportion of this community in the total population". Dragoş Hotea, the President of ICIMES, also mentions that the European Commission's requests concerned the establishment of milestones and measurable long-term objectives in each area of the NRSF, along with related budgeting, as well as the need to integrate gender and youth issues into the implementation of measures undertaken through the NRSF. As a result of these requests, a work calendar was established to be observed by each institution that is a party to the Committee, and the creation of a single reporting mechanism was agreed upon.

Yet another example of a concrete measure adopted following the observations from the EC was the creation of a Thematic Working Group on the rights of Roma women and girls. Following the assessment of April 2024, the European Commission found that three out of the four criteria attesting to the fulfilment of the enabling

⁴² European Commission. (2023). *Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament and the Council: Report on the Implementation of National Roma Strategic Frameworks*. Available at: <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/RO/TXT/?uri=CELEX:52023DC0007>

condition 'Strategic Policy Framework for Roma inclusion'⁴³ had been achieved. The unfulfilled criterion concerned measures to accelerate the integration of Romanian citizens belonging to the Roma minority, to prevent and eliminate segregation, taking into account the gender dimension and the situation of Roma youth, and to establish measurable milestones and targets. It is essential that the implementation of the NRSF is supported by stronger commitments, adequate resources and effective inter-institutional coordination.

In order to improve the NRSF implementation, the European Commission has requested the establishment of clear, measurable objectives and targets in all areas covered by the strategy. Romania has made significant progress in terms of monitoring and collaboration with local and regional stakeholders; however, establishing concrete milestones and benchmarks for accelerating Roma integration remains an unresolved priority.

The strategy partially addresses the observations and concerns identified in previous evaluations. These include the integration of an intersectional perspective, which takes into account gender and youth dimensions, and the active involvement of Roma civil society. However, there are still challenges related to the lack of data disaggregated by ethnicity, gender or other relevant criteria, which complicates the process of assessing the impact of the measures.

The limitations observed in the implementation of the NRSF 2015-2020⁴⁴ continue to affect the current strategy, highlighting the persistence of structural and coordination issues. One of the main challenges remains the quality of data collection and reporting, with the lack of systematic practices of disaggregation by ethnic criteria, which limits the possibility of accurately assessing the impact of measures. Also, the administrative culture, characterised by a reluctance to exchange information and the lack of clear collaboration protocols, undermines inter-institutional coordination efforts. These shortcomings, also present in the previous strategy, persist despite the tools created to standardise and strengthen monitoring processes.

The current strategy is perceived by some Roma and pro-Roma NGO representatives as ineffective, without a tangible impact on the Roma community. It is rather a political statement, lacking coherent measures and consistent support, and the lack of coordination among the responsible institutions leads to chaotic implementation of the measures, which highlights that the government does not prioritise this strategy. This perception is correct, as the Roma CSOs developed, wrongly again, after more than 20 years since the first Roma Strategy, a certain level of expectations and the life of the Roma communities is still not getting better.

As one of the Roma NGO representatives mentions, a positive aspect of the current strategy is the initial collaboration with Roma civil society in the development process, which was an improvement over the previous strategy, which exclusively reflected the government's vision. The current strategy is also structured in a way that integrates the interests and perspectives of civil society, marking a welcome change in focus. However, the approach remains limited by the traditional structure of the four main areas – housing, employment, education, and health – despite the inclusion of new themes, such as identity and anti-discrimination, which are highly relevant. "The good part is that [...] we were listened to, the less good part is that no line ministry has come up with a clear plan and budget [...] Even if they were more accessible now, I think we still lack substantial change".⁴⁵

⁴³ Romanian Government. (2024). *Annual Progress Report on the Implementation of the Romanian Government's Strategy for the Inclusion of Romanian Citizens Belonging to the Roma Minority for the Period 2022–2027, Reporting Period May 2023 – April 2024*. Available at: <https://sgg.gov.ro/1/wp-content/uploads/2024/09/RAPORT.pdf>

⁴⁴ World Bank. (2022). *First National Monitoring Report and the Final M&E Methodology (Part One). Developing a Functional M&E System at County Level for the Implementation of the Strategy for the Inclusion of Romanian Citizens Belonging to the Roma Minority [Primul Raport Național de Monitorizare Împreună cu Metodologia Finală de M&E (Prima Parte). Dezvoltarea unui Sistem Funcțional de M&E la Nivel Județean pentru Implementarea Strategiei de Incluziune a Cetățenilor Români Aparținând Minorității Rome]*. Available at: http://www.anr.gov.ro/images/2022/rapoarte/Roma-ME-Output-3-First-National-Monitoring-Report-part-1_RO.pdf

⁴⁵ Interview with Gelu Dumnică, President of the Împreună Community Development Agency, Bucharest, November 2024.

1.3. Roma participation in implementation and monitoring

Following the adoption of the NRSF, in 2023-2024, there were several opportunities for CSOs to engage in consultations and debates on the implementation of NRSF actions, organised by either the National Agency for Roma or the Ministry of Investments and European Projects through the National Roma Contact Point.

NAR continues to manage the relationship with CSOs and other stakeholders, including those in the NAR Advisory Council. The last meeting of the Council was organised by the Agency, together with the Chancellery of the Prime Minister, in 2023. During 2024, the NAR also invited other organisations to join the NAR Advisory Council, with some of the RCM coalition members becoming members and being regularly invited to related activities, such as ICIMES meetings.

1.3.1. Involvement of Roma CSOs in implementation

The role of Roma and pro-Roma organisations in the implementation of the NRSF is limited. On one hand, the NRSF is a governmental public policy, and most of the structures involved are public ones. CSOs need to have sustainable resources available, qualified human resources, expertise, and multiple sources of financing for their activities, among other things, to be relevant partners in the implementation of the NRSF measures. Unfortunately, only a tier of organisations has the capacity and willingness to participate, while their resources are most of the time project-based.

They also offer multiple services intended for beneficiaries, which generate funds from subsidies, national programmes, sectoral programmes, and fundraising efforts from various public and private, national, and international donors. The rest of the organisations, which act locally, enter into projects and increase their capacity when they have funding. To conclude, the participation of Roma civil society organisations, as well as many non-Roma ones, is strictly dependent on the availability of financial resources.

In 2024, NAR expanded the participation of Roma civil society organisations at the level of the Consultative Council, with two member organisations of the RCM2 coalition (Sastipen, Resource Centre for Roma Communities) and others, being members. They were often consulted informally by NAR management on various issues raised by the implementation of the NRSF.

A new approach of the NAR and ICIMES took place in May 2024, when the ICIMES meeting⁴⁶ organised in a hybrid format, was attended by representatives at the level of Secretary of State, Undersecretary of State, or management positions within the central Ministries/institutions with responsibilities in coordinating the measure plans and inter-ministerial TWG established through the NRSF, as well as 31 representatives of Roma NGOs in the room and 11 representatives of Roma NGOs via the videoconference system.

This CSO participation demonstrates the high level of interest among Roma organisations in the implementation and monitoring of the NRSF; however, their level of involvement is limited. Within the ICIMES meeting, they had the opportunity to address questions to the ministerial representatives present and receive clarifications on the issues raised: the status of some of the national programmes, indicators, and allocated budgets, the need to evaluate the impact of some of the measures in the strategy, and some proposals for legislative amendments identified following the debates. It is a positive development that the next ICIMES meetings were also organised with Roma CSOs participation in a hybrid format, ensuring a certain pressure on public structures to present their results.

The NAR press release issued after the meeting acknowledged the principle of 'Nothing for Roma, without Roma', and mentioned that in the future Roma practitioners from different CSOs to be invited to the meetings of the various TWGs (in face-to-face and online formats), so that they could contribute with their expertise and propose solutions to the decision-makers at the central level.

At the time of writing this report, the TWGs had not yet included Roma CSOs in their decision-making processes. Regarding the implementation of the NRSF, Roma CSOs participate as individual entities, usually at local and/or regional level, by associating with other institutions to tackle specific strategic directions (e.g., education,

⁴⁶ National Agency for Roma. (2023). *Consultation Meeting With Representatives of Roma and Pro-Roma Civil Society on the Annual Report Regarding the Implementation of the National Roma Inclusion Strategy 2022–2027*. Available at: <http://anr.gov.ro/index.php/anr/evenimente/evenimente-2023/reuniune-de-consultare-cu-reprezentantii-societatii-civile-rome-si-pro-rome-pe-tema-raportului-anual-privind-implementarea-strategiei-nationale-de-incluziune-a-romilor-2022-2027>

employment or entrepreneurship, social services, medical care, etc), through specific Calls for Proposals, both from the national budget (financed by the NAR) and the EU (ESF+ and ERDF).

1.3.2. Roma in public institutions implementing the NRSF

First and foremost, the National Agency for Roma (NAR) is the one body that brings together Roma specialists in all the areas of the NSRF at national level, through the Consultative Council, for both information and dissemination of the NRSF and for the promotion of project concepts and ideas, leaning towards the practical implementation of the NSRF.

All the relevant institutions have Roma employees with specific skills in the implementation of the NSRF, most notably was the National Roma Contact Point (NRCP), which enlisted the support of several Roma specialists, as well as developing a Traineeship Programme for young Roma students to take part in the implementation of and monitoring of some of the NSRF actions, not to mention the involvement of all the large Roma NGOs in most of the public events and initiatives for the NSRF, which were largely voluntary for the participants.

Unfortunately, we cannot find any positive aspects of Roma participation in other governmental structures, as hiring in the Romanian public system is strictly competitive. Still, we may notice that in the present Ministry of Education, a Sub-State Secretary is involved in ethnic minority education, and a well-known Roma activist and member of the Deputy Chamber, representing the Social Democrat Party, is also involved. However, this is the exception. At the time of finalising the present report, we would like to mention the presence of a young Roma ethnic activist in a newly appointed position at the Ministry of Labour,⁴⁷ which is practically the first of its kind.

Roma participation in monitoring and evaluation

One can say that information related to opportunities for involvement in any stage of the NRSF implementation and monitoring process exists and is available. Still, often Roma and non-Roma civil society organisations cannot access these opportunities for objective reasons: lack of specialised human resources capable of asking the right questions and giving the appropriate answers, lack of financial resources to cover travel costs (especially for small, provincial organisations), lack of time and technological resources, in some instances. Participation in these opportunities is not remunerated; however, some of the transport and accommodation costs may be supported by the organisers through their budget or from projects they have implemented.

Roma and Pro-Roma CSOs are invited to join initiatives organised by the National Agency for Roma (NAR), the National Roma Contact Point, other Roma organisations, whenever there are opportunities to mark essential aspects for the Roma, whether it is about the historical events/ celebrations, education, science, culture and traditions, etc. Roma civil society has access to available information regarding the monitoring of the NRSF. It receives all the details necessary to participate in this process, in various forms, including organised events letters, questionnaires that can be filled in online/ offline, participation in interviews, and involvement as members in networks and coalitions. All these forms of participation are voluntary and, as mentioned above, depend on the existence and abundance of resources. Access to information does not always mean guaranteed involvement in the monitoring process of the NRSF.

Both the National Agency for Roma, the NRCP, as well as the coalitions and networks formed in various projects and programmes provide information, send e-mail newsletters and create online and offline events to involve as many representatives of Roma civil society as possible in the monitoring and evaluation of the NRSF, to obtain the most up-to-date and relevant data. Their efforts yield good results when they have the funding to cover some of the participants' expenses and when they create options, such as online/ offline access and participation. However, it is primarily through their relationships that organisers encourage Roma experts and CSOs to participate in the monitoring and evaluation process, and provide significant and relevant information.

Representatives of civil society (NGOs, social partners and academics/researchers) were involved in the monitoring and evaluation process of the NRSF, through the ways described above. The RCM team has also attempted to gather information from several of these, with varying degrees of success, as shown in this report and the interviews. Most of the NGOs and social partners have had an observer role in the NSRF monitoring

⁴⁷ Petre-Florin Manole, Ministry of Labor, Family, Youth and Social Solidarity. *Ministerial Profile*. Available at: <https://gov.ro/ro/guvernul/cabinetul-de-ministri/ministrul-muncii-familiei-tineretului-i-solidaritatiei-sociale>

and evaluation process so far, with very few of these becoming members of working groups and monitoring bodies (ICIMES or TWGs).

1.3.3. Contribution of National Roma Platform to the NRSF implementation

The existence of the NAR as a governmental structure is in contradiction with the model promoted by the NRCP at the European level. Practically, in the case of Romania we cannot speak of the existence of a 'Roma Platform' in the sense in which it was conceived at the European level, the status of the NRCP in relation to the NRSF and the relevant ministerial structures is low, with a team in constant change and without a clear representation of the Roma ethnicity.

The National Contact Point for Roma uses its online platform to disseminate information to its subscribers. As a result, the online communication platform 'National Platform of Good Practices for Roma'⁴⁸ collects and provides information on good practice projects, reports, and studies⁴⁹ of interest to substantiate needs analyses regarding policies for Romanian citizens of Roma ethnicity, evaluation reports. It is also a meeting place for Roma and Non-Roma experts, through its discussion forums.

The latter are less popular, due to the lack of moderators to ensure a flow of comments, facilitate debates/discussions, and maintain order. News and events related to the NRSF and other aspects of interest to Roma CSOs, as well as initiatives that benefit Roma, are published on the NCPR Platform. This includes information on partner selection procedures for projects of interest, updates on funding sources, and more.

These structural weaknesses are also reflected in more recent initiatives. To support monitoring, since October 2022, the Government, through the National Roma Contact Point in MIPE, has been implementing the project 'Evaluation of Roma Inclusion Measures' (funded by the EC), which involves data collection, promotion of good practices, thematic meetings and workshops for consulting with civil society. In April 2024, the Government submitted the project 'Roma Platform' for monitoring the NRSF, with two Roma NGOs as partners,⁵⁰ but at this point one of the organisations has decided to no longer support this project, due to a certain lack of understanding and reciprocal expectations that prevented the project to go forward with the two Roma NGOs as partners. We currently do not have any information on the project's status.

According to the Assessment Report of the Member States' national Roma strategic frameworks in 2023,⁵¹ "the NRCP possesses sufficient resources, has staff capacity and potential to fulfil the coordination role with the line ministries, equality bodies and Roma civil society, however, their mandate does not include an explicit coordination role with the key stakeholders". It is evident that this statement lacks foundation in the institutional reality of Romania, and the EC should acknowledge the situation in Romania and other Member States and seek an alternative institutional solution.

⁴⁸ Ministry of European Investment and Projects. (n.d.). *National Recovery and Resilience Plan (PNCR) – Official Website*. Available at: <https://pn-cr.fonduri-ue.ro/>

⁴⁹ Ministry of European Investment and Projects. (n.d.). *Reports, Studies and Analyses – National Recovery and Resilience Plan (PNCR)*. Available at: <https://pn-cr.fonduri-ue.ro/rapoarte-studii-si-analize/>

⁵⁰ IMPREUNĂ – Community Development Agency and SASTIPEN – Roma Centre for Health Policies, both of them being members of the RCM coalition

⁵¹ European Commission. (2023). *Assessment Report of the Member States' National Roma Strategic Frameworks* [COM(2023) 7 final], p. 133. Available at: https://commission.europa.eu/publications/assessment-report-member-states-national-roma-strategic-frameworks-full-package_en

2. REVIEW BY THEMATIC AREA

2.1. Fighting antigypsyism and discrimination

The NRSF includes an essential component dedicated to combating discrimination, anti-Roma discourse and attitudes that generate hate speech or hate crimes⁵² (Objective no. 6). The implementation of measures to combat discrimination and hate speech within the NRSF has included some specific initiatives and projects. Still, numerous lines of action remain unimplemented or with limited impact.

2.1.1. Effectiveness of the NRSF in addressing the problems

According to the Annual Report on the progress made in implementing the NRSF, several measures for combating discrimination, anti-Roma hate speech and hate-motivated crimes registered no progress during the May 2023 – April 2024 period.⁵³ For example, monitoring the application of criminal law regarding racially motivated hate speech and hate crimes (Measure 1.1.1) or producing progress reports on the implementation of specific legislation in the field of combating anti-Roma hate speech (Measure 1.3.2) are both mentioned by the NAR report as not registering any progress. However, expert meetings were held to analyse the situation of hate speech, within the framework of a Project financed by the Norwegian Financial Mechanism 2014 – 2021 and coordinated by the Romanian Police – ‘Integrated Action to Combat Hate Crimes, in Particular Those Directed Against Roma Communities and Ensuring a High Standard of Quality in The police Service’. The report does not provide details on the outcomes of these meetings, nor does it mention any follow-up actions or assessments of their effectiveness. This lack of transparency and follow-up is indicative of a broader pattern in governmental actions, where initiatives are launched but their impact is rarely monitored or publicly reported.

Under Action Direction 1.4 of the NRSF, several training initiatives were implemented to improve the understanding and handling of anti-Roma attitudes and hate crimes among law enforcement officials and judicial actors. Measure 1.4.1 focused on organising targeted training courses for police officers, prosecutors, and judges, coordinated by institutions such as the National Agency for Roma (NAR), National Council for Combating Discrimination (NCCD), Ministry of Internal Affairs, and the ‘Alexandru Ioan Cuza’ Police Academy. Between 2021 and 2024, more than 1,400 participants were trained through various formats including introductory courses, capacity-building modules, and postgraduate programs. Trainings covered topics such as combating discrimination, addressing hate speech, and ethical conduct in policing. Notably, the General Inspectorate of the Romanian Police (IGPR) conducted language and career development courses, reaching hundreds of officers, while the *Jandarmerie* (Constabulary) included diversity and antidiscrimination themes in its official training curriculum, benefiting over 1,300 students.⁵⁴

Also, according to the same report, between May 2023 and April 2024, several campaigns and projects were implemented through the Ministry of Internal Affairs to inform the public and prevent anti-Roma attitudes:

- The ‘No Discrimination!’ campaign, to raise awareness of the risks associated with discrimination, was implemented in partnership with NGOs (Ministry of Administration and Internal Affairs - MAIA in collaboration with the E-Romnja Association and the Romano Kher National Roma Culture Centre)⁵⁵;
- The Project ‘Your Safety is Not a Game’ (implemented by MAIA in partnership with the *Telefonul Copilului* Association (Children’s Telephone Association) and the Bucharest National Airports Company and the ‘Şotron’ campaign (MAIA in partnership with the OvidiuRoM Association) focused

⁵² National Agency for Roma. (n.d.). *Strategy for the Inclusion of Romanian Citizens Belonging to the Roma Minority 2022–2027*. Available at: <http://anr.gov.ro/index.php/anr/proiecte-programe/strategie-de-incluziune-2022-2027>

⁵³ Romanian Government – General Secretariat. (2024). *Annual Progress Report on the Implementation of the Romanian Government’s Strategy for the Inclusion of Romanian Citizens Belonging to the Roma Minority for the Period 2022–2027, Reporting Period May 2023 – April 2024*. Available at: <https://sgg.gov.ro/1/wp-content/uploads/2024/09/RAPORT.pdf>

⁵⁴ *Ibidem*

⁵⁵ *Ibidem*

on the protection of children and vulnerable young people, including those from Roma communities⁵⁶;

- The 'Mental Health and the Impact of Hate Speech on Young People' Project included a study on the effects of hate speech on young people, revealing that ethnic minorities are frequently victims of online hate. The 'Împreună' Community Development Agency Foundation conducted a study commissioned by the Department for Interethnic Relations on the impact of online hate speech on young people, with a focus on young people belonging to national minorities. The report was not made public and was not accompanied by a launch or promotion that would generate discussion in the public space. This lack of visibility may be attributed to limited institutional prioritisation of the topic, insufficient inter-agency coordination, or a broader tendency within public institutions to commission studies without ensuring follow-up through dissemination or policy dialogue.

Additionally, NAR representatives⁵⁷ consider that a significant outcome of implementing the NRSF is the partnership developed with the Police Academy through which students from the Police Academy are taught about the history and contributions of the Roma to the Romanian society. This programme was carried out with the involvement of a team of representatives from the Roma civil society, serving as trainers, to increase the level of knowledge among young graduates of police schools in the field of anti-discrimination.

The NRSF supports the implementation of existing legislation against discrimination. Responsible institutions, such as the National Council for Combating Discrimination (CNCD), continue to monitor cases of discrimination and sanction discriminatory speeches and actions. In 2023, the National Council for Combating Discrimination (NCCD)⁵⁸ received a total of 1,000 petitions, of which 58 were related to discrimination based on ethnic criteria. Out of these 58 cases, 6 resulted in administrative fines, while 2 concluded with recommendations issued by the Council. This reflects both the presence of ethnically motivated incidents and the limited number of cases leading to sanctions, which may point to challenges in proving discriminatory intent or the procedural thresholds required for applying penalties. The NRSF has also promoted the harmonisation of legislation with the European Union directives on combating racial hatred and discrimination. However, according to the statements of the CNCD representative interviewed for this report, the institution's actions were not carried out specifically for the implementation of the NRSF, but represented steps provided for by the plans and responsibilities imposed by domestic legislation: "each institution mostly reports what it does regarding its main area of activity, for example, the CNCD only reported the number of petitions it received" (CNCD representative).

The analysis of particular cases and of the dissuasive nature of the sanctions was addressed in expert debates to assess the effectiveness of the sanctions applied in cases of hate speech. No progress was reported for Measure 1.1.1, concerning the monitoring of criminal legislation enforcement, or Measure 1.3.2, which foresaw the elaboration of progress reports on implementing hate speech legislation, particularly in relation to anti-Roma attitudes. Regarding the training of law enforcement officers, numerous training sessions have been organised for police officers and other professional categories, focusing on the prevention and fight against hate crimes, supported by European projects such as the 'Integrated Action to Combat Hate Crime'.

Although there have been initiatives to create educational resources aimed at preventing discrimination, including partnerships for information and awareness-raising in public and private institutions, progress in adopting these measures has been modest. Training sessions for public administration employees have been implemented however, their overall impact remains unclear, as available data primarily focuses on participant numbers, providing limited information regarding the content, depth, or relevance of the topics covered. The absence of follow-up mechanisms, performance indicators, or public reporting suggests significant gaps in monitoring and evaluation. Regarding the creation of good practice tools, no progress has been made in developing platforms for exchanging good practices or in disseminating them to public and private employers.

⁵⁶ National Agency Against Trafficking in Persons. (n.d.). *Your Safety Is Not a Game!* Available at: <https://anitp.mai.gov.ro/siguranta-ta-nu-e-o-joaca/>

⁵⁷ Interview with Iulian Paraschiv, NAR President, Bucharest, 18 November 2024,

⁵⁸ National Council for Combating Discrimination (2023). *Activity Report*. Available at: <https://www.cncd.ro/wp-content/uploads/2024/07/Activity-report-2023.pdf>

Within ICIMES, a TWG on combating discrimination is currently coordinated by the Ministry of Internal Affairs, although it was initially coordinated by the Department for Interethnic Relations (DRI). Although the number of institutions that are part of this TWG is large, the CNCD representative believes that certain key institutions are missing, such as the General Prosecutor's Office or the Public Ministry.

Coordination between these institutions is cumbersome, in the view of the CNCD representative, and, after two and a half years of implementation, the results are minimal due to significant difficulties in establishing a common working framework, planning actions and activities, as well as budgetary allocation. So far, each ministry and institution has carried out activities that they would have done anyway and reported them as part of the NRSF implementation. Although the NRSF includes a diverse array of stakeholders, the effectiveness of coordination depends on the quality of collaboration rather than the number of institutions involved. While there is no explicit assessment regarding the optimal level of cooperation, based on the interviews, the need to close implementation gaps and strengthen institutional commitment suggests that real progress requires the active involvement of key institutions, as mentioned by interviewees from both government and civil society.

2.1.2. Addressing the problems beyond the NRSF

Although Romania has good laws to protect minority rights, the Council of Europe's Advisory Committee gave a very critical review of how the country treats Roma people.⁵⁹ The Committee said that discrimination against Roma remains a serious problem, and that some politicians continue to use anti-Roma language, which spreads through the media and social networks. The report also said there has been little or no progress in stopping school and housing segregation, or in improving access to health care, clean water, and decent living conditions for Roma. These failures mean that Roma people still face significant disadvantages and daily discrimination, even though the laws say they should be treated equally.

One of the most serious concerns was the ongoing police violence against Roma people. The Committee said⁶⁰ police still use excessive force and racial profiling, and that complaints about abuse are not properly investigated. Even though Romania has been found guilty in international courts for this kind of behaviour, the government has not done enough to stop it from happening again. Training for police is limited and has not changed the situation. Roma people also face discrimination in schools, shops, and public offices, and were even wrongly blamed during the COVID-19 pandemic. The Committee welcomed some recent legal steps, like the 2021 law against antigypsyism, but said that the laws are not used well in practice, and victims do not trust the authorities to help them. It called once again for the government to work closely with Roma communities and take real, effective action – something that has been requested many times but rarely followed through.

2.2. Education

One of the fundamental pillars of the NRSF is ensuring equitable access to education for Roma children and youth. Through this component, the strategy aims to reduce educational gaps and promote an inclusive education system, adapted to the specific needs of vulnerable communities.

Among the measures mentioned in the NRSF related to Specific Objective no. 2: 'Ensuring access of Romanian citizens of Roma ethnicity to a quality inclusive education system' are the reduction of school dropout through social scholarships, mentoring programmes and early identification of vulnerable children, the prevention of school segregation through constant monitoring, training sessions for teachers, as well as supporting the transition to preschool education through vouchers, programmes for parents and investments in infrastructure.

As stated in the previous Roma Civil Monitor report for Romania,⁶¹ the educational issues faced by the Roma minority in Romania are deeply rooted and multifaceted, stemming not only from socio-economic

⁵⁹ Council of Europe. (n.d.). *Fifth Opinion on Romania of the Advisory Committee on the Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities*. Available at: <https://rm.coe.int/5th-op-romania-en/1680ac3917>

⁶⁰ *Ibidem*

⁶¹ Roma Civil Monitor. (2022). *Civil Society Monitoring Report on the Quality of the National Strategic Framework for Roma Equality, Inclusion, and Participation in Romania*. Publications Office of the European Union. Available at: <https://romacivilmonitoring.eu/wp-content/uploads/2023/07/RCM2-2022-C1-Romania-FINAL-PUBLISHED-CATALOGUE.pdf>

disadvantage, but also from systemic discrimination within the education system. These include high rates of early school leaving, particularly among Roma girls; limited access to quality early childhood education; widespread school and class-level segregation; and insufficient support for inclusive teaching practices. Moreover, Roma students continue to experience prejudice and racism in schools, both from peers and, in some cases, from teaching staff – factors that significantly affect their educational performance and emotional well-being.

2.2.1. Effectiveness of the NRSF in addressing the problems

The implementation of educational actions in the NRSF is coordinated through the Thematic Working Group for the Right to Education and Cultural Identity, coordinated by the Ministry of Education. This group includes the following institutions: the Ministry of Internal Affairs (MAI), the Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development (MADR), the Ministry of Health (MH), the Ministry of Education (MEd), the Ministry of Culture (MC), the Ministry of Family, Youth and Equal Opportunities (MFTES), the Department for Interethnic Relations (DRI), the National Agency for Equal Opportunities for Women and Men (ANES), the National Penitentiary Administration (ANP), the 'Al. I. Cuza' Police Academy, the Ministry of Investments and European Projects (MIPE), the National Agency for Roma (NAR), the People's Advocate (AVP), and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MAE).

According to the Annual Report on the progress made in the implementation of the NRSF (May 2023 – April 2024),⁶² during the Education TWG meeting in January 2024, the importance of integrating the gender and youth dimension into all actions taken was emphasized, as well as reflecting the contributions of the non-governmental sector in the reports, including assessments, recommendations and responses to them. The group also analyses the status of implementation of measures in the plans related to the Education and Identity-Culture areas and identifies delays.

Regarding the Thematic Working Group (GLT) on Education and Culture, there are clear signs of renewed activity following a period of stagnation. A positive aspect highlighted by a civil society representative is that “after three years of inactivity, the Committee for Monitoring School Segregation has resumed its work. We have started meeting again, outlining a clear plan, trying to re-engage”. However, uncertainties remain regarding the coherence and continuity of this plan, due to the lack of a publicly available roadmap or clear implementation deadlines.

For the period between May 2023 and April 2024, within the education component, a series of results are reported that constitute centralised results obtained in other programmes and projects. For example, approximately 25,000 Roma students were included in the PNRAS programme (National Programme for Reducing School Dropout – PNRAS), and approximately 56,000 Roma students benefited from the ‘Scholarships’ Programme. The reported indicators are strictly quantitative, lacking any qualitative assessment of the programmes’ actual impact on Roma students’ inclusion, learning outcomes, or experiences of discrimination. As such, it remains unclear whether these efforts contribute meaningfully to reducing structural barriers or improving long-term educational equity for Roma children. Including such programmes in strategy reports without proper context may inflate progress on paper without reflecting real systemic change.

Some other relevant results aimed at increasing number of Roma students in secondary and higher education mentioned in the annual report⁶³ are: the creation of special places in high schools, vocational schools and universities for young Roma, with over 3,000 students admitted to special places in high school and vocational education; encouraging the Romani language and culture, through Romani language and history courses; training of teachers specialised in teaching these subjects. The affirmative measure on allocating seats for Roma in high schools and universities needs to be improved, according to an extensive analysis made by Împreună Community Development Agency and the University of Bucharest.⁶⁴

⁶² Prime Minister's Chancellery and National Agency for Roma. (2024). *Report on the Progress Recorded in the Implementation of the Romanian Government's Strategy for the Inclusion of Romanian Citizens Belonging to the Roma Minority for the Period 2022–2027 (May 2023 – April 2024)*. Available at: <https://sqa.gov.ro/1/wp-content/uploads/2024/09/RAPORT.pdf>

⁶³ *Ibidem*

⁶⁴ Coșmeleață, V., Cristea, D., Hosszu, A., Ilie, D., Olteanu, C., & Pădure, I. (2023). *Affirmative Measures for Roma in Universities: Experiences, Changes and Lessons Learned* [Măsuri afirmative pentru romi în universități. Experiențe,

In many cases, affirmative measures are poorly promoted, both within schools and among Roma communities, resulting in underutilisation or low retention rates. Moreover, Roma students themselves report feeling isolated or stigmatised when accessing these opportunities, particularly in university settings that lack intercultural education and inclusive policies. One key finding of the study is a decline in the number of Roma students admitted through affirmative action across all education levels (bachelor's, master's, and doctoral). Several factors contribute to this trend: a general decrease in the number of Roma students graduating from high school and passing the national high school exam (*Bacalaureat*), an increase in Roma students applying for general merit-based seats, and demographic shifts.

In the field of education, significant disparities persist between Roma and non-Roma families.⁶⁵ Only 27% of Roma respondents with children under the age of six reported that their children were attending kindergarten, compared to 58% of non-Roma families. Financial barriers remain a key issue, with 16% of Roma parents citing the inability to afford appropriate clothing and footwear as a reason for not enrolling their children. Furthermore, 17% of Roma households reported having children who had either dropped out of school or had never been enrolled, in stark contrast to just 1% of non-Roma households. The main reasons identified by Roma parents for school dropout include poverty, the need for children to contribute to household income, and responsibilities such as caring for younger siblings.⁶⁶ Despite efforts by the state and civil society to promote inclusive education, school segregation remains widespread. According to FRA data from 2022, 51% of Roma children aged 6 to 15 are enrolled in schools where most or all pupils are also Roma, underscoring the persistence of ethnically segregated educational environments. Effective monitoring of schools with a significant share of Roma students remains limited, and only a fraction of the cases detected by systems such as PNRAS-MATE⁶⁷ are resolved.

In addition, training programmes for teaching staff have a limited impact, given the small number of participants in relation to real needs. While the Integrated Information System on Education in Romania (SIIR) is intended to centralise enrolment data, including ethnic affiliation, its current use is inconsistent, and its full potential remains untapped. One key limitation is that the number of Roma students recorded in SIIR is significantly lower than the actual Roma population in schools, primarily due to non-disclosure by parents, lack of awareness, or fear of stigmatisation. Additionally, data on Roma students varies significantly across government statistics, civil society reports, and international monitoring, making it challenging to assess progress or tailor effective interventions.

Promoting interculturality and combating discrimination are insufficiently integrated into the national curriculum, and measures on inclusive education are not implemented uniformly.⁶⁸

2.2.2. Addressing the problems beyond the NRSF

The phenomenon of school segregation continues to be a significant problem within Roma communities for over 20 years now, and, as recognition of this critical issue, a 'Methodology for Monitoring, Evaluation,

schimbări și lecții învățate]. Available at: <https://www.agentiaimpreuna.ro/wp-content/uploads/2023/04/RAPORT-MASURI-AFIRMATIVE-PENTRU-ROMI-IN-UNIVERSITATI-2.pdf>

⁶⁵ Împreună Agency. 2019. *Comparative Study of the Needs of Roma Communities in the Context of Establishing Strategic Intervention Priorities for Their Social Inclusion*. Împreună Agency/IRES. Available at: <https://www.agentiaimpreuna.ro/wp-content/uploads/2021/11/Studiu-comparativ-al-nevoilor-comunitatilor-de-romi-in-contextul-stabilirii-prioritatilor-strategice-de-interventie-pentru-incluziunea-sociala-a-acestora.pdf>

⁶⁶ European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights (FRA). (2022). *Roma in 10 European Countries – Main Results*. Available at: https://fra.europa.eu/sites/default/files/fra_uploads/fra-2022-roma-survey-2021-main-results2_en.pdf

⁶⁷ Ministry of Education. *Romania's Early Warning Education Mechanism*, launched with EU and World Bank support. Available at: <https://mate.edu.ro/>

It provides a national framework - including tools and procedures integrated into the country's education system - to identify students who are at risk of dropping out and to trigger timely support and interventions.

⁶⁸ Prime Minister's Chancellery and National Agency for Roma. (2024). *Annual Report on the Progress Recorded in the Implementation of the Romanian Government's Strategy for the Inclusion of Romanian Citizens Belonging to the Roma Minority for the Period 2022–2027 (May 2023 – April 2024)*. Available at: <https://sqg.gov.ro/1/wp-content/uploads/2024/09/RAPORT.pdf>

Identification, Prevention and Combating School Segregation in Pre-university Education' was adopted in 2024.⁶⁹ These mechanisms aim to identify and resolve cases of segregation promptly, to prevent school dropout and educational exclusion.

According to representatives of NGOs and institutions involved in implementing the NRSF, more effective coordination and adequate resources are needed to prevent segregation. At the same time, respondents emphasise the importance of closer collaboration between public institutions and NGOs to identify sustainable solutions and promote inclusion in education. While collaboration does exist, it is often based on personal initiative or project-based cooperation, rather than long-term strategic frameworks. NGOs often act as first responders in identifying and addressing segregated settings, yet their role is undervalued and underfunded by public authorities.

According to a representative of a Roma NGO,⁷⁰ progress in Roma education is visible in a few specific initiatives but remains insufficient to produce significant structural changes. The reactivation of the Committee for Monitoring School Segregation, after three years of inactivity, and the introduction of an optional course on Roma history and culture are essential but insufficient steps. The optional course will be available to high school students and is scheduled to be included in the curriculum starting with the 2025 - 2026 school year. However, it is important to note that, in contrast, the Ministry of Education has introduced a mandatory course on Jewish history for high schools.

For example, the course on Roma history is optional, compared to Jewish history, which is mandatory, and this shows discrepancies in addressing minority issues. Professional conversion programmes for training teachers of the Romani language and culture are successful; however, the decrease in the number of schools and teachers involved in teaching Romani indicates a lack of prioritisation for this initiative.

On the other hand, major challenges persist that hinder the effective implementation of the strategy. The lack of continuity and political will, as well as the stagnation of projects due to bureaucracy and changes in ministerial structures, as along with insufficient funding for key initiatives, negatively affect progress. The gradual disappearance of Roma school mediators due to high requirements for years of schooling and the problems of allocating special places for Roma students reflect a lack of understanding and concrete support for the needs of the community. However, there is no comprehensive, up-to-date official data tracking the exact number of active mediators, their territorial distribution, or the long-term effects of their removal from the system. Civil society organisations have repeatedly called for transparent data collection and evaluation mechanisms, including disaggregated statistics and qualitative studies that centre the voices of Roma students and professionals.

Beyond institutional efforts, Roma NGOs have played a vital role in implementing projects that promote education, empowerment, and inclusion, often filling systemic gaps.

A compelling example is the 'Together for a Diverse Society'⁷¹ Project, developed by the Împreună Agency (Roma NGO). This initiative addresses the lack of inclusive and safe spaces for both Roma and non-Roma children and youth, whose well-being has been severely affected by poverty, social exclusion, and the psychological impact of the COVID-19 pandemic. The project focuses on reducing the risk of poverty by facilitating access to education and developing the leadership skills of Roma university students, who are trained to serve as mentors and positive role models in pre-university education. The project also includes teacher training on inclusive education, a public awareness campaign featuring real-life stories of Roma individuals to combat prejudice, and the creation of educational and advocacy materials. A central component is the Împreună Interethnic Community Centre (opened in February 2024), which serves as a hub for tutoring, mentoring, personal development workshops, and cultural debates under the series '*Seara de debate*.' [Debate Evening]. Through

⁶⁹ Ministry of Education. (2024). *Methodology for Monitoring, Evaluation, Identification, Prevention and Combating School Segregation in Pre-University Education* [Metodologie din 6 decembrie 2024 pentru monitorizarea, evaluarea, identificarea, prevenirea și combaterea segregării școlare în învățământul preuniversitar]. Available at: <https://legislatie.just.ro/Public/DetaliiDocumentAfis/293538>

⁷⁰ Interview with Delia Grigore, President of Amare Rromentza Association, professor at the University of Bucharest, Bucharest, 23 October 2024

⁷¹ Împreună Agency. *Împreună pentru o societate diversă* [Together for a Diverse Society]. Available at: <https://www.agentiaimpreuna.ro/projects/impreuna-pentru-o-societate-diversa/>

academic support, career orientation, and emotional resilience sessions, the project responds directly to the complex needs of vulnerable students in the Bucharest-Ilfov region.

Funding for Roma inclusion under the 2022 – 2027 programming period faced significant delays. As a result, implementation of targeted measures at national and local levels has been slow to materialise. It was only in 2024 that the Managing Authority for the Education and Employment Programme (*Autoritatea de Management pentru Programul Educație și Ocupare*) publicly launched the Applicant's Guide for the call 'Integrated Measures for the Roma Community'. This competitive call is financed under Priority 6: Preventing early school leaving and increasing access and participation of disadvantaged groups in education and vocational training, within the Specific Objective ESO4.10: Promoting the Socio-economic Integration of Marginalised Communities such as Roma.

2.3. Employment

Romania, like other EU countries, is facing a series of challenges in the labour market, mainly driven by the declining birth rate and the ageing population. Labour migration, combined with overlapping crises in health, energy, and geopolitics, has generated additional tensions that require appropriate countermeasures and actions. In this context, adult education is a crucial tool to address these turbulences but also to promote inclusion and social cohesion.

The European Skills Index, which measures the performance of skills systems in the EU, places Romania among low-performing countries, especially in terms of skills development and activation.⁷² Around 36% of workers are not working in their field of study, compared to the EU average of 28.6%, and the share of adults who participated in learning/training activities, at 4.9% in 2021, is among the lowest in the EU (Country Report 2022).⁷³

Automation and new technologies have begun to alter the characteristics of skills demand, leading to changes in production processes. While the demand for routine job-specific skills is declining, the demand for non-routine cognitive and social-behavioural skills is on the rise in both advanced and emerging economies – a new challenge for the lower skills level of the Roma in Romania.

In Romania, relevant data on employment levels are still lacking, as disaggregated data are not available in the most relevant public structures. Furthermore, reports by civil society have also been scarce over the last three years. The employment rate of Roma in Romania appears to be on a downward trend, with the 2021 FRA Roma Survey⁷⁴ report indicating that for the figure for the Roma population with employee status (full-time, part-time, ad-hoc, occasional work, self-employed, etc.) aged between 20 and 64 years, was 45% in 2016 and 41% in 2021. Data from the Labour Force Survey shows that for the general population in Romania, this percentage was 67.1% in 2021, 68.5% in 2022, and 68.7% in 2023. These trends seem not to be affected by the COVID pandemic period,

At this level, the differences in the employment of Roma women are also significant, namely in 2021 only 23% of Roma women aged 20-64 were employed with a paid employment contract.⁷⁵ The same increasing trend also appears in the case of young Roma NEETs (young people between 16-24 years old, who are neither in school, vocational training, nor employed), from 52% in 2016, to 59% in 2021, while the share of young NEETs in the general population is only 15%. Regarding discrimination, 23% of Roma believe that they have been discriminated against in the course of looking for a job in 2021, compared to 10% in 2016.⁷⁶

⁷² Cedefop. *European Skills Index*. Available at: <https://www.cedefop.europa.eu/en/tools/european-skills-index>

⁷³ Council of the European Union. (2022). *Council Recommendation on the 2022 National Reform Programme of Romania and delivering a Council opinion on the 2022 Convergence Programme of Romania*. Country Report 2022. Available at: <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/RO/TXT/HTML/?uri=CELEX%3A32022H0901%2823%29>

⁷⁴ EU Agency for Fundamental Rights. (2022). *Roma in 10 European Countries: Main Results*, p. 43. Available at: https://fra.europa.eu/sites/default/files/fra_uploads/fra-2022-roma-survey-2021-main-results2_en.pdf

⁷⁵ *Idem*, p. 44.

⁷⁶ *Idem*, pp. 44-46.

The low employment rate of the Roma population, combined with the low level of education, results in a very low work intensity. Thus, adults of working age who have carried out activities that require less than 20% of their work potential are more common in the case of the Roma population, with the share being higher among women than among men. The at-risk-of-poverty or social exclusion rate (AROPE) was 32.0% in 2023, e.g. 6.0 million people, down from the previous year.⁷⁷

We note a worsening of the situation regarding Roma access to the labour market, in the current context of significant societal changes, driven by sustained technological advances, the increasingly widespread use of artificial intelligence, and the rise in the required level of qualification, among other factors. We cannot identify elements of progress in this area since the adoption of the NRSF in 2022.

2.3.1. Effectiveness of the NRSF in addressing the problems

Despite the emergence of quantitative and structural deficits, Romania has reserves of unused labour force, such as young people, long-term unemployed, Roma and disabled people, who face major difficulties in entering the labour market. Also, although some facilities have been granted to increase mobility, the impact of active policies on the labour market has been very low, and administrative barriers extremely high.⁷⁸ In the Annual Report on the progress recorded in the implementation of the NRSF⁷⁹ and specifically for 2023-2024, as concerns employment, the following elements are presented:

- Within the National Employment Programme carried out by National Employment Agency (NEA), for the year 2023, a special programme was also included for communities with a large number of Roma people, targeting 140 communities in which information dissemination events were carried out regarding the benefits of employment and the measures that Roma citizens can benefit from to get employment. Information about the benefits of employing Roma people was presented to employers, without whom employment would not exist. In the communities provided for in the mentioned special programme, between 1 May 2023 and 31 December 2023, 1,202 Roma people were employed. Of these, 1,182 Roma people were employed through mediation services, of which 982 were on open-ended contracts.
- In 2024, the special programme targeted 145 communities in which information dissemination actions were to be carried out about the measures that Roma citizens can benefit from. In these settlements, 530 Roma people had been hired by 30 April 2024. Of these, 522 Roma people were hired through mediation services, of which 477 people for an open-ended contract.

As presented by the NEA, measures for unemployed people (such as information on jobs and employment mediation) are implemented on a permanent basis, addressing the entire unemployed population. Therefore, the employment of Roma can be quantified to the extent that they declare themselves to be of this ethnicity; hence, it is expected that the number of Roma will be underestimated. No progress was recorded in Measures 1.1. and 1.1.1., namely Organisation of education and vocational training programmes of the Second Chance type in all localities of residence for adults belonging to vulnerable groups, for completing from primary and secondary education (responsible institutions and structures involved: ME, School Inspectorates), Measure 1.1.1: Creation of a working group to analyse the legal framework favourable to the flexibility of the framework for recognising skills acquired in a non-formal setting by people from vulnerable groups, especially Roma

⁷⁷ National Institute of Statistics (INSSE). (2023). *Sărăcia și excluziunea socială în România, 2023* [Poverty and Social Exclusion in Romania, 2023]. Available at: https://insse.ro/cms/sites/default/files/com_presa/com_pdf/saracia_si_excluziunea_sociala_e2023.pdf

⁷⁸ Chivu L., Georgescu G., Bratiloveanu A., Bancescu M. (n.d.). *Piața muncii din România sub presiune. Repere privind deficitul de forță de muncă* [The Romanian Labor Market Under Pressure. Highlights Regarding the Labor Shortage]. Available at: <https://media.hotnews.ro/assets/document/2022/09/1/25765615-0.pdf>

⁷⁹ Prime Minister's Chancellery and National Agency for Roma. (2024). *Raport anual cu privire la progresul înregistrat în implementarea Strategiei Guvernului României de incluziune a cetățenilor români aparținând minorității rome pentru perioada 2022-2027 (mai 2023 - aprilie 2024)* [Annual Report on the Progress Recorded in the Implementation of the Romanian Government's Strategy for the Inclusion of Romanian Citizens Belonging to the Roma Minority for the Period 2022-2027 (May 2023 - April 2024)]. Available at: <https://sqg.gov.ro/1/wp-content/uploads/2024/09/RAPORT.pdf>

(responsible institutions and structures involved: Ministry of Labour, National Authority for Qualifications, Ministry of Education, National Agency for Roma).

Following the implementation of Measure 2.1. regarding access to vocational training and qualifications, during the reference period (May 2023 – April 2024), the situation is reported as follows:

- 1,319 people, of whom 792 women, participating in vocational training programs (qualification/retraining, apprenticeship, skills assessment);
- 37 employed people, of which 18 are women, following the completion of a vocational training programme;
- 924 employed young NEETs, of whom 370 women, integrated/ reintegrated into the labour market;
- 924 employed young people, of whom 370 women, following the implementation of specific target groups programmes;
- 22,936 people included in employment stimulation measures;
- 3,004 people employed as a result of inclusion in employment stimulation measures;
- 6 people at risk of social marginalisation who have concluded a social solidarity contract.

Even if such numbers look like a positive result, it is for sure not enough compared to the actual situation of vulnerable groups, including Roma.

No progress was recorded regarding Specific Action 2.1.4: Supporting Partnerships with Local Authorities with the aim of improving the counselling of beneficiaries of the minimum inclusion income (VMI) to reintegrate them into the labour market and promote active occupational inclusion, primarily for Romanian citizens of Roma ethnicity.

Additionally, regarding employment priorities, no progress was recorded on Measure 2.2: Creating an Inter-institutional Working Group to Analyse the Existing Legislative Framework, to initiate or expand fiscal incentives for companies with sustainable activities in marginalised areas, including young Roma women and men from rural areas, particularly in areas with informal settlements.

2.3.2. Addressing the problems beyond the NRSF

Existing European funding opportunities, within the Social Inclusion and Dignity Programme 2021 – 2027 (SIDP), are planned to provide funding for the establishment of sustainable social enterprises in rural areas for the integration of people from vulnerable groups into the labour market. The budget allocations for this action amount to 100 million EUR, of which at least 9 million EUR will be exclusively for projects targeting people in Roma communities.

In addition, through the Education and Employment Programme 2021 – 2027 (EEP), Roma will benefit from an allocation of approximately 23.8 million EUR for activating the entrepreneurial potential of young people and 8.8 million euros for the development of social insertion enterprises to support young people by covering the costs of on-the-job qualification, professional counselling and guidance, subsidising employment contracts and placement on the labour market at the end of the support period, including the coordination of socio-professional and social support services. Regarding the development of entrepreneurship, and social economy entities, approximately 10.2 million EUR in support was allocated for Roma people. At the time of writing this report, both of the aforementioned EU funding programmes are undergoing a contracting and implementation phase. To date, there are no results to present in terms of social enterprises or jobs created for the Roma.

On the other hand, no data were available on the previous programming period 2014 – 2020, on information, counselling, mediation, employment, and entrepreneurship programmes for vulnerable groups, including those of Roma ethnicity, collected at the country level for projects financed through the Human Capital Operational Programme (HCOP), projects completed in December 2023 and which could provide a better picture of the results in this area. Even if data is fully collected and transmitted to the EC on the target groups' composition, numbers, qualifications, interventions, etc., including the Roma, this information is still not public.

2.4. Healthcare

As concerns Roma health, even if the Ministry of Health, the main responsible for implementing the measures in the action plan related to the Health chapter of NRSF, does not collect data on diseases in the Roma population, studies carried out by non-governmental organisations active in the field of community healthcare highlight the fact that there is still a gap in terms of morbidity and mortality indicators, including comorbidity (which refers to the simultaneous presence of two or more diseases in the same individual) between the Roma and the majority population in Romania.

The study carried out by Sastipen⁸⁰ in 2022 highlights that 38% of the Roma respondents included in the research were not registered with a family doctor (compared to 12% of non-Roma respondents) due to the lack of health insurance. In addition, 34% of Roma respondents diagnosed with various chronic diseases (diabetes, hypertension, heart disease, respiratory diseases such as asthma, etc.) were not enrolled with specialist doctors (compared to 7% of non-Roma respondents).

Another worrying indicator is the vaccination rate of Roma children aged 24-30 months. The Sastipen study highlights that 42% of Roma mother respondents stated they have partially vaccinated their children, compared to 12% of non-Roma mothers. Additionally, only 26% of Roma mother respondents mentioned that they have fully vaccinated their children according to the vaccination schedule, compared to 86% of non-Roma mothers. The most worrying indicator is the access of pregnant Roma women to health services, especially to medical services for monitoring pregnancies. According to the Sastipen study, only 32% of Roma women benefit from pregnancy monitoring services, compared to 95% of non-Roma women.

The lack of medical infrastructure in rural areas, the lack of health insurance, the lack of health education, as well as the phenomenon of discrimination against Roma who access public health services, are still severe problems that affect the health of the Roma, and which are also addressed in the ICIMES meetings.

2.4.1. Effectiveness of the NRSF in addressing the problems

The annual report⁸¹ published in 2023 by the Government of Romania on the progress recorded in the implementation of the NRSF highlights the fact that the responsible authorities are making efforts to address these problems, but, in the absence of legislation that would allow the collection of disaggregated ethnic statistical indicators on morbidity and mortality, it is rather difficult to assess the results of the national health programmes for the Roma, as well as the progress recorded in the implementation of the NRSF measures.

Furthermore, in the ICIMES working sessions, there is an ongoing debate on the need to collect ethnic data that would contribute to an adequate planning of actions targeting Roma inclusion, a discussion initiated by representatives of the National Agency for Roma, but in the field of health this is impossible because, on the one hand, it contradicts the ethical principles of doctors and medical staff who have the professional obligation to provide services to all patients regardless of ethnicity and on the other hand, members of the Roma civil society who campaign for non-discrimination against Roma consider that the collecting of data on ethnic criteria by health service providers is in itself a discriminatory activity because there are many Roma who do not assume their Roma ethnicity precisely for fear of being labelled and becoming victims of discriminatory behaviour.⁸²

The lack of ethnic data collection is a significant challenge for the Roma inclusion process. In the field of health, from the discussions with health specialists, we found two contradictory approaches: (1) medical specialists do not recommend the collection of ethnic data because the patient is not treated according to ethnicity, religion, or other discriminatory criteria, but is treated according to the medical problem. They also mention that medical staff should not discriminate against patients because of the existing antidiscrimination legislation; (2). On the other hand, public policy specialists note that data collection is necessary to plan, implement, and measure the impact of the proposed measures.

⁸⁰ Rădulescu, Daniel (coord.). (2022). *Analiza indicatorilor de morbiditate și mortalitate în rândul comunităților de romi* [Analysis of the Morbidity and Mortality Indicators within the Roma Communities]. SASTIPEN, June 2022. Available at: <https://sgg.gov.ro/1/wp-content/uploads/2023/12/RAPORT-1.pdf>

⁸¹ *Ibidem*

⁸² *Ibidem*

Analysing the latest progress report prepared by the Ministry of Health, and based on discussions with representatives of the Ministry, we find that some progress has been made in the field of Roma health, indicating a more focused concern on achieving results compared to previous years. For example, the Ministry of Health reported during the ICIMES meetings that it is in the process of implementing the Project 'Creation and Implementation of Integrated Community Services to Combat Poverty and Social Exclusion', a project financed by the ESF - HCOP and implemented in partnership by the Ministry of Labour and Social Solidarity,⁸³ as project leader, and the Ministry of Education. The project provides for the piloting of integrated community services in 125 rural and small urban communities with above average and severe marginalisation by increasing access of people belonging to vulnerable groups to medical, social and educational services.⁸⁴ Within this project, community healthcare teams including health mediators are employed to provide specific community healthcare services to all members of vulnerable communities, including Roma people.

Another notable result mentioned by the representatives of the Ministry of Health is the establishment of the Technical Working Group on the development of community healthcare activity and integrated community centres⁸⁵ in 2022, which has the role of analysing the dynamics of community healthcare activity, developing manuals and good practice guides, making proposals for legislative amendments, and of the Ministerial Commission for Roma within the Ministry of Health, which has the role of analysing the proposals for actions, monitoring the implementation status of the measures and actions found in the NRSF Health chapter and proposing revisions to the plan of measures adjusted to the real needs and problems of the Roma. According to official documents issued by the Ministry of Health, both working groups include representatives of Roma and pro-Roma civil society as full members.

According to the Ministry of Health⁸⁶ representative, the most important aspect of the NRSF health chapter remains the community health care programme, which, through the community team, can contribute to addressing all the issues mentioned in the rationale. The community healthcare team is important for Roma communities. For this reason, solutions must be identified to enable local authorities to hire health mediators and community nurses to provide services to community members.

In the context of this debate, the Ministry of Health is making efforts to plan actions in support of Roma communities. And for this reason, the health mediation programme is still the only programme that can contribute to measuring the impact of measures for the benefit of Roma communities, the health mediator being the only health professional who can collect ethnic data by the nature of the job description.

In this regard, another result mentioned by the Ministry of Health is the increase in the number of active health mediators in Roma communities, from 328 health mediators reported by the Ministry of Health in 2018 to 464 health mediators currently working in teams with community nurses. Through their work, they report on various screening campaigns (hepatitis B and C, cervical cancer, tuberculosis, breast cancer, cardiovascular screening, etc.), but with the clarification that in the reporting platform, even if their primary target group is the Roma population, the health mediators do not report the number of beneficiaries by ethnic criterion, as they assist people from the majority population as well.

⁸³ Ministry of Labour and Social Solidarity. *Strong Women – Integrated Community Services Project* [Proiectul „Femei Puternice – Servicii Comunitare Integrate”]. Available at: <https://mmuncii.ro/j33/index.php/ro/proiecte-programe/in-curs-de-implementare/5566-fp-sci>

⁸⁴ Government of Romania. *Annual Report on the Progress Recorded in the Implementation of the Romanian Government's Strategy for the Inclusion of Romanian Citizens Belonging to the Roma Minority for the Period 2022–2027, May 2022 – April 2023* [Raport anual privind progresul înregistrat în implementarea Strategiei Guvernului României de incluziune a cetățenilor români aparținând minorității rome pentru perioada 2022–2027, mai 2022 – aprilie 2023], p. 24. Available at: <https://sgg.gov.ro/1/wp-content/uploads/2023/12/RAPORT-1.pdf>

⁸⁵ Order of the Minister of Health No. 824/16.03.2022 on the Approval of the Establishment of the Technical Working Group on the Development of Community Healthcare Activity and Integrated Community Centers [Ordinul Ministrului Sănătății nr. 824/16.03.2022 privind aprobarea constituirii Grupului Tehnic de Lucru pentru dezvoltarea activității de asistență medicală comunitară și a centrelor comunitare integrate]

⁸⁶ Interview with Lidia Manuela Onofrei, National Coordinator of Community Healthcare and Social Inclusion Activity, Ministry of Health, on 19 November 2024, online.

Collaboration with Roma civil society is a key point on the Ministry of Health's agenda, and starting in 2022, it has been well outlined. The Ministry of Health has adopted a series of official documents recognising their partnership and expertise in the field of Roma inclusion. Considering the expertise of the Sastipen-Roma Centre for Health Policies Association in the field of health mediation and especially in research programmes that contributed to the substantiation of public policy recommendations in the field of Roma inclusion, the Ministry of Health included Sastipen Association both in the Technical Working Group on the development of community health care and integrated community centres, and in the Ministerial Commission for Roma, which also includes two other Roma organisations, namely the Împreună Agency and the E-Romnja Association.

In addition, Sastipen became the permanent collaborator of the Ministry of Health for carrying out the analysis, evaluation and identification of solutions for improving health mediation and achieving the objectives of the NRSF 2022-2027 health component.⁸⁷ This form of collaboration is a novelty for Romania, the Ministry of Health being the only ministry that has assumed the cooperation with the Roma civil society and has taken a step forward in the process of considering the 10 EU principles on Roma inclusion.

Another essential aspect addressed by the Ministry of Health is preventing discrimination against Roma patients and promoting the principles of equal opportunities and non-discrimination in accessing public health services. At the request of Sastipen, starting in August 2024, the members of the TWG on the development of community healthcare and integrated community centres will analyse the possibility of creating an operational working procedure in the field of non-discrimination and equal opportunities, addressing both public health units and community healthcare personnel. Based on this procedure, the Ministry of Health will lay the groundwork for a mechanism to prevent and sanction cases of discrimination by medical personnel in their interactions with Roma patients.

Regarding the relevance of the measures found in the action plan in the NRSF health chapter, from the analysis of the reports of the Ministerial Commission for Roma and from the analysis of the annual progress report published in 2023 by the Government of Romania on the implementation of the NRSF, we note that there is a need for a revision of the measures and actions proposed so that on the one hand, they respond to the problems and needs faced by vulnerable Roma communities, mentioned in the explanatory note of the strategy and, on the other hand, they contain a set of realistic indicators that can measure progress.

For example, in the background note of the NRSF, two important issues are mentioned which highlight the fact that the health status of Roma is much poorer than that of the majority population, namely the fact that Roma who have health insurance do not have their annual mandatory health check-ups and the fact that a significant number of pregnant Roma women report that they never received medical supervision during pregnancy. Upon analysing the action plan, we find that the proposed measures do not address these problems, and the proposed indicators are not relevant to these two important issues. Under these conditions, it is clear that the plan needs to be revised to respond to the real needs of Roma communities and include measurable indicators that can highlight progress in this priority area of the strategy.

2.4.2. Addressing the problems beyond the NRSF

Regarding the synergy of the NRSF with other national strategies, policies and legislation that reflect the measures in the NRSF, from discussions with the Ministry of Health representative,⁸⁸ we note that the NRSF and the plan of measures in the field of Roma health are correlated with the National Strategy in the field of Health 2023 - 2030⁸⁹ which provides for a series of actions addressing all citizens, regardless of ethnicity. In addition, the Ministry of Health representative also mentions that some of the actions found in the plan of measures in the NRSF health component are correlated with the PNRR, namely pillar V. 'Health and economic, social and institutional resilience', which provides for the establishment of community centres for integrated services and the development of medical infrastructure, especially in rural areas.

⁸⁷ Ministry of Health. Address No. 11894/23.07.2024 [Adresa nr. 11894/23.07.2024], issued by the Ministry of Health. Available at: https://ms.ro/media/documents/Anexa_1_-_SNS.pdf

⁸⁸ *Ibidem*

⁸⁹ *Ibidem*

2.5. Housing, essential services, and environmental justice

Ensuring access to adequate housing is a fundamental condition for the exercise of other essential rights, but the situation of Roma communities in Romania reveals significant challenges. According to the NAR,⁹⁰ 32% of Roma families live in unsanitary households, and 25% face pollution, dirt or other environmental problems. More than 50% of them live in overcrowded spaces, 16.5% in unsafe buildings and 30.3% in buildings in an advanced state of degradation. The lack of coordinated interventions and an inadequate implementation framework contributes to the perpetuation of these conditions. In this context, the need for integrated and well-funded policies is more evident than ever.

The lack of safe housing is one of the most pressing problems. Many families live in buildings without basic utilities, with dilapidated structures or in unsafe temporary spaces.⁹¹ These conditions exacerbate social exclusion and limit access to other fundamental rights, including health and education. Lack of access to running water, electricity and sanitation disproportionately affects women and children, who face additional health and safety risks. Poor housing conditions also contribute to the stigmatisation of Roma communities, reducing their chances of social and economic integration. All of these are directly related to a historical problem⁹² of lacking the proper legal documents – houses built on illegal land (owned by the state or private), houses lacking authorisation (subject to possible demolition), informal and illicit settlements developed in urban or rural areas, etc.

The impact of housing conditions on health is significant. Families living in substandard housing face increased risks of respiratory diseases, infections, and other chronic health problems. The lack of adequate ventilation and hygiene contributes to the spread of infectious diseases, and children in these environments are particularly vulnerable.

The quality of housing has a direct impact on the educational and economic opportunities of those affected. Students living in overcrowded or substandard housing perform worse in school, and adults in these communities face significant difficulties in finding employment due to poor living conditions. The stigmatisation of housing also contributes to social isolation, reducing the opportunities for communities to benefit from external support and resources.

2.5.1. Effectiveness of the NRSF in addressing the problems

Over 60,000 Roma families live in informal settlements, without property documents or access to infrastructure. These areas are often located on infertile land, floodplains or near landfills. Despite the provisions of the NRSF,⁹³ only 10% of the identified communities have benefited from regularisation programmes since 2022, when a new strategy on housing was adopted,⁹⁴ which highlights the inefficient implementation of the proposed measures. Additionally, the bureaucratic process and the limited availability of local resources hinder the authorities' ability to provide viable solutions. Studies indicate that legalising

⁹⁰ Prime Minister's Chancellery and National Agency for Roma. *Annual Report on the Progress Recorded in the Implementation of the Romanian Government's Strategy for the Inclusion of Romanian Citizens Belonging to the Roma Minority for the Period 2022–2027, the Period May 2022 – April 2023* [Raport anual privind progresul înregistrat în implementarea Strategiei Guvernului României de incluziune a cetăţenilor români aparţinând minorităţii rome pentru perioada 2022–2027, perioada mai 2022 – aprilie 2023]. Available at: <https://sgg.gov.ro/1/wp-content/uploads/2023/12/RAPORT-1.pdf>

⁹¹ *Ibidem*

⁹² Issues mentioned by several Roma CSOs interviewed.

⁹³ Government of Romania. *NRSF 2022–2027*.

⁹⁴ ActiveWatch. (2022). *Analysis Report: Precarious Housing and Social Housing in Bucharest* [Raport de analiză: Locuirea precară şi locuirea socială în Bucureşti]. Available at: <https://activewatch.ro/articole/raport-de-analiza-locuirea-precara-si-locuirea-sociala-in-bucuresti/>

housing could stimulate private investment and facilitate access to the essential services needed – social, health, and education.⁹⁵

Informal settlements represent a complex combination of systemic neglect and extreme poverty. Without adequate financial support, many communities remain stuck in unsanitary conditions, and their residents cannot access government programmes or European funds for community development. Furthermore, the lack of property documents significantly impacts housing stability, perpetuating social exclusion. Also, the issue of compliance with applicable building regulations, the majority of houses being built without proper authorisation and most probably, due to the associated high costs, will never receive authorisation.

In 2022, over 1,500 families were evicted from informal housing, and 70% of them did not receive support for reintegration. Evictions from informal or social housing have continued, disproportionately affecting Roma families. These evictions are often carried out without prior notice or support for relocation, exacerbating the vulnerability of affected communities. Although the National Council for Combating Discrimination (2022)⁹⁶ has issued warnings about these practices, implementation of recommendations is slow.

Repeated evictions create a vicious circle of instability and exclusion. Evicted families are often forced to relocate to other informal areas, thereby perpetuating the problems associated with inadequate infrastructure and housing insecurity. This situation highlights the need for policies that prioritise the prevention of evictions and provide durable relocation solutions. Also, the lack of relocation plans that include access to utilities and infrastructure contributes to the further marginalisation of affected communities.

The report on NRSF implementation in 2023⁹⁷ highlights that despite financial allocations, rehabilitation projects and construction of social housing are limited to a few regions. For example, in the South-eastern counties, rehabilitation programmes covered less than 5% of the actual demand. At the same time, the lack of coordination between local and central institutions remains a major obstacle. Initiatives funded through European funds have encountered difficulties in complying with eligibility standards, resulting in funding losses.

Although the NRSF strategy includes well-defined measures, their implementation is hampered by the lack of local administrative capacity. Local authorities face difficulties in developing projects and accessing the necessary funds. In many cases, the lack of transparency in the management of resources has led to significant delays in project implementation. This highlights the urgent need for professional training and technical support for local authorities.

2.5.2. Addressing the problems beyond the NRSF

Local authorities are essential for the success of initiatives, but low levels of accountability and excessive bureaucracy limit their impact. The integrated urban regeneration programmes proposed in the regional development programme have only been partially implemented, in a context in which over the last five years the general costs of constructions increased, and the initial budgets estimated in the feasibility studies were not covering the proposed works, many authorities were forced to reduce the size of the interventions. In addition, many municipalities lack qualified staff to manage infrastructure projects or access European funds. This situation is exacerbated by the lack of clear mechanisms for progress monitoring and evaluation.⁹⁸

⁹⁵ ActiveWatch. (2022). *Analysis Report: Precarious Housing and Social Housing in Bucharest* [Raport de analiză: Locuirea precară și locuirea socială în București]. Available at: <https://activewatch.ro/articole/raport-de-analiza-locuirea-precara-si-locuirea-sociala-in-bucuresti/>

⁹⁶ National Council for Combating Discrimination. (2022). *Report on Housing in Marginalised Communities* [Raport privind situația locuirii în comunitățile marginalizate].

⁹⁷ Prime Minister's Chancellery and National Agency for Roma. (2023). *Annual Report on the Progress Recorded in the Implementation of the Romanian Government's Strategy for the Inclusion of Romanian Citizens Belonging to the Roma Minority for the Period 2022–2027, May 2022 – April 2023* [Raport anual privind progresul înregistrat în implementarea Strategiei Guvernului României de incluziune a cetățenilor români aparținând minorității rome pentru perioada 2022–2027, mai 2022 – aprilie 2023]. Available at: <https://sqq.gov.ro/1/wp-content/uploads/2023/12/RAPORT-1.pdf>

⁹⁸ WGRH (Working Group on Roma Housing). (2018). *Methodologies for Housing Inclusion* [Metodologii pentru incluziunea locativă].

The involvement of local communities is essential for the success of these initiatives. In many cases, the lack of effective communication between authorities and residents has led to distrust and resistance to proposed changes. Education and awareness programmes can play a crucial role in reducing these barriers. In addition, including communities in the decision-making process can help increase transparency and tailor solutions to their specific needs. The Community Lead Local Development approach may be a viable solution, with local action groups taking responsibility for strategic development. However, the local development strategies funded by the EU faced difficulties due to a multi-funding approach, different levels of institutional capacity and increased investments costs, as mentioned above. The multi-funding approach is specific to CLLD, using different types of EU funding for various components of the local development strategies, for example ESF+, ERDF, and the current management authorities and their intermediary bodies at local or regional level are not used, working differently, do not communicate with each other, etc.

In marginalised communities, only 20% of households have access to drinking water, and connection to sewage networks remains an unachieved goal in most regions. National policies, such as the National Strategy for Housing for the period 2022 – 2050,⁹⁹ although well-intentioned, have not been supported by adequate investment and effective monitoring mechanisms. In the northeastern counties, less than 10% of households benefit from functional sewage networks. Infrastructure expansion programmes have generally been oriented towards urban areas, completely neglecting marginalised rural communities.

The lack of access to essential utilities severely affects the quality of life and limits the economic opportunities of the affected communities. Furthermore, this situation contributes to the perpetuation of social inequalities, highlighting the need for better coordinated and funded interventions. Access to electricity, water and sanitation is not only a technical need, but also a social justice issue.

2.6. Social protection

The NSRF does not have a specific component for social protection and social services, which is something worth changing in the next version of the NRSF. However, some data is collected through national channels – the National Statistics Institute, which analyses the poverty rate at the national level and international channels.

According to the National Statistics Institute, in 2023, one in five Romanians was affected by poverty, with the elderly and young people being the most affected. Low income, severe material deprivation and low employment have caused increased poverty rates within large families and one-person households. Roma people are more affected by this phenomenon, as they face multiple causes of poverty: low employment, due to low schooling, unqualified work, low incomes, and large families. This aspect is also confirmed by the 'National Strategy for Supporting Parents 2024-2030',¹⁰⁰ which states that the monetary poverty of Roma households is directly related to school dropout.

According to the EU-MIDIS II 2016 survey by the European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights (FRA), approximately 70% of Roma households were affected by monetary poverty,¹⁰¹ placing them at a significant disadvantage compared to national averages. The 2022 FRA report confirms a worsening trend, showing that the risk of poverty among Roma has increased to 78%, while the national average remains at just 23%.¹⁰² This growing disparity is further supported by findings from Romania's 'National Strategy for Supporting Parents

⁹⁹ Ministry of Development, Public Works and Administration. *National Housing Strategy 2022–2050* [Strategia Națională a Locuirii 2022–2050]. Available at: <https://www.mdlpa.ro/pages/strategianationalalocuirii>

¹⁰⁰ Government of Romania. *Annex 35 to the Annual Report on the Roma Inclusion Strategy Implementation* [Anexa 35 la Raportul anual privind implementarea Strategiei de incluziune a romilor]. Available at: <https://sgg.gov.ro/1/wp-content/uploads/2024/10/ANEXA-35.pdf>

¹⁰¹ European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights. (2017). *Second European Union Minorities and Discrimination Survey (EU-MIDIS II): Roma – Selected Findings*. Luxembourg: Publications Office of the European Union. Available at: <https://fra.europa.eu/en/publication/2016/eumidis-ii-roma-selected-findings>

¹⁰² European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights. (2022). *Roma in 10 European Countries* [Romii în 10 țări europene]. Luxembourg: Publications Office of the European Union. Available at: <https://fra.europa.eu/en/publication/2022/roma-10-european-countries>

2024 – 2030’, which emphasises that monetary poverty in Roma families is closely linked to early school dropout.¹⁰³

The 2018 IRES study¹⁰⁴ shows that 52% of Roma had incomes below 300 EUR (1,500 RON), compared to only 24% of the majority population who were below this threshold. At the same time, only 15% of Roma had incomes above 400 EUR (2,000 RON), compared to 52% of the majority population who exceeded this level. The same report mentions that although the economic situation of Roma has somewhat improved, the gap between the incomes of the poor Roma population and of the wealthy Roma, as well as their income compared to the of the majority population, continues to exist and even grow.

2.6.1. Effectiveness of the NRSF in addressing the problems

Access to a decent income for Roma is also limited due to discrimination in the labour market. For unemployed Roma, the primary source of income is daily or seasonal work in agriculture and construction, as well as informal self-employment, including activities such as berry and mushroom picking and sales, broom and basket making, and other crafts. Many of them are forced to take black market jobs, especially in construction. In addition, for many Roma who are marginalised and face poverty, the primary source of income is the Minimum Inclusion Income (VMI).¹⁰⁵ This is a social assistance programme designed to help individuals and families in vulnerable situations to more easily overcome the financial obstacles they face.

MII is a benefit provided for in Law no. 196/2016 on the minimum inclusion income, and has two components: 1. Support for Inclusion: this component aims to prevent and combat poverty and the risk of social exclusion and replaces the social aid previously granted to ensure the guaranteed minimum income; 2. Support for families with children: this component is granted to families with dependent children up to 18 years of age and aims to prevent poverty and encourage children’s participation in education, replacing the family support allowance.

MII can be requested by single individuals or families that meet the legal conditions. VMI is granted if the net income is lower than or equal to the limits established by law: Inclusion aid: maximum 346 RON/person (around 70 EUR equivalent) or 504 RON (around 100 EUR equivalent) for single individuals over 65 years of age; Family support for children: maximum 879 RON/family member (around 175 EUR equivalent).

Note that the minimum gross in Romania in 2025 is 4,050 RON (equivalent of 810 EUR) and generally includes around 45% taxes¹⁰⁶ for social security, unemployment, pension, health etc. (there are some deductions for the minimum salary, which reaches around 37%, so the tax proportions differ), the actual cash/ in-hand salary is 2,574 RON (equivalent of 513 EUR), which shows the very limited resources available for the beneficiaries of MII.

The 2018 civil society monitoring report¹⁰⁷ on the implementation of NRSF in Romania found that the guaranteed minimum income (formerly MGI, now MII) was reported as a source of income in 1% of households for the majority population and 10% of Roma households (an increase of 8% since 2012), highlighting a higher reliance on social assistance within the Roma communities. The NRSF does not explicitly address the creation

¹⁰³ Government of Romania. (2023). *Governmental Strategy for Supporting Parents 2024–2030* [Strategia națională pentru susținerea părinților 2024–2030]. Bucharest: Ministry of Family, Youth and Equal Opportunities [Ministerul Familiei, Tineretului și Egalității de Șanse]. Available at: https://www.edu.ro/sites/default/files/Proiect_SNSP_2024_2030.pdf

¹⁰⁴ Împreună Agency. (2021). *Comparative Study of the Needs of Roma Communities in the Context of Establishing Strategic Priorities for Their Social Inclusion* [Studiu comparativ al nevoilor comunităților de romi în contextul stabilirii priorităților strategice de intervenție pentru incluziunea socială a acestora]. Available at: <https://www.agentiaimpreuna.ro/wp-content/uploads/2021/11/Studiu-comparativ-al-nevoilor-comunitatilor-de-romi-in-contextul-stabilirii-prioritatilor-strategice-de-interventie-pentru-incluziunea-sociala-a-acestora.pdf>

¹⁰⁵ For further information about VMI, please see <https://mmuncii.ro/j33/index.php/ro/2014-domenii/familie/politici-familiale-incluziune-si-asistenta-sociala/2-uncategorised/7122-20231208-vmi-ghid-plian-poster>

¹⁰⁶ Online salary calculator for Romania in 2025: <https://www.calculator-salarii.ro/4050-brut-calcul-salariu-net/>

¹⁰⁷ Fundamental Rights Agency & Roma Civil Monitor. (2018). *Civil Society Monitoring Report on Implementation of the National Roma Integration Strategy in Romania: Assessing Progress in Key Areas of the Strategy*. Brussels: European Commission. Available at: <https://romacivilmonitoring.eu>

of a social safety net for people without income. According to the Strategy, these are individuals without a job, and the objective is to integrate them into the labour market.

Thus, Specific Objective no. 3: Increasing the employment rate of Roma in line with market requirements in terms of their professional development, contains Specific Action 2.1.4. 'Supporting partnerships with local authorities' to improve the counselling of VMG beneficiaries in order to reintegrate them into the labour market and promote active occupational inclusion with priority for Romanian citizens of Roma ethnicity. According to the Annual Progress Report on the Implementation of the NRSF, no progress was recorded regarding Specific Action 2.1.4.

2.6.2. Addressing the problems beyond the NRSF

Another form of income support, starting in 2024, is provided by the Ministry of Investments and European Projects through the programme 'Material Support for Certain Categories of Disadvantaged Persons in the Period 2024 - 2027'.¹⁰⁸ This support consists of providing social cards for food and hot meals worth 50 EUR (250 RON) every two months. The beneficiaries are vulnerable people with net incomes of less than 400 EUR (2,000 RON). Previously, people with net incomes of less than 340 EUR (1,700 RON) benefited from this support.

The people who benefit are pensioners and people with severe or medium disabilities with incomes below 2,000 RON, families with at least two children or single-parent families with incomes below 675 RON/member, people entitled to inclusion aid and homeless people. As can be seen, there is no ethnic criterion, but it is obvious that many Roma who face poverty are beneficiaries of this programme.

It should be noted that, as of 1 January 2025, the gross minimum wage in the country is 4,050 RON (approximately 810 EUR), while the net wage reaches 2,574 RON (approximately 515 EUR).^t The difference between those who live on social assistance and those who obtain a job at the minimum wage level minimal, hence the weak motivation to transition from a situation of social assistance to employment. Currently, approximately one-third of employees in Romania are registered as having a minimum wage in the economy.

According to INS,¹⁰⁹ in 2023, one in five Romanians was affected by poverty, 21.1% of the resident population lived in a household whose income was lower than the threshold of 60% of the median disposable income per adult-equivalent, (19.8%) people were affected by severe material and social deprivation, and 718,000 people up to 65 years old (5.2%) lived in households with very low work intensity. According to the INS, "the poverty rate by gender was higher in 2023 among men by 0.5% than among women (21.3% compared to 20.8%). The highest incidence of poverty was found among people aged 0-17 (29.6%) and those aged 18-24 (24.0%). The poverty rate of people living in households with dependent minors and young people aged 18-24 was 25.1% in 2023, 9.1% higher than that of people living in households without minors and young people".

According to the report on the Survey on the Roma Population in ten European Countries, conducted by FRA,¹¹⁰ in terms of severe material deprivation, 53% of the Roma population in Romania is in this type of situation. In the cases of children, 55% of Roma children live in conditions of extreme deprivation, the national median being only 21%.

¹⁰⁸ Further information on the programme: <https://mfe.gov.ro/mipe-demareaza-prima-incarcare-a-tichetelor-sociale-din-perioada-2024-2027/>

¹⁰⁹ National Institute of Statistics (INSSE). (2023). *Poverty and Social Exclusion in Romania, 2023* [Sărăcia și excluziunea socială în România, 2023]. Available at: https://insse.ro/cms/sites/default/files/com_presa/com_pdf/saracia_si_excluziunea_sociala_r2023_0.pdf

¹¹⁰ European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights. (2022). *Roma in 10 European Countries – Main Results*, pp. 27–28. Available at: https://fra.europa.eu/sites/default/files/fra_uploads/fra-2022-roma-survey-2021-main-results2_en.pdf

2.7. Social services

he NRSF does not have a specific component on social services/ social protection, or social assistance, which are aspects that should be addressed when amendments are made. As a result, the previous RCM report discussed issues related to the absolute poverty rate, labour market discrimination, guaranteeing a minimum income, access to health services, social assistance, education, and housing, among others.

2.7.1. Effectiveness of the NRSF in addressing the problems

As the issue of social services and social assistance is not specifically addressed by the NRSF, no data were collected in this regard.

2.7.2. Addressing the problems beyond the NRSF

The social services and social assistance provided to Roma are being addressed through national social services and budgeted within the national social services budget. Access to social services and social assistance is provided to all Romanian citizens, including the Roma, as per the national legislation.

Access to 'safety net' social assistance programmes is still quite widespread among Roma households, but they remain significantly below the poverty line. Nine out of ten Roma households have access to at least one social service or social benefits programme in Romania, but three out of five Roma households have the poorest income distribution.¹¹¹

Although 'safety net' social assistance programmes are targeted at the poorest, the fragmentation and underdevelopment of current social assistance programmes, including their formula, which tends to reduce generosity for larger households, limit their effectiveness in combating poverty in Roma households, where the number of children tends to be higher than in non-Roma households.

2.8. Child protection

Child protection is also not a specific component of the NRSF, which means that a large part of the aspects related to Roma children's access to education, health, social services, concern for their physical and emotional safety, prevention of abuse and violence, prevention of trafficking, institutionalisation, abandonment, etc., are not monitored and documented on a regular basis.

2.8.1. Effectiveness of the NRSF in addressing the problems

Regarding this issue, as indicated in the previous RCM report, there is no official data on the number of Roma children benefiting from protection services, the few existing data being provided by civil society, which states that Roma children are overrepresented in the institutional protection system.

2.8.2. Addressing the problems beyond the NRSF

The reasons why Roma children enter the protection system are multiple and interrelated, involving both socio-economic factors and racial discrimination. According to a study conducted by ERRC,¹¹² 50% of Roma children are institutionalised due to poverty, but also due to lack of jobs, inadequate living conditions and healthcare, or due to household structure, abandonment of children in maternity homes and parental migration. The Roma are disproportionately represented in the child poverty group, 70% of the Roma children being in risk of poverty, compared to only 25% at the national population level.¹¹³ Also, it is worth mentioning that even if ethnic data

¹¹¹ World Bank. *Diagnostic Study and Consultancy for Policies Supporting Roma Inclusion in Romania* [Studiu de diagnosticare și consultanță pentru politicile de sprijinire a incluziunii romilor din România]. Available at: <https://www.worldbank.org/content/dam/Worldbank/document/eca/romania/Output%20RO.pdf>

¹¹² European Roma Rights Centre. (2021). *Blighted Lives: Romani Children in State Care* [Vieți distruse: Romii în grija statului], p. 65. Available at: https://www.errc.org/uploads/upload_en/file/5284_file3_blighted-lives-romani-children-in-state-care-romanian.pdf

¹¹³ *Ibidem*, p. 68.

collection is denied by official child protection bodies, estimations are that Roma children make between 30-75 of the child protection system¹¹⁴ beneficiaries.

The main reason for maintaining the large number of Roma children in the protection system is the failure of biological families to meet the standards imposed by law for family reunification, which are very high and unrealistic. Roma children are often victims of physical abuse within the institutional system. They are victims of multiple/ intersectional discrimination (education, employment and healthcare), both because of their ethnicity and their status as institutionalised children. Also, most institutionalised Roma children manifest denial of ethnic identity due to a lack of awareness, denying or rejecting their biological families.

According to the report on the survey on the Roma population in ten European countries, carried out by FRA,¹¹⁵ in the European Union, on average, 83% of Roma minors lived in households at risk of poverty in 2021, and the situation had not changed compared to 2016. For Romania, 83% of Roma girls lived in households at risk of poverty, compared to only 75% of Roma boys, with approximately 79% of Romanian Roma children at risk of poverty and exclusion.

Regarding severe material deprivation, over 50% of the Roma population in Romania is in this type of situation and in the case of children, 55% of Roma children live in conditions of extreme deprivation.

The National Strategy for the Protection and Promotion of the Rights of the Child 2014-2020¹¹⁶ states that approximately 28% of Roma children/ youth between the ages of 15 and 19 are married, but does not provide for concrete measures or strategic actions to address the issue of early marriages.

The issue of violence against Roma children has also been identified at EU level, with the European Parliament underlining the high vulnerability of Roma communities to all forms of trafficking and exploitation, in particular of women and children, and calling on the Commission and Member States to develop specific measures to combat trafficking, as well as to collect data on victims of trafficking in human beings by ethnic origin.

In the EURSF, the Commission calls on Member States to include in their national strategic framework measures to 'protect women, children and young people through strategies to combat crime, such as trafficking in human beings, including all forms of exploitation, where appropriate (sexual exploitation, labour exploitation, forced soliciting and the exploitation of criminal activities to simulate forced and exploitative marriages) and to enable them to access assistance, support and protection'. However, as already concluded in the RCM 2022, the NRSF does not identify the issues that need to be addressed in the field of child protection, nor does it provide specific measures for each area, within the context of child protection norms, social benefits, administrative structures, and coherent general programmes.

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

The promotion of Roma culture, art, and history in Romania remains largely underdeveloped, despite being outlined in national strategies. Key initiatives such as establishing a Roma Culture Museum, a State Roma Theatre, and a National Research Institute have not been implemented. Political will is weak, funding is minimal, and Roma representation in decision-making is limited. Roma culture remains marginalised, with persistent stereotypes and little public exposure. Education systems rarely include Roma historical trauma, such as slavery and the Holocaust. Cultural participation among Roma is very low, and access to resources is scarce. Without strong institutional support and consistent implementation, Roma cultural identity remains largely invisible and unrecognised in Romanian society.

A unified and well-funded effort is essential to bring Roma heritage into the national cultural narrative. Despite the limited implementation so far, Roma culture, art, and history remain officially recognised as a priority within

¹¹⁴ *Ibidem*, p. 67.

¹¹⁵ European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights. (2022). *Roma in 10 European Countries – Main Results*, pp. 27–28. [Romii în 10 țări europene – Rezultate principale]. Available at: https://fra.europa.eu/sites/default/files/fra_uploads/fra-2022-roma-survey-2021-main-results2_en.pdf

¹¹⁶ National Qualifications Authority. (2014). *Strategia națională pentru protecția și promovarea drepturilor copilului 2014–2020* [National Strategy for the Protection and Promotion of the Rights of the Child 2014–2020]. Available at: https://www.anc.edu.ro/wp-content/uploads/2019/11/Strategie_protectia_copilului_2014.pdf

national strategic frameworks. The NRSF explicitly includes objectives aimed at supporting the preservation, research, and promotion of Roma cultural identity. These include plans for institutional development, such as the creation of a Roma Museum, a State Theatre, and a National Institute dedicated to Roma heritage. Additionally, the strategy promotes the teaching of Roma history in schools, recognition of historical traumas like slavery and the Holocaust, and support for Roma-language media and cultural productions. While these measures have yet to fully materialise, their presence in policy documents reflects a formal commitment. The challenge remains to translate this formal prioritisation into concrete action, funding, and sustainable institutional support. Until then, the gap between policy and reality continues, but the inclusion of Roma culture in the official agenda is an essential step forward.

The measures aimed at promoting Roma identity and culture (visual, fine arts, multimedia) aim to valorise Roma cultural heritage and Roma cultural identity through institutional representation, the Romani language, traditional Roma attire and the preservation of traditional Roma crafts. These measures include the establishment of the Roma Theatre, the Roma Museum and the Institute for Research and Conservation of Roma Culture and History. Another measure is the promotion of modern Roma culture (performing arts, Roma arts (performing arts, visual arts, fine arts, multimedia, etc.)). Measures aimed at reconciliation with the historical past aim to promote inclusion in the educational system by incorporating Roma cultural aspects and elements of the Roma minority's history into school and university curricula, as well as teacher training. Another aim is to encourage young people and artists to increase their interest in culture by organising camps and providing scholarships, as well as by placing a monument to Roma slavery.

For this strategic area, there is a TWG for the Right to Education and Cultural Identity established within ICIMES, coordinated by the Ministry of Education and responsible for the implementation of Specific Objective 5 of the NRSF Plan of Measures, which aims to support research, conservation and promotion of Roma cultural heritage and Roma cultural identity. To achieve this objective, two measures are proposed in the CRSR: A. Measures aimed at promoting Roma identity and visual culture, fine arts, multimedia and B. Measures aimed at reconciliation with the historical past.

The institutions responsible for implementing Specific Objective 5: Supporting research, conservation and promotion of Roma cultural heritage and Roma cultural identity are the Ministry of Culture, the National Centre for Roma Culture Romano Kher, the Department for Interethnic Relations, and the National Agency for Roma.

The proposed measures aim to promote the contribution of Roma to the development of Romanian society through cultural productions; promoting modern cultural productions with a Roma theme; community actions to valorise history, traditions, language and culture in multicultural communities, promoting the image and creations of Roma artists, writers and intellectuals at the national and European level.

2.9.1. Effectiveness of the NRSF in addressing the problems

According to the annual progress report (May 2022 – April 2023) on the implementation of the NRSF,¹¹⁷ the responsible institutions have carried out a series of diverse and complex activities, both individually and jointly, to respond to the proposed measures. The Ministry of Culture (MC) reports that it will provide methodological, but not financial, support for the State Roma Theatre and, contrary to the NRSF, cannot financially support the Museum of Roma History and Culture.

Actions have been taken regarding the representation of traditional Roma clothing in cultural institutions, such as the Craft Fair and the enrichment of the collections of the National Village Museum with over 100 pieces of Roma clothing. To promote the contribution of Roma to the development of Romanian society through cultural productions (performances, seminars, conferences, book, film, etc.), the MC and partners organised the National Conference 'Family in Contemporary Society'.

In the National Cultural Fund Administration (AFCN) grants programme, various activities can be identified that can be related to certain activities assumed in the NRSF's action plan: events dedicated to commemorating the victims of the Roma Holocaust, promoting theatre, cultural and artistic activities, intercultural camps, debates,

¹¹⁷ Government of Romania. (2023). *Annual Report on the progress recorded in the implementation of the Romanian Government's Strategy for the inclusion of Romanian citizens belonging to the Roma minority for the period 2022–2027, the period May 2022 – April 2023* [Raport anual privind progresele înregistrate în implementarea Strategiei Guvernului României de incluziune a cetătenilor români aparținând minorității rome pentru perioada 2022–2027, perioada mai 2022 – aprilie 2023]. Available at: <https://sgg.gov.ro/1/wp-content/uploads/2023/12/RAPORT-1.pdf>

and support for artists. With the exception of a few small projects (max. 12,000 EUR), most projects are implemented by organisations that are not Roma organisations (they do not have Roma members, nor Roma people in their governance or management).

In addition, as mentioned in connection with the implementation of some measures that have real potential to make a difference, delays have occurred due to a lack of funds, including for important projects such as the State Roma Theatre and the Museum of Roma History and Culture.

In 2022, the National Centre for Roma Culture (CNCR-RK)¹¹⁸ undertook actions aimed at preserving the Romani language, promoting the contributions of the Roma, valuing Roma culture, and conducting consultations for the revision of school curricula. Among the achievements are a digital book for children, teaching aids, conferences on Freeing Roma Slaves and the teaching of the Romani language in universities. The Centre participated in the Venice Biennale and the 'ProEtnica' festival. The National Network of Roma Writers was established, and Roma film and culture caravans were organised.

Craft fairs were held in several cities, a short film was made about the deportations to Transnistria and a collection of historical documents was launched. However, in the CNCR-RK report for October 2019 – June 2024, prepared by the institution's manager, Mihai Neacsu, it is not mentioned that all these activities were implemented in correlation with the NRSF. To publicly promote the history of the Roma, the Roma Slavery Monument project was launched. However, since the Ministry of Culture did not countersign the protocol within the agreed-upon deadlines, it is necessary to resume the steps and establish a new calendar.

To implement Specific Objective 5, the National Agency for Roma collaborated with the responsible institutions (MC, DRI, CNCR) in order to establish essential institutions for Roma culture and identity. Thus, meetings were held with representatives from ministries, cultural institutions, and the Prime Minister's Chancellery. In a joint effort, with the involvement of civil society and deputy Catalin Zamfir Manea, Law no. 238/2023 was passed on the establishment of the National Museum of Roma History and Culture in Romania.

This stipulates that the Government must identify a building for the museum within 90 days of the law coming into force. NAR has requested the support of the General Secretariat of the Government and the Ministry of Finance to identify an appropriate space, in accordance with the concept developed by experts. After determining the location, the design stages and the feasibility study will begin.

2.9.2. Addressing the problems beyond the NRSF

In 2021, through the RO-CULTURA Programme, funded by the 2014-2021 SEE Grants and implemented by the Ministry of Culture, a call for cultural projects dedicated to the Roma minority was launched. Ten projects were selected, including: ROMA'S STORIES (984,345.19 RON, approximately 196,850 EUR), Luludi Shukar (986,885.14 RON, approximately 197,300 EUR), ART-DENTIFY YOURSELF (985,369.25 RON, approximately 197,000 EUR), Lockout Stereotypes (977,013 RON, approximately 195,400 EUR) and CULTURAL HEROES (985,138 RON, approximately 197,000 EUR). Other projects include Promoting Roma Culture Through Contemporary Art, 'Shamanelism', 'Steppe Roma', 'Ferentari Studios and Khetanes – Together', all with a budget of approximately 195,000 EUR each. None of the organisations that implemented these projects were Roma organisations and some projects, as can be seen from the title, have rather exotic titles with no connection to the reality of Roma culture and communities.

To promote Roma culture, MC financed the 18th edition of the ProEtnica Intercultural Festival. Also, the 'ROM(a)NOR Interferences' Project was implemented by the National Village Museum with the support of SEE Grants. The National Museum of the Romanian Peasant organised the exhibition entitled 'TOKMEALA'. The 'George Apostu' Cultural Centre commemorated the victims of the Holocaust against the Roma (2 August 2022) and marked the International Roma Day (8 April 2023), the Museum of the Iron Gates Region obtained funding for the 'Roma MUZE' project.

The presence and activity of the National Centre for Roma Culture – Romano Kher, an institutional structure whose mission is to preserve, develop and promote the cultural heritage of the Roma, the values, culture and traditions of the Roma, is very important for the entire Roma community in Romania. According to GD no. 609

¹¹⁸ For more information about the National Centre for Roma Culture – Romano Kher, see the website: <https://cncr.gov.ro/>

of 20 May 2009, art. 2 (1) The Centre fulfils its role as a cultural service of public utility, carrying out activities in the field of culture, information, continuous education, support, and development of cultural programmes and projects intended for the Roma community and/ or promotion of Roma culture, in accordance with the Romanian legislation in force.

With a team made up mostly of Roma professionals, dedicated to the promotion of Roma cultural heritage, CNCR RK is perhaps the only structure that permanently acts to implement the measures of the NRSF, but also actions beyond them.

3. FOCUS ON KEY PROBLEMS AFFECTING ROMA

The present chapter will present some of the important topics that are relevant for the Roma population in Romania, that need to be addressed or to continue to be addressed through specific policies, probably beyond the NRSF. We identified, for the purpose of the RCM report four such issues, that are interrelated, complementary and feeding each other:

- Residential segregation and low quality of housing for the Roma.
- Inadequate access to pre-school by Roma children.
- Antigypsyism, hate crime and hate speech.
- Poverty and unemployment.

3.1. Residential segregation and low quality of housing

It is obvious that the rather low quality of life in Roma communities is directly connected to residential segregation and low quality of the housing. Most of the times, the marginalised segregated settlements are the result of intentional evictions and are marginalisation by local authorities, but also by the majority population. Long term solutions, in an integrated approach are needed to change the marginalised status of the Roma.

3.1.1. Effectiveness of the NRSF in addressing the problem

There is a consensus among all stakeholders that long-term solutions, in an integrated approach, are necessary to address the situation of Roma marginalisation. Within the NRSF Action Plan, Specific Objective 1: Improving the housing conditions of members of vulnerable Roma communities is closely linked to the level of engagement of the Ministry of Development, Works and Administration, and starting with 2024, of the Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development.¹¹⁹ From the point of view of the institutional infrastructure, the Technical Working Group in charge is the one dealing with Right to Housing.

In the annual progress report¹²⁰ (May 2022 – April 2023) on the implementation of the NRSF, we find that the MDPWA coordinates six main measures for the implementation and monitoring of the NRSF in the housing sector. Activity 1.1.1 of the action plan aims to evaluate and continue the national social housing construction programme (GD no. 1237/2008), also intended for vulnerable communities, including the Roma. The pilot programme, an experimental component for social inclusion, aims to improve access to decent housing. It provides for the construction of a maximum of 300 social housing units in the eight development regions of Romania. The construction is carried out through public investments of the National Housing Agency, financed from the state budget, through the MDPWA budget, with the construction of 281 social housing units out of the 300 planned in the NRSF having been reported by 15 May 2024.

However, there is no clear evidence that the new units were located in integrated, mixed neighbourhoods. Available reports suggest that many were built near existing Roma settlements or on urban outskirts, influenced by land availability and local discrimination. Similar patterns have been observed in EU-funded housing efforts, where projects lacking integration safeguards often yield isolated or substandard housing. A 2025 review found that some units in Romania were built in segregated areas with limited access to basic services.¹²¹

¹¹⁹ European funds will be accessible through LAGs financed through LEADER – NSP 2021–2027 starting in 2024, according to MARD.

¹²⁰ Government of Romania. (2023). *Annual Progress Report on the implementation of the Romanian Government's Strategy for the inclusion of Romanian citizens belonging to the Roma minority for the period 2022–2027, the period May 2022 – April 2023* [Raport anual privind progresele înregistrate în implementarea Strategiei Guvernului României de incluziune a cetăţenilor români aparţinând minorităţii rome pentru perioada 2022–2027, perioada mai 2022 – aprilie 2023]. Available at: <https://sgg.gov.ro/1/wp-content/uploads/2023/12/RAPORT-1.pdf>

¹²¹ Bridge EU (FURI – EU Funds for Fundamental Rights). (2025). *Building segregated housing for Roma families, Romania* [Construirea de locuinţe segregate pentru familii de romi, România]. Bridge EU / European Union, pp. 25–33. (Report published May 2025). Available at: https://www.bridge-eu.org/files/ugd/aba538_329823863b304d2d80eda3c6cdbf6aa3.pdf?index=true

The Action Plan lacks explicit desegregation criteria - such as location requirements in mixed areas - or monitoring tools to track spatial integration. This raises concerns that the programme may reinforce, rather than reduce, residential segregation.

Thus, although the NRSF achieved its construction target (281 units), its contribution to desegregation remains minimal in the absence of clear placement policies and inclusion objectives.

3.1.2. Synergy with other actions

The same report mentions that regarding Measure 1.2.1 which considers connection to utilities, no progress has been recorded, and Activity 1.3 considers local/ community infrastructure - asphaltting, paving of roads. In this regard, the authorities have attempted to correlate the implementation of this activity with the 'Anghel Saligny' National Investment Programme¹²² which has a total budget of 65.5 billion RON (equivalent of approximately 13 billion EUR), which is financing infrastructure projects - roads, water, sewage, gas - in disadvantaged and vulnerable communities, including Roma. Although the above-mentioned amount was allocated, actual implementation and disbursement are still at a very early stage, and it is not clear how many Roma communities have benefited from this programme.

Regarding the identification and implementation of solutions for the relocation of families in risk areas or at risk of eviction, the MDLPA has implemented data collection mechanisms for needs analysis and monitoring of the situation in informal settlements¹²³ (amending the Methodological Norms of Law no. 350/2001). Based on these mechanisms, in 2022, a public database on informal settlements was created, which theoretically available on the Ministry for Development, Public Works and Local Administration (MPWDLTA) website. Unfortunately, the public database on informal settlements does not appear to be accessible online at this time, but it may be available upon request directly from the Ministry.¹²⁴

Data collection was carried out between July 2021 and April 2022 using a data sheet sent out for completion, from the county level to the administrative-territorial units within the county. The centralisation and analysis of the data collected by MDLPA between July 2021 and April 2022 highlights the fact that, in Romania, there are 393 informal settlements, home to 71,965 people.

In order to correlate this needs analysis with investments financed through structural programmes, MIPE launched a call for proposals under the PIDS programme of the Ministry of Investments and European Projects 'Support for local public authorities in managing the situation of informal settlements and ensuring social housing for vulnerable people, with an emphasis on people from informal settlements' with a budget of 160 million EUR, the deadline for application being set for 12 February 2025.

While the call addresses the situation of informal settlements and aims to improve access to housing for vulnerable groups, it does not explicitly require that new social housing be placed outside of segregated or informal areas. The guidelines focus on addressing housing deprivation and formalising settlements but do not contain clear desegregation criteria, such as mandatory location in mixed neighbourhoods or minimum standards for spatial inclusion. As such, there is a risk that housing interventions under this call may perpetuate residential segregation, depending on how local authorities choose to locate projects. Stronger conditionalities promoting spatial integration would be necessary to ensure the programme contributes to desegregation.

It should be noted that many local authorities cannot benefit from this support because they reported not having any informal housing, although the reality on the ground is completely different. For example, in Ialomița County, the authorities have not identified any informal settlements, although according to local NGOs, there

¹²² For more information on the programme, see: <https://www.mdlpa.ro/pages/anghelsaligny>

¹²³ Order no. 3494/2020 on the approval of the Methodology for identifying, preventing and combating school segregation in the pre-university education system [Ordin nr. 3494/2020 privind aprobarea Metodologiei de identificare, prevenire și combatere a segregării școlare în învățământul preuniversitar]. Available at: <https://legislatie.just.ro/Public/DetaliiDocument/228632>

¹²⁴ For more information, see: <https://www.mdlpa.ro/pages/habitat>
<https://documents1.worldbank.org/curated/en/099062123013526907/pdf/P1761690122ece050b24e0994a1005f38c.pdf>

are at least ten informal settlements. There are seven other counties in the same situation: Constanța, Giurgiu, Gorj, Iași, Olt, Teleorman, and Vaslui.

Romania currently does not have full cadastral coverage nationwide – many rural and marginalised areas, including informal Roma settlements, are still not fully registered. This lack of formal land records hinders access to legal housing, infrastructure investments, and desegregation measures. Therefore, the NRSF action plan, through Activity 1.5, prioritises the cadastral registration of sectors with vulnerable Roma communities within the National Cadastre Programme.¹²⁵ This programme, implemented by ANCPi according to Law no. 7/1996, aims to create a cadastral plan and conduct the free tabulation of all real estate in Romania, with funds from various sources, including European funds and local budgets.

3.1.3. Roma participation

The field of social housing construction, its allocation to vulnerable families remains, most of the time, the responsibility of local public authorities, who complain about the lack of resources for such investments, the limited number of social housing units available at local level, but also about local legal provisions (Local Council) that establish the criteria for their allocation. Most of the time, the scores obtained by Roma families are far from those that would enable them to be granted housing. The challenges Roma families face in accessing social housing stem from both discriminatory practices and systemic issues within housing policies. Local authorities often establish allocation criteria that inadvertently disadvantage Roma applicants, leading to lower scores that hinder their chances of obtaining housing.

This situation reflects indirect discrimination, where ostensibly neutral policies disproportionately affect a particular ethnic group. Additionally, the limited availability of social housing exacerbates the problem, as the insufficient number and inadequate quality of units fail to meet the needs of vulnerable families, including Roma communities. This scarcity forces many to remain in substandard living conditions, such as shantytowns, perpetuating cycles of poverty and exclusion. Addressing these issues requires comprehensive policy reforms aimed at increasing the social housing stock, ensuring equitable allocation criteria, and actively combating discrimination to facilitate genuine social inclusion. As a result, existing social housing programmes fail to contribute to residential desegregation, as Roma families are seldom selected as beneficiaries and often continue to live in segregated, informal settlements.

The capacity of Roma civil society to influence decisions at the local level is extremely limited, especially when financial resources are limited, and prejudices against Roma do not create any openness and positive motivation to include them in such programmes. The difficulties in approaching this topic are sometimes too great for public officials to provide a coherent, integrated system of family identification, relocation opportunities, social housing construction, and allocation and maintenance of their proper functioning.

Through the Community Lead Local Development programmes, a series of local development strategies were financed, including objectives for building social housing for Roma communities. The financial sources referred to are mainly European Social Fund (ESF) allocations, as well as regional development funds, particularly those supporting integrated local development strategies aimed at marginalised communities, including Roma. While CLLD strategies often target Roma as a disadvantaged group, aiming to improve housing, employment, and services, they lack specific criteria requiring new housing to be placed in integrated, mixed neighbourhoods to address segregation. Moreover, the difficulties encountered, and the lack of local responsibility meant that a part of these resources was not used, and the planned housing units were not built. Most of the time, the initially estimated costs were affected by the high increase of the costs of construction during the last years and also due to the complex situations encountered (need for relocation of communities, lack of proper land ownership, other legal issues).

Roma are not a significant stakeholder in this whole process, their voice is sometimes heard, sometimes not, and their representatives have a very low capacity to influence decisions at the local level.

¹²⁵ National Agency for Cadastre and Land Registration. *National Programme for Cadastre and Land Book Registration [Programul Național de Cadastru și Carte Funciară]*. Available at: <https://www.ancpi.ro/pnccf/>

3.2. Inadequate access to pre-school by Roma children

Access to preschool remains an important issue for the vulnerable Roma communities, and a prerequisite for better school success. In rural areas, access to preschool education is lacking infrastructure, funding, and professionals, while in large urban areas, there is a significant lack of seats, and the resources for accessing private kindergartens are limited.

3.2.1. Effectiveness of the NRSF in addressing the problem

The lower quality of preschool education and early childhood education and care (ECEC) services for Roma is a significant problem in Romania, even if national policies do not treat it as a priority and consider it 'irrelevant'. The lack of concrete actions and effective measures means that this problem is ignored, while its impact on the early development of Roma children is profound and long-lasting.

According to Save the Children, one of the leading promoters of early education for Roma children, the lack of preschool education negatively impacts the schooling of children. It is a crucial indicator for their future in education. 76% of Roma children and young people under 19 years of age have not attended kindergarten. 75% of Roma children who chose to leave school have not attended kindergarten, while four out of five children who do not attend any schooling are Roma.¹²⁶

The Ministry of Labour and Family seems to be more interested in the issue of access for Roma children to early education, as shown in a debate organised with Roma Party Pro-Europe, highlighting the issue of early marriages in Roma communities.¹²⁷ A study analysing the current public policies in the field of early education in Romania and at EU level, shows that there is both interest and involvement from all types of stakeholders, public and private organisations.¹²⁸ This study shows that the preoccupation of the officials for early education of Roma children started as early as 2005. Still, it lacked the innovative solutions to bring the children in the educational system and maintain a steady presence during the early school years, due to lack of resources on the family's part.

Within the Roma communities, there is an issue of both the availability/ accessibility, as well as the quality of early education. Kindergartens located in rural or marginalised areas often lack access to modern facilities, and the teaching materials necessary for providing quality education are scarce. In addition, teachers working with Roma children do not receive specific training to address the needs of these children and to create an inclusive and stimulating educational environment. In addition, there are also complex family situations, generated by material shortages (clothes and shoes, snacks and supplies), the family's lack of awareness of the importance of this educational phase, the fact that parents are abroad for intermittent periods, and children stay with less interested relatives, among other factors.

There are also communities where, although in modest conditions, quality preschool and early childhood education and care are provided, sometimes with great effort and through the joint efforts of public institutions and NGOs. The most widespread situation is characterised, however, by the lack of preschool / early childhood education in most small rural communities (villages/ communes) and in many small towns, where crèches are almost non-existent.

Within the NRSF, the issue of the quality of preschool education for Roma children is absent, both in analysis and implementation. There are no specific measures in place to improve the educational infrastructure, to train teachers or to monitor educational standards in kindergartens attended by Roma children. Additionally, the lack of clear data on the quality of ECEC services makes it challenging to assess this issue and establish effective solutions.

¹²⁶ Save the Children Romania. *Preschool Education [Educație preșcolară]*. Available at: <https://www.salvaticopiii.ro/ce-facem/educatie/educatie-prescolara>

¹²⁷ Adevărul. *Firea: Birth Rate Among Roma Girls [Firea: Natalitatea la fetițele de origine romă]*. Available at: <https://adevarul.ro/politica/firea-natalitatea-la-fetitele-de-origine-roma-2177767.html>

¹²⁸ A.C.E.D.O. Association. *Early Childhood Education – Study [Educație timpurie – studiu]*. Available at: https://www.partedincomunitate.ro/images/Studii%20si%20analize/ACEDO_Educatie_timpurie_studiu.pdf

3.2.2. Synergy with other actions

Regarding the conditions in which educational activities are carried out for children up to six years old, the conclusions of the above-mentioned studies indicate that there are major problems with educational infrastructure, especially in rural areas.¹²⁹ Funds are available to remedy these, especially at regional level (Regional Operational Programmes)¹³⁰ and at national level (through the National Local Development Programme).¹³¹ Being a competitive approach, and regularly city-halls are main applicants, it is important to have the capacity to produce good quality projects, while Roma communities tend to be associated with lower capacity of the local administration, therefore it is difficult to say how the Roma access to kindergarten is improved.

Financing access to education in rural areas must also include financial and non-financial incentives, especially for poor communities. Educational staff must be permanently trained and be provided with at least the basic material resources necessary for instruction, since parents cannot cover such costs.

Measures to stimulate access and participation of Roma children in kindergarten and personalised support, targeting on the above-mentioned gaps, confirm that in timely, targeted, personalised interventions, which involve close collaboration between school and community and a mix of financial and non-financial incentives, there is a dramatic decrease in the phenomenon of school dropout during the mandatory ten-year schooling, and the school performance of children who benefit from personalised measures is increasingly better. Moreover, there is also a change among parents in that they understand the usefulness and purpose of education. These measures are somewhat aligned with the NSRF (quality education, financial incentives, educational infrastructure improvements).

In late autumn of 2024, two initiatives were launched by the Ministry of European Projects and Investments within the framework of the Inclusion and Social Dignity Operational Programme (ISDP) 2021-2027 and the Education and Employment Operational Programme (EEP) 2021-2027 that were aimed at marginalised communities. The ISDP promoted the creation of Centres for sports, cultural and extra-curricular activities for children in isolated, marginalised or Roma communities. Later in the year, the call 'Integrated measures for Roma Communities' was launched under the EEP, to support school integration for Roma children. A call for early education was launched in 2023 and there are several others in the pipeline.

So far, most synergies related to early education and Roma children that lead to the achievement of the NRSF can be related to the ESF initiatives, the EEA and Norway grants programmes nation-wide and the World Bank support for Inclusive and Safe schools for all. As part of the synergies for furthering early education participation for all beneficiaries, the Regional Programmes are offering local authorities the possibility of financing new building and rehabilitation of old buildings for the scope of early education.

3.2.3. Roma participation

Although the problem is significant, the low quality of pre-school education for Roma is ignored in national policies, being considered irrelevant. It is imperative to develop training programmes for educational staff, make investments in educational infrastructure and provide measures to monitor the quality of ECEC service to ensure a fair start in education for all children, including Roma.

¹²⁹ Save the Children Romania. *Preschool Education [Educație preșcolară]*. Available at: <https://www.salvaticopiii.ro/ce-facem/educatie/educatie-prescolara>

A.C.E.D.O. Association. *Early Childhood Education – Study [Educație timpurie – studiu]*. Available at: https://www.partedincomunitate.ro/images/Studii%20si%20analize/ACEDO_Educatie_timpurie_studiu.pdf

¹³⁰ West Regional Development Agency. *Non-reimbursable funding for kindergartens under the West Regional Programme – Guide under public consultation [Finanțare nerambursabilă pentru grădinițe prin Programul Regional Vest – Ghid în consultare publică]*. Available at: <https://adrvest.ro/finantare-nerambursabila-pentru-gradinite-prin-programul-regional-vest-ghid-in-consultare-publica/>

¹³¹ For an update list of the projects funded under National Local Development Plan: Ministry of Development, Public Works and Administration. *National Local Development Plan – PNDL [Programul Național de Dezvoltare Locală – PNDL]*. Available at: <https://www.mdlpa.ro/pages/pndl>

Roma participation in the ante-pre-school and preschool educational process requires a complex approach, with integrated measures to ensure parents' understanding of the importance of each educational stage. The institutional educational system does not cover such a problem, and NGOs do not have the professional and financial resources to ensure this important function, which leaves Roma communities and children at the mercy of chance.

According to the above mentioned study, *Impact Analysis on the Current Public Policies in the Field of Early Education in Romania and at European Level*,¹³² many of the issues that prevent Roma children from attending early education refer to paradigm changes for parents and legal guardians, combined with financial and material support and with complex, innovative and socially inclusive teaching methods – and these are all things that can be integrated in programmes and projects. However, the lack of infrastructure is not something that CSOs can tackle easily, and it is by far the most pressing issue.

As part of the synergies for furthering early education participation for all beneficiaries, the Regional Programmes are offering local authorities the possibility of financing new buildings and the rehabilitation of existing buildings for the scope of early education, with Roma CSOs and members of the Roma communities being able to participate as partners or indirect beneficiaries. As stated in the current situation analysis and in the other sections of the report, the issue of Roma children's access and participation to early education is one of the most important and urgent issues that need to be addressed in the future NRSF revision.

3.3. Antigypsyism, hate crime and hate speech

Antigypsyism, also referred to as anti-Roma racism or anti-Roma attitudes, by human rights activists and Roma inclusion experts, is recognised across Europe as a specific form of racism directed at Roma. It is rooted in deep-seated prejudices and discrimination, often reinforced by the pejorative exonym 'gypsy', which is widely used in public discourse. In Romania, the antigypsyism term is not used in the NRSF; it is replaced by 'anti-Roma attitudes' in order to avoid the use of pejorative terms. This terminological shift risks downplaying the depth and systemic nature of the issue.

3.3.1. Effectiveness of the NRSF in addressing the problem

Romania has implemented several measures to address antigypsyism and improve the situation of the Roma community. In 2021, the Romanian Parliament enacted Law No. 2/ 4 January 2021,¹³³ which outlines measures to prevent and combat antigypsyism. However, CSOs critique its effectiveness, particularly concerning its capacity to address systemic issues such as school segregation, forced evictions, and environmental racism. Additionally, the law has been criticised for not adequately defining antigypsyism in collaboration with Roma activists and scholars. The law defines antigypsyism as hatred expressed through verbal or physical manifestations directed at Roma individuals, their property, institutions, community leaders, or cultural symbols. It also penalises the dissemination of anti-Roma materials and the use of antigypsyist symbols. However, despite this progress, civil society organisations, and Roma rights experts have raised concerns about the law's conceptual and practical limitations. The definition of antigypsyism remains narrow and focuses mainly on explicit hate acts, overlooking its institutional and structural forms — such as racial profiling, school segregation, and systemic housing discrimination. Furthermore, the law was drafted without substantial consultation with Roma scholars or activists, which undermines both its legitimacy and its alignment with international standards, such as those proposed by the IHRA or the EURL. The law primarily adopts a punitive approach, with a strong emphasis on criminal sanctions, but lacks incorporation of educational, preventive, or institutional measures. It fails to establish anybody responsible for implementation or monitoring, and lacks mechanisms for reporting incidents, coordinating public authorities, or raising awareness. There is currently no publicly available report or official assessment regarding its implementation.

As described in Section 2.1, one of the key objectives of the NRSF in Romania is the 'combating of discrimination, hate speech, and anti-Roma attitudes that generate incitement to hatred or hate crimes'. This

¹³² A.C.E.D.O. Association. *Early Childhood Education – Study [Educație timpurie – studiu]*. Available at: https://www.partedincomunitate.ro/images/Studii%20si%20analize/ACEDO_Educatie_timpurie_studiu.pdf

¹³³ Government of Romania. *Order No. 4183/2022 on the Approval of the Methodology for Early Childhood Education Services [Ordinul nr. 4183/2022 privind aprobarea metodologiei pentru serviciile de educație timpurie]*. Available at: <https://legislatie.just.ro/Public/DetaliuDocument/235923>

objective acknowledges the deep-seated prejudices against the Roma community and aims to implement concrete actions to prevent and sanction such behaviours. Yet, the progress made in this direction is limited, with many measures suffering from insufficient follow-up and coordination among responsible bodies. While various public institutions have launched awareness campaigns and training sessions, these efforts often do not reach the scale or depth necessary to effect meaningful change in societal attitudes. Moreover, the reliance on ad-hoc interventions rather than on a systemic, integrated approach highlights the need for more robust monitoring mechanisms, better resource allocation, and stronger partnerships between government and civil society to address both preventive education and enforceable antidiscrimination policies effectively.

The NRSF fails to adequately address the growing risks associated with social media exposure and digitalisation. While the strategy focuses on combating discrimination and hate speech, it does not consider at all how the digital space has become a primary platform for the spread of anti-Roma rhetoric, misinformation, and online harassment. The risks and lived experiences of teenagers and young adults are absent from both the contextual analysis and the proposed measures.

3.3.2. Synergy with other actions

Several other initiatives have been implemented in this area by civil society in Romania:

- ROMAJUST,¹³⁴ a Romanian civil society organisation, launched the 'STOP HATE-SPEECH!' Project with financial support from the National Agency for Roma through the '*Romi pentru România*' (Roma for Romania) programme. The project aims to foster respect and promote cultural diversity by highlighting Roma cultural heritage, encouraging intercultural dialogue, and combating stereotypes and discrimination to strengthen social cohesion and mutual understanding among various ethnic groups in Romania.
- 'Challenging Online and Offline Roma Discrimination in Europe':¹³⁵ This project, also by ROMAJUST, focuses on combating hate speech against Roma and hate crimes by monitoring, reporting, and filing complaints against public figures and media platforms that disseminate racist content, aiming to ensure the recognition of Roma rights in Romania, Bulgaria, and Slovakia.
- 'Non-discrimination, Beyond Words':¹³⁶ Implemented by the Centre for Legal Resources (*Centrul de Resurse Juridice*), this project aims to raise awareness about the high level of acceptance of hate speech in Romanian society and empower citizens to identify, report, and combat such speech, providing tools and easy access to information.
- 'Together against Antigypsyism Online':¹³⁷ Launched in April 2024 in Reșița, Romania, this two-year project aims to counter antigypsyism and hate speech on the internet, running from March 2024 to February 2026.

3.3.3. Roma participation

Roma civil society organisations in Romania have struggled to promote the concept of antigypsyism in both public and institutional settings. A major obstacle is the Romanian translation— '*antițigănistism*'—which uses the word '*țigan*' (gypsy), a term widely considered pejorative and offensive by Roma communities. Because of this,

¹³⁴ Romajust Association. *Romajust Launched the Project "Stop Hate Speech"* [Romajust a lansat proiectul "Stop Hate Speech"]. Available at: <https://www.romajust.org.ro/index.php/noutati/60-romajust-a-lansat-proiectul-stop-hate-speech>

¹³⁵ Romajust Association. *Launch of the Project "Challenging Online and Offline Roma Discrimination in Europe"* (COORD-2 Romania). Available at: <https://romajust.org.ro/index.php/noutati/35-launch-of-the-project-challenging-online-and-offline-roma-discrimination-in-europe-coorde-2-romania>

¹³⁶ Center for Legal Resources (CRJ). *Non-Discrimination Beyond Words* [Nediscriminarea dincolo de cuvinte]. Available at: <https://www.crj.ro/en/antidiscrimination/nediscriminarea-dincolo-de-cuvinte/>

¹³⁷ Alliance Against Antigypsyism. *Toolkit Against Antigypsyism Online* (TAAO). Available at: <https://antigypsyism.eu/taao/>

the term itself feels inappropriate or even harmful, making it difficult to use in formal discourse, education, or advocacy. This linguistic barrier has prevented the concept from being accepted or understood in the way it is at the EU level, where antigypsyism is recognised as a specific, systemic form of racism. As a result, the public conversation in Romania often lacks the vocabulary needed to properly name and challenge anti-Roma racism in structural terms.

During the last years, the number of Roma organisations active in the antidiscrimination area decreased dramatically, while the number of Roma-related complaints to NCCD also decreased, even if the Roma continue to be discriminated against in multiple areas of the Romanian society.

Moreover, the lack of specific data on antigypsyism represents a significant barrier to monitoring and evaluating public policies. Without systematic data collection and clear indicators, it is difficult to measure the extent of the phenomenon and the effectiveness of adopted interventions. This absence of evidence limits the government's ability to develop policies based on the real needs of the Roma community and to implement effective solutions.

3.4. Poverty and unemployment

In a society with critical technological changes, there is an increase in the vulnerability of the Roma communities. New legislation on social income (inclusion benefits) is set to take effect in Romania in 2024, with certain conditionalities related to employment, and its effects need to be analysed.

Poverty and unemployment are two interconnected problems that directly affect the Roma population in Romania, with vulnerable communities lacking economic and social opportunities, and medium- and long-term development prospects, widening the gap between them and the rest of the population. In most cases, poverty and unemployment are perpetuated from generation to generation, creating a vicious circle that is difficult to break.

For Roma people, access to the labour market is restricted due to a lack of qualifications, a low level of education and other factors, such as distance from adequate jobs, lack of material resources, etc. Roma women have an extremely precarious position on the labour market, mainly being stay-at-home mothers, with a low level of education and almost non-existent employment prospects. For them, employment opportunities and income are linked to day labour, which involve various jobs that do not necessarily require qualifications (from laundry and housekeeping to unskilled work in woodworking, construction, or agriculture); at the same time, they are the ones who take care of the household and raise children.

In these families, it is a frequent situation where only the father works (with or without a contract) or the family benefits from various forms of social assistance (social income, heating benefits, school attendance benefits, child allowances, etc.). At the grassroots level, in most cases, the fact that the father works, regardless of the field of employment, indicates that he has a somewhat higher level of education than his partner, and in some cases, a qualification on the labour market, while the gender role remains important, especially in rather traditional communities.

In situations where no adult in the family earns a wage, the educational level of the parents is usually very low, and their interest in at least their children benefiting from an adequate education is limited. These adults, if they are not completing the compulsory education (ten grades now in Romania) are very difficult to employ in the labour market, as they most often only have basic communication skills and do not possess a sufficient level of literacy to obtain an adequate qualification. Their expectations for the education of their children are very low, therefore, a 'school for parents' is needed.¹³⁸

3.4.1. Effectiveness of the NRSF in addressing the problem

Poor access to and inefficiency of public employment services is a significant problem in Romania, particularly affecting vulnerable groups such as Roma and people from marginalised communities. Although this issue is mentioned in the NRSF, its analysis is superficial, and the measures implemented are insufficient to improve

¹³⁸ Save the Children Romania. *Parents with Less than Eight Grades Do Not Realize How Important School Is* [Părinții care au mai puțin de 8 clase nu conștientizează cât de importantă este școala]. Available at: <https://www.nouanepasa.ro/articole-noutati/parintii-care-au-mai-putin-de-8-clase-nu-constientizeaza-cat-de-importanta-este-scoala>

access and efficiency of these services for the Roma. The issue of ethnic data collection remains important, the NEA and its decentralised county structures, while having identified targets to be achieved with regard to the Roma employment, fail in collecting relevant data on their specific Roma achievements

Public employment services, such as county and local employment agencies, are essential for supporting people looking for a job. However, in the case of vulnerable communities, access to these services and implicitly their efficiency is often limited by several factors, such as lack of information about and awareness of these services, administrative barriers (lack of documents), discrimination and prejudices that discourage Roma from using these services, or the lack of personalised programmes that respond to the specific needs of vulnerable groups.

In many cases, employment agencies offer standardised programmes that are not adapted to the realities of the labour market or the Roma beneficiaries' skills and needs. The vocational training provided through these services is, for the most part, limited to a few areas that do not align with the current economy's requirements. Due to the increasing level of compulsory education, which is at least ten grades now in Romania, entering a high-level skills¹³⁹ vocational training is practically impossible for the majority of the Roma, their access being facilitated only to level one, or so-called initiation vocational training, where the expected skills are the simplest ones. For level two (360 hours of training – theory and practice), there is a minimum of compulsory education required, while level three (720 hours of training – theory and practice), requires a minimum of high school education. Also, the impact monitoring and assessment of these services is deficient, which makes it difficult to improve them, while the level of integration with other social services is very low. A reform of these services is needed, including personalised programmes, reducing administrative barriers, training staff to combat discrimination and creating partnerships with local employers to ensure real employment opportunities.

3.4.2. Synergy with other actions

The objectives included in the national employment strategies are not always relevant for vulnerable groups. Existing programmes, such as incentives for employers who hire vulnerable persons,¹⁴⁰ are implemented sporadically and are not promoted adequately, and the bureaucratic burden on companies is often discouraging. For example, in case of NEETs persons – where young Roma are largely present, employers who employ, for an indefinite period, young NEETs receive a monthly amount of 2,250 RON (450 EUR equivalent) for a period of 12 months, for each employee with the obligation to maintain employment relationships or for at least 18 months from the date of employment. Again, the incentive exists, but the reality is different; most employers are reluctant to enter the programme due to the uncertainty of the economic situation and the bureaucratic burden.

We need to connect this with the situation of the MII beneficiaries who are able to work, including the Roma, who are obliged, according to legal provisions, to register as job seekers and report to employment services in order to be employed or participate in vocational training. Refusal of employment or refusal to participate in vocational training generates the cessation of the minimum inclusion income.

In addition, there are insufficient measures to address the structural problems that limit Roma participation in the labour market, such as a lack of education or relevant qualifications, discrimination, lack of opportunities, and structural issues of the economy.

3.4.3. Roma participation

The participation and activism of the Roma organisations in the area of poverty alleviation and unemployment are lower when compared to other areas like antidiscrimination, education, or health. Still, the last few years of the Human Capital Operational Programme (HCOP) implementation have generated a certain level of involvement from the Roma and pro-Roma CSOs in the area, with a special focus on vocational training

¹³⁹ Lege5.ro. *Qualification Levels – Methodological Norm* [Nivelurile de calificare – Normă metodologică]. Available at: <https://lege5.ro/Gratuit/gg3tkmry/nivelurile-de-calificare-norma-metodologica?dp=giztinzsqgys>

¹⁴⁰ National Employment Agency (ANOFM). *Monthly Subsidies of 2,250 RON for Employers Hiring Unemployed People* [Subvenții lunare de 2,250 RON pentru angajatorii care încadrează în muncă șomeri]. Available at: <https://www.anofm.ro/ialomita/subventii-lunare-de-2250-lei-pentru-angajatorii-care-incadreaza-in-munca-someri/>

National Employment Agency (ANOFM). *Job Subsidies for NEET Youth* [Subvenționarea locurilor de muncă pentru tinerii NEET]. Available at: <https://www.anofm.ro/subventionarea-locurilor-de-munca-pentru-tinerii-neet/>

activities, job seeking, and entrepreneurship support, among others. Due to a lack of resources, involvement often ceased when the funding was exhausted. The new programming period, 2021-2027, has just begun implementing projects for the unemployed, skills improvement, entrepreneurship, and social economy. Therefore, it is too early to analyse the status correctly. The projects implemented through HCOP generated several qualified Roma; however, as mentioned above, not in the most skilled professions, and often, just receiving a qualification diploma was considered a success.

The Roma movement and Roma activists in Romania need to be more active in the area of poverty reduction and combating unemployment, in a more balanced way between areas like school education and antidiscrimination.

4. USE OF EU FUNDING INSTRUMENTS

4.1. Conditions for EU funds implementation for Roma equality

As of the date of this report, none of the operational programmes that have components dedicated to Roma inclusion have recorded indicators disaggregated by Roma ethnicity. The civil society organisations represented in the monitoring committees mentioned above have a somewhat formal role, as can be inferred from the minutes of their meetings, and their level of influence is relatively low.

The conditions for implementing EU funds to promote Roma equality present both significant opportunities and major challenges. In Romania, the NRSF establishes a framework for utilising European funds in projects that aim to promote social inclusion, education, health, or combat discrimination against Roma. For example, MDLPA manages pilot programmes for the construction of social housing for Roma and expanding access to basic infrastructure. The ESF+/ ERDF combined interventions and the National Recovery and Resilience Plan (NRRP) are key financial resources that indirectly support the measures included in the NRSF – not being directly designed for addressing the NRSF's action plan, while the calls for proposals prepared are not specifically designed for the Roma, but with a larger diversity of beneficiaries.

The reality is that Romania's national funding policy for Roma inclusion, particularly in programmes co-financed by the EC, heavily relies on the concept of Roma as 'indirect beneficiaries', as one of the interviewee also mentioned: "Roma seem to be listed in project proposals of the local authorities only to meet funding requirements, rarely experiencing concrete improvements, consequence of the lack the political will or intent to address Roma-specific needs, continuing the exclusion from quality education, housing, infrastructure or employment. It is, in the end, a form of institutional racism, in which personnel and decision makers in public administration apply their stereotypes and prejudices".¹⁴¹

The NRRP exemplifies this flawed model, with no targeted measures for Roma despite claims of equal benefit. Without targeted, direct support, the structural disadvantages faced by Roma communities will persist and likely worsen. This is clearly not respecting the EU's principle of 'explicit but not exclusive targeting' for Roma inclusion.¹⁴² Cases like the segregated container housing in Alexandria,¹⁴³ built on a decommissioned cemetery area, fenced with wire and reminiscent of concentration camp imagery, without proper consultation of the Roma community, exposes how public funds can reinforce exclusion rather than address it, at the limit of an institutional racism. For real progress, Romania must shift toward policies that directly engage and support Roma communities through targeted, transparent, and accountable interventions.

In technical terms, the EU – through the ESF+ and through the new multi-fund approach (ESF+ and ERDF combined interventions) – is the main contributor to the NSRF implementation. By comparison, the national budget matches the 85% of the ESF+/ ERDF with a 15% contribution, which is split between the national budget (13%) and the regional/ local budgets (2%) in the case of public bodies (local/ regional/ agencies, etc. contribute only 2%). In the case of NGOs, the financing is 100%. In the case of private companies, the national and EU contribution from ESF+/ ERDF interventions for human resources development amount to 95% of the eligible costs, while the companies provide a 5% private contribution from their own funds. In the case of public infrastructures and similar interventions, NGOs and companies are rarely eligible and the rules applied to public beneficiaries are similar to those mentioned above (2% contribution and non-eligible costs).

ESF+ mainly focuses on the human resources development and life improvement, with some multi-fund interventions that combine ESF+ (the cost of actual services) and ERDF (the cost of infrastructures) in the field of education, social services, socio-medical services, and social entrepreneurship. There are some calls that specifically address marginalised communities, rural or urban areas, but the majority are generally addressed to all geographical locations. The only geographical differences are between the 'more developed regions'

¹⁴¹ Interview with Costel Bercus, president of ACEDO, online, 22 April 2025.

¹⁴² European Commission: Directorate-General for Employment, Social Affairs and Inclusion. *The 10 Common Basic Principles on Roma Inclusion – Vademecum* [Cele 10 principii de bază comune pentru incluziunea romilor – Vademecum]. Publications Office, 2010. Available at: <https://data.europa.eu/doi/10.2767/22771>

¹⁴³ For more details, see: *Souls in the Dumpster* [Suflete la container], article in Investigatoria.ro. Available at: <https://investigatoria.ro/2020/11/28/suflete-la-container/>

(Bucharest-Ilfov) and 'less developed regions' (the other seven) and the Integrated Territorial Intervention scheme that concerns Danube Delta, and for these, the calls are usually separate, as the financing rates are different.

Equal opportunities for all eligible applicants state that any organisation can apply to any type of call for proposals, if they fit the criteria. There is a limit of five projects/ organisation/ call, which means if we have 30 calls/ year, an organisation can apply for 150 projects and can win them all. There are few limits if the organization has a high turnover/ income concerning the number of contracts it can sign and there are cases of organisations implementing dozens or more projects. Roma organisations tend to be local, smaller, with fewer resources, mainly attached to specific groups/ communities, so they cannot possibly compete. Regardless of the themes approached, Roma organisations have fewer chances to compete, as they have little EU projects experience, very specific expertise, and little money.

However, effective implementation is hindered by several factors. Local authorities and schools often lack the human, administrative, and financial resources necessary to carry out inclusion measures effectively. At the same time, potential applicants, including Roma NGOs, face obstacles such as limited access to funding opportunities and burdensome application procedures. Additionally, the absence of accurate ethnic data limits the ability of both managing authorities and implementers to plan and target interventions precisely. A further barrier is the insufficient cooperation between government institutions and Roma civil society, which weakens coordination and limits the impact of inclusion efforts.

The negative stereotyped social perception, sometimes racist, which influences the local authorities' commitment to Roma inclusion is yet another problem. Most of the EU-funded programmes in Romania are not specifically targeted at Roma but rather having a larger diversity of target group beneficiaries, and Roma are just a part of them. One can find, for example, indicators that have a secondary level, that includes "...out of which Roma ...".

The current EU funding framework in Romania, particularly in relation to Roma inclusion, reveals a troubling disconnect between stated goals and actual implementation. While the funding is positioned as a tool to bridge social and economic divides, the recent call for proposals aimed at improving Roma educational inclusion, called 'Integrated measures for Roma inclusion - Support measures to improve access and participation in education for children from marginalised communities, such as Roma',¹⁴⁴ is undermined by biased guidelines. These guidelines reflect deep-rooted stereotypes about Roma children, framing them as passive recipients rather than active participants in their own education. As a result, the measures are more likely to reinforce exclusion than foster real integration. Without addressing these prejudices and involving Roma communities in shaping the programmes, the funding risks perpetuating the very inequalities it claims to address.

For example, in a municipality where a CLLD approach was implemented (2020-2024 programming period, multi-fund approach, using ERDF, ESF) there was a social housing component that the City Hall did not manage to implement and the budget was practically lost, not used. This was due to several factors ranging from the legal status of the land, ownership of the existing damaged buildings, illegal households built, lack of identity documents. Facing the complex issues, including the need to evacuate and relocate the existing Roma inhabitants of the area, the City Hall did not follow the steps and just gave up the investment.¹⁴⁵

Under 2021 - 2027 programming, a call for proposals was launched in 2024¹⁴⁶ - 'Support for local public authorities to manage the situation of informal settlements and provide social housing for vulnerable people with a focus on people from informal settlements' with around 160 million EUR budget (118 million EUR ERDF,

¹⁴⁴ 'Integrated measures for Roma inclusion - Support measures to improve access and participation in education for children from marginalised communities, such as Roma', which targets the social inclusion of Roma children at risk of early school leave and of their families. Deadline of application was 1 April 2025, the evaluation process has just started. Available at: <https://oportunitati-ue.gov.ro/peo-a-publicat-ghidul-solicitantului-masuri-integrate-pentru-comunitatea-roma/>

¹⁴⁵ Interview with one member of the management team implementing a CLLD project.

¹⁴⁶ Ministry of Investments and European Projects. (n.d.). *POIDS Applicant's Guide: Specific Conditions - Support for Local Public Authorities to Manage Informal Settlements and Ensure Social Housing for Vulnerable People*. Available at: https://mfe.gov.ro/ghiduri_pids/poids-ghidul-solicitantului-conditii-specifice-sprijin-pentru-autoritatile-publice-locale-in-vederea-gestionarii-situatiei-asezarilor-informale-si-asigurarea-de-locuinte-sociale-pentru-perso/

ESF+, 42 million EUR State Budget). The call was launched in April 2024 and had two extensions for application, with final deadline on 12 February 2025, the evaluation of the application being in progress.

The legal issue related to informal settlements, detailed in Section 3.1, are extremely difficult, while social housing is under certain limitations, where the allocation criteria are designed at local level, and most of the times the possible Roma beneficiaries do not collect enough points in order to be on the top of the list of beneficiaries.

Thus, to improve the implementation of EU funding programmes, a more coherent and integrated approach is essential at all levels, based on cooperation between all parties involved, local authorities, agencies, CSOs, companies, but also along with campaigns to reduce discrimination and promote the active participation of Roma communities in the decision-making process. In terms of integrated approach, Romanian institutional system needs to make steps forward and go beyond the limited institutional mandate and open for integrating their own activities into the larger a perspective, even with the risk of downsizing, but with the benefit of effectiveness and efficiency.

It is rather obvious that the current approach of the EU funding in Romania is not much different from the previous programmes, the bureaucracy of reporting and the formality of monitoring the implementation being a déjà-vu for the majority of implementers.

There are a few key ingredients that could potentially significantly improve EU funds effectiveness. Some of these are: simplified implementation rules, which is something all Managing Authorities are working towards, as well as a more structured monitoring and evaluation (M&E) methodology, that sets periodic targets and creates early warning mechanisms for the project promoters and the financing bodies to look into. The simplification of partnerships between NGOs and public authorities and that of public procurement are also of outmost importance. Other types of support could include setting a minimum/ maximum amount per beneficiary as a starting point for the justification of the intervention (e.g., similar to the cost of social services or equivalent) – it is taken into account as a practice for education and training interventions (lump sum costs or recommended hourly costs).

Another aspect that could potentially lead up to the involvement of more NGOs in the competition for EU funds, and particularly for Roma NGOs, is allowing an organisation to take part as coordinator or partner in up to maximum two projects/ call of proposals/ organisation, instead of the current practice of five projects/ call/ organisation, which has led to the existence of coordinators with dozens of projects and organisations with no projects at all, in spite of their relevance.

4.2. Roma civil society in EU funds implementation

The allocation of EU funds to Roma-related priorities should include CSOs in general and Roma organisations in particular in the overall monitoring and tracking of progress (e.g. through monitoring committees or other formal structures), as foreseen in documents such as the Partnership Agreement and the NRSF.

Unfortunately, the consultation process by the institutions responsible for implementing EU funds is having a rather a mainstream approach, and just some of the Roma CSOs participated, based on their expertise and interests. Barriers such as a lack of targeted outreach, insufficient transparency in the consultation process, and complex bureaucratic procedures made it difficult for many Roma organisations, particularly smaller or community-based ones, to participate meaningfully. For example, during 2023, the regional offices for ESF+ related programmes organised rounds of information sessions across the country for public and private structures interested in EOP - Education and Employment Programme (2021-2027) and SIDP - Social Inclusion and Dignity Programme 2021-2027.

In the period 2022-2024, there were several meetings (three to four) organised by the NCPR in which the Operational Programmes were presented, emphasising those targeting vulnerable groups, including Roma communities (EOP and DISP). At each meeting, the importance of civil society participation in monitoring the implementation of European Funds was emphasised. The need for better collaboration between institutions and civil society was also emphasised, as was the creation of a working group to develop proposals for the guides related to the calls for proposals within the European funds.

Overall, while the initiative to consult Roma NGOs in the development of EU-funded programmes was a step forward in the right direction, its impact has been limited due to the lack of continuity and structured follow-

up. The working group did not function beyond a few initial meetings, and the influence of civil society on most Calls for Proposals has been minimal.

An important exception, however, is the Education and Employment Programme (EEP), Priority 6: – ‘Preventing early school leaving and increasing access and participation of disadvantaged groups in education and training’. Under Specific Objective ESO4.10, Action 6.j.1 specifically targets support measures to improve access to education for children from marginalised communities, such as Roma. Initially, the Applicant’s Guide (annexed to Ministerial Order no. 7079/2024) excluded NGOs as eligible applicants. However, following a formal letter submitted by the Roma NGO network called ‘Roma Forum’, the eligibility criteria were revised, and Roma NGOs were included as eligible applicants. Despite this positive outcome, such examples remain the exception rather than the rule, and there is still a strong need for sustained and meaningful engagement with Roma civil society across all stages of EU fund programming and implementation.

This resulted in a more inclusive and impactful funding call, backed by approximately 25 million EUR (20 million EU contribution, approximately 5 million EUR national contribution). The maximum budget of a project is 623,000 EUR and the minimum is 201,000 EUR. The Roma CSOs complained about the content of the call, in terms of target group and number of compulsory activities (six out of all activities are compulsory), while the duration of the implementation is minimum two school years and maximum 36 months. A simple calculation shows that the average target group is 200 Roma children, which is difficult to reach in a single community or school, resulting in around 3,000 EUR budget to be spent for one participant (all project costs included), which is probably very low compared to other programmes, where, for example, it is possible to reach 10,000 EUR for social services for elderly.

This is creating an important pressure for the implementation team, with low levels of salaries and high levels of indicators to be reached. Another significant issue that can endanger the projects implementation is the eligible target group, ISCED 1-4,¹⁴⁷ meaning children with at least primary education completed (graduated four classes in Romania), while the education problems of the Roma children are more complex, starting with the pre-school/ kindergarten education participation. Many of the project proposals included in their target group ISCED 0 (Early childhood education, ‘less than primary’ for educational attainment), and at this moment it is not clear what activities and costs linked to these target groups will be considered eligible. It proves that the level of preparation and consultation for this almost single Roma-related call was not the right one and the results and the impact may be not significant for Roma.

Another example of EU funding related indirectly to the Roma is the call PIDS/83/PIDS_P3/OP4/ESO4.1/PIDS_A12, ‘Support for the establishment of social enterprises in rural areas (Less developed regions and for More developed region Bucharest – Ilfov), with an allocation of 76.6 million EUR. According to the Guide of applicants, for each project, of the total target group of at least 100 people who want to establish social enterprises in the rural environment, at least 9% must be Roma participants.¹⁴⁸ A list of selected 100 projects is published by the MIEP for the less developed regions¹⁴⁹ and six projects for the better developed region of Bucharest-Ilfov.¹⁵⁰ All projects are in the contracting stage at this moment.

At the same time, in relation to the monitoring committees analysed for operational programmes being implemented, we noted the inclusion of civil society organisations in general and very few Roma non-governmental organisations in particular in the monitoring and general follow-up of their planning, implementation and monitoring (monitoring committees or other formal structures).

¹⁴⁷ Eurostat. (n.d.). *International Standard Classification of Education (ISCED)*. Available at: [https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/index.php?title=International_Standard_Classification_of_Education_\(ISCED\)](https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/index.php?title=International_Standard_Classification_of_Education_(ISCED)).

¹⁴⁸ Ministry of Investments and European Projects. (n.d.). *POIDS Applicant’s Guide: Specific Conditions – Support for the Establishment of Social Enterprises in Rural Areas*. Available at: https://mfe.gov.ro/ghiduri_pids/poids-ghidul-solicitantului-spezifice-sprijin-pentru-infiintarea-de-intreprinderi-sociale-in-mediul-rural/.

¹⁴⁹ Ministry of Investments and European Projects. (2024). *Applicant’s Guide – Specific Conditions for Supporting Local Public Authorities in Managing Informal Settlements and Providing Social Housing*. Available at: <https://mfe.gov.ro/wp-content/uploads/2024/07/bb2f00e42f386b3ad23f2dad328ae8e2.pdf>.

¹⁵⁰ Ministry of Investments and European Projects. (2024). *Technical Specifications Annex – Support Measures for Informal Settlements*. Available at: <https://mfe.gov.ro/wp-content/uploads/2024/07/0635197de834e3ed90b5e8ac65a3106d.pdf>.

According to the lists of members and observers of the relevant operational programmes, there is a balanced distribution of members and observers, in terms of structure by types of participating institutions: in most cases, over 30% of them are civil society organisations and, with a few exceptions, in each monitoring committee there is at least one Roma organisation or one that could be considered pro-Roma.

Roma participation in the monitoring of EU-funded programmes in Romania (2021 - 2027) varies widely across initiatives. Some programmes demonstrate strong engagement, such as the Education and Employment Programme (EEP) and the Social Inclusion and Dignity Programme (SIDP), where the National Agency for Roma as a governmental structure and the Roma Education Fund Foundation play an active role. The North-West and North-East Regional Programmes also show meaningful Roma involvement, with organisations like the Resource Centre for Roma Communities and World Vision Romania, organisations that are addressing Roma communities, contributing consistently.

In contrast, other programmes reflect only minimal or symbolic inclusion. For instance, in the Health Programme, although the Roma Centre for Health Policies – SASTIPEN is formally part of the monitoring committee, it did not participate in the only recorded meeting. Similarly, Roma issues are scarcely mentioned in the South-Muntenia and NPRR structures.

Several programmes, including those for the Centre, West, South-West Oltenia, and Bucharest-Ilfov regions, do not include any Roma organisations. In such cases, inclusive responsibilities are left to local authorities. Thematic programmes like the (Operational Programme Inclusion and Social Dignity) and Programme for Sustainable Development also lack Roma representation, despite general commitments to non-discrimination.

Overall, while some progress is evident, the inconsistency in Roma participation highlights the need for more structured, meaningful inclusion across all monitoring committees.

The Education and Employment Programme 2021-2027 and the Social Inclusion and Dignity Programme 2021-2027 have the same monitoring structure, consisting of 18 public institutions and 11 civil society organisations. Among them, the National Agency for Roma, public organisation, and the Roma Education Fund Foundation, Roma NGO.

The National Recovery and Resilience Programme (PNRR):¹⁵¹ 15 non-governmental organisations/ employers' associations/ trade unions/ chambers of commerce and industry were selected within this programme. Among them, the Roma Education Fund Foundation, the World Vision Romania Foundation, the National Red Cross Society of Romania, the Non-Governmental Professional Association of Social Assistance ASSOC, the Foundation for Civil Society Development, the PartNET Association - Partnership for Sustainable Development, the Romanian Association for Transparency are just a few of the organisations that have implemented/ are implementing projects and programmes dedicated to priorities benefiting Roma people.

As regards the Regional Development Programme, its investments priorities are not very relevant for the expertise and interests of the Roma civil society, therefore CSOs participation is rather about promoting participation of Roma, allocating extra evaluation points for Roma or other vulnerable groups' inclusion, making references to the NRSF in the guidelines for applicants and other programme's documents. So far, the situation is as follows:

- Bucharest-Ilfov Regional Programme 2021-2027 – Out of the 27 component organisations, 13 (almost half) are universities, research institutes and civil society organisations, and although none of them has Roma organisations in its composition.¹⁵²

¹⁵¹ Ministry of Investments and European Projects. (n.d.). *National Recovery and Resilience Plan (PNRR)*. Available at: <https://mfe.gov.ro/pnrr/>.

¹⁵² Bucharest-Ilfov Regional Development Agency. (n.d.). *Regional Programme BI 2021-2027*. Available at: <https://www.adrbi.ro/programe-regionale/por-bi-2021-2027>

- The West Regional Programme 2021-2027 – The Monitoring Committee of the programme has not had any registered meetings, and the component organisations do not include organisations with a focus on the Roma.¹⁵³
- The North-West Regional Programme 2021-2027 – The Monitoring Committee has 3 CSOs, the Resource Centre for Roma Communities Foundation, World Vision Romania Foundation and Civitas Foundation.¹⁵⁴
- The South-West Oltenia Regional Programme 2021-2027 – The list of members of the Monitoring Committee includes nine civil society organisations, research institutes and universities (30% of the total number of component organisations). Of these, none is fully dedicated to actions targeting the Roma population.¹⁵⁵
- The South-Muntenia Regional Programme 2021-2027 – The Monitoring Committee also includes 2 representatives of the National Agency for Roma, and among the civil society organizations there is none with a focus on Roma issues.¹⁵⁶
- South-East Regional Programme 2021-2027 – Among the members of the Monitoring Committee of the South-East Regional Programme 2021-2027 is the Danrom Făurei Association, which is one of the co-authors of this document.¹⁵⁷
- North-East Regional Programme 2021-2027 – Among the members of the Monitoring Committee there is the Association for the Development of Căldărari Roma Communities, while the National Agency for Roma is present as an observer. Also, World Vision Romania and the 'Alături de voi' (Next to You) Foundation, organisations that have had projects aimed at the social inclusion of the Roma.¹⁵⁸
- The Centre Regional Programme 2021-2027 – The Monitoring Committee does not include representatives from the Roma communities.

The Health Programme 2021-2027 – One of the members of the Monitoring Committee for the Operational Programme Health is the Roma Centre for Health Policies – SASTIPEN. They are very active in the committee, challenging the rest of the members on this topic, including in generating proposals for the future revision of the NRSF.

The Operational Programme Smart Research, Digitalisation and Financial Instruments 2021-2027 (POCIDIF 2021-2027) – The Monitoring Committee does not include representatives of Roma organisations/ communities. The Operational Programme for Sustainable Development 2021-2027 (PDD 2021 - 2027) – The Monitoring Committee does not include representatives of Roma organisations/ communities.

¹⁵³ West Regional Development Agency. (n.d.). *Regional Programme West 2021-2027*. Available at: <https://adrvest.ro/programul-regional-vest/>

¹⁵⁴ North-West Regional Development Agency. (n.d.). *Regional Programme North-West 2021-2027*. Available at: <https://regionordvest.ro/programul-regional-nv/>

¹⁵⁵ South-West Oltenia Regional Development Agency. (2024). *Nominal List of the Members of the Monitoring Committee for the Regional Programme South-West Oltenia 2021-2027 (Updated April 11, 2024)*. Available at: <https://pr2021-2027.adroltenia.ro/wp-content/uploads/2024/04/Lista-nominala-a-membrilor-Comitetului-de-Monitorizare-a-PR-SV-Oltentia-2021-2027-actualizata-in-data-de-11.04.2024.pdf>

¹⁵⁶ South Muntenia Regional Development Agency. (n.d.). *Monitoring Committee – Regional Programme South Muntenia 2021-2027*. Available at: <https://2021-2027.adrmuntenia.ro/comitetul-de-monitorizare/static/7>

¹⁵⁷ South-East Regional Development Agency. (2023). *Monitoring Committee Composition – Regional Programme South-East 2021-2027 (March 21, 2023)*. Available at: https://regiosudest.ro/images/docs/CMRSE/Componenta_CM-PRSE_21.03.2023.pdf

¹⁵⁸ North-East Regional Development Agency. (2024). *Structure and Composition of the Monitoring Committee – Regional Programme North-East (December 2024)*. Available at: https://regionordest.ro/wp-content/uploads/2024/12/PENTRU-SITE_Structura-si-componenta-CM-PR-Nord-Est-decembrie-2024.pdf

The level of participation¹⁵⁹ in these monitoring committee meetings is strictly dependent on the operational capacity and, in particular, on the number and skills of human resources allocated to this process, most non-governmental organisations being part of the list of members of the monitoring committees but having no notable written or oral interventions in the MC meetings. This also correlates with findings from previous discussions with the representatives of the National Agency for Roma regarding the level of involvement of Roma and pro-Roma organisations, the NAR Consultative Council being convened/ informed when necessary. NAR remains the most relevant institution regarding NRSF implementation.

Currently, there is limited evidence that the National Agency for Roma (NAR) plays a structured or influential role in the monitoring of EU funds, particularly those financed under the ESF+ and ERDF. Although NAR is formally responsible for coordinating the implementation of the National Roma Strategic Framework (NRSF), its actual involvement in the oversight or monitoring of EU-funded programmes remains minimal and largely informal.

In this context, a potential step forward would be to allocate resources from technical assistance funds to help strengthen NAR's institutional capacity and support a more structured participation of the Roma civil society organisations in the planning and monitoring of EU-funded programmes. This would not only enhance transparency and coordination but would also ensure that Roma inclusion objectives are better reflected in practice.

There is no formal mechanism ensuring the participation of NAR in decision-making or monitoring processes led by Managing Authorities. Coordination between NAR and the Managing Authorities of ESF+/ ERDF remains ad-hoc, often dependent on personal or institutional relationships rather than a clear mandate or operational framework. Strengthening NAR's role in this area - either through formalised cooperation agreements or technical assistance support - would be essential to ensure that EU-funded interventions targeting Roma are aligned with national strategic goals and properly monitored for impact.

The NRCP remains another important actor in the context of the implementation of the NRSF 2022 - 2027, ensuring, through the projects and initiatives that it is promoting, the analysis of needs in terms of substantiating the funding dedicated to inclusion and in particular updating the list of vulnerable Roma communities, but also the impact assessment of the funding. The NRCP remains part of the Ministry of Investments and European Programmes. According to its official description, it is responsible for coordinating national efforts to improve the situation of Roma citizens, monitoring and evaluating the implementation of the National Roma Strategic Framework (NRSF), reporting progress to the European Commission, and proposing changes or updates to the Strategy.

While placing the National Roma Contact Point (NRCP) within MIPE should, in theory, improve alignment between EU funds and NRSF priorities; however, this potential remains largely untapped. NRCP has limited influence over funding decisions and little involvement in ESF+/ ERDF programming. The lack of formal coordination with Managing Authorities weakens strategic coherence. Despite its mandate, NRCP remains under-resourced and politically marginal. Structural changes are needed to move beyond symbolic presence toward real impact – it is still a contact point and nothing else.

¹⁵⁹ Interview with Radu Lăcătuș, expert on European funding programmes, member in the Regional Programme 2021-2027 Monitoring Committee, Cluj-Napoca, 12 December 2024.

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Following the EURSF, the adoption of the NRSF in April 2022 marked a step forward for the Romanian Government in addressing the most pressing issues related to Roma. Still, the Roma CSOs expressed a certain disappointment that the Government had not adopted a new proposed approach of the NRSF, based on the creation of national sectoral programmes as a mechanism for facilitating financing solutions for the Roma.

The creation of ICIMES in May 2022 marked the practical implementation of the NRSF, although only two meetings were organised in 2022, primarily for organisational purposes. At the time the NRSF was adopted, the state budget for 2022 was already in place; therefore, there was no direct funding of the NRSF measures, but still the line ministries were managing certain activities related to Roma issues – carried out activities that they would have done anyway and report them as part of the implementation of the NRSF.

For 2022, perhaps the most significant accomplishment was the creation of the Thematic Working Groups, referred to by one of the NAR leaders as the ‘engine of the NRSF’. However, there are significant differences between the groups and the responsible ministries regarding the progress made in implementing the NRSF, with the TWG on combating discrimination being the most engaged and active. This status remained unchanged also during the 2023–2024 period. The Ministerial Commission for Roma are established at the level of each ministry to monitor the implementation of sectoral measures under institutional responsibility. At the county level, monitoring is carried out through County Mixed Working Groups.

Since its adoption in 2022, there have been no changes in the NRSF and plan of action. Proposals from the line ministries are expected at the end of 2024, to be discussed and implemented in 2025. There is currently no information available on the duration of this modification to the NRSF process.

Data collection remains problematic, even though NAR has developed a standardised reporting mechanism (reporting template) that includes targets, budgets, specific indicators and the status of implementing measures. Collecting ethnic data remains a challenge due to the lack of a clear legal framework and the reluctance of Roma communities to assume their ethnic identity, which limits monitoring efforts. On the other hand, the line ministries are also reporting data on beneficiaries without mentioning their ethnicity, and these issues need to be addressed through a better-defined ethnic data collection mechanism.

The NRSF continues to reflect EU priorities in several key areas, including education, employment, health, housing, and combating discrimination. The integration of the gender and youth dimensions into the strategy’s measures is a clear example of alignment, with Romania creating thematic working groups to promote the rights of Roma women and girls, in line with European recommendations. NAR continues to manage its relationship with civil society organisations and other stakeholders, including those represented on the NAR Advisory Council. There is also a permanent presence of Roma CSOs as observers in ICIMES meetings.

The NRSF structure and approach is the same as for the previous versions of the strategy, having an identical implementation structure, which did not prove to be successful. Probably the new approach proposed by the Roma civil society, based on sectoral national programmes, with clear targets, responsibilities, budget allocations, etc., was a better option for the NRSF, but bureaucratic and political reasons prevented this.

The role of the NAR needs to be redesigned – it is responsible for development, implementation, and monitoring of the NRSF at the same time, while the role of the line ministries should be enhanced, through such sectoral programmes. The NRCP may be also integrated in the NAR structure.

Other sources available for funding directly or indirectly the NRSF measures should be taken into consideration, especially in terms of supporting the initiatives and development of the Roma CSOs, more specifically the Swiss Development programmes,¹⁶⁰ EEA and Norway Grants,¹⁶¹ programmes that have a history of funding Roma participation.

¹⁶⁰ Civil Society Development Foundation [Fundația pentru Dezvoltarea Societății Civile]. (n.d.). *Switzerland Supports Civil Society in Romania – The Civic Engagement Programme Launches Its First Call for Proposals*. Available at: <https://www.fdsc.ro/elvetia-sprrijina-societatea-civila-din-romania-programul-de-implicare-civica-lanseaza-primul-apel-de-finantare/> and <https://elvetiaromania.ro/apel/> s and <https://elvetiaromania.ro/apel/>

¹⁶¹ EEA and Norway Grants. Available at: <https://eeagrants.org/>

Recommendations to national authorities

1. Urgently promote a revision of the NRSF:
 - a. Review of the set of the NRSF indicators to be more realistic and capable of measuring progress;
 - b. Adequate representation of the issues related to Roma women and children in the NRSF;
 - c. Include Roma participation and empowerment as a horizontal objective and ensure participation of the Roma civil society representatives in all structures related to NRSF, especially as members of the TWGs;
 - d. Make available resources for development of the capacity of Roma and pro-Roma organisations to monitor and evaluate the NRSF implementation and results;
 - e. Develop a set of measures for preventing and fighting antigypsyism and discrimination, and segregation in education and housing;
 - f. Review the NRSF for a better synergy with the main sectoral strategies with relevance for the Roma communities.
2. The Government should ensure that the necessary funding for the implementation of the NRSF is allocated in the state budget. Each line ministry should properly allocate and manage its NRSF budget and report yearly on spending.
3. The Government should allocate financial resources to establish relevant structures for representing Roma culture and history, such as the Roma Museum and Roma Theatre, to raise the Roma's status and acknowledge their contributions to the development of Romanian society.

Recommendations to European institutions

4. The European Commission should prioritise the fight against racial discrimination and the exclusion of Roma communities in Europe as a 'crystal-clear priority', urging national governments to align their policies accordingly. Additionally, the European Commission must allocate substantial financial resources to combat racial discrimination against Roma individuals and establish a European mechanism to ensure the comprehensive implementation of NRSFs.
5. Furthermore, the European Commission must assess the relevance and effectiveness of the existing European Roma Platform (ERP). To this end, an independent assessment of the ERP should be conducted, and the revision process should incorporate lessons learned from the last decade, ensuring that the Roma Platform evolves into a more inclusive rather than an 'exclusive/ selective forum', with the participation of diverse stakeholders, including CSOs.
6. The European Commission should make resources available for further development of the capacity of Roma and pro-Roma organisations to monitor and evaluate the NRSF implementation and results.
7. The European Commission should fund initiatives that promote Roma heritage, identity, diversity and artistic expression of the Roma. Support should include cross-border projects, capacity-building, and integrating Roma culture into education curricula.
8. The European Commission should use the cohesion funds to support housing initiatives for Roma inclusion, ensuring access to safe and affordable homes, together with an integrated approach that will address also the segregation and poor living conditions.
9. The EC funding initiative for the Roma Platform in Romania should be directed to the National Agency for Roma, rather than to the NRCP, who is managing a more genuine national Roma platform in the sense it was conceived at the EU level.

Recommendations to the civil society

10. Roma civil society organisations should further develop a collaborative mechanism with NCCD, NAR and other public bodies in order to prevent discrimination, provide assistance to victims of discrimination and strategic litigation.
11. Roma civil society organisations should continue to promote Roma culture through collaboration with cultural institutions, organising community events, advocating for Roma history in education, monitor cultural initiatives to ensure inclusivity and reflect Roma voices. By fostering cultural pride and Roma self-esteem, civil society should contribute to combating stereotypes and strengthens social cohesion.
12. Roma civil society organisations should continue to build their own capacity, improve transparency, and report on the impact of their initiatives. By empowering civil society as a key partner, the NRSF can achieve greater inclusivity, effectiveness, and sustainability in promoting Roma inclusion.

Recommendations to other stakeholders

13. Funding mechanisms (Swiss Development programmes, EEA and Norway Grants, etc.) should promote an open dialogue with the Roma CSOs, the government and the EU institutions in order to ensure complementarity of funding for achieving the NRSF's objectives.

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Type of respondent	Affiliation	Names of person	Date of interview	Type
Public authority in charge of the NRSF drafting	National Agency for Roma	Iulian Paraschiv – NAR President	15 October 2024	Face-to-face
	National Agency for Roma	Iulian Stoian – Head of Public Policy	12 November 2024	Face-to-face
	Government	Dragoş Hotea – State Secretary, co-president of the Interministerial Committee for the Implementation, Monitoring and Evaluation of the Roma Inclusion Strategy	15 November 2024	Written answers
	Ministry of Health	Lidia Manuela Onofrei – National Coordinator of Community HealthCare Activity	19 November 2024	On-line interview
	INSP – National Institute for Public Health	Eugenia Bratu – Health Policy expert	18 November 2024	On-line interview
	Ministry of Development, Public Works and Administration	Vlad Stefan Niculae – State Secretary	6 November 2024	Written answers
	National Roma Culture Centre	Mihai Neaşcu – Director	18 November 2024	Face-to-face
	Ministry of Labour and Social Solidarity			
National equality body	National Council for Combating Discrimination	Catalina Olteanu - member	8 October 2024	Face-to-face
Regional and local authorities in key regions	Prefecture Iasi	Elena Motaş – County Office Roma Expert	13 October 2024	On-line interview
	County Council Cluj	Marius Lakatoş - Roma Expert	11 October 2024	On-line interview
	Fărcaş City Hall, Gorj County	Marinel Dinu - Roma Expert	11 October 2024	On-line interview
	Băicoi City Hall, Prahova County	Mariana Ioniţă - Roma Expert	15 October 2024	On-line interview
Public authorities in charge of statistics	National Institute of Statistics			
Roma civil society and activists	Nevo Parudimos Association	Daniel Grebeldinger, President	11 November 2024	On-line interview
	Policy Centre for Roma and Minorities	Florin Botonogu – Executive Director	11 November 2024	On-line interview
	Împreună Agency for Community Development	Gelu Duminică – Executive Director	28 October 2024	Face-to-face
	ACEDO	Costel Bercuş – President	14 October 2024	

	Amare Romenza	Delia Grigore – President	23 October 2024	On-line interview
Academics, experts, analysts, international organisations, donors, diplomats	Research Institute for Quality of Life	Filip Alexandrescu – Researcher	21 November 2024	On-line interview
	Research Institute for Quality of Life	Marian-Ionut Anghel – Researcher	21 November 2024	On-line interview
	Resource Centre for Roma Communities	Radu Lăcătuș, expert on EU funding programmes, member in the Regional Programme 2021-2027 Monitoring Committee	12 December 2024	Face-to-face

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ANNEXE: LIST OF PROBLEMS AND CONDITIONS

Fighting antigypsyism and discrimination

Problems and conditions	Significance:	Identified by strategy:	Measures to address:	Targets defined:	Details of NRSF implementation relevant to the problem:
Antigypsyism not recognised as a specific problem in national policy frameworks	significant problems	understood with limitations	adequate but with room for improvement	some targets but not relevant	<p>Although there is a general antidiscrimination framework in national policies, antigypsyism is not recognised as a distinct and specific issue in government strategies. Although the NRSF includes measures to combat discrimination, these do not explicitly address the phenomenon of antigypsyism, which limits the effectiveness of existing interventions. In the last two years, no relevant changes have been introduced to recognise and address antigypsyism as a significant issue, and current measures remain too general to combat this deep-rooted phenomenon.</p> <p>The impact of these limitations is felt at the level of Roma communities, which continue to be affected by prejudice, stereotypes and discriminatory treatment. The effectiveness of interventions is reduced because existing measures are not sufficiently targeted and do not provide adequate solutions. Furthermore, the lack of dedicated policies and concrete actions hinders progress in addressing antigypsyism.</p> <p>The coverage of existing measures is also insufficient. The initiatives adopted are often limited to certain geographical areas or apply restrictive conditions that exclude a significant part of the Roma population. For example, pilot projects or programmes implemented only in certain localities fail to address the needs of those in rural or marginalised areas, where antigypsyism is often more pronounced. This unequal coverage perpetuates vulnerabilities and creates gaps in access to protection and opportunities.</p> <p>In addition, the lack of specific data on antigypsyism represents a significant barrier to monitoring and evaluating public policies. Without systematic data collection and clear indicators, it is difficult to measure the extent of the phenomenon and the effectiveness of interventions adopted. This absence of evidence limits the government's ability to develop policies based on the real needs of the Roma community and to implement effective solutions.</p> <p>Thus, antigypsyism remains a significant problem, insufficiently addressed by national policies, with a negative impact on Roma communities, who continue to face systemic discrimination and lack of real opportunities.</p>
Prejudice against Roma	significant problems	identified and analysed sufficiently	adequate but with room for improvement	adequate but with room for improvement	<p>In 2022, the Government of Romania approved the NRSF aiming at improving the living conditions of Roma people and combat discrimination. However, the effective implementation of these measures faces difficulties, and the impact on Roma communities remains limited.</p> <p>International reports highlight that Roma in Romania continue to face discrimination in areas such as education, employment, and access to healthcare services.</p> <p>These prejudices not only limit individual opportunities, but also contribute to the perpetuation of negative stereotypes at a societal level.</p> <p>To effectively address these issues, it is essential that authorities implement coherent public policies and ensure constant monitoring of progress. Education also plays a crucial role in combating prejudice by promoting diversity and tolerance among the general population.</p> <p>In conclusion, although there is official recognition of the prejudice against Roma and initiatives aimed at combating it, increased efforts are needed to ensure real and sustainable change in Romanian society.</p>

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Hate crimes against Roma	significant problems	understood with limitations	present but insufficient	some targets but not relevant	<p>Hate crimes against Roma are a significant problem in Romania, but their understanding and response are limited. Although national legislation prohibits hate crimes, enforcement of these provisions is often insufficient. The lack of a systematic and effective approach reduces the impact of existing measures, and the objectives set to combat this phenomenon are often insufficient or irrelevant to the needs of the Roma community.</p> <p>The impact of these crimes is profound, perpetuating stigma, inequality and feelings of exclusion for Roma. Although there are institutional initiatives to prevent and combat these acts, their effectiveness is limited due to barriers such as lack of adequate training of authorities, lack of resources, and dysfunctional reporting and sanctioning mechanisms.</p> <p>Another problematic aspect is the lack of relevant and up-to-date statistical data, which is necessary for effective monitoring and analysis of hate crimes. This deficit makes it difficult to truly quantify the phenomenon and develop evidence-based policies. Furthermore, cases of hate speech and hate crimes are often underreported due to distrust in state institutions and bureaucratic difficulties.</p> <p>In conclusion, although legislation and strategies exist to combat hate crimes against Roma, they are insufficiently implemented and require considerable improvement. The development of a functional data collection mechanism, the training of responsible authorities and the implementation of coherent and effective public policies are essential to combat this phenomenon.</p>
Hate speech towards and against Roma (online and offline)	significant problems	understood with limitations	present but insufficient	some targets but not relevant	<p>Hate speech against Roma, both online and offline, is a significant problem in Romania. Although there are initiatives and projects aimed at combating this phenomenon, the approaches remain limited and the measures adopted are not sufficiently effective. In many cases, the proposed objectives fail to adequately respond to real needs and do not have the necessary impact in reducing hate speech.</p> <p>Hate speech ranges from simple 'jokes' to extremely toxic discourses that perpetuate stereotypes and fuel discrimination against Roma communities. These discourses contribute to the deepening of stigmatisation and social exclusion of Roma, affecting social cohesion. The problem is amplified by the lack of systematic prevention and sanctioning measures.</p> <p>At the same time, there is a deficit in education for tolerance and the promotion of diversity. Awareness campaigns are insufficient, and the punitive measures applied do not really discourage discriminatory behaviours. In this context, it is essential to develop integrated strategies that include educational programmes to combat prejudice, careful monitoring of hate speech, and the implementation of effective sanctions.</p> <p>Combating hate speech requires a more robust approach, with a focus on prevention, education, and early intervention. At the same time, promoting positive and inclusive narratives can help change perceptions and reduce this harmful phenomenon.</p>
Weak effectiveness of protection from discrimination ¹¹⁸	significant problems	mentioned but not analysed sufficiently	present but insufficient	some targets but not relevant	<p>The weak effectiveness of protection against discrimination is a significant problem in Romania, with direct implications for access to justice for vulnerable groups, including the Roma community. Although an antidiscrimination legal framework exists, it is only partially implemented, and the measures adopted fail to provide effective and comprehensive protection.</p> <p>The problem is mentioned in various strategies and reports, but detailed analysis of the causes and effects of this low effectiveness is lacking. In particular, the lack of access to information, resources and legal assistance prevents many victims of discrimination from filing complaints. Administrative and judicial procedures can also be complex and daunting, especially for people from disadvantaged backgrounds.</p> <p>Although the NCCD is the institution responsible for protecting citizens against discrimination, the effectiveness of its interventions is limited by insufficient resources and sanctions that are not always dissuasive. NCCD decisions are often poorly implemented and follow-up monitoring of their</p>

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					<p>application is limited.</p> <p>As for the objectives set to improve protection against discrimination, they are present in national strategies, but they are not always relevant or aligned with the real needs of the people affected. The lack of proactive policies, such as large-scale awareness campaigns and equality education programmes, contributes to the perpetuation of the phenomenon of discrimination.</p> <p>In conclusion, although a legal and institutional framework for protection against discrimination exists, its effectiveness is limited. A deeper analysis of systemic barriers and the implementation of concrete measures, including simplified access to justice, effective sanctions and antidiscrimination education for the wider society, are needed.</p>
Segregation in education, housing, or provision of public services	significant problems	mentioned but not analysed sufficiently	present but insufficient	some targets but not relevant	<p>Segregation in education, housing, and public service provision is a significant problem in Romania, directly affecting vulnerable communities, especially Roma. Although this issue is mentioned in strategic documents and the public discourse, it does not benefit from a sufficient and detailed analysis leading to effective and sustainable measures.</p> <p>In education, segregation is a persistent reality. Roma students are frequently concentrated in separate classes or schools, often located in disadvantaged areas, which limits their access to quality education and perpetuates social inequalities. Although the legislation explicitly prohibits school segregation, the implementation and monitoring of these provisions are insufficient. Government interventions and existing programmes, such as 'School after School' or 'Second Chance', fail to address the problem in depth and are not implemented uniformly at the national level.</p> <p>In terms of housing, spatial segregation is visible in many Roma communities, which are often marginalised in isolated areas, without adequate access to utilities and infrastructure. Housing policies do not address the root causes of segregation, and the measures adopted are limited or conditional (for example, access to social housing depends on documents that many families in Roma communities do not possess).</p> <p>In the provision of public services, segregation is manifested through unequal access to health, drinking water, sanitation and social assistance. Roma communities are often excluded from local development programmes, either due to a lack of identity documents or due to systemic discrimination. Although some government programmes aim at social inclusion, they are underfunded and do not have the necessary impact.</p> <p>In conclusion, segregation in education, housing and public service provision is mentioned as a problem in national strategies, but is not sufficiently analysed to identify effective solutions. Existing measures are present but insufficient, and the objectives set are often irrelevant to the real needs of the affected communities. An integrated and coherent approach to combat segregation through educational policies, inclusive housing programmes and equitable access to public services is essential.</p>
Forced evictions and demolitions leading to homelessness, inadequate housing, and social exclusion	significant problems	mentioned but not analysed sufficiently	present but insufficient	some targets but not relevant	<p>Forced evictions and demolitions, leading to homelessness, inadequate housing and social exclusion, are a significant problem in Romania, particularly affecting Roma communities. Although this issue is mentioned in national strategies and official documents, detailed analysis and implementation of concrete solutions remain insufficient.</p> <p>Forced evictions frequently occur in the context of urban regeneration projects or due to the lack of legal documents proving the right to property over the house. Thus, many Roma families are relocated to isolated areas, without adequate access to basic services such as drinking water, electricity or public transport. These practices not only worsen the housing situation of the affected communities but also contribute to social exclusion, reinforcing spatial segregation and structural inequalities.</p> <p>Current housing policies are inadequate to prevent forced evictions and provide durable solutions. In many cases, local authorities do not comply with international standards on the right to housing, and support for those affected is limited or non-existent. The measures adopted are often reactive and do</p>

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					<p>not address the root causes of the problem, such as extreme poverty, systemic discrimination, and lack of access to property documents.</p> <p>The objectives set for improving housing conditions are present in national strategies, but they are not relevant to the realities of the affected communities. Existing programmes, such as the allocation of social housing, are insufficient and apply restrictive criteria that exclude the most vulnerable. For example, families living in informal housing are not eligible for housing support programmes.</p> <p>In conclusion, forced evictions and demolitions continue to contribute to social exclusion and the deterioration of living conditions of vulnerable communities, especially Roma. More effective policies and an integrated approach are needed to prevent arbitrary evictions, ensure adequate housing solutions and promote social inclusion through equitable access to basic services.</p>
Misconduct and discriminatory behaviour by police (under-policing/under-policing)	significant problems	mentioned but not analysed sufficiently	present but insufficient	some targets but not relevant	<p>Police misconduct and discriminatory behaviour are significant problems in Romania, especially in the treatment of Roma communities. Although this issue is mentioned in official reports and public discussions, it is not thoroughly analysed, and the measures adopted to date are insufficient to remedy the situation.</p> <p>Numerous cases documented by human rights organisations show discriminatory practices, such as ethnic profiling, differential treatment in similar situations, and excessive use of force in interventions against Roma communities. These actions reinforce the Roma community's distrust of state institutions and perpetuate social exclusion. In addition, the lack of effective mechanisms for reporting and investigating abuses committed by police officers contributes to the maintenance of this behaviour without adequate sanctions.</p> <p>Although there are objectives to improve relations between the police and vulnerable communities, they are only partially implemented and, in many cases, are not relevant to real needs. Training programmes for police officers to prevent discriminatory behaviour are limited, and measures to make law enforcement institutions accountable and transparent remain insufficient. Monitoring of police behaviour is also often formal, without addressing the systemic causes of discriminatory treatment.</p> <p>In conclusion, police misconduct and discriminatory behaviour towards Roma communities are significant problems that require a firmer and more transparent approach. It is essential to develop effective mechanisms for monitoring, sanctioning and preventing abuses, as well as continuous training programmes that promote respect for diversity and human rights within law enforcement institutions.</p>
Barriers to <i>de facto</i> exercise of EU right to free movement	significant problems	irrelevant	absent	absent	<p>Barriers to the <i>de facto</i> exercise of the EU right to free movement represent a significant problem for Roma communities in Romania, even if, in the context of national policies, this issue is considered 'irrelevant' and is not properly analysed or addressed.</p> <p>Although the European Union law guarantees the right to free movement, many Roma citizens face obstacles that limit the effective exercise of this right. The most common barriers include the lack of valid identity documents, poor economic situation, discrimination at border crossings or in countries of destination, and lack of access to information about their rights as EU citizens. These problems are amplified by negative stereotypes associated with Roma, which generate suspicion and discriminatory treatment.</p> <p>Currently, national policies do not address these barriers, and programmes dedicated to Roma communities do not include specific measures to facilitate the exercise of the right to free movement. At the same time, there are no initiatives to collect data or monitor situations in which Roma citizens encounter difficulties in exercising this fundamental right.</p> <p>In conclusion, although barriers to free movement are a real problem for vulnerable communities, they are wrongly considered irrelevant in national policies. The lack of concrete interventions and a</p>

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					monitoring framework means that this issue remains absent from the public agenda, despite the negative impact on Roma citizens trying to exercise their rights in the EU.
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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	significant problems	mentioned but not analysed sufficiently	present but insufficient	some targets but not relevant	<p>The lack of available and accessible preschool education and early childhood education and care (ECEC) programmes for Roma is a significant problem in Romania. Although this issue is mentioned in various national strategies and policies, its analysis is superficial, and the measures adopted are insufficient to address the root cause of the problem.</p> <p>Preschool and ECEC services play a crucial role in children's early development and in reducing long-term educational inequalities. However, many Roma children do not have access to these services due to economic, geographical and social barriers. In many marginalised communities, kindergartens are non-existent or located at great distances, which discourages parents from enrolling their children. In addition, the costs associated with participation, such as transportation, supplies or uniforms, represent major financial obstacles for vulnerable families.</p> <p>Currently, existing measures to support Roma access to preschool education are limited and inconsistent. Although there are programmes such as 'Friends' Kindergarten' or social voucher support for kindergarten attendance, these are not implemented uniformly at national level and are not sufficiently promoted in Roma communities. There are also no consistent initiatives to actively involve Roma parents and overcome cultural barriers or prejudices related to education.</p> <p>The objectives included in the national strategies aim to expand access to early childhood education, but many of them are not relevant to the real needs of Roma communities. The lack of educational infrastructure, insufficiently trained staff to work with children from disadvantaged backgrounds, and the lack of adequate funding considerably reduce the impact of these measures.</p> <p>In conclusion, the lack of accessible pre-school education and ECEC services for Roma is a problem that requires priority attention. An integrated approach is needed that includes the development of educational infrastructure in disadvantaged communities, direct financial support for families, training of academic staff and information campaigns to encourage early participation in education.</p>
Lower quality of pre-school education and ECEC services for Roma	significant problems	irrelevant	absent	absent	<p>The lower quality of preschool education and early childhood education and care (ECEC) services for Roma is a significant problem in Romania, even if national policies do not treat it as a priority and consider it 'irrelevant'. The lack of concrete actions and effective measures means that this problem is ignored, and its impact on the early development of Roma children is profound and lasting.</p> <p>In many Roma communities, existing preschool services are characterised by inadequate infrastructure, insufficiently trained teaching staff and limited educational resources. Kindergartens located in rural or marginalised areas lack modern facilities, and the teaching materials necessary for carrying out quality educational activities are almost non-existent. In addition, teachers working with Roma children do not receive specific training to address the needs of these children and to create an inclusive and stimulating educational environment.</p> <p>The low quality of preschool education seriously affects the chances of Roma children to have a successful educational path. The lack of adapted educational activities and inclusive methods makes these children disadvantaged in terms of cognitive and social skills when they enter primary education. This initial gap increases the risk of later school dropout and perpetuates the vicious circle of educational and social exclusion.</p> <p>In current national policies, the issue of the quality of preschool education for Roma children is absent, both in analysis and in implementation. There are no specific measures to improve infrastructure, train</p>

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					<p>teachers or monitor educational standards in kindergartens attended by Roma children. Also, the lack of precise data on the quality of ECEC services makes it challenging to assess this problem and establish appropriate solutions.</p> <p>In conclusion, although the problem is significant, the low quality of pre-school education for Roma is ignored in national policies, being considered irrelevant. There is an urgent need to develop training programmes for educational staff, invest in educational infrastructure and monitor the quality of ECEC services to ensure a fair start in education for all children, including Roma children.</p>
High drop-out rate before completion of primary education	significant problems	irrelevant	present but insufficient	some targets but not relevant	<p>The high rate of early school leaving is a significant problem in Romania, disproportionately affecting children from Roma communities. Although this phenomenon is recognised as a major obstacle to access to education, national policies treat the situation as 'irrelevant', and the measures adopted are insufficient and inadequate to prevent early school leaving.</p> <p>The leading causes of school dropout include extreme poverty, lack of resources to purchase educational materials, long distances to schools, and discrimination faced by Roma children in the academic environment. Many Roma families also do not prioritise formal education due to the need for young members to contribute to the family income or fulfil domestic responsibilities.</p> <p>Currently, existing measures to combat school dropout are present but insufficient. Programmes such as 'School after School' or 'Second Chance' are helpful, but are not widely implemented in vulnerable communities. The lack of adequate infrastructure, underfunding of education in rural areas and the low number of teachers trained to work in multicultural environments exacerbate the problem.</p> <p>Although there are targets in national strategies to reduce early school leaving, they are not always relevant to the real needs of Roma communities. Structural and cultural barriers that prevent Roma children from completing primary education are not taken into account. Furthermore, there is no effective mechanism to monitor progress in reducing early school leaving, and interventions are often fragmented and lack coherence.</p> <p>In conclusion, the high rate of early school leaving is an urgent problem affecting the educational inclusion of Roma children. An integrated approach is needed that includes financial support for vulnerable families, investments in educational infrastructure, teacher training programmes, and awareness campaigns to promote the importance of early and continuing education.</p>
Early leaving from secondary education	significant problems	mentioned but not analysed sufficiently	present but insufficient	some targets but not relevant	<p>Early school leaving is a significant problem in Romania, disproportionately affecting Roma youth and other vulnerable groups. Although this issue is mentioned in national strategies and documents, detailed analysis is lacking, and the measures implemented so far are insufficient to combat the phenomenon effectively.</p> <p>The leading causes of early secondary school leaving include extreme poverty, lack of adequate educational support, family responsibilities, and discrimination from teachers or peers. In many cases, Roma youth are discouraged from continuing their studies due to negative perceptions of education, a lack of positive role models in their communities and the need to contribute to household income.</p> <p>Although there are programmes such as 'Second Chance' and material support measures for vulnerable families (e.g. social scholarships or transport subsidies), their implementation is limited and does not cover the needs of all beneficiaries. In rural and marginalised areas, educational infrastructure is often deficient, and access to high schools or vocational schools is difficult due to long distances and a lack of adequate transport.</p> <p>The objectives included in educational strategies to reduce dropout in secondary education are present, but are not always relevant to the specific context of Roma youth. The strategies do not sufficiently address the cultural and economic factors that underlie the decision to leave school. In addition, the lack of adapted programmes and an effective monitoring mechanism means that progress in combating this phenomenon is limited.</p>

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					In conclusion, early leaving secondary education is a problem that is mentioned but insufficiently analysed and addressed in national policies. A more integrated approach is needed that includes concrete material support, flexible educational programmes adapted to the needs of young Roma, training of teachers in inclusive methods, and awareness campaigns to promote the value of education at the community level.
Secondary education/vocational training disconnected from labour market needs	significant problems	irrelevant	present but insufficient	some targets but not relevant	<p>Secondary education and vocational training disconnected from labour market needs is a significant problem in Romania, but is treated as 'irrelevant' in national policies, despite the negative impact on the integration of young Roma and other vulnerable groups into the labour market. This disconnect deepens economic exclusion and perpetuates the cycle of poverty in marginalised communities. In many cases, secondary education and vocational training programmes are not adapted to the current demands of the labour market, and the skills acquired by students do not offer them real employment opportunities. School curricula are often rigid and lacking in practice, not aligned with technological and economic developments. This situation is more accentuated in disadvantaged communities, where access to modern educational resources and quality vocational training is limited. Furthermore, vocational training is perceived negatively by young people and their families, being associated with low-paid jobs or limited opportunities for professional development. This perception is amplified by the lack of vocational counselling in schools, which could guide young people towards areas with high demand on the labour market.</p> <p>Although national strategies include objectives regarding vocational training and reducing youth unemployment, these objectives are not always relevant to the needs of the local labour market and the realities of Roma communities. Training programmes are often implemented superficially, without consulting the private sector and without adapting to regional specificities. At the same time, the lack of partnerships between schools, authorities, and employers reduces the effectiveness of interventions. In conclusion, the disconnection of secondary education and vocational training from the demands of the labour market affects the chances of young Roma to obtain stable and well-paid jobs. A structured reform is needed, which includes modernising the curriculum, promoting vocational training in demand fields, collaborating with local employers, and providing vocational counselling adapted to the needs of young people.</p>
Misplacement of Roma pupils into special education	significant problems	irrelevant	absent	absent	<p>Secondary education and vocational training disconnected from labour market needs is a significant problem in Romania, but is treated as 'irrelevant' in national policies, despite the negative impact on the integration of young Roma and other vulnerable groups into the labour market. This disconnect deepens economic exclusion and perpetuates the cycle of poverty in marginalised communities. In many cases, secondary education and vocational training programmes are not adapted to the current demands of the labour market, and the skills acquired by students do not offer them real employment opportunities. School curricula are often rigid and lacking in practice, not aligned with technological and economic developments. This situation is more accentuated in disadvantaged communities, where access to modern educational resources and quality vocational training is limited. Furthermore, vocational training is perceived negatively by young people and their families, being associated with low-paid jobs or limited opportunities for professional development. This perception is amplified by the lack of vocational counselling in schools, which could guide young people towards areas with high demand on the labour market.</p> <p>Although national strategies include objectives regarding vocational training and reducing youth unemployment, these objectives are not always relevant to the needs of the local labour market and the realities of Roma communities. Training programmes are often implemented superficially, without consulting the private sector and without adapting to regional specificities. At the same time, the lack of partnerships between schools, authorities and employers reduces the effectiveness of interventions.</p>

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					In conclusion, the disconnection of secondary education and vocational training from the demands of the labour market affects the chances of young Roma to obtain stable and well-paid jobs. A structured reform is needed, which includes modernising the curriculum, promoting vocational training in demand fields, collaborating with local employers, and providing vocational counselling adapted to the needs of young people.
Education segregation of Roma pupils	significant problems	understood with limitations	present but insufficient	some targets but not relevant	<p>The segregation of Roma students in education is a significant problem in Romania, profoundly affecting equal access to education and perpetuating the social exclusion of the Roma community. Although the phenomenon is recognised in certain national documents and strategies, its understanding is limited, and the measures implemented are insufficient to combat this type of systemic discrimination.</p> <p>Segregation manifests itself in many forms, such as:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Separate classes or schools unofficially designated for Roma children, often in marginalised areas, without adequate educational resources. • Segregation within schools, where Roma students are concentrated in 'special' classes under the pretext of learning difficulties, without objective assessments. • Unequal access to resources, with schools attended by Roma children often being poorly equipped and with unqualified or unmotivated teachers. <p>Although national legislation explicitly prohibits segregation in education, its implementation is flawed. Local and central authorities do not monitor the phenomenon sufficiently, and cases of segregation are treated superficially. Some initiatives, such as school inclusion programmes or parent counselling, exist, but are not widely applied and do not address the structural causes of segregation.</p> <p>As for the objectives included in the educational strategies, they are present, but not always relevant. There are not enough measures to directly combat segregation, and many programmes focus on formal integration, without ensuring a quality and inclusive education for Roma children. The lack of training of teachers for working in multicultural environments and the lack of sanctions for documented cases of segregation undermine progress in this direction.</p> <p>In conclusion, the educational segregation of Roma students is a serious problem, only partially understood and addressed by insufficient measures. Rigorous monitoring of schools and classrooms, sanctioning of discriminatory practices, investments in educational infrastructure and teacher training are needed to create inclusive educational environments that offer equal opportunities to all students, regardless of ethnicity.</p>
Increased selectivity of the educational system resulting in concentration of Roma or other disadvantaged pupils in educational facilities of lower quality	significant problems	identified and analysed sufficiently	present but insufficient	some targets but not relevant	<p>The increasing selectivity of the education system, which leads to the concentration of Roma or other disadvantaged students in lower-quality educational institutions, is a significant problem in Romania. Although the problem is identified and analysed in certain studies and educational strategies, the measures implemented are insufficient to reduce the existing gaps, and the objectives set are not always relevant to the reality of vulnerable communities.</p> <p>The Romanian education system tends to be selective, placing excessive emphasis on academic performance at the expense of equitable and inclusive access to education. This phenomenon leads to the segregation of students from disadvantaged backgrounds, including Roma students, in schools with limited resources, poor infrastructure and poorly trained teachers. These schools, often located in rural or marginalised areas, fail to provide quality education, which perpetuates inequalities and social exclusion.</p> <p>Another factor contributing to this situation is the admission and testing procedure for access to high schools or vocational schools. Students from disadvantaged backgrounds, who do not benefit from adequate educational support and necessary resources, have reduced the chances of accessing high-performing educational institutions. Thus, they are directed to 'second-hand' schools, which do not offer</p>

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					<p>real opportunities for professional development or further studies.</p> <p>Although there are objectives in education strategies that aim for equity and inclusion in education, they are partially implemented and do not address the structural causes of selectivity. Support programmes, such as social scholarships or remedial programmes, are not sufficiently well-funded or adapted to ensure equitable access to quality schools. In addition, the lack of systematic measures to monitor and correct educational disparities between urban and rural schools exacerbates the problem. In conclusion, the selectivity of the education system accentuates the exclusion of Roma students and those from disadvantaged backgrounds, by concentrating them in inferior educational units. A reform is needed that promotes equity in education by allocating adequate resources to schools from vulnerable communities, improving the quality of the educational act and implementing measures to ensure an equitable distribution of educational opportunities.</p>
Limited access to second-chance education, adult education, and lifelong learning	significant problems	mentioned but not analysed sufficiently	present but insufficient	some targets but not relevant	<p>The increasing selectivity of the education system, which leads to the concentration of Roma or other disadvantaged students in lower-quality educational institutions, represents a significant problem in Romania. Although the problem is identified and analysed in certain studies and educational strategies, the measures implemented are insufficient to reduce the existing gaps, and the objectives set are not always relevant to the reality of vulnerable communities.</p> <p>The Romanian education system tends to be selective, placing excessive emphasis on academic performance at the expense of equitable and inclusive access to education. This phenomenon leads to the segregation of students from disadvantaged backgrounds, including Roma students, in schools with limited resources, poor infrastructure and poorly trained teachers. These schools, often located in rural or marginalised areas, fail to provide quality education, which perpetuates inequalities and social exclusion.</p> <p>Another factor contributing to this situation is the admission and testing procedure for access to high schools or vocational schools. Students from disadvantaged backgrounds, who do not benefit from adequate educational support and necessary resources, have reduced chances of accessing high-performing educational institutions. Thus, they are directed to 'second-hand' schools, which do not offer real opportunities for professional development or further studies.</p> <p>Although there are objectives in education strategies that aim for equity and inclusion in education, they are partially implemented and do not address the structural causes of selectivity. Support programmes, such as social scholarships or remedial programmes, are not sufficiently well-funded or adapted to ensure equitable access to quality schools. In addition, the lack of systematic measures to monitor and correct educational disparities between urban and rural schools exacerbates the problem. In conclusion, the selectivity of the education system accentuates the exclusion of Roma students and those from disadvantaged backgrounds, by concentrating them in inferior educational units. A reform is needed that promotes equity in education by allocating adequate resources to schools from vulnerable communities, improving the quality of the educational act and implementing measures to ensure an equitable distribution of educational opportunities.</p>
Limited access to and support for online and distance learning if education and training institutions close, as occurred during the corona virus pandemic	significant problems	irrelevant	absent	absent	<p>Limited access and insufficient support for online and distance learning in the event of school closures, as occurred during the COVID-19 pandemic, is a significant issue in Romania, which has disproportionately affected children from Roma communities and other vulnerable groups. Although this issue is ignored in national policies and considered 'irrelevant', the reality shows that the impact on the education of these children has been profound and lasting.</p> <p>During the pandemic, the transition to online education has highlighted the digital divide and inequalities in access to education. Many children from vulnerable communities, especially Roma, did not have access to digital devices (tablets, laptops) or a stable internet connection. In many cases, families did not even benefit from support in using technology, which completely excluded children from the educational process.</p>

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					<p>The lack of adequate support programmes led to an increase in school dropout and a widening educational gap. Roma students and other children from disadvantaged backgrounds, who depended on school for direct educational support, were the most affected. In addition, teachers were not sufficiently trained to adapt teaching methods to the online environment, and digital educational content was insufficient and not adapted to the specific needs of these children.</p> <p>In current education policies, the issue of access to online and distance learning is not adequately addressed. There are no clear measures to equip vulnerable students with digital equipment or to train teachers in the use of modern technologies. There is also a lack of a national mechanism to monitor and support the participation of children from marginalised communities in crisis situations.</p> <p>In conclusion, the COVID-19 pandemic has exposed the vulnerabilities of the Romanian education system, and limited access to online learning has deeply affected Roma communities and other disadvantaged groups. It is essential to develop proactive policies that ensure the provision of students with technological resources, the training of teachers, and the creation of inclusive digital education strategies to prevent educational exclusion in similar situations.</p>
Low level of digital skills and competences and limited opportunities for their development among pupils	significant problems	irrelevant	absent	absent	<p>The low level of digital skills and competences, as well as the limited opportunities to develop them among students, is a significant problem in Romania. Although this aspect is considered 'irrelevant' in national policies and does not benefit from concrete measures, its negative impact on digital inclusion and chances of integration into the labour market is profound.</p> <p>In the context of an increasingly digitalised society, digital skills are essential for students' educational and professional success. However, many students, especially those from disadvantaged communities such as the Roma, do not receive adequate training in this area. This is due to several factors:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lack of access to digital devices and the internet in disadvantaged environments. • Lack of trained teaching staff for teaching digital skills. • The absence of a coherent curriculum that includes digital training in all educational cycles. <p>In addition, regional inequalities exacerbate the problem. In rural areas, digital infrastructure is poorly developed, and schools lack computer labs or modern educational resources. Also, many schools do not include digital skills as an integral part of the teaching process, and students are not encouraged to develop practical skills in using technology.</p> <p>Although national education strategies include general objectives related to digital literacy, they are rarely adapted to the specific needs of vulnerable groups. There are no dedicated programmes to develop digital skills for students from disadvantaged communities or measures to support their integration into the digital economy.</p> <p>In conclusion, low levels of digital skills and a lack of opportunities to develop in this area represent a significant barrier for students, especially those from vulnerable communities. An integrated national strategy is needed that includes investments in digital infrastructure, teacher training, digital literacy programmes for students, and equitable access to technological resources.</p>
Low level of digital skills and competences and limited opportunities for their development among adults	significant problems	irrelevant	absent	absent	<p>Romania, with a direct impact on the adult population's ability to adapt to the demands of the labour market and to actively participate in the digital society. Although this issue is considered 'irrelevant' and concrete measures are lacking in national policies, its negative effects on economic and social inclusion are major.</p> <p>A significant percentage of the adult population in Romania, including vulnerable communities such as the Roma, has low or no digital skills. This situation is the result of several factors:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The lack of digital training programmes for adults, especially in the community • The costs associated with purchasing digital devices and internet access, which discourages participation by adults from low-income backgrounds. • Lack of awareness regarding the importance of digital skills for everyday life and

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					<p>employment.</p> <p>The COVID-19 pandemic has highlighted these gaps, with many adults struggling to use technology for activities such as online education for children, accessing digital public services, or finding jobs. In rural and marginalised environments, the problem is more acute due to the lack of infrastructure and digital literacy programmes.</p> <p>National policies on adult education do not sufficiently address digital skills. Although there are initiatives such as training projects financed by European funds, they are insufficiently promoted and rarely reach vulnerable groups. There is no coherent strategy that includes partnerships between authorities, non-governmental organisations and the private sector to provide long-term digital learning opportunities.</p> <p>In conclusion, the low level of digital skills among adults is a significant barrier to economic and social integration in the digital society. There is an urgent need to develop policies that support digital training for adults through accessible and free programmes, investments in digital infrastructure and awareness campaigns on the importance of these skills.</p>
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Employment

Problems and conditions	Significance:	Identified by strategy:	Measures to address:	Targets defined:	Details of NRSF implementation relevant to the problem:
Poor access to or low effectiveness of public employment services	significant problems	mentioned but not analysed sufficiently	present but insufficient	some targets but not relevant	<p>Poor access to and low efficiency of public employment services are significant problems in Romania, particularly affecting vulnerable groups such as Roma and people from marginalised communities. Although this issue is mentioned in national strategies, its analysis is superficial, and the measures implemented are insufficient to improve access and efficiency of these services.</p> <p>Public employment services, such as county and local employment agencies, are essential for supporting people looking for work. However, for vulnerable communities, access to these services is often limited by several factors:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lack of information and awareness about the existence of public employment services. • Administrative barriers, such as the documents required to access • Discrimination and prejudices within public institutions discourage Roma from using these services. • Lack of personalised programmes that meet the specific needs of vulnerable groups. <p>The efficiency of these services is also low. In many cases, employment agencies offer standardised programmes that are not adapted to the realities of the labour market or the skills and needs of beneficiaries. The vocational training provided through these services is often limited to a few areas that do not correspond to the requirements of the current economy. Monitoring and evaluation of the impact of these services are also deficient, which makes it difficult to improve them.</p> <p>The objectives included in the national employment strategies are present, but are not always relevant for vulnerable groups. Existing programmes, such as incentives for employers who hire vulnerable people, are sporadically implemented and not adequately promoted. There are also insufficient measures to address structural issues that limit Roma participation in the labour market, such as a lack of education or relevant qualifications.</p> <p>In conclusion, poor access and low efficiency of public employment services represent a significant barrier to the economic integration of vulnerable groups. A reform of these services is needed, including personalised programme, reducing administrative barriers, training staff to combat</p>

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					discrimination, and creating partnerships with local employers to ensure real employment opportunities.
Youth not in employment, education or training (NEET)	significant problems	mentioned but not analysed sufficiently	present but insufficient	some targets but not relevant	<p>Young people NEET (not in employment, education or training) are a significant problem in Romania, particularly affecting vulnerable groups, including young Roma. Although this issue is mentioned in national policies, its analysis is insufficient, and the measures adopted to combat the phenomenon are limited and ineffective.</p> <p>Romania has one of the highest percentages of NEET youth in the European Union, reflecting the difficulties they face in transitioning from education to the labour market or accessing vocational training opportunities. Factors contributing to this situation include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lack of relevant qualifications, caused by early school leaving or an education system that does not meet the demands of the labour market. • Social and economic exclusion, especially for young people from marginalised communities, such as the Roma. • Lack of personalised support programmes, such as vocational counselling or mentoring programmes, that could help young people find a place in the labour market. • Limited access to transportation and infrastructure prevents young people in rural areas from participating in training programmes or getting a job. <p>Although there are national strategies and programmes targeting NEETs, such as initiatives funded by European funds (e.g. the Youth Guarantee), their implementation is uneven and their impact is limited. Programmes are often difficult to access due to bureaucracy or are not adapted to the specific needs of vulnerable groups.</p> <p>The objectives of national strategies, although well-intentioned, are not always relevant to NEETs. Lack of coordination between institutions and insufficient resources mean that these initiatives do not produce significant changes. Additionally, there is no effective system in place to monitor the progress of young people who leave the NEET programme and transition into education, training, or employment. programme</p> <p>Conclusion:</p> <p>The issue of NEET youth is a complex one, requiring an integrated and multi-sectoral approach. Proactive policies are needed that include personalised support programmes, partnerships with employers to provide internships and jobs, investments in vocational training, and making infrastructure accessible to young people in rural and marginalised communities.</p>
Poor access to (re-) training, lifelong learning and skills development	significant problems	mentioned but not analysed sufficiently	present but insufficient	some targets but not relevant	<p>Poor access to (re)training, lifelong learning and skills development is a significant problem in Romania, with direct implications for the economic and social integration of the population, especially vulnerable groups, including Roma. Although this issue is mentioned in national policies, its analysis is superficial, and the measures adopted are limited and insufficiently targeted.</p> <p>In a constantly changing economic and social context, lifelong learning and continuous skills development are essential for adapting to the demands of the labour market and preventing social exclusion. However, Romania faces a low participation of the adult population in training and retraining programmes. The leading causes include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lack of access to (re)training opportunities in rural and marginalised areas, where educational infrastructure is poorly developed. • The high costs of training programmes, discourage low-income individuals from participating. • Lack of information and awareness about the benefits of continuing learning, especially among people from vulnerable communities. • Limited training options, which are not aligned with current labour market requirements.

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					<p>Existing national programmes, such as those financed by European funds for retraining or continuing educational support, are present, but their implementation is uneven and has limited impact. Additionally, many of these initiatives are not sufficiently tailored to the individual needs of beneficiaries, and the complex bureaucratic process discourages participation. In addition, the lack of mechanisms for monitoring and evaluating the results of training programmes limits the ability of authorities to improve their efficiency.</p> <p>The objectives included in national strategies are well-intentioned, but they do not directly address the challenges faced by vulnerable groups. In many cases, the programmes are general and do not provide personalised support for those who have the most significant difficulties in accessing training and skills development.</p> <p>Conclusion:</p> <p>Poor access to (re)training, lifelong learning and skills development is a major barrier to economic and social integration. A more inclusive approach is needed, including the development of educational infrastructure in marginalised areas, the provision of free or subsidised programmes, awareness campaigns to promote the benefits of lifelong learning and the creation of monitoring mechanisms to evaluate and improve the impact of these programmes.</p>
Discrimination on the labour market by employers	significant problems	mentioned but not analysed sufficiently	present but insufficient	some targets but not relevant	<p>Discrimination in the labour market by employers is a significant problem in Romania, particularly affecting vulnerable groups such as Roma, women and people with disabilities. Although this issue is mentioned in various national documents and strategies, its analysis remains insufficient, and the measures implemented are limited, failing to produce the necessary effects to eliminate systemic discrimination.</p> <p>In the labour market, discrimination manifests itself through:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Refusal to hire based on ethnicity or gender, without objective and verifiable reasons. Employers often perpetuate negative stereotypes about Roma communities, associating them with a lack of education or frivolity. • Unfair working conditions for employees from vulnerable groups, who receive lower wages, are subjected to forms of harassment or are excluded from promotion opportunities. • Exclusion from recruitment processes, through the use of subjective criteria or by omitting inclusive policies in job advertisements. <p>Although Romania's antidiscrimination legislation explicitly prohibits any form of discrimination in the labour market, its implementation remains weak. The National Council for Combating Discrimination (CNCD) receives few complaints because victims of discrimination are either unaware of their rights or fear retaliation. At the same time, the lack of effective mechanisms to monitor recruitment and employment practices means that discrimination remains prevalent.</p> <p>Existing measures to combat discrimination are present, but they are insufficient. Programmes aimed at promoting inclusion in the labour market, such as financial incentives for employers or vocational training programmes, are not adequately implemented and do not directly target the elimination of discriminatory barriers. Furthermore, current strategic objectives are not relevant to combating the stereotypes and prejudices that underlie discrimination.</p> <p>Conclusion:</p> <p>Discrimination in the labour market constitutes a major barrier to the social and economic integration of vulnerable groups, especially Roma. Rigorous enforcement of antidiscrimination legislation is necessary, accompanied by awareness-raising campaigns for employers, monitoring of recruitment practices, and the implementation of programmes that promote equal opportunities and diversity in the workplace.</p>
Risk for Roma women and girls from	significant problems	irrelevant	absent	absent	<p>The risk of Roma women and girls from disadvantaged areas being subjected to human trafficking and forced prostitution is a significant problem in Romania. However, it is wrongly categorised as</p>

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disadvantaged areas of being subjected to trafficking and forced prostitution					<p>'irrelevant' in national policies and does not benefit from adequate prevention and combat measures. The lack of a systematic approach and specific interventions means that this vulnerability persists, endangering the lives of Roma women and girls.</p> <p>Roma women and girls from marginalised communities face extreme poverty, social exclusion, and a lack of educational and economic opportunities. These factors disproportionately expose them to the risk of human trafficking and exploitation. Lack of access to quality education and early school leaving mean that many of them cannot build a stable future, making them vulnerable to human trafficking networks.</p> <p>Furthermore, cultural barriers and discrimination exacerbate this issue. Roma girls are often subjected to traditional practices that limit their freedom and access to education, such as early or forced marriage. These practices, combined with a lack of social support services and appropriate interventions, increase the risk of them being recruited or trafficked for sexual exploitation or forced labour.</p> <p>Although Romania has a legislative framework against human trafficking, its implementation is weak in disadvantaged communities. There are no specific programmes to prevent trafficking among Roma girls and women, and support services for victims of trafficking are insufficient. In addition, the lack of awareness-raising and information campaigns means that these communities are uninformed about the risks and existing protection mechanisms.</p> <p>The high risk of Roma women and girls in disadvantaged areas being subjected to human trafficking and forced prostitution requires urgent attention and an integrated approach. It is necessary to implement prevention programmes through education, economic support for vulnerable families, accessible social services and awareness-raising campaigns in marginalised communities. At the same time, authorities must monitor and actively intervene in cases of exploitation and trafficking, ensuring the protection and reintegration of victims.</p>
Barriers and disincentives to employment (such as indebtedness, low income from work compared to social income)	significant problems	irrelevant	absent	absent	<p>Barriers and disincentives to employment, such as indebtedness and low income from work compared to social benefits, are a significant problem in Romania, especially for vulnerable groups, including Roma communities. However, this issue is classified as 'irrelevant' in national policies and is absent from government interventions, despite its negative economic and social impact.</p> <p>The main barriers that discourage employment are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Low income from work: Many from marginalised communities, including Roma, have access only to low-paid jobs, especially in informal sectors, without employment contracts and social protection. Thus, in many cases, the incomes obtained are lower than those from social assistance, making employment an unattractive option. • Indebtedness: Vulnerable families are often trapped in a vicious cycle of debt, resorting to informal loans or high-interest loans to cover basic needs. This situation limits their economic mobility and discourages them from seeking employment due to financial uncertainty and instability. • Lack of support for the transition to work: There are not enough programmes to support the integration of vulnerable people into the labour market, such as subsidising jobs, career counselling, or facilitating access to relevant qualifications. • Costs associated with employment: For people from marginalised communities, transportation costs, suitable workplace attire, and lack of support infrastructure (e.g., childcare services) represent additional barriers to obtaining and maintaining employment. <p>Currently, national employment policies do not specifically address these barriers. Strategies focus on general measures without taking into account the specific needs of vulnerable groups. There is also a</p>

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					<p>lack of detailed analysis of the impact of low income on employment decisions and concrete measures to make employment more attractive than relying on social support.</p> <p>Economic and social barriers, such as low income, indebtedness and work-related costs, discourage employment among vulnerable groups, including Roma. An integrated approach is needed, including support measures for the transition to the labour market, employment subsidies, training programmes and policies to ensure fair wages and adequate social protection for those in formal employment.</p>
Lack of activation measures, employment support	significant problems	mentioned but not analysed sufficiently	present but insufficient	some targets but not relevant	<p>The lack of activation measures and employment support is a significant problem in Romania, particularly affecting vulnerable groups, including Roma communities. Although this issue is mentioned in national strategies, its analysis is insufficient, and existing measures are limited, not generating a significant impact on employment among people in situations of economic exclusion. Activation measures, which involve facilitating access to the labour market for the long-term unemployed and inactive people, are inadequate in Romania for several reasons:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lack of personalised counselling and support: Vulnerable people do not benefit from vocational counselling services and personalised integration plans, which could facilitate access to suitable jobs. • Non-adapted vocational training: Vocational training programmes are often standardised and not correlated with local labour market requirements or the skills needed for growing sectors. • Lack of real incentives for employers: Although there are subsidies for companies that employ vulnerable people, they are insufficiently promoted and implemented, and access criteria are often restrictive. • Lack of supporting infrastructure: People in isolated communities face significant barriers, such as a lack of transportation to work or the absence of childcare services, which discourages employment. <p>Despite the objectives outlined in national employment strategies, measures are insufficiently implemented and often fail to address the specific needs of vulnerable groups. For example, 'activation' programmes do not take into account the structural problems of people from disadvantaged backgrounds, such as lack of formal education, discrimination in the labour market, and extreme poverty. The lack of effective activation and employment support measures significantly limits the chances of vulnerable groups, including Roma, to obtain stable employment. An integrated approach is needed, including personalised counselling services, vocational training adapted to market requirements, effective subsidies for employers and investments in infrastructure to support active participation in the labour market.</p>

Healthcare

Problems and conditions	Significance:	Identified by strategy:	Measures to address:	Targets defined:	Details of NRSF implementation relevant to the problem:
Exclusion from public health insurance coverage (including those who are stateless, third country nationals, or EU-mobile)	significant problems	identified and analysed sufficiently	present but insufficient	some targets but not relevant	<p>Exclusion from public health insurance coverage, affecting stateless persons, third-country nationals or mobile persons within the EU, including vulnerable groups such as Roma communities, is a significant problem in Romania. Although it is sufficiently identified and analysed in some studies and reports, measures to remedy this situation are present, but are insufficient. Current objectives in national strategies are not always relevant to the real needs of those excluded from the public health insurance system.</p> <p>The main leading of exclusion are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lack of identity documents: Many members of vulnerable communities, including Roma or

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					<p>stateless people, do not have documents attesting to their legal status, which prevents them from being registered in the public health system.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mobility within the EU: People migrating between European Union member states may encounter difficulties in transferring their insurance rights, due to bureaucratic hurdles and a lack of coordination between national health systems. • Third-country nationals and stateless persons: Their access to health insurance is limited due to restrictive legislation or unclear legal status. Even in cases where they could benefit from medical services, the associated costs become an insurmountable barrier. <p>Although Romania has a public health system that guarantees access to medical services for those insured, the administrative and structural exclusion of certain groups contributes to serious health inequities. The measures adopted so far, such as information campaigns and assistance provided by local authorities, are sporadic and have not had a sufficient impact.</p> <p>In national strategies, the objectives for inclusion in the health system focus on expanding theoretical access, without addressing structural and administrative barriers. There are no dedicated initiatives to facilitate access for stateless persons, third-country nationals or those from mobile communities, and mechanisms for their identification and registration in the health system are insufficient.</p> <p>Exclusion from public health insurance remains a significant barrier for vulnerable groups and mobile individuals in the EU. An integrated approach is needed, including measures to simplify registration procedures, recognise the legal status of affected persons and implement specific programmes to ensure equitable access to essential health services.</p>
Poor supply/availability of healthcare services (including lack of means to cover out-of-pocket health costs)	significant problems	mentioned but not analysed sufficiently	absent	absent	<p>The poor supply and availability of health services, including the lack of financial means to cover out-of-pocket medical costs, is a significant problem in Romania, particularly affecting vulnerable communities, such as Roma and people from marginalised areas. Although this issue is mentioned in national policies, its analysis is insufficient and concrete measures are lacking.</p> <p>In Romania, limited access to health services is caused by a series of systemic factors:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Unequal distribution of health services: In rural areas and isolated communities, health infrastructure is deficient, and the number of health facilities and health workers is insufficient. Many communities lack access to family medical practices or emergency units, and the long distances to urban centres represent a significant barrier. • High medical costs: People without health insurance are often forced to cover expenses out of pocket, which is particularly challenging for low-income families. Even for insured people, the costs of medications, additional investigations, or treatments are often prohibitive. • Lack of prevention programmes: Prevention and health monitoring services are poorly developed and inaccessible to vulnerable populations. The lack of regular medical check-ups leads to the aggravation of treatable conditions and higher costs in advanced stages of the disease. • Discrimination and cultural barriers: In the case of Roma communities, there is often discrimination in the provision of health services, as well as mutual distrust between medical staff and patients. The lack of health education programmes exacerbates this problem. <p>Although national policies recognise the importance of expanding access to health, concrete measures are lacking to improve medical infrastructure in marginalised areas or to ensure free access to essential services for those without income. There are no specific programmes to reduce out-of-pocket costs, nor are there any sustained initiatives to attract doctors to rural communities.</p> <p>The inadequate supply of health services and high out-of-pocket costs represent a major barrier to accessing healthcare for vulnerable groups. A systemic intervention is needed, through investments in</p>

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					medical infrastructure, prevention and health education programmes, subsidising essential services for people without income, and combating discrimination in the health system.
Limited access to emergency care	significant problems	mentioned but not analysed sufficiently	absent	absent	<p>Limited access to emergency medical care is a significant problem in Romania, particularly affecting people from vulnerable communities, such as the Roma and those in rural or isolated areas. Although this issue is mentioned in strategic documents, it has not been sufficiently analysed, and concrete measures to remedy the situation are absent.</p> <p>Several systemic factors cause unequal access to emergency medical care:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Unequal distribution of medical services: Many rural localities lack access to emergency units, and the long distances to the nearest hospitals or emergency centres make it difficult to access medical care quickly. • Poor infrastructure: Poorly developed roads in remote areas delay the interventions of ambulance services and emergency crews, putting patients' lives at risk. • Shortage of medical personnel: In many areas, the reduced number of doctors and nurses, combined with insufficient emergency services resources, limits the system's ability to respond promptly and effectively to critical cases. • Discrimination and cultural barriers: Roma people often face discriminatory attitudes from medical personnel, which can discourage them from seeking emergency medical care. In addition, the lack of basic medical education in these communities results in delayed calls to emergency services. <p>Currently, measures to improve access to emergency medical care are absent or implemented piecemeal. There are no policies in place to improve access in marginalised communities, and investments in infrastructure and human resources are insufficient. There are also no dedicated programmes to inform and raise awareness of vulnerable groups about their right to benefit from emergency medical services without discrimination.</p> <p>Limited access to emergency medical care remains a significant barrier for vulnerable communities in Romania. An integrated approach is needed, including investments in infrastructure, equipping emergency services with adequate resources, training medical personnel, and attracting them to disadvantaged areas, as well as combating discrimination through training.</p>
Limited access to primary care	significant problems	identified and analysed sufficiently	adequate but with room for improvement	adequate but with room for improvement	<p>Limited access to primary healthcare is a significant problem in Romania, having been identified and sufficiently analysed in various studies and national strategies. While existing measures are adequate to a certain extent, there is significant room for improvement to ensure equitable access to primary health care services, especially for vulnerable communities, including Roma and people from rural or marginalised areas.</p> <p>Primary health care is the population's first point of contact with the health system, and unequal access to these services generates health inequities. The main causes of limited access include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lack of family doctors: In many rural and remote localities, there is a significant shortage of family doctors. This directly affects vulnerable communities, who are forced to travel long distances to receive basic consultations and treatments. • Poor infrastructure and limited resources: Family doctors' offices are often under-equipped, lacking the necessary equipment for simple investigations or routine treatments. • Indirect costs: Although primary healthcare is covered by health insurance, indirect costs, such as transportation or the purchase of medicines, remain a barrier for people with low incomes. • Discrimination and distrust: Roma and other vulnerable groups face discriminatory attitudes from some health professionals, which discourages access to primary care services. The lack of health education campaigns also exacerbates distrust in the health system. <p>Although the national health strategy recognises the importance of expanding access to primary health</p>

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					<p>care, the measures implemented are only partially effective. Programmes aimed at attracting doctors to disadvantaged areas through financial incentives or other facilities are limited, and their results are unsustainable in the long term. In addition, investments in modernising infrastructure and equipping medical offices are insufficient, particularly in rural areas.</p> <p>Limited access to primary healthcare is a problem that requires significant improvement. Future measures must include real incentives to attract doctors to disadvantaged areas, investments in modernising medical infrastructure, health education campaigns, and programmes that eliminate discrimination and encourage trust in health services.</p>
Limited access to prenatal and postnatal care	significant problems	identified and analysed sufficiently	present but insufficient	some targets but not relevant	<p>Limited access to prenatal and postnatal care is a significant problem in Romania, particularly affecting women from vulnerable communities, such as Roma and people from rural or marginalised areas. Although this problem has been sufficiently identified and analysed, the implemented measures are present but insufficient, and the established objectives do not always meet the real needs of the affected groups.</p> <p>Several factors cause unequal access to prenatal and postnatal care::</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lack of access to doctors and specialised services: In rural and disadvantaged areas, medical infrastructure is poor, and the small number of gynaecologists or midwives significantly limits access to essential services for maternal and child health. • Associated costs: Although prenatal services are theoretically free for insured women, indirect costs, such as transportation to medical centres or purchasing necessary supplements, represent a major barrier for low-income women. Uninsured women, often from Roma communities, are entirely excluded from these services. • Lack of health education: In many vulnerable communities, women are not informed about the importance of prenatal and postnatal check-ups. This lack of awareness leads to late seeking medical care or ignoring it altogether. • Discrimination and stigmatisation: Roma women frequently face discriminatory attitudes from medical personnel, which discourages them from accessing health services regularly. <p>Although there are programmes targeting maternal and child health, their implementation is limited and often inconsistent. Initiatives to improve access to prenatal care, such as regular check-ups and support for vulnerable mothers, are only available in certain areas and do not sufficiently cover the needs of the entire disadvantaged population. In addition, the absence of an effective monitoring system hinders the ability to accurately assess the impact of these measures.</p> <p>Limited access to prenatal and postnatal care remains a major health problem for vulnerable women in Romania. Significant investments in medical infrastructure, health education campaigns tailored to disadvantaged communities, free care services for uninsured women, and measures to combat discrimination in the health system are needed.</p>
Limited access to health-related information	significant problems	identified and analysed sufficiently	adequate but with room for improvement	adequate but with room for improvement	<p>Limited access to health-related information is a significant problem in Romania, particularly affecting vulnerable communities such as Roma, people from rural areas and those with low levels of education. Although the issue is sufficiently identified and analysed, existing measures to facilitate access to information are present, but can be improved to become more effective and inclusive.</p> <p>The main causes of limited access to health information include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Low level of health education: The lack of health education programmes in schools or disadvantaged communities prevents the population from understanding the importance of disease prevention, regular check-ups, and a healthy lifestyle. • Lack of information campaigns: National information campaigns are often general, insufficiently adapted to the specific needs of vulnerable communities, and rarely accessible in Romani or a simplified format for people with low literacy levels.

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					<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Limited access to technology: In rural and isolated communities, access to the internet and digital health information is often restricted, which hinders the dissemination of rapid and accurate information about prevention, treatments, and available medical services. Lack of active medical counselling: Family doctors or medical professionals often lack the time and resources to provide detailed and tailored information to patients. For vulnerable groups, this counselling is essential, particularly in preventing chronic and communicable diseases. <p>Although existing measures, such as health education and information campaigns occasionally organised by public health authorities and NGOs, are adequate, they have limited impact due to a lack of funding, coordination and adaptation to the needs of vulnerable communities. Information is also not always accessible in a simplified, visual form or in minority languages.</p> <p>Limited access to health information can be improved through sustained and tailored information campaigns, health education programmes in schools and communities, the development of accessible digital resources, and active counselling by health professionals. Providing clear and accessible information for all social groups is essential for reducing health inequalities.</p>
Poor access to preventive care (vaccination, check-ups, screenings, awareness-raising about healthy lifestyles)	significant problems	identified and analysed sufficiently	present but insufficient	some targets but not relevant	<p>Limited access to health-related information is a significant problem in Romania, particularly affecting vulnerable communities such as Roma, people from rural areas and those with low levels of education. Although the problem is sufficiently identified and analysed, existing measures to facilitate access to information are present but can be improved to become more effective and inclusive.</p> <p>The main causes of limited access to health information include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Low level of health education: The lack of health education programmes in schools or in disadvantaged communities prevents the population from understanding the importance of disease prevention, regular check-ups, and a healthy lifestyle. Lack of information campaigns: National information campaigns are often general, insufficiently adapted to the specific needs of vulnerable communities, and rarely accessible in Romani or a simplified format for people with low literacy levels. Limited access to technology: In rural and isolated communities, access to the internet and digital health information is often restricted, which hinders the dissemination of rapid and accurate information about prevention, treatments, and available medical services. Lack of active medical counselling: Family doctors or medical professionals often lack the time and resources to provide detailed and tailored information to patients. For vulnerable groups, this counselling is essential, particularly in preventing of chronic and communicable diseases. <p>Although existing measures, such as health education and information campaigns occasionally organised by public health authorities and NGOs, are adequate, they have limited impact due to a lack of funding, coordination and adaptation to the needs of vulnerable communities. Information is also not always accessible in a simplified, visual form or in minority languages.</p> <p>Limited access to health information can be improved through sustained and tailored information campaigns, health education programmes in schools and communities, the development of accessible digital resources, and active counselling by health professionals. Providing clear and accessible information for all social groups is essential for reducing health inequalities.</p>
Poor access to sexual/reproductive healthcare and family planning services	significant problems	identified and analysed sufficiently	present but insufficient	some targets but not relevant	<p>Poor access to sexual/reproductive health and family planning services is a significant problem in Romania, especially for vulnerable groups, such as women from Roma communities, people with low incomes, and those from rural or marginalised areas. Although the problem has been sufficiently identified and analysed, the measures implemented are insufficient, and the objectives set do not always align with the real needs of beneficiaries.</p> <p>The main causes of limited access:</p>

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					<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lack of dedicated infrastructure and services: In many rural and marginalised areas, no specialised centres are offering sexual and reproductive health services. Access to gynaecologists or family planning services is minimal. • Associated costs: Even if some services are free, indirect costs (transportation, medications, and contraceptive methods) represent a significant barrier for low-income families. • Lack of sexual health education: Sexual and reproductive education is almost absent from schools and communities, and young people, especially girls, do not have access to accurate and complete information about preventing unwanted pregnancies and sexually transmitted diseases. • Cultural factors and stigma: For Roma women and other vulnerable groups, social prejudice and discriminatory attitudes from medical personnel discourage access to these services. • Lack of coherent policies: Although national reproductive health and family planning strategies have objectives, they are not always tailored to the specific context of vulnerable communities and are not uniformly implemented at the national level. <p>Impact of the problem: Limited access to sexual and reproductive health services leads to high rates of teenage pregnancy, especially in Roma communities, and an increase in unassisted births. Lack of access to contraception and family planning also contributes to the perpetuation of poverty and social exclusion.</p> <p>Necessary measures:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Developing and expanding health centres that provide free sexual and reproductive health services in disadvantaged areas. 2. Implementing culturally and linguistically adapted educational programmes that promote sexual and reproductive health among young people and vulnerable women. 3. Facilitating free access to contraceptive methods and family planning counselling services. 4. Training medical staff to provide services without discrimination and stigma. <p>Poor access to sexual and reproductive health services requires an integrated approach tailored to vulnerable groups. Investments in infrastructure, education and family planning programmes are essential to ensure equitable access to these services and reduce existing inequalities.</p>
Specific barriers to better healthcare of vulnerable groups such as elderly Roma people, Roma with disabilities, LGBTI, and others	significant problems	mentioned but not analysed sufficiently	present but insufficient	some targets but not relevant	<p>Specific barriers to better healthcare for vulnerable groups, such as elderly Roma, Roma with disabilities, LGBTI people and others, represent a significant problem in Romania. Although this issue is mentioned in various national documents and strategies, its analysis is superficial, and the measures adopted are present but insufficient. The objectives set are not always relevant and do not respond to the specific needs of these groups.</p> <p>The main barriers faced by these groups:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Limited physical and geographical access: Elderly Roma and people with disabilities in rural or isolated communities face a lack of adequate medical infrastructure and accessible transportation to health facilities. The physical accessibility of medical centres is poor for people with disabilities, with many units not being adapted to their needs. • Discrimination and negative attitudes: Elderly Roma and people with disabilities frequently face discrimination and prejudice from medical personnel, which discourages access to healthcare. LGBTI people face stigma and reluctance to receive appropriate medical services, especially mental health and sexual health services. • Lack of specialised and adapted services: There are no specific programmes to improve access to adequate health services for elderly Roma or people with disabilities, such as home care or gerontological services. LGBTI people have limited access to counselling and

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					<p>treatment services in safe and non-discriminatory settings.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Low level of health education and lack of information: The lack of health education, especially in Roma communities, leads to ignorance of patients' rights and available medical services. People with disabilities and LGBTI people have limited access to adapted medical information, both in terms of content and accessible presentation (e.g. simplified language, sign language translation). • Costs associated with medical care: Additional costs, such as those for medicines, transportation or medical equipment, represent a major barrier for elderly Roma, people with disabilities and other vulnerable groups with low incomes. <p>Specific barriers to access to healthcare for vulnerable groups, such as older Roma, people with disabilities, and LGBTI people, require a targeted and inclusive approach. Dedicated programmes are needed, including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Physically and financially accessible health services. • Training medical staff to combat discrimination and stigma. • Creating specialised services tailored to the needs of each vulnerable group. <p>Accessible and culturally appropriate information campaigns to promote rights and available services.</p>
Discrimination/ antigypsyism in healthcare (e.g., segregated services, forced sterilisation)	significant problems	mentioned but not analysed sufficiently	present but insufficient	some targets but not relevant	<p>Discrimination and antigypsyism in healthcare are a painful reality in Romania, where Roma communities constantly face obstacles and unfair treatment in accessing healthcare services. Whether it is segregation in healthcare facilities, lack of respect for patients, or abusive practices, such as forced sterilisation in the past, these forms of systemic exclusion continue to deeply affect Roma's trust in the healthcare system.</p> <p>One of the most visible manifestations of this discrimination is medical segregation, a practice that persists in some hospitals and clinics. Roma patients are sometimes placed in separate wards, subjected to negligent treatment, or received with reluctance by medical staff. Instead of being treated with dignity and professionalism, they are often judged through the lens of prejudice and negative stereotypes. Such an experience discourages members of Roma communities from seeking medical care, even when it comes to serious health problems.</p> <p>Another extremely sensitive issue is the forced sterilisation of Roma women, an abusive practice documented in the past that has had irreversible consequences on the lives of those affected. Although such cases are rare today, the lack of clear mechanisms to monitor and prevent such abusive practices continues to generate fear and distrust among Roma communities.</p> <p>In addition, discriminatory attitudes and subtle racism displayed by medical professionals contribute to the exclusion of Roma from the health system. Whether it is a refusal to consult Roma patients, superficial diagnosis or treating them with indifference, such practices reinforce stigma and discourage them from seeking medical care. In many cases, Roma communities prefer to seek informal, non-medically approved solutions, thus worsening their health condition.</p> <p>Poor access to medical information and preventive services exacerbates these problems. Many Roma, especially those in rural areas, are not informed about their rights as patients or about available medical services. Also, the lack of health education programmes adapted to their cultural and linguistic needs means that prevention and treatment of diseases are neglected.</p> <p>Although the issue of discrimination is addressed in national strategies, the measures implemented to date are insufficient. There are no sustained campaigns to combat discriminatory attitudes in the medical system, and training of medical staff in diversity and inclusion is often absent or superficial.</p> <p>Antigypsyism in healthcare not only deprives Roma communities of their fundamental right to equitable healthcare but also perpetuates a vicious cycle of social exclusion and poverty. Urgent action is needed to eliminate discrimination by training healthcare professionals, sanctioning abusive practices, and</p>

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					developing inclusive and accessible healthcare programmes. Only in this way can the healthcare system become truly equitable and capable of providing care to all, without exception.
Inequalities in measures for combating and preventing potential outbreaks of diseases in marginalised or remote localities	significant problems	Irrelevant	absent	absent	<p>Inequalities in measures to combat and prevent potential disease outbreaks in marginalised or remote localities are a profound problem in Romania, even though they are considered 'irrelevant' in national policies and are absent from current interventions. These discrepancies have a severe impact on vulnerable communities, where a lack of access to preventive and disease control measures perpetuates poor health and the risk of epidemic outbreaks.</p> <p>In marginalised and isolated localities, such as rural or Roma communities, access to basic health services and preventive measures is minimal. Several factors cause this situation:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Poor medical infrastructure: In many of these localities, there are no family doctors or functional medical facilities. The lack of medical coverage makes it impossible to monitor and intervene quickly in the event of outbreaks of communicable diseases. • Poor hygiene and housing conditions: Many marginalised communities lack access to clean water, sanitation, or adequate hygiene, which increases the risk of the outbreak and spread of preventable diseases, such as hepatitis, tuberculosis, or gastrointestinal infections. • Lack of vaccination and prevention programmes: National vaccination and screening campaigns for infectious diseases often do not cover these localities, due to geographical isolation, inadequate infrastructure, and poor information. As a result, immunisation rates remain low and the risk of epidemics is considerable. • Lack of rapid interventions in the event of an outbreak: Local authorities lack the resources or capacity to act promptly in the event of a disease outbreak, which aggravates the situation and leads to the rapid spread of diseases among the population. <p>In addition, the lack of health education in these communities exacerbates the issue. People are often not informed about essential disease prevention measures, such as personal hygiene, vaccinations, and the importance of regular medical check-ups. This information deficit means that preventable diseases continue to affect these communities at an alarming rate.</p> <p>Result</p> <p>The impact of these inequalities is profound and lasting:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increased incidence of communicable diseases and avoidable mortality. • The uncontrolled spread of outbreaks in communities without access to medical interventions. • The continued exclusion of vulnerable populations from the health system perpetuates the vicious cycle of poverty and disease. <p>Necessary solutions</p> <p>To address these inequalities, authorities must implement the following measures:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Expanding the coverage of health services in marginalised localities through mobile medical teams and investments in health infrastructure. • Implementing vaccination and prevention campaigns targeted at isolated communities, including health education programmes tailored to their needs. • Creating rapid intervention mechanisms in case of outbreaks, with dedicated resources for vulnerable communities. • Ensuring access to basic hygiene conditions through investments in water and sanitation infrastructure. <p>Inequalities in preventing and combating disease outbreaks in marginalised localities reflect the lack of coherent and tailored measures for these communities. To avoid major public health risks, systematic interventions are necessary through investments in infrastructure, education, and mobile medical services, ensuring that every community benefits from equal protection against disease.</p>

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Housing, essential services, and environmental justice

Problems and conditions	Significance:	Identified by strategy:	Measures to address:	Targets defined:	Details of NRSF implementation relevant to the problem:
Poor physical security of housing (ruined or slum housing)	significant problems	mentioned but not analysed sufficiently	present but insufficient	some targets but not relevant	Poor physical security of housing disproportionately affects vulnerable communities, such as Roma, low-income families, and people from marginalised or remote communities. This problem is caused by extreme poverty, lack of property titles, geographical isolation, and poor infrastructure, as well as discrimination in access to resources and support programmes. In many cases, housing is dilapidated, built without permits, and lacks basic utilities such as water, electricity, or sanitation. The lack of adequate infrastructure and sanitation poses serious risks to the physical and mental health of residents, while stigma and discrimination contribute to social exclusion. Slums are often ignored in public housing policies, and existing programmes, such as those for housing rehabilitation or support for vulnerable families, are underfunded and difficult to access for those most affected.
Lack of access to drinking water	significant problems	understood with limitations	present but insufficient	some targets but not relevant	The lack of access to drinking water affects marginalised communities in Romania, especially in rural and peripheral areas, being a significant problem with serious consequences on health and quality of life. Although the issue is partially understood in national strategies, the measures implemented to improve access to drinking water are insufficient, and the objectives set are not always adapted to the needs of these communities. In many marginalised communities, water supply infrastructure is either absent or underdeveloped. Vulnerable communities often rely on unsafe sources, such as contaminated wells or rivers, which increases the risk of waterborne diseases. A lack of financial resources and administrative support means that local authorities are unable to expand their water networks or maintain existing ones. Discrimination in the allocation of resources also contributes to the perpetuation of exclusion for groups such as the Roma. The problem is compounded by a lack of health education, which limits awareness of the importance of clean water in preventing diseases. In addition, investments in water infrastructure are rarely targeted at marginalised communities, and mechanisms for monitoring progress are poorly developed.
Lack of access to sanitation	significant problems	understood with limitations	present but insufficient	some targets but not relevant	Lack of access to sanitation is a significant problem in Romania, especially in marginalised communities in rural areas or slums. Although this problem is partially understood at the national policy level, the measures implemented to improve the situation are insufficient, and the objectives set do not always respond to the specific needs of these communities. A significant percentage of the population, particularly in rural areas, lacks access to toilets connected to sewerage networks or safe septic systems. This situation is exacerbated by the lack of basic infrastructure, including sewerage networks or treatment plants. In slums and other marginalised communities, the use of makeshift toilets or their complete absence exposes the population to high risks of communicable diseases and seriously affects hygiene and public health conditions. The limited financial resources of vulnerable families and discrimination in the allocation of public investments also contribute to perpetuating this problem. The lack of sanitation facilities disproportionately affects women, children and older people, creating additional barriers to their participation in education and social life.
Lack of access to electricity	significant problems	understood with limitations	present but insufficient	some targets but not relevant	Lack of access to electricity remains one of the most pressing infrastructural deficiencies for marginalised populations in Romania, especially in remote rural areas and informal settlements. Although partially acknowledged in public policy discussions, the issue remains underaddressed, and current strategies fail to provide relevant or measurable solutions. The main obstacle is the lack of

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					adequate infrastructure, particularly in isolated regions where extending the national electricity grid is either too costly or deemed financially unviable. In many disadvantaged areas, households are not connected to electricity networks due to the prohibitive costs of connection, which low-income families cannot afford. While subsidy programmes theoretically exist, they are often inaccessible due to bureaucratic complexity, lack of awareness, or restrictive eligibility criteria. This results in a cyclical form of exclusion, where those most in need are structurally unable to benefit from available support. The absence of electricity significantly undermines quality of life: children cannot study after dark, families rely on hazardous lighting or heating alternatives, and the lack of energy-dependent tools and equipment constrains economic activities. Moreover, the digital divide deepens, as communities without electricity are systematically left behind in educational programmes, telehealth initiatives, and digital inclusion efforts. Beyond practical limitations, the issue reflects a deeper pattern of structural discrimination and neglect. Expansion projects for electricity infrastructure often bypass marginalised communities - particularly Roma settlements - either due to administrative oversight or active resistance based on prejudicial stereotypes. This reinforces territorial segregation and fuels social inequalities. National strategies have yet to define electricity access as a fundamental public right or to include explicit targets for universal coverage. To overcome this, Romania must adopt a more inclusive approach, ensuring that infrastructural development is guided not solely by economic efficiency but also by principles of equity, social justice, and environmental sustainability. This includes simplified access to subsidies, targeted investment in underserved regions, and accountability mechanisms for inclusive public service planning.
Limited or absent public waste collection	significant problems	mentioned but not analysed sufficiently	absent	absent	<p>In many marginalised communities across Romania, the absence of a public waste collection service remains a critical issue that is insufficiently addressed in national or local policy frameworks. While the problem is occasionally acknowledged in reports and situational analyses, it is rarely explored in depth, and concrete intervention measures are missing.</p> <p>The lack of waste collection disproportionately affects vulnerable groups of the population - particularly those living in informal settlements, rural slums, or geographically isolated areas - who are effectively excluded from municipal sanitation services. As a result, households often resort to self-disposal methods, such as open burning, illegal dumping, or storing waste at home, which creates severe environmental and public health risks. These unsanitary conditions contribute to the spread of disease, contamination of soil and water sources, and increased social stigma against affected groups, especially the Roma.</p> <p>The absence of structured waste management also reflects broader systemic neglect, as most waste-related infrastructure projects fail to prioritise underserved or marginalised regions. Furthermore, the lack of legal tenure in many of these settlements prevents local authorities from officially including them in urban or rural sanitation planning, reinforcing their invisibility in public policy.</p> <p>Despite its serious impact, there are no national strategies or objectives specifically targeting the expansion of waste collection services to vulnerable communities, nor are there funds or guidelines to support municipalities in extending these services to these communities. Bureaucratic limitations, institutional discrimination, and a lack of cross-sectoral coordination among housing, environment, and public health authorities compound the problem. This policy void allows the perpetuation of hazardous living environments and exacerbates social exclusion. Addressing this issue requires a multidimensional and rights-based approach that recognises waste collection as a public service essential to health and dignity, and ensures its accessibility for all communities, regardless of legal status or geographic location.</p>
Restricted heating capability (families)	significant problems	Irrelevant	absent	absent	The inability of households to adequately heat their homes - whether due to financial constraints, poor insulation, or lack of access to affordable energy sources - is a widespread but severely

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unable to heat all rooms/all times when necessary) or solid waste used for heating					<p>underrecognised issue in Romania. This problem particularly affects rural and marginalised areas, where energy poverty manifests through both limited heating capacity and the unsafe practice of burning solid waste for warmth.</p> <p>Despite its serious health, environmental, and social consequences, the issue is largely considered 'irrelevant' in public discourse and policymaking, with no targeted national programme to address it. Families unable to afford quality fuel or efficient heating appliances often resort to burning low-grade wood, plastic, textiles, or other household waste. This generates toxic fumes that pollute both indoor and outdoor environments, increasing the risk of respiratory illnesses and long-term health conditions, especially among children and the elderly. In extreme cases, these practices lead to domestic fires and accidents due to the unsafe handling of flammable materials. The root causes are manifold.</p> <p>Firstly, most low-income households cannot afford alternative sources such as electricity or natural gas, particularly when these are priced at market rates without subsidies. Secondly, the thermal inefficiency of homes - many of which are poorly insulated or structurally deteriorated - greatly increases heating needs and costs. Thirdly, these families are often disconnected from energy networks entirely, either due to geographic isolation or legal/technical constraints such as informal housing. Romania currently lacks a coherent policy to combat energy poverty.</p> <p>There are no national strategies offering heating subsidies tailored to vulnerable populations, nor systematic programmes to improve home energy efficiency through insulation or infrastructure upgrades. Furthermore, bureaucratic obstacles and low institutional capacity at the local level prevent municipalities from intervening effectively. This institutional inertia not only leaves the most vulnerable unprotected but also contradicts national commitments to environmental protection and social inclusion. Addressing energy poverty must become a political priority. Solutions should include simplified and targeted heating subsidies, national investment in residential energy efficiency, incentives for clean and affordable energy alternatives, and a legal framework that explicitly defines energy as a social right.</p>
Lack of security of tenure (legal titles are not clear and secure)	significant problems	understood with limitations	present but insufficient	some targets but not relevant	<p>Legal insecurity regarding housing tenure is a widespread issue in Romania, especially in marginalised and vulnerable communities where a large number of households lack clear and secure ownership titles. While national policies acknowledge the existence of this problem, the strategies adopted are insufficient in both scale and relevance to the affected populations. The most frequent cause is the absence of cadastral documentation: many dwellings, particularly in rural areas and informal settlements, are not registered in the official cadastre. Homes built without permits or located on unregistered land fall outside the legal framework, which disqualifies residents from accessing loans, subsidies, or basic services such as water, sewage, or electricity.</p> <p>Complex bureaucratic procedures, high administrative fees, and limited access to legal assistance make the process of regularizing property rights virtually inaccessible to low-income families. Among Roma communities, the situation is further exacerbated by discriminatory practices and a chronic lack of administrative support, perpetuating housing insecurity and social exclusion.</p> <p>The consequences are profound: without secure legal tenure, residents live under constant threat of eviction and are unable to invest in improving their homes. Their neighbourhoods remain outside urban planning initiatives, which results in a lack of infrastructure development and continued invisibility in public policy. Children growing up in such contexts often experience educational discontinuity and psychological stress linked to unstable living conditions.</p> <p>While Romania has introduced initiatives such as free land registration programmes under the national cadastre and land registration efforts, these have been implemented unevenly and have had limited impact in marginalised areas. Moreover, these programmes are not designed with the specific needs of vulnerable communities in mind, lacking outreach, guidance, and follow-up.</p>

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					To effectively address this issue, Romania must invest in comprehensive regularisation policies that include simplified legal pathways, cost-free assistance for low-income households, antidiscrimination safeguards, and institutional support tailored to communities living in informal or unregistered housing. Legal security of tenure must be recognised as a precondition for inclusive urban development, social stability, and access to fundamental rights.
Lacking or limited access to social housing	significant problems	mentioned but not analysed sufficiently	present but insufficient	some targets but not relevant	<p>The lack of adequate access to social housing in Romania represents a persistent structural barrier for vulnerable populations, including low-income families, Roma communities, single parents, and homeless people. Although national strategies occasionally acknowledge the issue, they fail to analyse its scope, systemic causes, and long-term consequences in sufficient detail. Measures that exist are inadequate in coverage, poorly implemented, and fail to reach the most disadvantaged populations. One of the primary challenges is the chronic shortage of available social housing units. Existing stock is well below the actual demand, and very few new units are built due to insufficient public investment and the absence of a coherent national programme to expand affordable housing. Moreover, many of the existing dwellings are in poor condition - deteriorated, overcrowded, or lacking basic utilities - yet they remain unrenovated due to budget constraints. Bureaucratic obstacles further complicate access. Eligibility procedures are often overly complex, exclusionary, and inconsistently applied by local authorities. As a result, those most in need are frequently unable to obtain housing, while discriminatory practices - particularly against Roma - undermine the fairness and transparency of the allocation process. Rising housing costs and urban expansion have worsened the situation in major cities, where vulnerable families are pushed toward informal housing on the outskirts, intensifying spatial segregation and deepening poverty.</p> <p>The impact of limited access to social housing is far-reaching. Families are forced into overcrowded, unsanitary, or insecure conditions, which in turn contribute to chronic health issues, educational setbacks, and long-term social exclusion - particularly among children. Additionally, the lack of housing security makes it harder for individuals to find and maintain employment, reinforcing cycles of dependency and marginalisation. While national frameworks formally recognise the importance of housing rights, the actual policy targets are often misaligned with the needs of marginalised populations. Implementation is slow, monitoring is weak, and there are few incentives or support structures for local governments to develop inclusive housing policies.</p> <p>To address this problem effectively, Romania must adopt a rights-based housing policy, increase public investment in both the construction and rehabilitation of social housing units, ensure equitable access procedures, and build institutional mechanisms to monitor and enforce non-discriminatory allocation.</p>
Overcrowding (available space/room for families)	significant problems	mentioned but not analysed sufficiently	present but insufficient	some targets but not relevant	<p>Overcrowding, defined as insufficient living space per individual within a household, constitutes a significant and persistent housing challenge in Romania, particularly affecting low-income families, large households, and marginalised communities. Although the issue is mentioned in national housing and social inclusion documents, its root causes and long-term effects are inadequately analysed. Moreover, the measures designed to mitigate overcrowding are either insufficient or fail to reach the populations most at risk.</p> <p>The main drivers of overcrowding include economic hardship, lack of affordable housing options, and rapid urbanization. Many families, especially in rural and segregated areas, are forced to live in cramped dwellings with multiple generations sharing the same small space. In cities, rising rents and limited access to social housing prevent low-income households from securing adequate living conditions. In some marginalised communities, it is common for two or more families to share a single dwelling, not out of cultural preference but due to economic necessity. Overcrowded conditions have direct and serious consequences.</p> <p>From a health perspective, they facilitate the spread of communicable diseases, compromise hygiene</p>

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					<p>standards, and exacerbate chronic illnesses. Children raised in overcrowded environments often lack space to study, play, or rest, which negatively impacts their educational performance and emotional well-being.</p> <p>The psychological toll is equally concerning: prolonged lack of personal space increases family tensions, contributes to anxiety and depression, and reduces individual autonomy and privacy.</p> <p>The social implications include stigmatisation, reduced civic participation, and exclusion from programmes or services that assume a minimum level of housing adequacy. While policy documents reference overcrowding, few concrete steps have been taken to reduce it. Programmes aimed at expanding housing options or supporting families in accessing larger dwellings are scarce, underfunded, or poorly targeted. Local authorities often lack the resources and policy guidance to intervene meaningfully. In addition, urban planning processes rarely prioritise the housing needs of large families or address density challenges in vulnerable neighbourhoods. To respond effectively, Romania must develop a coordinated housing strategy that includes financial assistance for overcrowded households, incentives for constructing or upgrading multi-room homes, and clear regulations linking housing adequacy to health, education, and social development goals. A shift toward integrated planning and sustained investment in inclusive housing solutions is crucial to breaking the cycle of spatial deprivation and promoting social cohesion.</p>
Housing-related indebtedness at levels which may cause eviction	significant problems	mentioned but not analysed sufficiently	absent	absent	<p>Housing-related indebtedness that places families at risk of eviction is a growing yet under-addressed problem in Romania. It affects a broad spectrum of vulnerable households, including low-income workers, the unemployed, informal labourers, and marginalised communities – especially in urban centres where housing costs have risen sharply in recent years.</p> <p>Although sporadically referenced in national documents, the phenomenon remains largely unexamined, and there are no concrete public interventions. The key causes of excessive housing debt are structural. Many families are forced to take out high-risk loans in order to purchase, build, or renovate housing due to a lack of access to social or affordable housing alternatives.</p> <p>As income instability persists in low-wage sectors, families are increasingly struggling to meet their monthly mortgage payments or rental obligations. Rising utility costs, inflation, and inadequate financial literacy among vulnerable groups exacerbate this issue. Additionally, many debtors have limited access to legal assistance or financial counselling, leaving them exposed to predatory lending practices or eviction procedures they do not fully understand. In this context, an unforeseen event such as illness, job loss, or family breakdown can push families into default, placing them at immediate risk of losing their home. The impacts are severe and multifaceted.</p> <p>Eviction results not only in the loss of shelter but also in social disintegration: children are forced to drop out of school, employment becomes harder to maintain, and families may become homeless or be relocated to overcrowded, substandard housing. Psychologically, the constant fear of eviction produces high levels of stress, anxiety, and depression.</p> <p>There is also a broader social cost, as evictions contribute to instability in already precarious neighbourhoods and deepen intergenerational poverty. Despite these realities, there are no national programmes designed to prevent evictions linked to debt. Romania lacks mechanisms such as temporary rent subsidies, emergency housing funds, legal protection against arbitrary evictions, or structured debt restructuring plans for housing costs. Financial education campaigns tailored to vulnerable households are also missing.</p> <p>This vacuum in public policy leaves struggling families unsupported and reinforces housing insecurity as a chronic condition. Addressing this issue requires a robust policy framework centred on housing stability, including accessible legal aid, fair lending regulation, temporary moratoriums on evictions in cases of hardship, and targeted debt relief measures. Without these, Romania risks normalising housing loss as a routine outcome of poverty, rather than a failure of policy.</p>

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Housing in segregated settlements/ neighbourhoods	significant problems	understood with limitations	absent	absent	<p>Residential segregation remains one of the most persistent and damaging forms of spatial inequality in Romania. Segregated settlements - often inhabited by Roma or other marginalised ethnic minorities - are characterised by physical isolation, infrastructural neglect, and systemic exclusion from public services. Although the issue is partially acknowledged in some policy documents, it is rarely prioritised, and there are no coherent strategies or targeted interventions to address its structural roots. These segregated neighbourhoods typically emerge on the outskirts of towns or cities, in geographically marginalised locations such as flood-prone areas, near industrial sites, or on unregistered land. Over time, due to a lack of investment and political will, such areas fall into deep disrepair. Houses are often makeshift or deteriorated, streets remain unpaved, and basic services such as electricity, running water, sewage, or waste collection are either unreliable or absent. In some cases, entire communities are cut off from public transportation, schools, and healthcare facilities. This spatial separation fosters multiple and overlapping layers of exclusion. Children from segregated areas frequently attend segregated or lower-quality schools, reinforcing educational disadvantage. Adults face discrimination when seeking employment, both due to their address and perceived ethnicity. The stigma associated with these areas compounds the exclusion, as residents are often portrayed negatively in media and local discourse. Moreover, urban planning policies usually ignore segregated areas or treat them as temporary irregularities, rather than recognising them as communities with equal rights. Forced evictions, non-consultative relocation, or demolition of homes without adequate alternatives further erode trust in public institutions and perpetuate trauma among already vulnerable populations. Despite occasional pilot programmes or local initiatives, there are no national frameworks that explicitly target residential desegregation. Romania lacks comprehensive strategies for inclusive urban planning that would ensure equitable investment in all neighbourhoods, regardless of ethnic composition or legal status. Without legal recognition, residents of segregated settlements are denied access to the rights enjoyed by other citizens, including the right to participate in local decision-making and environmental planning. A meaningful response requires a systemic shift, including investment in infrastructure and services in segregated communities, legal recognition and integration into urban planning, enforcement of anti-discrimination laws, and participatory development processes. Only through such inclusive measures can the cycle of spatial and social segregation be broken.</p>
Housing in informal or illegal settlements/ neighbourhoods	significant problems	understood with limitations	present but insufficient	some targets but not relevant	<p>Informal or illegal settlements - typically built without planning permission, outside urban zoning laws, and without recognised ownership titles - are a widespread phenomenon in Romania, particularly in marginalised areas inhabited by Roma and other vulnerable groups. While the problem is partially acknowledged in policy frameworks, the implemented measures are minimal, fragmented, and poorly adapted to the specific needs of these communities. The main characteristics of these settlements include: dwellings constructed from improvised or substandard materials, lack of connection to basic utilities (such as water, electricity, sewage, or waste collection), and geographic isolation from main roads, schools, healthcare centres, and employment hubs. These neighbourhoods often lie beyond the official urban perimeter, which excludes them from municipal development plans, investment schemes, and census data. One of the most critical challenges is the lack of legal recognition of property and residency status. Because residents do not hold formal titles, they are disqualified from applying for public utilities, subsidies, or loans to improve their homes. In many cases, they are also denied participation in community decision-making and are invisible to social service systems. The housing conditions themselves are often dangerous - exposed to extreme weather, unstable foundations, and poor sanitation - posing significant health and safety risks. In addition to the physical</p>

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					<p>hardship, living under the constant threat of forced eviction creates a climate of fear and insecurity. Families, especially children, are frequently displaced, disrupting their access to education and basic health services, and perpetuating cycles of poverty. Women and people with disabilities in these contexts are particularly vulnerable to exclusion and abuse. Although Romania has piloted some efforts to register properties and legalise informal settlements, these initiatives lack scalability and continuity. Complex administrative procedures, lack of inter-agency coordination, and insufficient funding also hinder them. Moreover, current housing policies often impose legalistic criteria that make legalization inaccessible to the poorest households. To break this cycle, national authorities must recognise the legitimacy of informal settlements as a developmental concern- not merely a legal irregularity. Solutions must include simplified regularisation processes, financial and legal support for low-income households, and integration of these neighbourhoods into local and regional development strategies. Participatory approaches, antidiscrimination safeguards, and alignment with EU urban inclusion principles are essential to ensure these communities are no longer left behind.</p>
Exposure to hazardous factors (living in areas prone to natural disasters or environmentally hazardous areas)	significant problems	mentioned but not analysed sufficiently	present but insufficient	some targets but not relevant	<p>In Romania, a considerable number of vulnerable households - particularly in informal or marginalised communities - are exposed to severe environmental risks and natural hazards, such as flooding, landslides, industrial pollution, or seismic activity. While the existence of such exposure is acknowledged in some national risk management strategies, the problem is insufficiently analysed in terms of its socioeconomic roots and its disproportionate impact on disadvantaged populations. Moreover, the response mechanisms are often reactive and fail to address long-term vulnerabilities or community resilience. Many homes are located in areas officially designated as high-risk zones - such as floodplains near rivers, unstable hillsides, or zones adjacent to industrial waste sites. These locations are often the only available or affordable spaces for the poorest families, especially those without legal tenure or excluded from social housing schemes. In these cases, the absence of adequate infrastructure (drainage systems, protective barriers, early warning systems) makes the communities more susceptible to environmental shocks. In industrial regions, residents are exposed to chronic risks, including air and water contamination, toxic emissions, and hazardous waste disposal. These conditions lead to elevated rates of respiratory disease, skin infections, and long-term health problems, particularly among children and the elderly. The health impacts are worsened by limited access to medical care, poor nutrition, and lack of environmental education. These communities also face economic vulnerability, as disasters often destroy what limited property or income-generating activities residents have. Rebuilding is typically not supported by state compensation mechanisms, and most affected households are uninsured. As a result, entire families are pushed further into poverty following each environmental event. Although Romania has adopted national plans on disaster risk reduction and civil protection, these frameworks lack a strong social inclusion component. They rarely prioritise the specific needs of vulnerable groups, and few funds are allocated to relocation support, home strengthening, or preventive interventions in high-risk neighbourhoods. Additionally, the lack of coordination between local authorities, urban planners, and environmental agencies hinders proactive planning and exacerbates institutional neglect. To reduce exposure and increase resilience, Romania must integrate environmental justice and social equity into its environmental and urban development policies. This includes mapping high-risk settlements, prioritising them for infrastructure investment, and offering safe and dignified relocation options. Community-based disaster preparedness, environmental education, and participatory planning processes must also be expanded so to ensure that the voices of those most at risk are included in shaping the solutions.</p>
Limited or lacking access to public transport	significant problems	understood with limitations	present but insufficient	some targets but not relevant	<p>Limited or absent access to public transport is a major obstacle to mobility, social inclusion, and economic opportunity for vulnerable populations in Romania - particularly in rural areas, marginalised communities, and urban peripheries. Although the issue is partially recognised at the national level,</p>

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					<p>including in mobility and infrastructure plans, the actual response measures are insufficient and often fail to reflect the lived realities of the affected groups.</p> <p>The most severely impacted are those living in remote villages or informal settlements, which lack integration into the formal transport grid. Many such localities lack basic bus or rail connections to administrative centres, hospitals, schools, or job markets. Even where transport routes exist, they are often infrequent, unreliable, or financially inaccessible for low-income residents. In certain regions, transportation is entirely privatized, leading to fluctuating fares, deteriorated vehicles, and the elimination of unprofitable routes – further isolating the communities. For Roma communities and other discriminated groups, the issue is compounded by ethnic bias and poor treatment by service providers, which discourages use even when transport is technically available.</p> <p>The consequences are manifold. Children face barriers to accessing quality education if schools are located far away and transportation options are limited. Adults are limited in their ability to seek or retain employment, particularly in urban areas, where job opportunities are concentrated but commuting is unaffordable. Older adults, people with disabilities, and women with caregiving responsibilities are disproportionately affected, as their mobility needs are more complex and less prioritised in existing transport systems.</p> <p>The problem also perpetuates cycles of territorial exclusion, as localities without access to public transportation often miss out on development funds, business investment, and public service expansion. While some EU-funded projects have sought to modernise Romania's transport infrastructure, they usually prioritise intercity or international corridors rather than last-mile connectivity or community-based transport services. National strategies typically focus on road quality and emissions reduction but do not systematically address affordability, accessibility, or equity. Local authorities, who are responsible for much of the public transport provision, often lack the technical capacity or budgetary support to develop integrated mobility solutions for underserved communities. To remedy this, Romania must adopt a mobility justice approach that frames public transport as a social right, not just an economic utility. This includes targeted subsidies for vulnerable users, expansion of routes based on equity indicators, coordination between transportation and housing policies, and direct engagement with marginalised communities in transportation planning and service monitoring.</p>
Limited or lacking internet access (e.g., public internet access points in deprived areas, areas not covered by broadband internet)	significant problems	Irrelevant	absent	absent	<p>The lack of reliable internet access – particularly in rural, marginalised, or informal communities – constitutes a significant but largely overlooked barrier to digital inclusion, education, healthcare, and economic participation in Romania. Despite its transformative potential, internet connectivity is still considered 'irrelevant' in national strategies targeting vulnerable populations, resulting in a widening digital divide that has only grown more critical in recent years. Entire areas, particularly in remote villages or informal urban neighbourhoods, remain outside the reach of broadband infrastructure due to market disinterest, poor coordination of public investments, and the absence of targeted policy interventions.</p> <p>Even when physical infrastructure exists, the costs of connection and maintenance are often unaffordable for low-income households, which lack the financial means to pay monthly subscriptions, buy appropriate equipment, or access repair services. Moreover, public internet access points – such as libraries, community centres, or school-based facilities – are scarce in disadvantaged areas, leaving entire populations disconnected from online services and information.</p> <p>The digital exclusion of vulnerable communities has wide-ranging implications. In education, students without internet access are unable to attend online classes, complete homework, or benefit from educational platforms. This was especially visible during the COVID-19 pandemic, when digital schooling became the norm and thousands of children were left behind. Adults are similarly</p>

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					<p>disadvantaged in accessing telework opportunities, applying for jobs, registering for social benefits, or engaging with public administration via e-government platforms. Healthcare access is also impacted, as digital tools for telemedicine or health information are underutilised by the communities that would benefit from them most.</p> <p>This situation is exacerbated by low digital literacy levels, which remain unaddressed by current educational or employment policies. The lack of internet access is not only a technological issue but a social and economic one, reinforcing patterns of exclusion and marginalisation. Despite European funding streams that could support digital inclusion (such as those under the EU Recovery and Resilience Facility), Romania has failed to deploy these resources effectively in underserved areas. There are no coordinated national programmes for expanding broadband coverage, providing subsidised internet for poor households, or creating safe digital access hubs in rural or vulnerable urban environments. To bridge this gap, Romania must recognise internet connectivity as a fundamental enabler of social rights. This requires a comprehensive digital inclusion strategy that includes infrastructure development in marginalised areas, free or low-cost public internet points, community training in digital skills, and regulatory incentives to encourage private sector involvement in equitable broadband deployment.</p>
Limited or lacking access to green spaces	significant problems	Irrelevant	absent	absent	<p>Access to green spaces is a crucial component of urban well-being, yet in Romania, large segments of the population – particularly those living in dense, low-income urban areas and marginalised neighbourhoods – face limited or no access to public parks, playgrounds, or natural recreational areas. Despite the substantial physical and mental health benefits associated with greenery, national policy frameworks treat this issue as marginal or ‘irrelevant’, resulting in a widespread disregard for equitable green space development.</p> <p>Urban planning in Romania has historically prioritised commercial or residential expansion at the expense of preserving and creating public green zones. This has led to the severe underdevelopment of such areas in many city peripheries and marginalised neighbourhoods, where the need is often greatest. Unregulated urban sprawl, inadequate zoning laws, and a lack of investment in neighbourhood-scale urban regeneration exacerbate the situation. In many cases, even where green areas exist on paper, they are either poorly maintained, inaccessible, or unsafe for community use due to neglect, vandalism, or poor lighting.</p> <p>The uneven spatial distribution of green infrastructure also reflects and reinforces social inequalities. Affluent urban districts tend to enjoy proximity to well-equipped parks and tree-lined streets, while vulnerable communities are often confined to areas with little or no vegetation, suffering from higher temperatures in the summer (the urban heat island effect), increased air pollution, and reduced opportunities for physical activity. This has direct implications on public health: studies link the lack of green spaces to increased stress, respiratory problems, sedentary lifestyles, and reduced life expectancy. For children, the absence of outdoor areas for play contributes to developmental delays and a lack of socialisation opportunities.</p> <p>For elderly and disabled people, inaccessible or absent green space limits mobility, physical exercise, and social engagement. Despite growing evidence on these links, Romania lacks a national policy for equitable urban greening. Environmental and health strategies fail to incorporate green space equity indicators or guidelines for inclusive green infrastructure planning. Local authorities often lack the resources or political support to prioritise investments in disadvantaged neighbourhoods. Furthermore, there are no national targets or funding mechanisms specifically designed to increase access to nature in underserved areas.</p> <p>A shift toward inclusive green urbanism is urgently needed. This would require: minimum standards for green space per capita; the strategic use of EU cohesion funds for urban regeneration; community participation in green space design and management; and integrating access to green infrastructure</p>

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					into broader public health, education, and housing policies. Making nature accessible for all is not just an environmental concern - it is a matter of social justice.
Roma excluded from environmental democracy	significant problems	Irrelevant	absent	absent	<p>The systematic exclusion of Roma communities from environmental decision-making processes in Romania reflects a deeper pattern of civic disenfranchisement and ecological inequality. Despite the well-documented vulnerabilities of Roma settlements to environmental degradation, pollution, and hazardous living conditions, their voices remain largely absent from public consultation processes, local planning decisions, and environmental justice frameworks.</p> <p>This exclusion is not only a violation of basic democratic principles but also a significant barrier to inclusive and sustainable development. Roma communities are disproportionately situated in polluted areas - near landfills, industrial zones, or in flood-prone locations - and often lack access to safe water, sanitation, waste management, and green infrastructure. Despite this, they are rarely consulted in decisions that directly affect their environment. Environmental impact assessments and urban development plans often overlook these communities in stakeholder lists, and participation mechanisms are either inaccessible or tokenistic. A lack of access to environmental education and public information on ecological rights and risks further compounds this marginalisation. The effects of this exclusion are wide-ranging. Roma residents bear the brunt of environmental hazards without the means to advocate for safer, healthier conditions. They are often blamed for local environmental degradation, despite being systematically denied services and infrastructure that would enable sustainable living. At the same time, they are excluded from green transition projects and environmental funding mechanisms, which are designed without consideration for the structural inequalities they face.</p> <p>Environmental exclusion reinforces social marginalisation, undermining Roma communities' trust in institutions and their ability to participate meaningfully in democratic life. Currently, no national strategies in Romania include Roma-specific objectives within environmental governance frameworks. Environmental protection laws often lack provisions for the participation of vulnerable groups, and there are no mechanisms in place to ensure equitable access to essential resources, such as clean air, water, or green spaces. Moreover, there is a notable absence of Roma representation in environmental agencies or consultative bodies at both local and national levels.</p> <p>Addressing this democratic deficit requires the explicit integration of environmental equity into both Roma inclusion policies and environmental policy. This includes mandatory consultation of affected communities, Roma representation in environmental decision-making, targeted investments in ecological infrastructure for Roma areas, and culturally appropriate education on environmental rights. Building an inclusive environmental democracy means ensuring that all citizens - not just the privileged few - have a voice in shaping the spaces in which they live.</p>

Social protection

Problems and conditions	Significance:	Identified by strategy:	Measures to address:	Targets defined:	Details of NRSF implementation relevant to the problem:
High at-risk-of-poverty rate and material and social deprivation	significant problems	understood with limitations	present but insufficient	some targets but not relevant	<p>The exclusion of Roma from environmental democracy is a significant problem in Romania, although it is considered 'irrelevant' in national policies. The lack of measures and objectives for involving this community in environmental decision-making amplifies social and ecological exclusion.</p> <p>Main problems:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Lack of representation in environmental decision-making processes, such as urban planning, access to natural resources or waste management.

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					<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Exclusion from green initiatives, such as sustainability projects or environmental education. • Living in polluted or risky areas, without consultation or involvement in remedial solutions. <p>Impact:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Limiting the civic and ecological rights of Roma. • Perpetuating social inequalities by neglecting the specifics of their communities in environmental policies. • Increased risks to health and quality of life due to exposure to hazardous environments
Income support programmes fail to guarantee an acceptable level of minimum income for every household	significant problems	mentioned but not analysed sufficiently	absent	absent	<p>Income support programmes that fail to guarantee an acceptable level of minimum income for each household represent a significant problem in Romania. Although this issue is mentioned in official strategies and documents, it has not been sufficiently analysed, and concrete measures to ensure an adequate minimum income are almost entirely missing.</p> <p>Main problems:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Insufficient value of social benefits: The current level of financial support is well below the threshold necessary to cover the basic needs of vulnerable households. • Restrictive eligibility criteria: Many households in difficulty do not qualify for support due to rigid or bureaucratic criteria, thus excluding a significant part of the population in need. • Lack of periodic indexing: Social benefits are not adequately adjusted to reflect the increase in the cost of living or the inflation rate, which reduces their effectiveness over time. • Uneven implementation: Support varies between regions and localities, particularly affecting communities in rural and marginalised areas. <p>Impact:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Persistence of extreme poverty: Households that depend on these programmes remain below the poverty line. • Social exclusion: The lack of an adequate minimum income prevents households from accessing basic services such as education, health and housing. • Economic disadvantage: Without sufficient support, families are unable to invest in vocational training or other opportunities that could improve their financial situation.
Limited access to income support schemes (low awareness, barrier of administrative burdens, stigma attached)	significant problems	mentioned but not analysed sufficiently	present but insufficient	some targets but not relevant	<p>Limited access to income support systems, caused by low awareness, administrative barriers and associated stigma, is a significant problem in Romania. Although the issue is mentioned in official documents, its analysis is insufficient, and the implemented measures fail to respond to the needs of vulnerable groups adequately. The established objectives are present, but inadequate and sometimes irrelevant.</p> <p>Main problems:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lack of information: Vulnerable people are often unaware of their rights or available benefits, primarily due to ineffective information campaigns, functional illiteracy, or limited access to communication channels. • Administrative barriers: Complex procedures, the need for difficult-to-obtain documents, and a lack of support for completing applications exclude many families in need. • Stigma and discrimination: Accessing social assistance is often perceived negatively, which discourages beneficiaries from seeking support. Social prejudices and discriminatory attitudes of civil servants amplify this stigma. Unequal access: People in rural or marginalised areas face additional difficulties due to a lack of infrastructure and poor public services. <p>Impact:</p>

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					<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Economic inequality: Limited access to financial support perpetuates poverty and social exclusion. • Reduced access to essential services: Without financial support, vulnerable families face difficulties in meeting basic needs, such as food, education, and health. • Stress and marginalisation: Administrative barriers and stigmatisation increase the stress levels of affected families and contribute to social exclusion.
Low flexibility of income support programmes for addressing changing conditions of the household	significant problems	Irrelevant	absent	absent	<p>The limited flexibility of income support programmes, which fail to respond effectively to changing household circumstances, is a significant problem, although it is considered 'irrelevant' at the national policy level. The lack of adaptive mechanisms in these programmes limits their ability to support households dynamically and according to real needs.</p> <p>Main problems:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Rigidity of eligibility criteria: Existing programmes are based on fixed criteria, which do not take into account rapid changes in the economic situation of households, such as job loss or unexpected increases in expenses. • Lack of periodic review: The level of financial support is not updated to account for inflation or changes in household structure (e.g. birth of a child). • The cumbersome adjustment process: Households have to go through complex administrative procedures to request changes to support, which discourages them from accessing additional help. • Low adaptability to crises: Support programmes fail to respond quickly to crisis situations, such as pandemics, natural disasters, or sudden increases in <p>Impact:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Economic inefficiency: Rigid support does not respond to real needs, leaving households facing severe financial difficulties. • Increasing vulnerability: Lack of adaptability amplifies the risk of poverty • Frustration and low trust: The difficult process and lack of flexibility reduce the population's trust in public institutions and social support systems.
Discrimination by agencies managing income-support programmes	significant problems	mentioned but not analysed sufficiently	absent	absent	<p>Discrimination by agencies managing income support programmes is a significant problem in Romania, although it has not been sufficiently analysed, and there are no concrete measures to address it. This situation directly affects vulnerable groups such as Roma, people from rural areas and other marginalised categories.</p> <p>Main problems:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Prejudices and discriminatory attitudes: Staff in agencies that manage support programmes often exhibit stereotypes and discriminatory attitudes towards certain groups, which discourages accessing social assistance. • Unequal treatment of requests: Requests from vulnerable groups are processed more slowly or rejected on subjective criteria, without clear legal justification. • Lack of monitoring and reporting mechanisms: There are no practical tools to identify and sanction discriminatory practices within these agencies. • Language and cultural barriers: Marginalised groups, such as Roma, experience difficulties in communicating with agency staff, especially <p>Impact:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Limited access to financial support: Discrimination prevents vulnerable families from receiving the aid needed for survival and social inclusion.

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					<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Persistence of social exclusion: Discriminatory treatment amplifies economic and social inequalities. • Lack of trust in public institutions: Negative experiences discourage vulnerable populations from seeking official help.
Risk of municipalities misusing income support to buy votes	significant problems	Irrelevant	absent	absent	<p>The risk of municipalities abusing income support to buy votes is a significant problem in Romania, despite being considered 'irrelevant' in national policies and concrete measures to address it are lacking. This phenomenon affects the integrity of the democratic process and citizens' trust in public institutions.</p> <p>Main problems:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Politicisation of social assistance: In some cases, financial support is conditional on political support for certain candidates or parties, which compromises the purpose of the support programmes. • Lack of transparency in allocation: Decisions on the provision of social assistance are often opaque and influenced by political interests, especially in rural or marginalised communities. • Absence of monitoring mechanisms: There are not enough measures to prevent and sanction the use of social assistance as a political tool. • Vulnerability of beneficiaries: People in extreme poverty are more easily influenced to accept such practices, due to their dependence on financial support provided by city halls. <p>Impact:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Compromising the electoral process: The use of social assistance to buy votes undermines the fairness of elections and erodes democracy. • Discrimination and Inequity: Beneficiaries who do not support the preferred candidate may be excluded or disadvantaged. • Degradation of public trust: Such practices reduce citizens' trust in state institutions and the social support system.

Social services

Problems and conditions	Significance:	Identified by strategy:	Measures to address:	Targets defined:	Details of NRSF implementation relevant to the problem:
Limited quality, capacity and comprehensiveness of help provided by social services	significant problems	irrelevant	absent	absent	<p>The risk of municipalities abusing income support to buy votes is a significant problem in Romania, despite being considered 'irrelevant' in national policies and concrete measures to address it are lacking. This phenomenon affects the integrity of the democratic process and citizens' trust in public institutions.</p> <p>Main problems:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Politicisation of social assistance: In some cases, financial support is conditional on political support for certain candidates or parties, which compromises the purpose of the support programmes. • Lack of transparency in allocation: Decisions on the provision of social assistance are often opaque and influenced by political interests, especially in rural or marginalised communities. • Absence of monitoring mechanisms: There are not enough measures to prevent and sanction the use of social assistance as a political tool. • Vulnerability of beneficiaries: People in extreme poverty are more easily influenced to accept

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					<p>such practices, due to their dependence on financial support provided by city halls.</p> <p>Impact:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Compromising the electoral process: The use of social assistance to buy votes undermines the fairness of elections and erodes democracy. Discrimination and Inequity: Beneficiaries who do not support the preferred candidate may be excluded or disadvantaged. Degradation of public trust: Such practices reduce citizens' trust in state institutions and the social support system.
Limited access to social services: low awareness of them, low accessibility, (e.g., due to travel costs) or limited availability	significant problems	mentioned but not analysed sufficiently	absent	absent	<p>Limited access to social services, caused by low awareness, low accessibility (including travel costs) and limited availability, is a significant problem in Romania. Although mentioned in official documents, the issue has not been sufficiently analysed, and the lack of concrete measures leaves many vulnerable communities without adequate support.</p> <p>Main problems:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Lack of information: Vulnerable people are not sufficiently informed about the existence of or how to access social services, either due to insufficient campaigns or due to functional illiteracy. Reduced accessibility: The costs of travelling to social centres represent a significant barrier, especially for residents of isolated rural areas. Lack of public transportation or poor infrastructure makes physical access to these services difficult. Limited availability: Social service centres are insufficient, especially in rural areas and marginalised communities. Qualified staff is understaffed, which limits the number of beneficiaries who can receive help. Poor infrastructure: Some social centres are not properly equipped to meet the needs of beneficiaries, such as accessibility for people with disabilities. <p>Impact:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Persistence of poverty and social exclusion: Lack of access to social services amplifies economic and social vulnerabilities. Reduced access to emergency interventions: Beneficiaries who cannot reach these services do not receive the necessary help in a timely manner. Inequality between regions: Differences in access between urban and rural areas accentuate regional disparities.
Services providers do not actively reach out to those in need	significant problems	mentioned but not analysed sufficiently	absent	absent	<p>Service providers not actively reaching out to those in need is a significant problem in Romania, albeit one that is often mentioned superficially and lacks concrete measures to address it. This situation limits the access of vulnerable groups to social support and contributes to the perpetuation of social and economic exclusion.</p> <p>Main problems:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Lack of proactive strategies: Social service providers rely on the demand of beneficiaries instead of initiating active contacts, which leaves many fundamental needs of marginalised communities unidentified. Limited resources: The lack of qualified personnel and financial resources hinders the development of outreach programmes (direct actions in communities). Focus on fixed centres: Social services are usually only available in dedicated centres, without expansion into isolated communities or rural areas.

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					<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cultural and linguistic barriers: For some groups, such as the Roma, the lack of cultural adaptation of services limits interaction with and trust in providers. <p>Impact:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Failure to meet real needs: Many people who need support remain without help. • Exclusion of marginalised groups: The lack of active contact increases social isolation and reduces the chances of integration of these communities. • Low programme efficiency: Resources allocated to social services are used inefficiently if they do not reach the most vulnerable.
Limited ability of social services to effectively work together with other agencies (e.g., public employment service) to help clients	significant problems	irrelevant	absent	absent	<p>The limited capacity of social services to collaborate effectively with other agencies, such as public employment services, is a significant problem in Romania. Although classified as 'irrelevant' in national policies, the lack of coordination between these institutions negatively affects the efficiency of support provided to vulnerable clients and reduces the impact of social programmes.</p> <p>Main problems:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lack of a clear inter-institutional framework: There are no well-defined mechanisms for collaboration among social services, employment agencies, and other relevant institutions (e.g. health, education). • Communication deficit: Beneficiary information is not shared effectively between agencies, resulting in duplication of efforts or overlooking specific needs. Distinct and unaligned objectives: Each institution prioritises its own goals, without a common strategy for integrated customer support. • Insufficient resources for coordination: The staff and infrastructure needed for effective collaboration are often inadequate, especially in marginalised communities. <p>Impact:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Fragmented support for beneficiaries: Lack of collaboration makes the support provided incomplete or not adapted to the complex needs of clients • Failure in socio-economic integration: Vulnerable people often do not receive combined services (e.g. social counselling and vocational training), which limits their chances of overcoming crisis situations. • Administrative inefficiency: Resources are used inefficiently and programme outcomes are below potential.
Discrimination by social service providers	significant problems	understood with limitations	present but insufficient	some targets but not relevant	<p>Discrimination by social service providers is a significant problem in Romania, particularly affecting vulnerable groups such as Roma, people with disabilities and families in extreme poverty. Although the problem is partially understood, measures to combat it are present but insufficient, and the objectives set are not always relevant to the needs of the affected groups.</p> <p>Main problems:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Prejudices and stereotypes: Social service staff often display discriminatory attitudes based on ethnicity, social status or other characteristics, which affects the quality of support provided. • Unequal treatment of beneficiaries: Beneficiaries from marginalised groups often receive reduced or conditional support compared to other categories of people. • Lack of training on diversity and inclusion: Staff do not receive adequate training to understand the needs and rights of vulnerable groups, which contributes to the perpetuation of discriminatory practices. • Weak monitoring and sanctioning mechanisms: There are not enough tools to identify and sanction cases of discrimination within social services. <p>Impact:</p>

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					<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Reduced access to support: Beneficiaries affected by discrimination are discouraged from seeking help, which exacerbates their social and economic problems. Social exclusion: Discrimination reinforces stereotypes and segregation, reducing the chances of integration of vulnerable groups. Low trust in institutions: Negative experiences discourage the use of social services and decrease trust in authorities.
Lack of adequacy of programmes for addressing indebtedness (providing counselling and financial support)	significant problems	irrelevant	absent	absent	<p>The lack of adequate debt relief programmes, including financial counselling and support, is a significant problem in Romania, although it is classified as 'irrelevant' in national policies. The absence of well-designed programmes to help indebted households limits their ability to manage their debts and avoid economic crises.</p> <p>Main problems:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Lack of accessible financial advice: Vulnerable households do not benefit from counselling services to help them manage their debts or understand the economic implications of loans. Inadequate financial support: Existing programmes do not provide sufficient resources for debt restructuring or preventing debt accumulation. Absence of preventive mechanisms: There are no effective initiatives to educate the population on managing personal budgets and avoiding excessive debt. Administrative barriers and stigma: Complex procedures for accessing support and the stigma associated with financial difficulties discourage people from seeking help. <p>Impact:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Inability to overcome financial crises. Financial exclusion: Indebted people become excluded from formal financial systems, exacerbating economic isolation

Child protection

Problems and conditions	Significance:	Identified by strategy:	Measures to address:	Targets defined:	Details of NRSF implementation relevant to the problem:
Child protection not considered in the NRSF	significant problems	understood with limitations	present but insufficient	some targets but not relevant	<p>Child protection insufficiently integrated into the NRSF is a significant problem in Romania. Although partially recognised, this problem is not adequately addressed, and existing measures for child protection in Roma communities are insufficient and fragmented.</p> <p>Main problems:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Lack of a specific focus on children within the NRSF: The strategy addresses the general problems of Roma communities, but does not place a clear focus on the particular needs and rights of children. Limited access to education and social services: Roma children face barriers in accessing quality education, medical services, and the social support necessary for their development. Social exclusion and discrimination: Roma children are often marginalised in their communities and in interactions with public institutions, which limits opportunities for social inclusion. Lack of resources and specialised personnel: Child protection is hindered by the insufficient resources and shortage of qualified personnel in marginalised communities, which impede the implementation of support measures.

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					<p>Impact:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Disadvantages in education and health: Lack of adequate protection leads to increased school dropout, insufficient access to medical care, and poor living conditions. Increasing social vulnerabilities: Children who are not adequately protected are more prone to exploitation, abuse or human trafficking. Transgenerational social exclusion: Without specific support, Roma children grow up in an environment that perpetuates poverty and marginalisation.
Specific vulnerability of Romani children as victims of violence not considered	significant problems	mentioned but not analysed sufficiently	present but insufficient	some targets but not relevant	<p>The specific vulnerability of Roma children as victims of violence is a significant problem in Romania, mentioned but insufficiently analysed in national policies and strategies. Existing measures are present but inadequate, and the established objectives are not relevant for effectively combating violence against Roma children.</p> <p>Main problems:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Lack of a specific focus on Roma children in protection policies: General national child protection strategies do not include specific measures to address the unique vulnerabilities of Roma children. Underreporting of violence cases: Violence against Roma children is often underreported due to cultural barriers, lack of trust in authorities, and social stigma. Reduced access to support services: Roma children and their families have limited access to psychological counselling, shelters, and other services needed to cope with situations of abuse or violence. Institutional discrimination: Discriminatory attitudes from authorities and service providers discourage reporting of violence and hinder effective intervention. Socio-economic factors: Extreme poverty and social exclusion amplify the vulnerability of Roma children, exposing them to multiple forms of violence, including domestic violence, physical abuse and exploitation. <p>Impact:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Psychological and physical trauma: Lack of adequate intervention leads to long-term effects on the mental and physical health of affected children. Social exclusion: Child victims of violence are more likely to drop out of school and experience social exclusion, perpetuating the cycle of vulnerability. Lack of trust in institutions: Discrimination and lack of support reduce trust
Segregated or discriminatory child-protection services provided to Roma	significant problems	irrelevant	absent	absent	<p>Segregated or discriminatory child protection services provided to Roma are a significant problem in Romania, although it is classified as 'irrelevant' in national policies. The lack of concrete measures and adequate monitoring perpetuates inequalities and prevents equal access to support for Roma children.</p> <p>Main problems:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Segregation in service provision: Roma children are often separated in social protection institutions or benefit from different, lower-quality services compared to other children. Discrimination in accessing services: Roma families face institutional barriers and discriminatory attitudes from staff, which limit access to adequate help. Lack of culturally sensitive staff: The lack of specific training in the field of cultural diversity hinders the provision of services adapted to the needs of Roma children. Underrepresentation in protection policies: National strategies do not explicitly address the unique needs of Roma children, thus ignoring the specific challenges they face. <p>Impact:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Inequalities in child protection: Roma children receive inferior support, which exacerbates

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					<p>their social and economic vulnerabilities.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Long-term disadvantages: Lack of adequate protection increases the risk of school dropout, exploitation or social exclusion for Roma children. • Low trust in public institutions: Experiences of discrimination discourage Roma communities from seeking support from authorities
Activities aimed at strengthening parental responsibility and skills not available or not reaching out to Roma parents	significant problems	irrelevant	absent	absent	<p>The lack of activities aimed at strengthening parental responsibility and skills for Roma parents is a significant problem in Romania, although it is considered “irrelevant” in national policies. The lack of programmes or the difficulty of accessing them limits development opportunities for Roma families and perpetuates the vulnerability of children in these communities.</p> <p>Main problems:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Absence of culturally adapted programmes: General parenting skills programmes are not designed to meet the specific needs of Roma parents, which reduces their participation. • Lack of geographical and financial access: Many Roma communities live in isolated or marginalised areas, where such activities are not available, and travel costs represent an additional barrier. • Low level of information: Roma parents are not sufficiently informed about the existence or benefits of these programmes, due to insufficient awareness campaigns. • Discrimination and stigmatisation: The discriminatory attitudes of the staff running these programmes discourage the participation of Roma parents and amplify social exclusion. <p>Impact:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Educational Disadvantages for Children: Lack of adequate parental support contributes to school dropout and reduced access to educational opportunities. • Strained family relationships: Lack of parental training affects family dynamics, increasing children's vulnerability to violence or neglect. • Persistence of stereotypes: The exclusion of Roma parents from such programmes reinforces prejudices related to parental responsibility in Roma communities.
Illegal practices of child labour	significant problems	irrelevant	absent	absent	<p>Illegal child labour practices are a significant problem in Romania, particularly affecting children from vulnerable communities, including Roma. Although this issue is classified as “irrelevant” in national policies, the lack of concrete measures and adequate monitoring contributes to the perpetuation of child labour exploitation.</p> <p>Main problems:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The burden of poverty: Vulnerable families are often forced to involve children in work activities to supplement household income. • Lack of access to education: School dropout or low participation in the educational system favours children's involvement in illegal work. • Lack of oversight mechanisms: Institutions responsible for child protection and labour authorities do not have sufficient resources to identify and sanction cases of illegal child labour. • Cultural acceptance of child labour: In some communities, the involvement of children in labour is considered a standard practice, which reduces reporting and combating the phenomenon. • Exploitation in informal sectors: Children are often involved in agricultural work, collecting recyclable materials, or other informal activities, where regulations are poorly enforced. <p>Impact:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Violation of child rights: Illegal child labour seriously affects their health, education, and

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					<p>personal development.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Persistence of poverty: Lack of education and early involvement in work perpetuates the cycle of poverty in affected families. • Health issues: Children involved in work are exposed to unsafe conditions, accidents and occupational diseases
Large-scale and discriminatory placement of Romani children in early childhood care institutions	significant problems	irrelevant	absent	absent	<p>The widespread and discriminatory placement of Roma children in early childhood care institutions is a significant problem in Romania, even though it is classified as 'irrelevant' in national policies. This practice reflects a lack of adequate family support measures and perpetuates social inequalities and stigmatisation.</p> <p>Main problems:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Discrimination in the placement process: Roma children are overrepresented in care institutions due to stereotypes and prejudices that influence authorities' decisions. • Lack of family support alternatives: Vulnerable families do not receive sufficient financial or social support to prevent the separation of children from their parents. • Inadequate conditions in institutions: In many cases, institutions do not provide an optimal environment for children's development, and the cultural and emotional needs of Roma children are ignored. • Lack of monitoring and accountability: There are no effective mechanisms to ensure that the placement of children in institutions is used. <p>Impact:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Social exclusion and perpetuation of stigma: Roma children placed in institutions are more likely to experience long-term marginalisation and discrimination. • Emotional trauma: Separation from family and the lack of a family environment affect the emotional and psychological development of children. • Vicious circle of poverty: A lack of adequate family support reduces children's long-term chances of social and economic integration.
Persistence of large-scale institutions rather than family-type arrangements	significant problems	irrelevant	absent	absent	<p>The persistence of large institutions in place of family-type arrangements is a significant problem in Romania, although it is classified as 'irrelevant' in national policies. This practice negatively affects the emotional, psychological and social development of children, especially those from vulnerable communities.</p> <p>Main problems:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lack of transition to family-type models: Although there are initiatives for deinstitutionalisation, many large institutions continue to operate, and resources for family arrangements are insufficient. • Negative impact of institutionalisation: Large institutions cannot provide the personalised attention necessary for the healthy development of children, which leads to emotional trauma and difficulties in social integration. • Limited resources for alternatives: The lack of financial support and qualified personnel hinders the development of practical solutions, such as placement in families or family-type homes. • Focusing on short-term solutions: Current policies prioritise maintaining existing institutions instead of investing in developing sustainable family arrangements. <p>Impact:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Developmental deficits: Children in large institutions are more prone to delays in cognitive and emotional development. • Difficult social integration: The lack of a family environment makes it difficult for these

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					<p>children to adapt to community life in the long term.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Stigma and exclusion: Children raised in large institutions are often negatively perceived by society, which amplifies their marginalisation.
Early marriages	significant problems	irrelevant	absent	absent	<p>Early marriage is a significant problem in Romania, mainly affecting girls from vulnerable communities, including Roma. Although considered 'irrelevant' in national policies, the lack of measures and an effectively enforced legislative framework perpetuates this practice, with a negative impact on children's rights and development opportunities.</p> <p>Main problems:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Cultural and traditional factors: In some communities, early marriage is considered a cultural norm, making it challenging to combat through public policies. Lack of enforcement of legislation: Although underage marriages are prohibited, enforcement of the law is ineffective, and reported cases are rare. Lack of access to education: School dropout and lack of quality education contribute to the perpetuation of early marriages, as girls lack viable alternatives for personal and professional development. Poverty and social exclusion: Families in marginalised communities often see early marriages as an economic solution to reduce financial burdens. <p>Impact:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Violation of child rights: Girls involved in early marriages are deprived of education, health, and the right to choose their future. Health issues: Early pregnancies endanger the physical and mental health of girls. Social exclusion: Early marriages reduce girls' chances of integrating into society and contributing to community development.
Barriers to children's registration; statelessness	minor problems	irrelevant	absent	absent	<p>Barriers to child registration and the risk of statelessness are a minor issue, but with significant implications for children's rights. Although classified as "irrelevant" in national policies, the lack of effective measures to facilitate birth registration can lead to legal and social difficulties for unregistered children.</p> <p>Main problems:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Lack of access to parents' identity documents: Families from vulnerable communities, especially Roma, often face difficulties in obtaining the necessary documents for birth registration. Geographical and administrative barriers: Limited access to institutions that facilitate birth registration in rural or remote areas complicates the process. Lack of information: Parents are often unaware of the importance and procedure of birth registration. Risk of statelessness: Children born to stateless or undocumented parents risk not being recognised as citizens, which limits access to services and fundamental rights. <p>Impact:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Limited access to education and healthcare: Unregistered children are unable to access basic services, including schools and healthcare. Lack of legal rights: Without a birth certificate, children cannot benefit from legal protection and other rights associated with citizenship. Risk of marginalisation: Non-registration perpetuates the social and economic exclusion of these children and their families.

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Biased treatment of Roma youth by security and law enforcement	significant problems	irrelevant	present but insufficient	some targets but not relevant	<p>The biased treatment of Roma youth by law enforcement and security forces is a significant problem in Romania. Although classified as 'irrelevant' in national policies, it remains present and insufficiently addressed, and existing objectives do not adequately respond to the situation.</p> <p>Main problems:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ethnic profiling: Young Roma are frequently disproportionately targeted by law enforcement checks and inspections based on ethnic stereotypes. • Abuse and excessive violence: There are reported cases of abusive treatment and disproportionate use of force against young Roma, which increases fear and distrust of the authorities. • Lack of reporting mechanisms: Victims do not have easy access to safe and effective mechanisms to report abuse or discriminatory behaviour by law enforcement. • Inadequate staff training: The lack of training in the field of cultural diversity and human rights contributes to the perpetuation of discriminatory treatment. • Insufficient enforcement of antidiscrimination legislation: Although the legislation prohibits discrimination, its application in the context of law enforcement is poorly monitored and implemented. <p>Impact:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Social exclusion: Negative interactions with law enforcement lead to the marginalisation of young Roma and reinforce social stereotypes. • Distrust in authorities: Negative experiences reduce collaboration between Roma communities and state institutions, affecting the prevention and fight against crime. • Trauma and anxiety: Discriminatory treatment affects the mental health of young Roma, limiting opportunities for social integration.
Inadequate child/adolescent participation	significant problems	irrelevant	absent	absent	<p>The inadequate participation of children and adolescents in decisions that concern them is a significant problem in Romania, although it is classified as 'irrelevant' in national policies. Their lack of active involvement in decision-making processes limits opportunities for personal and social development, perpetuating their exclusion from civic and educational processes.</p> <p>Main problems:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lack of consultation mechanisms: There are no effective structures through which children and adolescents can express their opinions on policies or projects that affect their lives. • Absence of effective civic education: The education system does not provide sufficient opportunities to learn about children's rights and the role of participation in democratic processes. • Stigmatising young people's opinions: In many cases, the opinions of children and adolescents are considered irrelevant or unimportant, which results in • Lack of resources to support participation: Programmes that promote youth participation at the local or national level are rare and underfunded. • Inequalities between groups: Children from marginalised communities, including Roma, have even fewer opportunities to actively participate due to social exclusion and cultural barriers. <p>Impact:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Limited personal development: Lack of involvement in decisions reduces the ability of children and adolescents to develop social and leadership skills. • Exclusion from decision-making processes: Children and adolescents are not involved in policies that affect their future, which reduces the relevance and effectiveness of these

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					<p>policies.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Violation of child rights: Inadequate participation violates children's fundamental right to express their views on matters that concern them.
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Promoting (awareness of) Roma arts, culture, and history

Problems and conditions	Significance:	Identified by strategy:	Measures to address:	Targets defined:	Details of NRSF implementation relevant to the problem:
Poor or lacking awareness of the general population of the contribution of Roma art and culture to national and European heritage	significant problems	understood with limitations	adequate but with room for improvement	adequate but with room for improvement	<p>The low or non-existent awareness of the general population regarding the contribution of Roma art and culture to national and European heritage is a significant problem in Romania. Although partially understood, the measures implemented to promote this aspect are only partially adequate and require improvements to generate a real impact.</p> <p>Main problems:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lack of cultural education: The education system does not sufficiently integrate information about the cultural contributions of Roma, which perpetuates stereotypes and a lack of appreciation. • Insufficient representation in the media: Roma contributions to art and culture are poorly represented or even ignored in the media, which limits their visibility. • Limited access to cultural initiatives: Projects and events that promote Roma culture are not sufficiently supported or promoted at the national and European levels. • Persistence of negative stereotypes: Lack of awareness contributes to the perpetuation of prejudice against Roma, ignoring their cultural and artistic value. <p>Impact:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Marginalisation of Roma culture: The valuable contributions of Roma to cultural heritage are overlooked, which reduces • Lack of diversity in cultural narratives: The exclusion of Roma culture from national and European discourses leads to an incomplete perception of • Perpetuating discrimination: The lack of appreciation for Romani culture reinforces the stigmatisation and exclusion of Romani communities. <p>Possibilities for improvement:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improved cultural education: Integrating Roma cultural contributions into school curricula and educational programmes. • Media promotion: Creating and distributing media content that highlights the contribution of Roma to art and culture. • Support for cultural initiatives: Increasing the funding and visibility of cultural projects that involve and promote Roma art.
Exclusion of Roma communities from national cultural narratives	significant problems	identified and analysed sufficiently	present but insufficient	some targets but not relevant	<p>The exclusion of Roma communities from national cultural narratives is a significant problem in Romania. Although adequately identified and analysed in certain contexts, the measures implemented to address this exclusion are insufficient, and some of the set objectives do not correspond to the real needs for cultural inclusion.</p> <p>Main problems:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lack of representation in official cultural heritage: The contributions of Roma communities to national cultural heritage are rarely recognised in official museums, events and cultural initiatives.

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					<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Non-integration into school curricula: Roma culture and history are not sufficiently included in the educational system, perpetuating ignorance of their cultural and historical contributions. • The dominance of majority narratives: Official cultural discourse often privileges majority traditions and perspectives, leaving little room for cultural diversity. • Cultural stigmatisation: Prejudices against Roma communities discourage their inclusion in cultural events and other public platforms for expression. <p>Impact:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cultural marginalisation: Exclusion from national cultural narratives perpetuates stereotypes and reduces the chances of integration of Roma communities. • Erosion of cultural identity: The lack of official recognition affects the affirmation and transmission of Roma cultural heritage among younger generations. • Amplified social inequalities: Cultural exclusion contributes to the isolation of Roma communities and the reduction of their participation in public life. <p>Possibilities for improvement:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Official recognition: Integrating Roma cultural contributions into national cultural initiatives and institutions. • Diversified education: Inclusion of Roma culture and history in compulsory educational programmes. • Cultural promotion: Supporting initiatives that promote Roma culture within national and international events.
Romani history and culture not included in school curricula and textbooks for both Roma and non-Roma students	significant problems	identified and analysed sufficiently	present but insufficient	some targets but not relevant	<p>The lack of inclusion of Roma history and culture in school curricula and textbooks for Roma and non-Roma students is a significant problem in Romania. Although this problem has been sufficiently identified and analysed, existing measures are insufficient, and some objectives are not relevant to ensure an adequate representation of Roma cultural heritage.</p> <p>Main problems:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lack of dedicated curriculum: General school curricula do not consistently include elements of Roma history and culture, leading to widespread ignorance about the contributions of Roma. • The lack of specialised manuals: Students do not have access to educational materials that reflect Roma culture and history in a balanced way, for both Roma and non-Roma. • Prejudices in the educational system: The education system perpetuates stereotypes through omission or inadequate representation of Roma communities. <p>Insufficient teacher training: Teachers often lack specific training to address and integrate Roma culture into their teaching effectively. Impact:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identity marginalisation: Roma students cannot capitalise on their cultural and historical identity, which affects self-esteem and social integration. • Ignorance and prejudice: The lack of education about Romani culture among non-Roma students perpetuates stereotypes and discrimination. • Difficult social integration: Non-inclusion in school programmes limits the understanding of diversity and contributes to social segregation. <p>Possibilities for improvement:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • School curriculum review: Integrate Roma history and culture into all national school curricula, not just as part of optional modules. • Developing textbooks and educational materials: Creating resources that reflect cultural diversity and are accessible to all students.

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					<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Teacher training: Organising training courses for teachers on cultural diversity and inclusive teaching.
Lack of inclusion of Romani language in schools, and development of necessary educational materials and resources for Romani language preservation and teaching	significant problems	identified and analysed sufficiently	present but insufficient	some targets but not relevant	<p>The lack of inclusion of the Romani language in schools, as well as the development of educational materials and resources necessary for its the preservation and teaching is a significant problem in Romania. Although sufficiently identified and analysed, the measures implemented so far are insufficient to ensure the preservation and promotion of the Romani language, and some of the set objectives are not relevant to the real needs of the Roma community.</p> <p>Main problems:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The absence of a dedicated national curriculum: The Romani language is not systematically integrated into school curricula, being available only in a few schools as an optional language or in limited contexts. Lack of educational materials: Textbooks, pedagogical guides and other resources needed for teaching the Romani language are rare and insufficient. Low number of qualified teachers: The lack of teachers trained to teach the Romani language limits students' access to Romani language classes. Underfunding of language initiatives: Programmes aimed at developing and promoting the Romani language are poorly funded and lack consistent support from the authorities. Ignorance and lack of interest at the institutional level: The Romani language is not perceived as a significant part of the national linguistic heritage, resulting in its neglect in educational policies. <p>Impact:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Loss of linguistic identity: The lack of teaching the Romani language in schools contributes to its decline in use among younger generations. Cultural marginalisation: Ignoring the Romani language in the educational system perpetuates the exclusion of Roma communities from cultural discourse Reduced educational opportunities: Students who lack access access to the Romani language are deprived of an essential element of their cultural identity and opportunities for linguistic expression. <p>Possibilities for improvement:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Integrating the Romani language into the curriculum: Expanding the teaching of the Romani language to all levels of education, with government support. Development of educational materials: Creation of textbooks, digital platforms and other resources for teaching the Romani language. Teacher training: Training and Certification of Teachers for Teaching the Romani. Language. Funding language programmes: Allocation of funds to support initiatives to promote the Romani language.
Lack of memorialisation of Roma history through establishing monuments, commemorative activities, and institutionalising	significant problems	identified and analysed sufficiently	adequate but with room for improvement	adequate but with room for improvement	<p>The lack of memorialisation of Roma history, as evidenced by the absence of monuments, commemorative activities, and the institutionalisation of data relevant to Roma history, is a significant problem in Romania. Although identified and partially addressed, current measures are only adequate to a certain extent, and improvements are needed to ensure proper recognition and commemoration of Roma history.</p> <p>Main problems:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Insufficient monuments and memorials: The number of monuments and memorials dedicated to Roma history, especially regarding the Roma Holocaust and slavery, is minimal. Rare commemorative activities: Events organised to commemorate significant events in

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dates relevant to Roma history					<p>Roma history, such as the Holocaust or the abolition of slavery, are sporadic and poorly promoted.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lack of inclusion in the official calendar: Dates relevant to Roma history, such as Roma Holocaust Remembrance Day, are not sufficiently well integrated into the national commemoration calendar or public consciousness. • Reduced visibility in public space: Roma history is not promoted through cultural and educational initiatives that support memorialisation and broad awareness. <p>Underfunding of memorialisation initiatives: Projects aimed at memorialising Roma history are poorly funded, and there is a lack of dedicated programmes to support these initiatives. Impact:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Loss of historical memory: The lack of memorialisation contributes to the forgetting of significant events in Roma history, perpetuating cultural marginalisation. • Inequality in historical recognition: Compared to other groups, the history of the Roma receives less attention, which affects their inclusion and representation. • Barrier in combating discrimination: Ignorance of history contributes to prejudices and negative stereotypes about Roma communities. <p>Possibilities for improvement:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Building monuments and memorials: Creating spaces dedicated to commemorating Roma history at the local and national level. • Institutionalisation of relevant dates: Integrating commemorative days into the official calendar and promoting them through public events. • Funding memorialisation projects: Allocating resources to initiatives that promote Roma history through art, culture, and education. • Raising public awareness: Information campaigns and collaborations between authorities, NGOs, and Roma communities to promote their history.
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