



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

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of the national strategic framework
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The report was prepared by a coalition of CSOs:

- Roma advocacy and research centre
- eduRoma – Roma Education Project
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- Romano Kher
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The report represents the findings of the authors, and it does not necessarily reflect the views of the consortium or the European Commission who cannot be held responsible for any use which may be made of the information contained herein.

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

AP	Action Plan
CBS	Conference of Bishops of Slovakia
CC	Community Centre
CSO	Civil Society Organisation
EC	European Commission
EURSF	EU Roma Strategic Framework
ERDF	European Regional Development Fund
ESF	European Social Fund
ESIF	European Social and Investment Funds
FRA	Fundamental Rights Agency of the European Union
FSW	Field Social Work
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
HLSAF	Headquarters for Labour, Social Affairs and Family
MRC	Marginalised Roma Communities
NIEY	National Institute of Education and Youth
NEET	Not in Education, Employment, or Training
NGO	Non-governmental Organisation
NRSF	Strategy for Equality, Inclusion and Participation of the Roma by 2030 (2021-2030)
OGPRC	Office for the Government Plenipotentiary for Roma Communities
OP SK 21-27	Operational Programme Slovakia 2021-2027
RCM	Roma Civil Monitor
RPHO	Regional Public Health Office
SAO	Supreme Audit Office of Slovak Republic
SNCHR	Slovak National Centre for Human Rights
TWG	Thematic Working Group

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The report examines the implementation of the National Roma Strategic Framework (NRSF) in the period 2022–2024, highlighting notable shortcomings in its execution. Although monitoring processes exhibit some strengths, there are areas that require improvement, such as implementation quality, inclusiveness, and the authorities' grasp of the NRSF's complexity. A key issue is that the NRSF does not target the majority population; in consequence, measures fail to address prejudices and racism against Roma. This undermines efforts aimed at Roma inclusion.

The report emphasises the urgent need for systemic enhancements to achieve effective, sustainable, and broadly supported Roma inclusion. This summary provides an overview of the key findings, which are elaborated and sourced in detail throughout the full report.

Implementation of the NRSF

The government adopted the NRSF in 2021, followed by its five Action Plans (APs) between 2022 and 2024. These Action Plans concern the following areas: education, employment, housing, health, and the fight against antigypsyism and the promotion of participation and are valid for the period until 2030.

In 2022, a total of 139 Actions were planned for implementation, of which 34% were completed. However, most activities did not go as anticipated. The situation was similar in 2023.

The NRSF is monitored annually, exceeding the biannual cycle recommended by the European. The annual evaluation reports on the implementation of the Action Plans are available on the website of the Office of the Government Plenipotentiary for Roma Communities (OGPRC).

Data collection on the living conditions of the Roma population is ongoing, with an updated *Atlas of Roma Communities* planned for 2025. Despite continuous efforts to collect data and significant investments, the findings are seldom used to inform policymaking.

Certain domestic policies, including an amendment to the Education Act and social reforms, appear to conflict with the objectives of the NRSF. Although some projects under the post-COVID Recovery and Resilience Plan aim to promote inclusion, they do not consistently address segregation, which remains a systemic obstacle to Roma equality and inclusion.

Roma organisations' involvement in the implementation of the APs is limited. Roma are employed in regional offices and projects, but their representation in public institutions remains unclear due to legal restrictions regarding the collection of data on ethnicity. Only a few Roma participate in NRSF monitoring and evaluation, with non-transparent nomination processes. The OGPRC platform, organised between 2021 and 2022, allowed for public debate on Action Plans, but its impact on decision-making is uncertain.

Review of country situation by area

Fight against antigypsyism and discrimination: The NRSF has largely failed to implement its Action Plan against antigypsyism. The Slovak National Centre for Human Rights has implemented planned training activities, but their scope is limited compared to the scale of the problem. Government efforts to challenge Roma stereotypes have inadvertently reinforced them by portraying Roma primarily as entertainers. Measures to combat hate speech, educate the media on proper representation, and foster critical thinking to counter misinformation have not been enacted. Anti-discrimination activities are fragmented across different Action Plans and lack a unified approach. The most effective activities in advocacy for Roma rights are implemented by CSOs.

Education: Some positive developments related to pre-school education have been recorded. The Recovery and Resilience Facility has significantly invested in increasing the capacity of kindergartens across the country. A new funding policy for kindergartens in place since 2025 is likely to improve access to pre-primary education for all children, and three- and four-year-old children are entitled to be admitted into kindergarten. However, the impact on Roma children cannot be assessed at this stage. Schools lack defined strategies for engaging Roma parents, and tutoring programmes are associated with inconsistent funding. Barriers to completing primary school in adulthood further limit educational opportunities. Anti-discrimination policies show limited effectiveness, with weak desegregation standards and no state support for implementation. Schools can still

be built in segregated areas, worsening exclusion. A new law allows segregated schools to rebrand as 'minority schools', potentially hindering desegregation efforts.

Employment: Evaluations of NRSF implementation in the field of employment, commissioned by the government, admit that most activities have delivered unsatisfactory results. Employment programmes lack a focus on marginalised Roma communities (MRC) and fail to assess their impact. The involvement of unqualified actors contributes to ineffective outcomes. Discrimination in hiring persists, lacking broader efforts like local campaigns and legal enforcement. Job creation efforts for Roma often do not provide the necessary education or skills for their long-term integration into the labour market. So-called 'national projects'¹ fail to offer formal training that could transition Roma staff into mainstream professions. Sustainable employment strategies are needed to break stereotypes and increase Roma representation in skilled professions.

Health: Many activities associated with the Action Plan on Healthcare, which was rated as one of the best by evaluators, like paediatric home visits, have been poorly executed or ineffective. Most achievements rely on the ESF-funded National Project 'Healthy Communities', which provides valuable assistance to inhabitants of marginalised Roma communities, but cannot tackle the systemic problems and disadvantages that Roma face, such as systemic discrimination and the limited availability of healthcare in some areas. Health disparity monitoring was developed but not fully implemented, and proposed laws for Roma healthcare access have not been enacted. Preventive care (e.g., dental treatment, cancer screenings) is unavailable to the poorest Roma, and issues like menstrual poverty and access to contraceptives are overlooked.

Housing, essential services, and environmental justice: Roma communities continue to face spatial segregation, deepening social exclusion, and limited access to essential services. Without land ownership or property rights, systematic housing improvements are hindered. Municipal reluctance to engage in social housing projects due to political and social concerns stalls progress. Discrimination in housing remains unaddressed. Insufficient funding has allowed only a small fraction of informal Roma settlements to be legalised. Limited municipal participation in social housing projects stems from a lack of interest and resources. Some initiatives, like the CSO project 'Domov', have been successful in certain areas but failed elsewhere due to financial barriers faced by Roma families. Technical infrastructure projects progressed, but were too small to meet actual needs. Environmental justice is overlooked. Many Roma settlements face extreme pollution, flood risks, and hazardous living conditions, without clear measures in the NRSF to address them.

Social protection: The NRSF lacks comprehensive measures to systematically improve social protection and mostly relies on increasing employment. Limited access to income support programmes and inadequate income support schemes have significantly contributed to the social vulnerability of Roma communities. The Social Economy Act's compensatory allowance has helped to create jobs for disadvantaged groups, including Roma, but targeted social support programmes for Roma women have failed.

Social services: Community Centres and field social work supported by EU funds, which have been the core governmental activities for marginalised Roma for decades, face an uncertain future. Since 2023, Roma involvement in these services has decreased, particularly at senior management levels, after a restructuring of the project's implementation. The focus is on the number of participants rather than the quality or outcomes. Staff receive insufficient training on issues such as housing quality, and the link between NRSF objectives and social service operations remains weak. Vulnerable groups (e.g., the elderly, disabled, abused women, and children) have limited access to social services, including residential and outpatient services like homes for the elderly or emergency housing.

Child protection: The NRSF only addresses these areas as a secondary concern, without a direct focus on improving child protection systems for children from poor or marginalised backgrounds, including Roma children. It does not propose systemic changes to enhance the protection of children's rights. The problem of biased treatment and even documented cases of police violence against Roma children is acknowledged but not tackled. It is not clear whether the topic of child protection and children's rights has been included in the anti-extremism training of law enforcement officers.

¹ The 'National Project' is a common Slovak mechanism for using EU funds, whereby the government, a public authority, or another preselected body directly implements strategically significant projects, in contrast to holding open, competitive calls for proposals.

Promoting (awareness of) Roma arts, culture, and history: Support for Roma culture in Slovakia is criticised as insufficient and disorganised, and further jeopardised by the current overall destabilisation of cultural policy in Slovakia. Despite some financial backing for cultural institutions and initiatives, Roma culture remains marginalised with an uncertain future for many important institutions such as the Romathan Theatre, Documentation and Information Centre of Roma Culture, and the Museum of Roma Culture. Roma media, such as *Romano Nevo Lil*, struggle with inconsistent funding.

Focus on key issues affecting Roma.

Segregation in education: Roma children from marginalised communities often attend segregated Roma-only schools due to local school zoning and poverty, which reinforces exclusion and inequality. New policies could deepen segregation by redefining these schools as ethnic minority institutions. In June 2024, the Ministry of Education proposed establishing the first Roma ethnic/minority school in Rakúsy without consulting Roma representatives. UNESCO's Convention on Discrimination in Education states that minority education must be voluntary and offer quality equal to mainstream schooling. Despite protests from CSOs and experts and many concerns about the quality of education in this particular case, the Ministry of Education proceeded, raising fears that Roma children would be forced into segregated education under the guise of the promotion of minority rights.

Segregation has been prohibited in school law since 2008, but interpretations vary, and courts fail to consistently enforce desegregation. In 2024, the Ministry of Education identified 468 at-risk schools and introduced desegregation standards. However, these standards lack financial and methodological support, failing to address key issues like special classes and school zoning policies. The decision to establish a Roma ethnic school was made without consulting Roma parents or community representatives, violating international human rights principles. Despite legal prohibitions and policy efforts, Slovakia's education system continues to segregate Roma pupils.

Residential segregation in poor neighbourhoods: Residential segregation separates social groups by ethnicity, race, and economic status, causing deprivation and social tensions. Roma segregation, historically rooted in assimilation and marginalisation policies, persists. The NRSF aims to reduce segregation but lacks proper funding and concrete plans. Broader state housing policies fail to explicitly address Roma inclusion, missing systemic change opportunities. While Roma participate in policymaking, true desegregation requires stronger local strategies and adequate funding.

Projects that promote temporary segregated jobs: Roma face discrimination, educational disadvantages, and limited job opportunities when entering the labour market. Instead of addressing these issues, many projects create segregated jobs for Roma, reinforcing segregation rather than inclusion. Over the past 15 years, roles such as community workers and teaching assistants have emerged, but fail to transition Roma into mainstream employment. A case study of the National Project Development Teams (DT) indicates that while these teams aim for social inclusion, most activities remain isolated within Roma communities. National Projects create jobs for Roma, but lack the added value of formal education, which would enable them to be better employed in the mainstream labour market after the National Projects end.

Capacity building/empowerment of Roma civil society organisations: Roma organisations in Slovakia have historically depended on international institutions for capacity building due to a lack of domestic support. Since 2017, the Minority Culture Fund (*Fond na podporu kultúry národnostných menšín*) has supported Roma cultural activities among other national/ethnic minorities. The NRSF has included provisions for Roma participation since 2021, yet political restrictions have hindered the actual implementation. Roma CSOs frequently experience challenges in institutional development, funding strategies, and professional capacities. When they receive state funding, their reliance on it often constrains their independence.

Although the AP for Combating Antigypsyism aimed to facilitate Roma participation in policymaking, its implementation stalled due to political instability, early elections, and government actions that weakened civil society. Since Prime Minister Robert Fico's leadership commenced in October 2023, Roma organisations, along with other CSOs, have faced increasing political repression. The absence of cooperation between OGPRC and Roma CSOs has enabled the government to implement policies affecting Roma communities negatively, such as the reduction of social benefits and support for the controversial Roma-only school, without facing significant opposition or scrutiny.

Use of EU funding instruments

While EU funds play a crucial role in Roma inclusion efforts in Slovakia, their implementation raises concerns regarding sustainability, desegregation policies, and civil society participation. Increased national funding, better oversight of project effectiveness, and stronger Roma representation in decision-making bodies are needed to ensure genuine and long-term social integration.

The 2021-2027 programming period allocates resources under the Partnership Agreement's Objective 4, focusing on social inclusion, education, employment, and accessibility of services. The majority of the funding is directed toward less developed regions to reduce regional disparities. EU funds are distributed through various ministries, with the OGPRC overseeing projects targeting marginalised Roma communities (MRC). The total allocation under Objective 4 amounts to 3.25 billion EUR, with 518 million EUR earmarked for OGPRC. The Partnership Agreement includes measures for road infrastructure improvements with an ERDF allocation of 30.5 million EUR.

By February 2025, most allocated funds had been spent, but concerns persist over the sustainability and effectiveness of supported projects. In 2022, 85 million EUR was used for NRSF-related activities, with only 12.2 million EUR from the state budget. In 2023, 261.5 million EUR was used, with 45.4 million EUR from national resources. Implementing the '3D' principles—destigmatisation, desegregation, and de-ghettoisation—has been key in Roma inclusion policies. However, a 2024 OGPRC interpretation led to concerns that exceptions in the application of desegregation principles provide municipalities with an excuse to maintain segregated provisions. In this context, it should be noted that evidence from new and old research confirms that segregated schools offer lower educational standards, limiting Roma children's opportunities.

The participation of Roma civil society in the implementation of EU funds is limited. The OGPRC established a Monitoring Committee for the country's single operational programme, 'Slovakia 2021-2027', including a Commission for Marginalized Roma Communities, with only one Roma civil society representative present. Despite commitments in the Action Plan, the involvement of Roma CSOs in monitoring and evaluation remains insufficient.

INTRODUCTION

National Roma strategic framework (NRSF)

The Slovak Strategy for Equality, Inclusion and Participation of Roma until 2030 (NRSF) was approved by the Slovak Government in April 2021,² and its subsequent Action Plans (APs) in April 2022 (for the period 2022-2024),³ and December 2024 (for the period 2025-2027).⁴

In October 2023, following early elections, Robert Fico became the Prime Minister of the new government of Slovakia. The latter's programme statement for 2023-2027 dedicates only a short chapter of three paragraphs to marginalised Roma communities. The government points out that the resources spent over the years have been wasted and that the state of integration of poor, marginalised communities is not favourable. A significant concern is the approach of the Fico government, which, in its programme statement, restricts Roma integration efforts primarily to employment, overlooking broader aspects of social inclusion, such as the fight against racism and discrimination that Roma face.

"The government will be particularly interested in the potential, especially the motivation, for members of marginalised groups to enter the labour market, which is currently marked by labour shortage."⁵

At the end of the brief section dedicated to marginalised (Roma) communities, the government states that it will persist in pursuing only those projects and strategies to support the marginalised Roma community that have demonstrably measurable impacts. However, the fact remains that for a number of projects, there are no evaluations of measurable impact, and for some projects, there are no evaluations at all. An example is the support for missionary and pastoral work in marginalised Roma communities, for which there is no evaluation of measurable positive impact. Despite this, in December 2024, the Government Office and the Office of the Government Plenipotentiary for Roma Communities (OGPRC) launched a National Project titled 'Comprehensive System of Support for Marginalised Roma Communities through Missionary and Pastoral Centres', allocating 4.5 million EUR from EU funds.⁶

The OGPRC evaluates the implementation of the APs for each year of their duration. At the end of 2024, the time of the drafting of this report, evaluations of the APs for 2022 and 2023 are available.⁷ For 2024, an evaluation of the implementation of the APs will be carried out in 2025. Over the two-year period, it can be seen that the implementation of activities in the APs is very slow, some activities are not implemented at all,

² Available at: <https://www.romovia.vlada.gov.sk/strategie/strategia-pre-rovnost-inkluziu-a-participaciju-romov-do-roku-2030/>

³ Available at: https://www.romovia.vlada.gov.sk/site/assets/files/1113/akcne_plany_strategie_2030_na_roky_2022_2024_final.pdf?csr=11150349872187148210.

⁴ Available at: https://www.romovia.vlada.gov.sk/site/assets/files/1113/akcne_plany_strategie_2030_na_roky_2025_2027_final.pdf?csr=11150349872187148210.

⁵ Programme Statement of the Government of the Slovak Republic, available at: <https://www.nrsr.sk/web/Dynamic/DocumentPreview.aspx?DocID=535376>

⁶ Government Plenipotentiary for Roma Communities. Vyhlásenie výzvy s názvom „Komplexný systém podpory marginalizovaných rómskych komunit prostredníctvom misijnno-pastoračných centier. [Announcement of the call entitled "Comprehensive Support System for Marginalised Roma Communities through Missionary and Pastoral Centres."] Available at: <https://romovia.vlada.gov.sk/archiv-tlacovych-sprav/vyhlasenie-vyzvy-s-nazvom-komplexny-system-podpory-marginalizovanych-romskych-komunit-prostrednictvom-misijno-pastoracnych>

⁷ Monitoring Report on the Implementation of the Action Plans of the Strategy for Equality, Inclusion and Participation of Roma until 2030 for 2022, available at: https://romovia.vlada.gov.sk/site/assets/files/1113/ms_2022_sprava_final.pdf?csr=14598545656017724858.

Monitoring Report on the Implementation of the Action Plans of the Strategy for Equality, Inclusion and Participation of Roma until 2030 for 2023, available at: https://romovia.vlada.gov.sk/site/assets/files/1113/ms_2023_sprava_final-1.pdf?csr=14598545656017724858.

and only a minimum of them are implemented effectively and in accordance with the principles of inclusion, equality, and participation.

It is regrettable that only the OGPRC is considered a relevant voice of Roma in the process of adopting public policies. There are no functioning consultative bodies at the OGPRC where representatives of Roma organisations can discuss government policies and offer suggestions. Additionally, the 'Operational Programme Slovakia 2021-2027' (PSK 21-27) lacks open procedures for public participation in the Monitoring Committees, thereby preventing Roma organisations or experts from contributing to these committees.

In the area of relevance, we consider it important for the NRSF to define systemic changes. However, we do not see this in the activities planned for 2022-2024.

The implementation of activities under the 2022-2024 APs has been unsatisfactory. Previous reports pointed out that activities were not systematically coordinated across all departments, and this criticism in connection with the implementation of the first APs has proven correct.

The NRSF has been prepared on the basis of the Recommendation of the Council of the European Union of 12 March 2021 on equality, inclusion, and participation of Roma, which is reflected in all the areas, measures, and activities developed. The NRSF pays some attention to Roma women and youth but does not address the protection of members of LGBTI+ communities from multiple forms of discrimination. The NRSF does not address sub-ethnic groups or older Roma citizens. In the implementation phase for 2022-2024, it can be observed that groups such as youth, women, children, and the elderly have not been given much attention.

About this report

The aim of this report is to provide a civil society perspective on the implementation of the NRSF activities. The monitoring report was prepared by a consortium of ten Roma and pro-Roma organisations: Roma Advocacy and Research Centre, eduRoma - Roma Education Project, Centre for Research on Ethnicity and Culture (CVEK), Romano Kher - Roma House, In Minorita, Minority Community Centre, Roma Platform, Union of Roma Physical Education and Sport, Satisfaction - Social Services Centre, and Sapling.

We used a variety of methods for the data collection. In total, we conducted 21 interviews, of which 8 were face-to-face semi-structured interviews, four were video semi-structured interviews, seven were written communications via email, and two were telephone interviews. Three interviewees were from the OGPRC, one from the Ministry of Transport, one from the Ministry of Labour, Social Affairs and Family, and there was one group video interview with three representatives from the Implementing Agency of the Ministry of Labour, Social Affairs and Family. We also interviewed a representative from the Ministry of Health. Additionally, six interviews with mayors and representatives of municipalities were conducted. We also contacted activists from different regions, and they gave us five interviews. We conducted a further two interviews with interviewees from the academic field.

As part of our desk research, we studied a number of documents in detail, including—most importantly—the monitoring reports for 2022 and 2023,⁸ which include an external evaluation. We also focused on documents related to National Projects, project evaluation reports, and analyses related to the status of marginalised Roma communities.

The Roma Advocacy and Research Centre served as the editor of the report and drafted chapters 1 and 4. EduRoma - Roma Education Project contributed to issues related to education, segregation, and capacity building. Romano Kher - Roma House prepared the chapter on antigypsyism. In Minorita prepared the sections on health and social services and support for Roma culture. An informal group of activists compiled an important collection of field interviews.

To avoid potential conflicts of interest, Zuzana Havířová of the Roma Advocacy and Research Centre did not participate in the development of the chapter on the Action Plan to Combat Antigypsyism and Promote Participation 2022-2024, as she was involved in its preparation. Similarly, Elena Cinova from the Union of Roma Physical Education and Sport participated in the preparation of the Action Plan for Education 2025-2027

⁸ *Ibid.*

and therefore was not involved in the preparation of this report. We are not aware of any consortium members being involved in the implementation of any of the activities of the NRSF.

We would like to thank everyone who contributed in any way to the preparation of this report.

1. IMPLEMENTATION OF THE NRSF

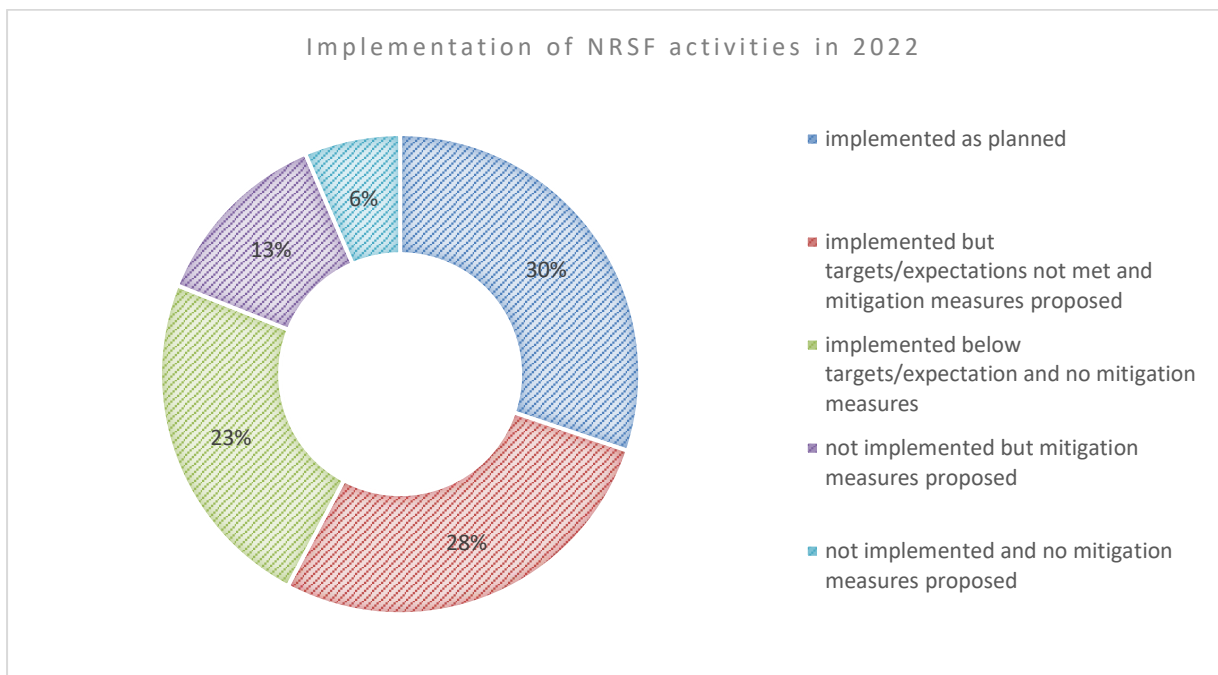
1.1. Key developments and effectiveness of implementation

1.1.1. Changes in the NRSF and Action Plans

As of the end of 2024, when this report was written, there were no changes in the approved NRSF and APs for 2022-2024.

1.1.2. Progress in implementation

By 2022, 117 Activities had been planned; assessment of their implementation is illustrated in the chart below. The total amount of financial resources utilised for the implementation of the Action Plans in 2022 was more than 85 million EUR.⁹

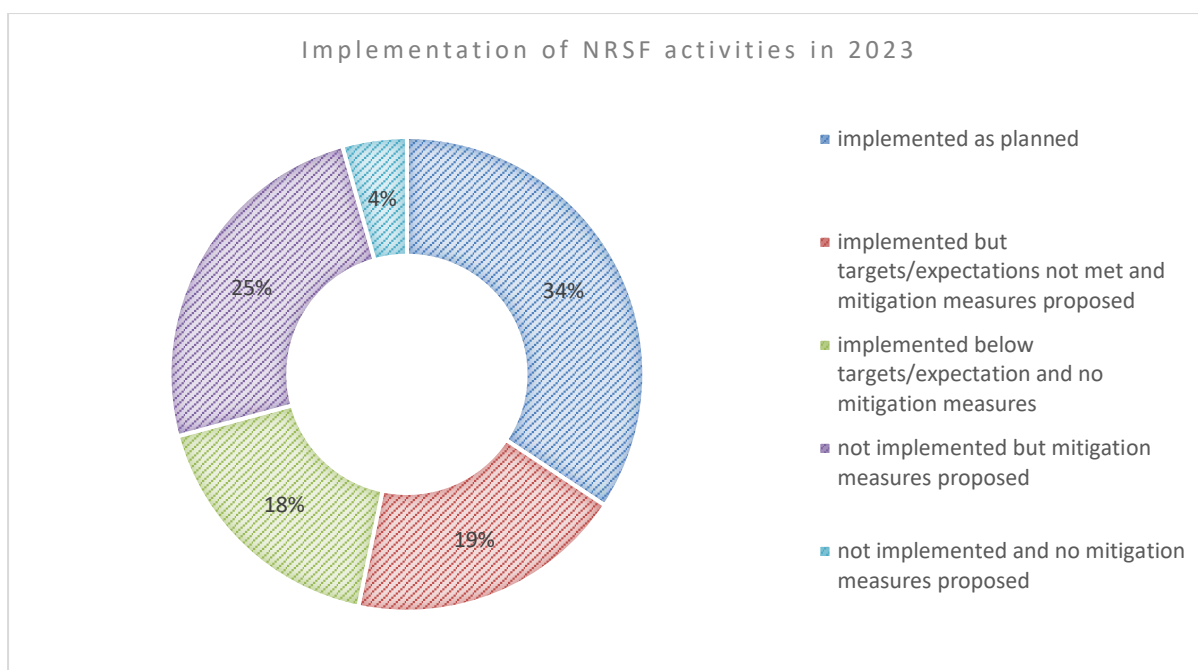


Data from the *Monitoring Report on the Implementation of the Action Plans of the NRSF for 2022*, processed by the authors

In 2023, 139 Activities were planned, and the assessment of their implementation is as follows:¹⁰

⁹ *Monitoring Report on the Implementation of the Action Plans of the Strategy for Equality, Inclusion and Participation of Roma until 2030 for 2022*, available at: https://romovia.vlada.gov.sk/site/assets/files/1113/ms_2022_sprava_final.pdf?csrt=14598545656017724858

¹⁰ *Monitoring Report on the Implementation of the Action Plans of the Strategy for Equality, Inclusion and Participation of Roma until 2030 for 2023*, available at: https://romovia.vlada.gov.sk/site/assets/files/1113/ms_2023_sprava_final-1.pdf?csrt=14598545656017724858



Data from the *Monitoring Report on the Implementation of the Action Plans of the NRSF for 2023*, processed by the authors

For the year 2024, there is no available external evaluation of OGPRC.

1.1.3. Effectiveness of monitoring

While the European Commission requires evaluation every two years, the OGPRC's analytical unit conducts an evaluation of the Action Plans annually. The OGPRC believes that such annual periodicity of reviewing increases the ministries' commitment. These annual evaluations include assessments by both the responsible implementing body and external experts. The resulting annual report is subject to a standard review procedure, i.e., both internal and inter-ministerial consultations. Subsequently, the report is submitted to the government for acknowledgment.¹¹

In January 2023, OGPRC launched a call for experts to join an expert panel tasked with verifying the accuracy of the content and substance of the data provided by each responsible authority ('gestor') and assessing the real impact of the reported activities on the achievement of the NRSF targets for the 2022 period.¹² The members of the expert panel evaluated the implementation of the activities during the period under review by giving an overall rating on a scale of 1 to 5. For example, a grade of 4 indicated that the activity was not being implemented for reasons that the promoter could justify, under the condition that the promoter had proposed adequate corrective measures. It is unclear what adequate corrective action means, how this adequate corrective action was designed, whether it went through any participatory process, etc. Similarly, grade 3 indicates that the activity has been implemented on an ongoing basis, but below expectations, or there has been a delay in implementation (the activity is in the preparation phase), the targets have not been met, and the promoter has not proposed adequate measures. The experts were thus faced with the situation that some activities had not been implemented, but the declaration by the promoter that the activity was in the preparatory phase was sufficient, and thus they were awarded a grade of 3. These definitions of the scaled assessment in some way distorted the assessment and the overall picture of the fulfilment of the APs in specific reporting periods. The same scaled assessment was used to assess the implementation of the 2023 APs.

Upon reviewing these evaluation reports, it appears that some of the external evaluations lack clarity and comprehensibility. For instance, in terms of employment-related activities, general public activities were

¹¹ *Evaluation and monitoring of the Strategy for Equality, Inclusion and Roma Participation until 2030*. October 2022. Available at: https://www.romovia.vlada.gov.sk/site/assets/files/1113/metodicky_dokument_ham_2022_final.pdf

¹² There were 22 applications, and the following were selected: Education: Vladimír Rafael, Employment: Zuzana Polačková, Housing: Alexander Mušíňka, Health: Andrej Belák, Combating Antigypsyism and Promoting Participation: Zuzana Havířová.

The Supreme Audit Office reported that, although the OGPRC has a strategic document, there is no relevant and comprehensive assessment of the effectiveness of the personnel, institutional, and financial capacities used in projects on the implementation of the NRSF. Additionally, measurable indicators required by the Government's Programme Statement for 2023–2027 have not been quantified.¹⁵

Systematic efforts are being made to collect comprehensive data on marginalised Roma communities, but this data is seldom used to inform policymaking. The National Project 'Monitoring and Evaluation of Inclusive Policies I' aims to comprehensively monitor and evaluate the living conditions of the Roma population, especially of the MRC. The project involves comprehensive data collection through quantitative research and qualitative surveys carried out during the whole project period, 09/2023 - 10/2026, such as EU SILC MRC¹⁶ and sociographic mapping via the updated *Atlas of Roma Communities*.¹⁷

As part of the update of the *Atlas of Roma Communities*, an online survey of the initial screening of the situation in the localities was carried out from June 2024 to August 2024. In August 2024, the Thematic Working Group

¹⁸ Interview with Tibor Škrabský, Office of the Government Plenipotentiary for Roma Communities, 9 October 2024.

of the Government Plenipotentiary for Monitoring and Evaluation of NRSF met online.¹⁹ The EU SILC MRC will be prepared next year, i.e., in 2025, as well as other qualitative and quantitative studies in the areas of housing, health, and employment.²⁰

Data collection associated with the Atlas provides a foundation for developing activities in the Action Plans of the NRSF and serves to identify the target group for beneficiaries of EU funds when designing National Projects (for example, the implementation of the project 'Local Civil and Order Services in Areas with the Presence of Marginalized Roma Communities'). However, data is not utilised in assessing the impact of mainstream activities on Roma. Ministries claim that they are unable to evaluate the impact of projects on MRC, despite the existence of detailed data collections on MRC. Additionally, public policies and laws do not appear to reflect on the data that is collected about MRC.

1.2. NRSF's synergy with domestic and EU actions

1.2.1. Complementary policies

The NRSF is incorporated into the Recovery Plan, particularly with regard to measures aimed at reducing social inequalities and improving the living conditions of marginalised communities.²¹ The 'National Programme for the Development of Education and Training of the Slovak Republic 2021-2033' addresses issues pertaining to education and support for vulnerable groups, including the Roma community. The NRSF is mentioned here as a tool for improving access to education and increasing its quality for marginalised communities.²² The National Priorities for the Development of Social Services 2021-2030 emphasise supporting vulnerable groups through effective social services. As a key component of this strategy, the NRSF provides guidelines for improving the social circumstances of Roma, which is one of the main objectives of the approach.²³ The 'Strategy for Lifelong Learning and Counselling 2021-2030' underscores the importance of improving the inclusiveness of education in order to prevent leaving the future generation of adults who leave compulsory education with a negative attitude towards learning and often with insufficient basic skills. The 'Lifelong Learning and Guidance Strategy 2021-2030' also states that a specific inclusion issue is the position of marginalised Roma communities. In this area, the document links the proposed actions to the NRSF and, in particular, to the AP Education and AP Employment.²⁴

In October 2024, the Education Act²⁵ was amended to change the definition of education for ethnic minorities. The establishment of minority schools has become easier, as they no longer need to teach at least four subjects in the minority language. In practice, this could allow segregated Roma schools to be renamed Roma minority schools, which contradicts the NRSF's education goal of ensuring equal access of Roma to quality mainstream education by 2030, emphasizing desegregation and inclusion. It will be very easy for segregated schools to be renamed minority schools, and they will not have to follow desegregation policies (for more information, see section 3.1).

At the beginning of July 2024, the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs began amending the Employment Services Act and the Act on Material Need. With the slogan 'Work instead of benefits', the ministry aims to motivate the long-term unemployed and low-skilled workers to find jobs. Those able to work but refusing suitable employment will see their benefits reduced. The activation allowance will be graded according to the activity levels, with a larger allowance going to those who are actively involved in labour policy programmes,

¹⁹ The meeting was also attended by Zuzana Havířová from the Roma Advocacy and Research Centre.

²⁰ Interview with Tibor Škrabský, Office of the Government Plenipotentiary for Roma Communities, 9 October 2024

²¹ *Recovery Plan*. Available at: <https://www.planobnovy.sk>

²² *National Programme for the Development of Education and Training of the Slovak Republic 2021-2033*, available at: <https://www.minedu.sk/data/att/27e/24904.c12072.pdf>

²³ *National Priorities for the Development of Social Services 2021-2030*, available at: <https://www.employment.gov.sk/files/slovensky/rodina-socialna-pomoc/socialne-sluzby/nprss-fin.pdf>

²⁴ *Strategy for Lifelong Learning and Counselling 2021-2030*, available at: https://www.minedu.sk/data/files/11044_strategia-celozivotneho-vzdelavania-a-poradenstva-na-roky-2021-2030.pdf

²⁵ *Act on Upbringing and Education (School Act) and on Amendments and Supplements to Certain Acts 245/2008 Coll.*, as amended on 30 October 2024, available at: <https://www.nrsr.sk/web/Dynamic/DocumentPreview.aspx?DocID=551206>

education, and expanding the possibilities of carrying out small-scale municipal services.²⁶ Instead of creating stable jobs with existing employers, the ministry presents project-based work opportunities. Although not explicitly stated, the legislation appears to target the Roma, as indicated by the presence of Alexander Daško, the Government Plenipotentiary for Roma Communities when the legislation was presented by Minister Erik Tomáš. While both claimed that the policy targets various groups, only Alexander Daško—as a representative of the Roma—was present, and only images of Roma were shown at the press conference.²⁷ Instead of addressing barriers that Roma face when entering the labour market, this approach overlooks discrimination and neglects regions with minimal employment opportunities, not aligning with the NRSF.

1.2.2. Alignment with EU actions

Within the framework of the Recovery and Resilience Plan, projects that both target MRC and align with the objectives of the NRSF have been approved. These are aimed at promoting early childhood care and eliminating two-shift schooling in primary schools.²⁸ Additionally, the NRSF also adheres to the objectives of the European Pillar of Social Rights and European Semester.²⁹ However, when implementing strategies alongside individual EU actions, the complexity of the issue is not always fully considered. For example, regarding the aim to increase employment among MRC residents, some projects fail to address the elimination of segregation and social exclusion. These jobs are created inside segregated and socially excluded communities, such as local civil order services or workers on the Development Teams project. Although there has been an increase in the employment rate among MRC residents, segregation and social exclusion persist.

1.2.3. Addressing concerns of previous assessments

The Civil Society Monitoring Report on the implementation of the NRSF in Slovakia from 2018 recommends that relevant political parties and movements come together to promote long-term solutions to the complex problems of Roma exclusion. They should, by all means, avoid populism, stigmatising proposals, and political abuse of the issue.³⁰ Unfortunately, this recommendation is not taken into account in proposals concerning Roma. Most political parties cannot communicate issues relating to the Roma without referring to stereotypes, prejudices, and antigypsyism. Previous civil society reports, as well as recommendations of the European Commission, stress the need to end segregation of Roma in education. Unfortunately, this recommendation has failed to be implemented for a number of reasons that are not taken into account by the Slovak Government, the Ministry of Education, and/or the OGPSC.³¹ One of the recommendations of the Roma Civil Monitor reports³² was the use of qualitative indicators in the implementation of measures and activities. However, this recommendation was not taken into account either.

²⁶ Press conference of the Ministry of Labour, Social Affairs and Family from 2 July 2024 and Press release from 1 October 2024. Available at: <https://www.employment.gov.sk/sk/uvodna-stranka/informacie-media/aktuality/praca-namiesto-davok-ministerstvo-prace-spusta-legislativu-zlepsenie-zamestnanosti-najzranitelnejších.html> and https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Jt4_b8z_ayE&t=596s

²⁷ Media statement, 14 August 2024, available at: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=C8f1ozQvJSs> and press conference https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Jt4_b8z_ayE&t=926s

²⁸ Recovery Plan's calls available at: <https://www.planobnovy.sk/realizacia/vyzvy/page7>

²⁹ *National Reform Programme of the Slovak Republic 2023*, available at: https://commission.europa.eu/document/download/756838b4-1707-4ff5-8532-f003f1cc25a2_en?filename=National%20Reform%20Programme%202023.pdf

³⁰ Roma Civil Monitor, *Civil Society Monitoring Report on the Implementation of the National Roma Integration Strategy in Slovakia. Focusing on the structural and horizontal preconditions for its successful implementation*, 2018, available at: <https://romadata.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/04/sk-reportcely-final.pdf>

³¹ Denisa Žilová, *Segregácia rómskych detí v školách je stále realitou*. (Bratislava: Školský portal, 2024), available at: <https://www.skolskyportal.sk/prevadzka-skoly/segregacia-romskych-deti-v-skolach-je-stale-realitou>. Vlado Rafael, *Nové pravidlá desegregácie v školách sú deravé, vylúčeným žiakom nepomôžu*, 21 November 2024, available at: <https://romanoforum.dennikn.sk/nove-pravidla-desegregacie-v-skolach-su-derave-vylucenym-ziakom-nepomozu/>. Zuzana Havířová, *Nemáme právo hazardovať s budúcnosťou rómskych detí*. (Bratislava: Romano forum, 2024), available at: <https://romanoforum.dennikn.sk/nemame-pravo-hazardovat-s-buducnostou-romskych-deti/>

³² See: www.romacivilmonitoring.eu

1.3. Roma participation in implementation and monitoring

1.3.1. Involvement of Roma CSOs in implementation

The participation of Roma CSOs in NRSF implementation is limited to specific fields.

First, they participated in the implementation of activities from the education AP: supporting scientific, educational and research activities in the field of Roma language and realities, Roma culture and art; supporting scientific, research and educational activities in the field of language; fighting extremism, racism and intolerance; supporting the presentation of culture and art of the Roma minority.³³

Second, Roma CSOs have also been involved in activities ensuring intercultural dialogue and understanding between citizens of the Slovak majority and citizens belonging to ethnic minorities. They have also worked on informing and educating about discrimination and persecution of Roma in the past within the framework of the AP Combating Antigypsyism and Promoting Roma Participation.³⁴

This involvement has been possible thanks to the Minority Culture Fund, which is committed to the fulfilment of the NRSF and through which projects are approved every year in the fields of culture and education, science and research, literature, publishing, theatre, music, dance, visual and audiovisual arts.³⁵

Most of these projects are typically implemented through cultural events. Only a small number of projects focus on scientific research and educational activities related to language and the prevention of extremism, racism, and intolerance.³⁶

Roma CSOs are underrepresented in implementation due to a lack of expertise and capacity in areas like housing, health, and social services.

1.3.2. Roma in public institutions implementing the NRSF

The largest share of Roma in the process of NRSF implementation is seen at the OGPRC and in its regional offices. Most of them are employed in National Projects: NP Monitoring and Evaluation, NP Settlement of Land Legal Relations, and NP Development Teams.³⁷ Furthermore, Roma are also present in the Healthy Regions organisation, which fulfils the NRSF for health. They are mainly in the position of Health Promotion Assistants, as this position only requires a completed primary education. Some Roma also work in positions that require higher education or first- and second-level university education, such as Health Promotion Assistant Coordinators. There are also Roma in the organisation's management positions, such as Field Expert and Senior Regional Health Promotion Manager.³⁸ Roma are also involved in the field of social work and community centres projects implemented by the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs.

We lack knowledge of the number of Roma employed by the National Institute of Education and Youth, which, together with the Ministry of Education, Science and Training of the Slovak Republic, should implement programmes to teach the Roma language for strengthening the inclusion of Roma pupils in education. Similarly, we have insufficient information about Roma working at the Headquarters for Labour, Social Affairs and Family, which together with the MLSAF should manage employment under the AP. The involvement of Roma in the implementation of the NRSF within the Ministry of Investment, Regional Development and Informatisation of the Slovak Republic, Ministry of Environment of the Slovak Republic, Ministry of Transport of the Slovak

³³ Education Action Plan 2022-2024, available at:

https://www.romovia.vlada.gov.sk/site/assets/files/1113/akcne_plany_strategie_2030_na_roky_2022_2024_final.pdf?csrt=3030421130587460759

³⁴ Action Plan for Combating Antigypsyism and Promoting Roma Participation 2022-2024, available at:

https://www.romovia.vlada.gov.sk/site/assets/files/1113/akcne_plany_strategie_2030_na_roky_2022_2024_final.pdf?csrt=3030421130587460759

³⁵ See: www.kultminor.sk

³⁶ Evaluation of Zuzana Havirová, member of the expert commission for the Roma minority in the Minority Culture Fund

³⁷ Interview with Tibor Škrabský, Office of the Government Plenipotentiary for Roma Communities, 9 October 2024. And see more <https://www.romovia.vlada.gov.sk/kontakty-uradu-splnomocnenca-vlady-sr-pre-romske-komunity?csrt=3030421130587460759>

³⁸ See: <https://www.zdraveregionv.eu/experti-koordinatori-np-zk/>

Republic, Statistical Office of the Slovak Republic, and Ministry of Culture of the Slovak Republic is also unknown. We believe that ministerial institutions do not prioritise Roma job applicants, even when it comes to leadership positions in projects aimed at supporting Roma inclusion.

Roma are also expected to be involved in the implementation of the NRSF through the AP Combating Antigypsyism and Promoting Participation, with particular focus on engagement of youth and women in preparation, implementation, review, as well as reporting on Roma-oriented measures and policies. By the end of 2024, not a single activity had taken place to fulfil this measure. No Young Roma Congress has been held, no advisory bodies for young Roma or Roma women have been established, and no activities have been implemented to develop public policies to improve the position of Roma in society through a participatory approach.³⁹

1.3.3. Roma participation in monitoring and evaluation

Within the NRSF, five Roma should have participated in the monitoring and evaluation of the implementation of the activities of the Operational Programme Slovakia for the period 2021–2027.⁴⁰

In order to monitor the implementation of the ‘Programme Slovakia 2021–2027’, the Ministry of Investment, Regional Development and Informatisation established the Monitoring Committee for the Programme Slovakia 2021–2027 and the Commission under the Monitoring Committee for the Programme Slovakia 2021–2027 for Marginalised Roma Communities. To implement the above, CSO platforms were approached and three non-Roma civil society representatives were delegated to the Monitoring Committee for the Programme Slovakia 2021–2027 through a transparent nomination mechanism administered by the Office of the Government Plenipotentiary for Civil Society Development and the Chamber of Non-Governmental Non-Profit Organisations of the Council of the Government of the Slovak Republic for Non-Governmental Non-Profit Organisations.

The Ministry of Investment, Regional Development and Informatisation established the Monitoring Committee and the Commission for Marginalised Roma Communities under the Programme Slovakia 2021–2027. Three non-Roma civil society representatives were selected through a transparent nomination process by CSO platforms, managed by the Office of the Government Plenipotentiary for Civil Society Development and the Chamber of Non-Governmental Non-Profit Organisations.

The Ministry of Investment, Regional Development and Informatisation delegated the Office of the Government Plenipotentiary for Civil Society Development and the Chamber of Non-Governmental Non-Profit Organisations of the Government Council of the Slovak Republic for Non-Governmental Non-Profit Organisations to nominate representatives to both the Commission to the Monitoring Committee for the Slovakia 2021–2027 Programme regarding Objective 4 (more social and inclusive Europe implementing the European Pillar of Social Rights) and the Commission to the Monitoring Committee for the Slovakia 2021–2027 Programme for Marginalised Roma Communities. Two representatives were nominated on the basis of this request. This shows that the number of representatives is two, but this representation is not explicitly from CSOs but nominated by the Council of the Government Plenipotentiary for Roma Communities. In order to fulfil the above-mentioned activity-related criteria, the Ministry of Investment, Regional Development and Informatisation offered OGPRC the possibility to nominate the above-mentioned CSOs to the Monitoring Committee, temporarily in the position of observers. OGPRC had not submitted the proposed nominees by the end of 2023.⁴¹

As part of the internal evaluation of the implementation of the NRSF, two monitoring cycles were carried out for 2022 and 2023. For these monitoring cycles of the evaluation of the implementation of the APs, OGPRC

³⁹ *Monitoring Report on the Implementation of the Action Plans of the Strategy for Equality, Inclusion and Participation of Roma until 2030 for 2023*, available at:
https://romovia.vlada.gov.sk/site/assets/files/1113/ms_2023_sprava_final.pdf?csrt=5073062753059547304

⁴⁰ *Action Plan to Combat Antigypsyism and Promote Roma Participation*, available at:
https://www.romovia.vlada.gov.sk/site/assets/files/1113/akcne_plany_strategie_2030_na_roky_2022_2024_final.pdf?csrt=3030421130587460759

⁴¹ *Monitoring Report on the Implementation of the Action Plans of the Strategy for Equality, Inclusion and Participation of Roma until 2030 for 2022*, available at:
https://romovia.vlada.gov.sk/site/assets/files/1113/ms_2022_sprava_final.pdf?csrt=7775005331818248825

Monitoring Report on the Implementation of the Action Plans of the Strategy for Equality, Inclusion and Participation of Roma until 2030 for 2023, available at:
https://romovia.vlada.gov.sk/site/assets/files/1113/ms_2023_sprava_final.pdf?csrt=5073062753059547304

launched a selection process for choosing external experts, which also included the selection of two Roma, one for the area of Education and one for the area of Combating Antigypsyism and Promoting Roma Participation.⁴²

1.3.4. Contribution of National Roma Platform to the NRSF implementation

Since the adoption of the current NRSF in 2020, the National Roma Platform was organised between 2020 and 2022. OGPRC organised three local consultative meetings – ‘Roma Platforms’ – in 2021 in the context of the upcoming Action Plans for 2022-2024, in order to create space for the public to comment on the draft versions of the Action Plans for each priority area for 2022-2024. These platforms were hosted in the cities of Banská Bystrica, Košice, and Prešov, with the participation of representatives of academia, government, non-profit, and non-governmental sectors operating in the respective regions.

The Government Plenipotentiary, at that time Andrea Bučková, presented the elaborated versions of the Action Plans to the public present, who were able to comment on the intentions in question and to suggest possible amendments to the elaborated Action Plans, which were subsequently incorporated by the Office during the finalisation of the Action Plans.

In the following period, OGPRC did not submit a project, so Roma platforms were no longer implemented.

⁴² Dr. Vlado Rafael for AP Education and Dr. Zuzana Havířová for Fighting Antigypsyism and Promoting Roma Participation. *Monitoring Report on the Implementation of the Action Plans of the Strategy for Equality, Inclusion and Participation of Roma until 2030 for 2022*, available at: https://romovia.vlada.gov.sk/site/assets/files/1113/ms_2023_sprava_final-1.pdf?csrt=14598545656017724858

2. REVIEW BY THEMATIC AREA

2.1. Fighting antigypsyism and discrimination

Combating antigypsyism is not a priority for the Slovak government. Existing commitments are insufficiently implemented and have little or marginal effect. Public figures, including the Prime Minister, have used anti-Roma language in public, legitimising anti-Roma sentiment.⁴³

The most critical issues in this area include the lack of official recognition of antigypsyism in national policies, widespread prejudice against Roma, hate speech both online and offline, poor effectiveness of protection against discrimination, segregation across all areas of life, and discriminatory behaviour by law enforcement.

2.1.1. Effectiveness of the NRSF in addressing the problems

Most activities under the Action Plan Combating Antigypsyism and Promoting Roma Participation have not been successfully implemented. Only the educational activities by the Slovak National Centre for Human Rights were carried out, but there is no qualitative assessment of their actual impact on the target group.⁴⁴

In 2021, a definition of antigypsyism was adopted by the Government of the Slovak Republic in the Concept of Countering Radicalisation and Extremism until 2024,⁴⁵ and included in the NRSF 2030. The Action Plan stipulated that the definition of antigypsyism should be included in several strategies. The goal of this measure was to ensure that when creating sectoral strategies, antigypsyism and what defines it should be considered, and only government strategies that do not (even implicitly) support antigypsyism should be adopted. For example, if the Ministry of Labour develops a strategy to support social services, it should explicitly state that it aligns with the fight against antigypsyism. The same should apply, for example, to the creation of housing policy at the Ministry of Transport. This has not happened.

However, in 2022, the Parliament adopted the IHRA definition of antigypsyism proposed by Roma MP Petr Pollak Jr. and former Government Plenipotentiary Jan Hero.⁴⁶ The submitters did not appear to notice that this definition was already included in the existing 'Concept of Countering Radicalisation and Extremism until 2024'. The problematic parts⁴⁷ of the IHRA definition were objected to by experts, who also expressed concern that such a process had not gone through the expert community.⁴⁸ It is therefore important to continue to use the definition of antigypsyism as set out in the Concept of Countering Radicalisation and Extremism until 2024 and the NRSF 2030, as these encompass all existing international definitions.

⁴³ E.g. Slovak PM smears Romani people at Davos, calling them "gypsies", Romani MPs call it systemic racism and an enormous delusion. See: <https://romea.cz/en/world/slovak-pm-smears-romani-people-at-davos-calling-them-gypsies-romani-mps-call-it-systemic-racism-and-an-enormous-delusion>

⁴⁴ Monitoring Report on the Implementation of the Action Plans of the Strategy for Equality, Inclusion and Participation of Roma until 2030 for 2022, available at: https://romovia.vlada.gov.sk/site/assets/files/1113/ms_2022_sprava_final.pdf?csrt=14598545656017724858

Monitoring Report on the Implementation of the Action Plans of the Strategy for Equality, Inclusion and Participation of Roma until 2030 for 2023, available at: https://romovia.vlada.gov.sk/site/assets/files/1113/ms_2023_sprava_final-1.pdf?csrt=14598545656017724858.

⁴⁵ Government Resolution No. 22/2021 of 13 January 2021, available at: <https://rokovania.gov.sk/RVL/Resolution/18982/1>

⁴⁶ NRSR: Plenary approves definition of antigypsyism, 2022, available at: <https://www.nrsr.sk/web/Default.aspx?sid=udalosti/udalost&MasterID=56150>

⁴⁷ The definition states that the "devaluation of Roma cultures and lifestyles" and reference to "lifestyle" in the context of Slovakia are unacceptable because anti-Roma rhetoric often describes the lifestyle of Roma from marginalised communities as the reason they are unable to integrate into society. This view suggests that the financial resources allocated for inclusion are wasted because Roma people will not abandon their way of life and do not wish to be integrated.

⁴⁸ Pavol Lacko, *Parlament schválil definíciu protirómskeho rasizmu. Odborníkom prekáža duplicita aj zmienka o „životnom štýle Rómov"*, 2022, available at: <https://romanoforum.dennikn.sk/parlament-schvalil-definiciu-protiromskeho-rasizmu-odbornikom-prekaza-duplicita-aj-zmienka-o-zivotnom-style-romov/>

Activities that were supposed to fight stereotypes about Roma have been implemented with a misunderstanding of what such stereotypes are. Such a complete misunderstanding of stereotypes about Roma can be found in the activity aimed at regular monthly reporting on the fight against antigypsyism and discrimination in Slovakia. OGPRC set up an anti-discrimination section and within it brought information about Roma, but most of this was stereotyped because it presented Roma as dancers, musicians, and singers. It is precisely such portrayals of Roma that only reinforce stereotypes about the Roma national minority and do not contribute in any way to the fight against antigypsyism.⁴⁹

Planned activities aimed at combating hate speech against Roma—both online and offline—have not been implemented.⁵⁰

2.1.2. Addressing the problems beyond the NRSF

In the fight against antigypsyism, organisations and institutions that address the problem through legal action or draw attention to it through systematic, long-term advocacy work are specifically important. Unfortunately, such support has not been identified in the AP Combating Antigypsyism and Promoting the Participation of Roma. For example, if we look at the activities of the CSO Center for Civil and Human Rights, we can see that their legal advice and services are among the most important activities in the field of Roma rights advocacy in Slovakia.⁵¹

2.2. Education

In the Action Plan for Education 2022–2024, the overarching goal was defined as ensuring equal access for Roma men and women to quality education within the mainstream education system from birth to employment by 2030, with an emphasis on implementing desegregation and inclusive measures at all levels of education.⁵²

This objective is of great importance. However, we have identified several critical issues in its implementation: limited access to early childhood education for Roma children, high rates of grade repetition and early dropout rates, and systemic failure to address discrimination in schools.

2.2.1. Effectiveness of the NRSF in addressing the problems

At the outset, we wish to state that the measures outlined in the Action Plan for 2022–2024 to address issues regarding the education of Roma children and youth are neither sufficient nor systemic.

Early childhood education and care policy (0–7 years) in Slovakia is not unified and falls under three ministries: Health, Education, and Labour and Social Affairs. This in itself leads to a lack of coordination in addressing the issue.

Measure 1.1. was supposed to address the problem of early childhood care and education by improving the cognitive, emotional, and prosocial skills of children from MRC aged 0–3 through the active participation of children and parents in early care programmes. Three activities were planned under this measure, but two of them were analytical in nature—the first focused on developing a strategy and the second on creating a methodological guide.

As part of the first activity, the development of an interministerial strategy for early care for disadvantaged children and children from MRC was defined, including the identification of barriers to accessing early care

⁴⁹ See: <https://romovia.vlada.gov.sk/antidiskriminacna-rubrika/?cst=5073062753059547304>

⁵⁰ For example: implementation of training for the media on the correct portrayal of minorities, support for preventive activities and programmes for pupils, students, pedagogical and professional staff and residents of the MRC, aimed at breaking down prejudices and stereotypes associated with the perception of minorities in Slovakia, in order to strengthen critical thinking and the ability to distinguish misinformation, and thus prevent the polarisation of society through targeted calls. See more: *Monitoring report on the implementation of the NRSF Action Plans for 2022*, available at: https://romovia.vlada.gov.sk/site/assets/files/1113/ms_2022_sprava_final.pdf?cst=775005331818248825, and *Monitoring report on the implementation of the NRSF Action Plans for 2023*, available at: https://romovia.vlada.gov.sk/site/assets/files/1113/ms_2023_sprava_final.pdf?cst=5073062753059547304

⁵¹ See: <https://poradna-prava.sk/aktuality/dosiahli-sme-prelomovy-rozsudok-odvolaci-sud-potvrdil-zodpovednost-statnych-institucii-za-segregaciu-romskych-deti-na-zakladnej-skole-v-teni-stat-musi-teraz-desegregovat/>

⁵² *Action plans 2022–2024*, available at: https://romovia.vlada.gov.sk/site/assets/files/1598/akcne_plany_strategie_2030_na_roky_2022_2024_final.pdf

programmes. In 2022, the National Strategy for the Development of Coordinated Early Intervention and Early Care Services for 2022–2030 was adopted and developed by the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs.⁵³ This document has primarily been drafted from the perspective of social policy, which is problematic, as it lacks an analysis of the needs of children from the MRC from an education perspective. For example, there is no analysis of the problems and challenges in preschool education, the diagnosis of children from a special education perspective, or a psychological assessment perspective, and the subsequent social and educational intervention. Furthermore, the formulation of concrete steps and recommendations for change and improvement, as well as the accessibility of early intervention and early care for children from MRC, is also missing in the strategy. Even the commitments to develop accessible methodologies for early intervention focus solely on children with disabilities, overlooking those from marginalised Roma communities. The strategy simply states that the availability of early intervention and early care services for MRC is currently in the hands of non-governmental organisations.

The second activity focused on raising public awareness of early care programmes, including summarising methodological materials and early care standards for children. As part of fulfilling this activity, the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs developed the document *The Child's Journey in Early Childhood* in 2023.⁵⁴ In 2024, as part of the aforementioned activity, a separate methodological document was also developed, entitled *Methodology for Providing Early Intervention Services*.⁵⁵

The third activity under this measure was intended to implement programmes and support early care providers in MRC, with a focus on parenting skills and family literacy. These programmes were planned to be carried out between 2022 and 2024. As an indicator, a target was set for 940 children to participate in early care programmes and for 10 entities to receive support. It is difficult to fully assess whether this indicator—namely, the number of children involved and the number of supported entities—was insufficient. This is because the initiative focused on supporting non-governmental organisations engaged in early care and education for Roma children, whose presence and intervention in disadvantaged communities are objectively limited. According to the evaluation of the Action Plans for 2022,⁵⁶ consultations and the preparation of a funding call took place. The Ministry of Education, Science, Research, and Sport of the Slovak Republic published the results of the call 'Support for the Provision of Early Care and Early Intervention for Children Aged 0 to 6 from Marginalised Roma Communities and Generational Poverty',⁵⁷ which was announced in 2023 as part of the 'Accessibility, Development, and Quality of Inclusive Education at All Levels' initiative within Slovakia's Recovery and Resilience Plan. The aim of the call was to support the preparedness of children from marginalised Roma communities and generational poverty for entry into formal pre-primary education by developing their cognitive, motor, and social skills, thereby contributing to equal opportunities in education. A total of 32 applications were submitted, requesting €25,761,337.73. Of these, the evaluation committee approved funding for 10 applications, with a total allocated amount of €6,263,520.⁵⁸

There has been a positive shift in children's access to kindergartens. Significant resources from the Recovery and Resilience Facility (RRF) have been invested in increasing the capacity of kindergartens. The allocation of 172 million EUR should create more than 9,000 places in kindergartens until 30 April 2026.⁵⁹ Moreover, a new

⁵³ Government Resolution 435/2022, available at: <https://www.employment.gov.sk/files/slovensky/rodina-socialna-pomoc/socialne-sluzby/ostatne/narodna-strategia-rozvoja-koordinovanych-sluzieb-vcasnej-intervencie-ranej-starostlivosti.pdf>

⁵⁴ Available at: <https://www.employment.gov.sk/files/sk/rodina-socialna-pomoc/socialne-sluzby/vcasna-intervencia-rana-starostlivost/cesta-dietata-ranom-veku-december-2023.pdf>

⁵⁵ This document was developed as a commitment under the *National Strategy for the Development of Coordinated Early Intervention and Early Care Services 2022–2030*. For more information, see: *Methodology for Providing Early Intervention Services 2024*, available at: <https://www.employment.gov.sk/files/sk/rodina-socialna-pomoc/socialne-sluzby/vcasna-intervencia-rana-starostlivost/metodika-svi-2024.pdf>

⁵⁶ Evaluation of Action Plan for 2022 available at: https://www.romovia.vlada.gov.sk/site/assets/files/1277/ms_2022_sprava_final.pdf

⁵⁷ See: <https://www.minedu.sk/vyzva-na-podporu-ranej-starostlivosti-a-intervencie-vyhodnotenie/>

⁵⁸ The list of supported applicants: <https://www.minedu.sk/data/att/448/27600.85c829.pdf>

⁵⁹ Ministry of Education. *Call for increasing the capacity of kindergartens*, available at: <https://www.minedu.sk/vyzva-na-zvysenie-kapacit-materskych-skol/> (accessed 19 June 2025).

funding model for kindergartens will be directly financed by the Ministry of Education,⁶⁰ starting in January 2025. Additionally, legal entitlement to kindergarten places has been secured for three- and four-year-old children.⁶¹ These reforms should, at least in theory, ensure better access to pre-primary education for all children.⁶² However, the impact on Roma children may be uneven for various reasons, including financial barriers, geographic accessibility, the availability of places in areas inhabited by Roma, discrimination, or the lack of trust of parents in institutions based on their experiences with racism. This type of data is missing from Slovakia's education policy, and non-governmental organisations have not yet collected such data either.

Importantly, the issue of school segregation in the education of Roma children in kindergartens remains unaddressed at a systemic level. This means that as kindergarten capacities for Roma children gradually expand in the coming years, the Ministry of Education and other institutions may implement these expansions by increasing places directly within excluded localities, rather than promoting desegregation.

The implementation of mandatory preschool education undoubtedly affects the success of Roma students in primary schools and contributes to preventing their placement in special schools. Although we do not yet have data on the effectiveness and efficiency of mandatory preschool education in terms of the success of Roma students in primary schools in Slovakia, we must acknowledge that a persistent problem remains: the repetition of grades and the subsequent early termination of compulsory education in lower grades of primary schools.⁶³

Two activities were defined in the Action Plan to address this issue. The first aimed to increase the number of schools implementing an all-day educational system in 2022 as a prerequisite for successful completion of primary school, with a focus on municipalities with the highest concentration of Roma students. This activity was carried out through school clubs for children, where the fee for the club was reimbursed.⁶⁴ The total reimbursement amounted to €365,594,⁶⁵ and during the entire project, up to 41,204 individual fees for school clubs could be compensated. A total of 199 schools and educational institutions participated in the call.

However, in this case, we must again state that it was not a systemic measure, but rather a temporary intervention. The temporary reimbursement of the fee for school clubs does not address the real causes of the high absenteeism of Roma students in these clubs and their overall school failure. Many students do not attend school clubs, for example, due to insufficiently developed and supported positive peer relationships between Roma and non-Roma students, which is why Roma parents do not allow their children to participate in informal education. Additionally, school clubs do not represent the concept of the intended All-Day Educational System, which is still not legally or conceptually developed in Slovakia.

Another activity, 1.3.2, aimed to prevent the early termination of compulsory schooling by reducing the proportion of underperforming students from MRC through the creation of support measures⁶⁶ to ensure the

⁶⁰ Until January 2025, kindergartens were funded by municipalities and towns through tax revenue. See: <https://hnonline.sk/slovensko/96176881-skolky-sa-od-buduceho-roka-budu-financovat-zo-statneho-rozpoctu>.

⁶¹ The target was achieved by Act No. 182/2023 Coll., which was adopted by the National Council of the Slovak Republic on 9 May 2023. This law primarily amends Act on Upbringing and Education (School Act) and on Amendments and Supplements to Certain Acts 245/2008 Coll., as well as the amendment to Act No. 138/2019 Coll. on Educational Employees and Specialized Employees and on the Amendment and Supplementation of Certain Acts, Act No. 553/2003 Coll. on the Remuneration of Certain Employees Performing Work in the Public Interest, and Act No. 596/2003 Coll. on State Administration in Education and School Self-Government and on the Amendment and Supplementation of Certain Acts.

⁶² Act No. 290/2024 Coll., which amends Act No. 597/2003 Coll. on the Financing of Primary Schools, Secondary Schools, and Educational Institutions, as amended, see: <https://www.minedu.sk/financovanie-materskych-skol-od-112025/>

⁶³ See: <https://slowakei.fes.de/e/publikacia-eduroma-priciny-prepadavania-romskych-ziakov-alebo-ked-opakovanie-nie-je-matkou-mudrosti.html>

⁶⁴ See: <https://www.minedu.sk/kompenzacia-poplatku-v-sk-d-pre-ziakov-zo-szp-a-v-hn-2-zdroj-3p01/>

⁶⁵ Amount of financial contribution under the call "Compensation of the fee in school childcare clubs for pupils from socially disadvantaged backgrounds and in material need 2" for the year 2023, see: <https://www.minedu.sk/kompenzacia-poplatku-v-sk-d-pre-ziakov-zo-szp-a-v-hn-2-zdroj-3p01/>

⁶⁶ For example: Provision of education and training based on the adjustment of educational content and the assessment of outcomes achieved by children or pupils in the educational process, activities supporting the development of school readiness, improvement of educational conditions for pupils from socially disadvantaged backgrounds, and enabling pupils to receive instruction in a subject or educational area in a higher grade.

proper completion of compulsory schooling. Available statistics⁶⁷ show that in September 2021, the highest number of students repeating grades was recorded in the Košice region (3,717), followed by the Prešov region (3,131), and in third place, the Banská Bystrica region (1,848),⁶⁸ which mirrors the regions with the highest representation of MRC settlements. In July 2024, the Ministry of Education launched a National Project aimed at creating and testing an innovative early warning system for early school leaving (ESL), which will enable schools to identify at-risk students and offer them specific support. Through early identification and timely intervention, the number of students who drop out of school prematurely can be significantly reduced. The project will run for four years, with implementation beginning at the end of 2025. The project has been allocated 7.7 million EUR from the priority for the Youth Guarantee and will be coordinated by the Research Institute of Child Psychology and Pathopsychology.⁶⁹

In the case of the third most critical issue in education, the AP addressed the fourth specific goal defined as 'Systematically preventing, mitigating, and eliminating manifestations of segregation in the educational process at all levels of the education system' (please see the more detailed report about this issue in Chapter 3.1).

2.2.2. Addressing problems beyond the NRSF

Although the Action Plan is quite comprehensive, it lacks the treatment of topics related to the development and support of non-formal education or the resolution of practical problems in education at the decentralised school level. The action plan also fails to address strategies for educating students from marginalised communities during crises, such as COVID-19, during which most Roma children from marginalised communities had no access to online education.

According to a research survey⁷⁰ from July 2020 onward, on average, 60% of Roma students had no or very little contact with their teachers during distance learning. As many as 70% of students from Roma communities did not participate in education at all during the crisis. The survey results show that in some marginalised Roma communities, 90% to 100% of students did not engage in education during the crisis.

The Action Plan does not address digital education or the education of children from marginalised Roma communities in modern technologies. Given that these are areas that will determine job market trends in the coming years, we consider it inadequate that these topics were not included in the Action Plan for 2022-2024.

2.3. Employment

In the population of MRC, there is, on average, one employed person in every second or third household and one retired person in every fifth household. In nearly every household, there is at least one unemployed person or someone on parental leave. The further a Roma settlement is from the centre of a municipality, the lower the economic activity among its adult residents. In settlements located outside municipalities and towns, one employed person can be found in approximately every third household, while for every ten households, there are eleven unemployed individuals. The overall unemployment rate in MRC is 38%, with 46% of the unemployed being young people up to the age of 34, and 38% falling into the 35–49 age group. Only one in five Roma residents over the age of 16 is employed. The NEET rate (young people not in education, employment, or training) for those aged 15 to 34 reached 17.2% in 2018, compared to the EU average of 14.1%. The share of young Roma aged 16 to 24 who were NEET was 65%.⁷¹

The gender employment gap in MRC is significantly more pronounced than in the majority population. According

⁶⁷ See: <https://www.skolskyportal.sk/vzdelavanie-vychova/deti-nezvladaju-ucivo-prepadli-najma-najmladsi>

⁶⁸ See: https://www.cvtisr.sk/cvti-sr-vedecka-kniznica/informacie-o-skolstve/statistiky/statisticka-rocenka-publikacia/statisticka-rocenka-zakladne-skoly.html?page_id=9601

⁶⁹ More about the project: https://www.minedu.sk/ministerstvo-skolstva-spusta-projekt-prevence-predcasneho-ukoncenia-skolskej-dochadzky?fbclid=IwZXh0bgNhZWQCMTEAAR2zSr-zwy2bE6fi5uepK2s3ifIFkGvqOTj2zbeKDzmDRKERnJlqrWu_IQ_aem_lleEjAZ8210M9pBOnNmHtQ

⁷⁰ The research study is available at: <https://eduroma.sk/docs/ako-zostat-blizko-na-dialku.pdf>

⁷¹ See more: *The social and employment situation of Roma communities in Slovakia, 2021*, available at: [https://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/etudes/STUD/2021/695466/IPOL_STU\(2021\)695466_EN.pdf](https://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/etudes/STUD/2021/695466/IPOL_STU(2021)695466_EN.pdf)

to the Employment Institute,⁷² the employment rate of Roma women was only about 16%, compared to 26% for men. The reason for this unequal position of Roma women in the labour market compared to men is their early school dropout, which also increases their share in the NEET group. As a result of early school departure and failure to attain the qualifications necessary for labour market integration, the employment rate of Roma women significantly lags behind that of Roma men, as well as men and women from the general population. Other factors include, for example, unfavourable housing conditions, which make it difficult to manage household duties, the low participation of children in preschool education, a mismatch between skills and labour market demand, low levels of digital skills, and discrimination by employers. A special issue is the societal pressure on young women regarding their participation in family life, particularly in terms of motherhood, as well as caring for dependent family members.⁷³

Therefore, we have identified the following as serious and critical issues: NEET, discrimination in the labour market, and creating parallel jobs for Roma.

2.3.1. Effectiveness of the NRSF in addressing the problems

External evaluations of the 2022 and 2023 Action Plans conclude that most activities delivered unsatisfactory results.⁷⁴

In the external evaluations of the 2022 and 2023 APs, the 'Step by Step' project was listed as fulfilling the activity of setting up and implementing assistance programmes for NEETs (including NEETs from the MRC background) with the inclusion of their identification, tracing, and selection for inclusion in the programme.⁷⁵ The Step by Step project was funded by the European Social Fund under the 'Human Resources Operational Program: REACT-EU Support for Recovery from the Crisis Caused by the COVID-19 Pandemic', including its social consequences, and the preparation for green, digital, and resilient recovery. The call was announced in December 2021, and projects could be implemented until 2023. Eligible applicants were non-profit organisations, foundations, civic associations, associations of legal entities, municipalities and cities, self-governing regions, and registered churches or religious societies. No evaluation report is available that analyses the project's impact on the MRC population. Also, the involvement of different actors in the project without professional experience in the field of social work can be considered an inefficient approach, since the project was implemented, for example, by companies that were previously involved in the financial sector.

*"In our district, we had a number of actors involved in the project, and there were some who had previously engaged in providing, for example, loans. And what happened to us was that the clients that they approached ended up coming to us because they were not satisfied with their approach."*⁷⁶

Again, relying on quantity is not always effective, and even for such projects, care must be taken to ensure a minimum level of expertise.

In the case of the elimination of discrimination in entry into the labour market, we can speak of some misunderstanding of the whole issue by the OGPRC. The Action Plan included five training events by The Slovak National Centre for Human Rights (SNCHR) for employers, which were certainly justifiable, but this problem requires systematic work, especially in the localities where most of the MRC population lives, and in addition to

⁷² See: *Inklúzia Rómov je celospoločenskou výzvou*, 2018, available at: <https://www.mfsr.sk/sk/financie/institut-financnej-politiky/publikacie-ifp/komentare/18-inkluzia-romov-je-celospolocenskou-vyzvou-august-2018.html>

⁷³ See also: *Thematic survey: Barriers to the labour market entry of marginalised Roma*, 2022, available at: https://romovia.vlada.gov.sk/site/assets/files/1276/tematicke_zistovanie_-_bariery_pri_vstupe_marginalizovanych_romov_na_trh_prace.pdf?csrt=81033093537187103

⁷⁴ *Monitoring Report on the Implementation of the Action Plans of the Strategy for Equality, Inclusion and Participation of Roma until 2030 for 2022*, available at: https://romovia.vlada.gov.sk/site/assets/files/1113/ms_2022_sprava_final.pdf?csrt=14598545656017724858.

Monitoring Report on the Implementation of the Action Plans of the Strategy for Equality, Inclusion and Participation of Roma until 2030 for 2023, available at: https://romovia.vlada.gov.sk/site/assets/files/1113/ms_2023_sprava_final-1.pdf?csrt=14598545656017724858.

⁷⁵ *Ibid.*

⁷⁶ Interview with a social worker from the Trnava region who was involved in the Step by Step project, 18 September 2024

training, it would be appropriate to implement campaigns, temporary compensatory measures under the Anti-Discrimination Act, and engage key employers in the regions. Discrimination in entering the labour market is one of the most significant barriers to employment. Several studies⁷⁷ have shown this to be the case, and yet the problem is not being addressed effectively. Rather than fostering an inclusive employment environment, many National Projects create jobs specifically for Roma without offering opportunities for formal education that would support long-term integration.

Access to education within the framework of National Projects is an element that is lacking in the work opportunities created for the population of the MRC. For example, in the National Project 'Local Community Policing', workers could have received training at the police academy and joined the police force after the project. This inclusive and sustainable aspect would not only represent the added value of National Projects in the field of Roma inclusion but would also help to break down stereotypes and prejudices, as Roma would become visible in positions that are mostly perceived by the majority as not typical of Roma.

2.3.2. Addressing problems beyond the NRSF

The Action Plan does not contain any activities targeting private employers. It also does not include any activities focused on employers from sectors such as transportation, services, or education. Additionally, there are no activities aimed at integrating Roma before they reach retirement age. It is further important to note that the Action Plan does not include any legislative changes that would effectively combat discrimination in the labour market.

2.4. Healthcare

The population of MRC is among the most vulnerable groups in terms of health. This is reflected in health indicators (e.g., life expectancy, infant mortality rate, prevalence of infectious diseases, and others) as well as indicators of access to healthcare.

The available data on the disparities in health status between MRC residents and the majority population were presented in the previous report. Therefore, in this section, we will focus primarily on the systemic shortcomings that contribute to these disparities.

The health issues of MRC residents are complex and require a comprehensive approach, including addressing environmental quality, housing conditions, access to basic infrastructure (water, sewage systems, heating), and, of course, access to qualified healthcare. The strategy acknowledges this reality, but it remains questionable whether the Slovak Republic adequately reflects it in practice.

In a conversation with a representative of the Ministry of Health, the complexity of addressing health issues was highlighted as a significant challenge: "First and foremost, there are structural factors that the healthcare sector alone cannot influence. We cannot dig a well to provide access to drinking water—that is a matter of environmental policy or the responsibility of the municipality to ensure access to drinking water. But in reality, environmental conditions are simply beyond the competence of the healthcare sector..."⁷⁸

2.4.1. Effectiveness of the NRSF in addressing the problems

The AP for Health was among the better-rated plans by external evaluators, although several activities were insufficiently implemented, such as an interesting initiative led by the Banská Bystrica Region. This initiative involved home visits by paediatricians to mothers from the MRC. However, only one visit took place during the monitored period, raising doubts about whether this activity was genuinely implemented.

⁷⁷ Zuzana Havirova, *Analysis of barriers to labour market entry for residents of marginalised Roma communities, 2023, doctoral thesis*; Erik Šatara – Zuzana Havirová, *The decisions of Roma from marginalised localities about travelling to work in the form job mobility*, 2022, available at: <https://www.prog.sav.sk/the-decisions-of-roma-from-marginalised-localities-about-travelling-to-work-in-the-form-job-mobility-or-commuting/>; Jurina Rusnáková – Alena Rochovská, *Social exclusion, segregation, and life strategies of Roma community members from the perspective of resource theory*, 2016, available at: <https://www.sav.sk/journals/uploads/10250923Rusnakova,%20Rochovska.pdf>; Zuzana Havirova, *Exclusion from the labour market in the context of anti-Roma racism*, 2022, available at: https://www.researchgate.net/publication/367246046_Vylucenie_z_trhu_prace_v_kontexte_protiromskeho_rasizmu

⁷⁸ Interview with Daniela Kállayová from 11 October 2024

The external evaluator's commentary⁷⁹ questioning the targeting or effectiveness of certain activities also appears in other initiatives' monitoring reports.

Overall, the AP for health received a good rating (compared to other priority areas), which, in the authors' opinion, was because it lacked ambition and remained within the competencies of the entities willing to participate in its implementation—namely, the OGPRC, the National Project 'Healthy Communities',⁸⁰ and some institutions under the Ministry of Health. Key issues, such as discrimination in healthcare and lack of access to services, were inadequately addressed and mainly targeted at Roma themselves or at entities involved in drafting the AP.

The need for a comprehensive approach to the health of MRC, mentioned at the beginning of this subchapter, was reflected in the establishment of an interministerial working group. While this group may serve as a tool for identifying intersections between different ministries, it has no influence on political decision-making.

The proposed measures and activities in AP were tailored to the competencies of the entities willing to participate in their implementation. During interviews with ministry representatives, it was mentioned that a significant proportion of MRC residents lack access to health insurance due to debt, yet this issue was not reflected in the AP. Efforts to involve key stakeholders in addressing MRC health issues, particularly healthcare providers and doctors, have been unsuccessful. This is clearly illustrated by the list of entities involved in implementing the AP health activities, which primarily included Healthy Regions (responsible for the National Project Healthy Communities), the OGPRC, and the Ministry of Health.

It appears that the authors and key coordinators of AP largely relied on the National Project Healthy Communities, which, by its nature, cannot solve all the challenges and disadvantages that Roma face in accessing healthcare. While the project is valuable, it has limitations, particularly the lack of adequate qualification training for health support assistants. Ensuring the sustainability of these individuals in the healthcare system would require their integration into formally recognised positions in hospitals or clinics, such as nurses and medical assistants. However, the education provided by the project does not enhance their qualifications in line with formal healthcare system requirements, making it difficult for them to remain in the system after the project ends.

The AP clearly demonstrates the carryover of unimplemented activities since 2019 from the Strategy for 2020. For example, the measure aimed at monitoring health quality and disparities between MRC and the majority population was included in the Strategy 2020 and remains part of the currently reported AP for 2022–2024. This means that the measure has not been fulfilled for six years. According to our findings, a methodology for this monitoring has been developed, and its implementation is part of research conducted for the OGPRC. The same applies to other measures and activities, such as monitoring infectious diseases in MRC and supporting vaccination. These are annual activities carried out by organisations under the Ministry of Health, independent of the NRSF.

From our perspective, measures aimed at monitoring health disparities between MRC and the majority population are meaningful. In this case, a methodology was developed, but the planned monitoring report was not completed.

Legislative change proposals were also meaningful, as they aimed to provide better protection for low-income individuals from high co-payments for medications and medical supplies, which would improve access to treatment in impoverished MRC households. However, these changes were not implemented during the observed period.

⁷⁹ *Monitoring Report on the Implementation of the Action Plans of the Strategy for Equality, Inclusion and Participation of Roma until 2030 for 2022*, available at: https://romovia.vlada.gov.sk/site/assets/files/1113/ms_2022_sprava_final.pdf?csrt=14598545656017724858.

Monitoring Report on the Implementation of the Action Plans of the Strategy for Equality, Inclusion and Participation of Roma until 2030 for 2023, available at: https://romovia.vlada.gov.sk/site/assets/files/1113/ms_2023_sprava_final-1.pdf?csrt=14598545656017724858.

⁸⁰ The National Project 'Healthy Communities' has been implemented since 2017 and brings health education and referral services to the MRC. Under this project, nearly 270 health promotion assistants are working in MRC. The project also has an Activity to support hospitals that also have such workers, especially in paediatric and gynaecology and obstetrics wards, in a total of 11 hospitals.

The activities of the already mentioned National Project, 'Healthy Communities', and efforts to increase the knowledge and sensitivity of healthcare personnel toward MRC residents are also justified. These have included the enhancement of complementary (voluntary) education standards for selected healthcare positions (e.g., nurses) with new educational topics (though the AP does not specify which topics). The external evaluation of this activity is positive but highlights several risks. The target group for education is narrowly defined, and it should be expanded to include other healthcare positions. The training is voluntary, meaning there is no guarantee that healthcare staff will participate or apply the knowledge they obtain. Accredited educational institutions may lack the expertise to provide training on new topics.

2.4.2. Addressing the problems beyond the NRSF

The NRSF did not directly address discrimination in the health service delivery system, the inaccessibility of health services, determinants of the impact on health quality in terms of their complexity, and the need to involve relevant ministries and other entities in the implementation of measures.

The AP did not address the availability of preventive screenings, such as dental treatment. This is an area that is completely inaccessible to the poorest population. Also, the NRSF does not pay attention to menstrual poverty and available contraceptives. Similarly, cancer prevention activities were absent.

2.5. Housing, essential services, and environmental justice

A part of the Roma population in Slovakia resides in areas with significantly limited access to basic infrastructure, healthcare services, educational institutions, and employment opportunities, which deepens their social exclusion and economic marginalisation. These segregated settlements are located either on the outskirts of municipalities or entirely outside the built-up areas, leading to both physical and social isolation. It is estimated that approximately 56,000 Roma individuals live in settlements outside municipalities, while 151,000 reside on their peripheries. This disproportionate spatial distribution highlights systemic segregation, which severely restricts their opportunities for social and economic inclusion.⁸¹

2.5.1. Effectiveness of the NRSF in addressing the problems

The implementation of the objective of reducing the residential segregation of Roma has been contingent on the willingness of local governments to engage in the preparation of rental housing projects that would reduce segregation. The problem has been the low level of interest of municipalities in engaging in such projects, often due to the fear of losing the support of the local population. This low level of involvement was also highlighted in our interviews with various actors, who pointed to the passivity of key actors in this area.⁸²

Planned activities aimed at mapping the manifestations of discrimination in housing or its elimination were not implemented. At the same time, research from 2024 points to persistent discriminatory barriers, such as higher deposits or rents for Roma, landlords' concerns about tenants' social backgrounds, and discrimination based on ethnicity.⁸³

Within the objective of reducing the number of illegal dwellings in the MRC, OGPRC has implemented projects to regularise land within MRC settlements by 2030. This activity was set up from the outset in such a way that it could not achieve significant positive results because the financial resources⁸⁴ that were allocated were too small, and it was also specified that only 30 municipalities would be involved. As Tomáš Ščuka, a Roma activist, said, one of the key obstacles is the long-term lack of legislation that would enable the comprehensive

⁸¹ Ábel Ravasz, Lúboš Kovács, Filip Markovič, *Atlas rómskych komunit 2019*. [Atlas of Roma Communities 2019.] (VEDA, vydavateľstvo SAV, 2020), available at: <https://www.romovia.vlada.gov.sk/atlas-romskych-komunit/atlas-romskych-komunit-2019/?csrt=7061851889043599343>

⁸² In the context of the low level of involvement of local governments in the implementation of measures aimed at reducing the residential segregation of Roma and promoting social rental housing, Veronika Rehakova, Director of the Housing Policy Department at the Ministry of Transport of Slovak republic, stated: "The target subject, which in our opinion is actually supposed to solve this, are municipalities as the main actor, [but] often they do not show interest in this issue". (Interview with the representative of the Department of Housing Policy, Ministry of Transport of the Slovak Republic, 16. 09. 2024)

⁸³ Sára Danielová, *Subjective perception of manifestations of racism on the life of Roma* (Trnava: UCM FSV, 2024), available at: <https://opac.crzp.sk/?fn=detailBiblioForm&sid=2023538FE3639DEE215B28572DF4>

⁸⁴ Amount of allocated financial resources: EU funds 3.15 million EUR and State budget 0.556 million EUR.

regularisation of land associated with Roma dwellings. Although there has been some progress in the area of so called 'simple land consolidation', which allows for the settlement of property relations in the situation of a large number of owners or their fragmentation, this is a solution with limited impact, because it does not systematically address all cases of property relations, is time-consuming and administratively complex, and its implementation is slow and uncoordinated. Simple land consolidation is a tool that replaces conventional means such as purchase or exchange contracts, but its use remains marginal because the process is administratively complex, time-consuming, and lacks sufficient support for effective implementation.⁸⁵

The project 'Domov' can be evaluated as partially successful.⁸⁶ This was implemented within the framework of improving the quality of housing in MRC and implemented with the non-profit organisation DOM.ov.⁸⁷ The 'Domov' (Home) project focuses on the provision of inclusive housing, with the main objective of addressing the problem of limited access to adequate housing for MRC families.⁸⁸ A case study from Toporec municipality illustrates the challenges of the project implementation. According to Mayor Gustáv Pompa, the municipality purchased land from a private owner and joined the project, initially registering 16 interested applicants. However, the project required participants to save for two years to qualify for a 17,000 EUR loan, along with an additional 4,000 EUR in personal savings, which proved to be a significant financial barrier. As a result, only two out of the original 16 applicants remained. Currently, the municipality is collaborating with the State Housing Development Fund regarding the construction of approximately 24 municipal rental housing units, suggesting a shift towards alternative housing solutions.

The situation was different in the village of Podhorany. According to Mayor Jozef Oračko, this project had significant results and helped the marginalised Roma community in the village. The mayor also highlighted the contribution of expert advice and support, which played a key role in raising awareness and the effective implementation of the project, enabling the municipality and the Roma population to better understand and take advantage of its benefits. The project is perceived positively in the municipality and has the potential for further expansion. The municipality has praised it not only for its practical but also its positive impact on community relations and municipal development. According to the mayor, the results of this project can be assessed as almost "100% successful", which shows its effectiveness and positive contribution to the local community.⁸⁹

The NRSF has set itself the objective of improving access to and use of technical infrastructure and amenities in the MRC. A number of projects were implemented in the period 2022-2024 to promote access to drinking water in the MRC. In 2022, the preparatory activities, including procurement, were initiated, leading to the phased implementation of the projects. In 2023, a total of 11 municipalities participated in a project aimed at improving access to drinking water in marginalised Roma communities. In 2024, activities continued under the new calls of the 'Programme Slovakia 2021-2027', which is a positive sign as it indicates continuity in addressing this issue. However, despite the progress that has been achieved, the setting of targets remains unambitious. For the next period, ambition and capacity must be increased to support higher-impact projects.

Training on waste segregation and waste management was also planned to be conducted for the staff of the supporting professions to improve their capacity to deal with such problems in the MRC. However, these training events were not implemented during the monitoring period, and no changes were noted in the NRSF that would have supported their implementation.⁹⁰

2.5.2. Addressing the problems beyond the NRSF

The NRSF does not take into account some important issues that significantly affect the quality of life in the MRC. These are critical areas that are not sufficiently named or addressed through concrete actions.

⁸⁵ Interview with a representative of CSO from the Prešov region, 4 November 2024.

⁸⁶ According to the Action Plan, a total of 19 entities participated in the settlement of property rights to land.

⁸⁷ See: <https://projektdomov.sk/>

⁸⁸ *SocialMarie Prize for Social Innovation, Projekt Domov*, available at: <https://www.sozialmarie.org/sk/projects/7898>

⁸⁹ Interview with the representative of Podhorany, 3 October 2024.

⁹⁰ *Monitoring Report on the Implementation of the Action Plans of the Strategy for Equality, Inclusion and Participation of Roma until 2030 for 2023*, available at: https://romovia.vlada.gov.sk/site/assets/files/1113/ms_2023_sprava_final-1.pdf?csrc=14598545656017724858

The first area is the environmental burdens that many Roma families are exposed to. Some MRCs are located in flood zones, near slopes prone to landslides, or in areas with higher soil, water, and air contamination. These factors have a significant impact on the health of residents and the safety of their housing, but the NRSF lacks specific measures to prevent and reduce these risks. An example is Rudňany, which has historically been exposed to intensive industrial pollution. Until 1993, industrial activity here significantly damaged all environmental components due to the presence of heavy metals such as mercury, copper, cadmium, lead, and antimony. The Roma families in Rudňany who live nearby are exposed to a disproportionately high risk of contamination compared to the majority population. Another example is the settlement of Pătoracké, one of the most endangered in Central Europe. The site is located on a waste dump contaminated with heavy metals, where toxic substances are leaking into the air and water, and subsidence is occurring. While the majority population has been evacuated from the area, the Roma community continues to face extreme conditions that include environmental and security risks.⁹¹ The village of Jarovnice, home to one of the largest Roma communities in Slovakia, is threatened by water flooding; tragically, in 1998, river flooding killed 47 people, including 45 Roma.⁹²

Another critical area is limited or no access to internet connectivity. Digital accessibility and equity are essential for education, employment, and social integration. Yet many excluded localities do not have access to high-speed internet or lack public internet hotspots. This problem deepens the isolation of the MRC and reduces their chances of economic and social inclusion. Roma communities in Slovakia are often constrained by the lack of internet access in their localities. Many of these areas are not covered by high-speed internet, and public connectivity is insufficient or non-existent.⁹³ This lack prevents residents from using digital technologies for education, information, or employment opportunities. As a result, digital inequality is widening, and they are consequently disadvantaged in adapting to the digital transformation of society. The transformation of the labour market, including automation and digitalisation, requires new skills, especially in working with digital tools.⁹⁴ Moreover, in the context of online education, which was essential during the COVID-19 pandemic, the inaccessibility of the internet has been shown to have exacerbated inequalities in education.⁹⁵ Investments in digital infrastructure in segregated areas and digital skills development programmes can help to bridge the digital divide and promote the inclusion of these communities.⁹⁶

2.6. Social protection

According to data from 2020, up to 87% of households in the MRC were at risk of poverty, and 52% faced severe material deprivation. By comparison, in the overall population of Slovakia, the risk of poverty was 11%, and severe material deprivation affected 6% of households.⁹⁷ The NRSF does not have a separate AP for this

⁹¹ Juliana Krokusová, Tomáš Pasternak, *Environmental and social discrimination as a cause of regional disparities (a case study of Roma settlements in the central Spiš region)*, (University of Prešov Press, 2017), available at: <https://www.unipo.sk/public/media/30383/AUP-Folia%20Oecologica-2017-Vol.%209,%20No.%201.pdf>

⁹² TASR, *Pred 15 rokmi zmetla rozvodnená Svinka v Jarovniciach rómsku osadu*, available at: <https://www.teraz.sk/regiony/jarovnice-povoden-1998-svinka-obete/52937-clanok.html>

⁹³ FRA. (2021). *Second European Union Minorities and Discrimination Survey – Roma*, available: <https://fra.europa.eu/en/publication/2023/roma-survey-2021-technical-report>

⁹⁴ OECD, *Skills Outlook 2019: Thriving in a Digital World*. OECD Publishing, available at: https://www.oecd.org/en/publications/2019/05/oecd-skills-outlook-2019_c8896fe0.html

⁹⁵ DiMaggio, Hargittai, E., *Digital inequality: From unequal access to differentiated use*. *Social Inequality* (2002), available at: [https://scholar.google.sk/scholar?q=DiMaggio.+P.,+%26+Hargittai.+E.+\(2001\).+Digital+inequality:+From+unequal+access+to+differentiated+use.+Social+Inequality.&hl=en&as_sdt=0&as_vis=1&oi=scholar](https://scholar.google.sk/scholar?q=DiMaggio.+P.,+%26+Hargittai.+E.+(2001).+Digital+inequality:+From+unequal+access+to+differentiated+use.+Social+Inequality.&hl=en&as_sdt=0&as_vis=1&oi=scholar)

⁹⁶ UNDP, *Digital Inclusion for Marginalized Communities: Strategies for Bridging the Digital Divide*. United Nations Development Programme (2021), available at: <https://www.undp.org/digital/standards/2-bridge-digital-divide>

⁹⁷ Filip Markovic, Ludmila Placha, *Príjmy a životné podmienky v marginalizovaných rómskych komunitách: Vybrané ukazovatele zo zisťovania EU SILC_MRC 2020* (Bratislava: USVRK, 2020), available at: https://www.romovia.vlada.gov.sk/site/assets/files/1276/analyticka_sprava_eu_silc_mrc_2020_elektronicka_final.pdf?csrt=7878632348697876683

area. In a previous report,⁹⁸ we identified the following social protection challenges: high risk of falling into poverty and material and social deprivation, failure of income support programmes, and limited access to income support schemes.

2.6.1. Effectiveness of the NRSF in addressing the problems

The NRSF has identified that to improve social protection, the employment of MRCs needs to be significantly increased.⁹⁹ This approach fails to address broader structural barriers, such as labour market discrimination, low qualifications, inadequate infrastructure, and limited access to stable employment opportunities. Without comprehensive measures aimed at eliminating these obstacles, increasing employment alone may be insufficient to ensure effective social protection.

A positive example is the implementation of the compensatory allowance for social enterprises under Section 19b of the Social Economy Act.¹⁰⁰ This instrument has contributed to the creation of jobs for disadvantaged people, including members of the MRC, and represents a proven model of support.

On the other hand, support programmes for women from the MRC affected by multiple forms of discrimination implemented by the Ministry of Labour, Social Affairs and Family, Ministry of Education, Ministry of Health, and Ministry of Transport, Construction and Regional Development, in cooperation with non-governmental organisations and community centres have been unsuccessful. The main reason was ineffective cooperation with the responsible actors.

2.6.2. Addressing the problems beyond the NRSF

We consider it unfortunate that no legislative processes have taken place that would change the social security system and thus help improve social protection for MRC. The only change started in July 2024 in the area of the material deprivation benefit. The material deprivation benefit provides monthly financial support for economically vulnerable households: 84.90 EUR for each individual, 161.40 EUR for an individual with children (max. four), 147.50 EUR for a couple without children, and 297.50 EUR for a couple with more than four children. This benefit is reduced by 86.60 EUR for each adult household member of working age who does not work or volunteer for at least 32 hours per month.¹⁰¹ As this represents 86.60 EUR for 32 hours of work, it works out at 1.35 EUR per hour, which is less than one third of the minimum hourly wage. By comparison, the basic hourly minimum wage is 4.30 EUR.¹⁰² As can be seen, the material hardship allowance is very low, so it is illogical to cut it further by tightening the already strict rules for its approval. However, the minister's communication¹⁰³ makes it clear that he wants to cut the number of recipients of this benefit because he feels that people are abusing it and do not really want to work. It is obvious that these statements of the minister¹⁰⁴ were meant in relation to Roma as they were made in the presence of the GPRC.

The housing allowance is a state benefit designed to partially cover housing costs for households in material need. Its amount depends on the number of household members. It is paid monthly through the Office of Labour, Social Affairs, and Family, and it is available to owners or tenants of apartments or houses who have

⁹⁸ Roma Civil Monitor, *Civil society monitoring report on the quality of the national strategic framework for Roma equality, inclusion, and participation in Slovakia*, 2022, available at: <https://romacivilmonitoring.eu/wp-content/uploads/2023/07/RCM2-2022-C1-Slovakia-FINAL-PUBLISHED-CATALOGUE.pdf>

⁹⁹ *Ibid.*

¹⁰⁰ The law is available in Slovak at: https://www.slov-lex.sk/ezbierky/pravne-predpisy/SK/ZZ/2018/112/#error=login_required&state=9e84bad7-158a-4258-8343-6798e0f92caf

¹⁰¹ Ministry of Labour, Social Affairs and Family, *Výška pomoci v hmotnej núdzi [Amount of assistance in material need]*, 12 October 2024, available at: <https://www.employment.gov.sk/sk/rodina-socialna-pomoc/hmotna-nudza/davky-hmotnej-nudzi/davka-hmotnej-nudzi/vyska-davky.html>

¹⁰² *Minimálna mzda na Slovensku v roku 2025: Najdôležitejšie informácie [Minimum wage in Slovakia in 2025: Key information]*, available at: <https://www.platy.sk/analzy/minimalna-mzda-na-slovensku-v-roku-2024-najdolezitejsie-informacie/50925>

¹⁰³ See: <https://www.aktuality.sk/clanok/rMYnPbs/odmietnutie-pracovnej-ponuky-by-malo-podla-erika-tomasa-znamenat-stratu-davky-v-hmotnej-nudzi/>

¹⁰⁴ Ministry of Labour, Social Affairs and Family, *Výška pomoci v hmotnej núdzi [Amount of assistance in material need]*, 12 October 2024, available at: <https://www.employment.gov.sk/sk/rodina-socialna-pomoc/hmotna-nudza/davky-hmotnej-nudzi/davka-hmotnej-nudzi/vyska-davky.html>

permanent or temporary residence in Slovakia. Despite the existence of this allowance, many families face obstacles in accessing it, primarily due to the strict eligibility conditions, which exclude households living in informal or technically inadequate dwellings. Administrative barriers and a lack of information also result in many eligible applicants not claiming the benefit.¹⁰⁵

2.7. Social services

The social services system is primarily regulated by the Social Services Act (Act No. 448/2008 Coll.), with services being provided by municipalities, non-profit organisations, and community centres; however, their capacities are often insufficient. The NRSF focuses primarily on community centres and field social work, but it fails to address broader issues of service accessibility as a whole for different groups within the MRC. A significant problem remains the lack of coordination between the state, municipalities, and non-governmental organisations, which results in uneven coverage of the needs of Roma communities across different regions.

The NRSF does not analyse the social services themselves (or their importance, barriers to access, etc.). The context of the MRC mainly talks about community centres and field social work, but the issue of social services and their (in)accessibility to specific population groups in the MRC is broader and ignored. Programmes similar to social services are not enshrined in legislation, but according to their characteristics, they are helping professions that are similar to social services. These are programmes implemented within the MRC setting (e.g., assistants for health support associated with the 'Omamas programme' – an early childhood care programme), youth counselling, or career counselling. A new programme is the 'Development Teams', implemented as a National Project by the OGPRC from 2023. The Development Teams refers to a group of job positions specialised in specific areas of support: housing, early care, youth work, employment and job counselling, social work, and community development. The project is being implemented in 60 municipalities with MRC. The question remains whether this scope is sufficient given the total number of municipalities with a high concentration of MRC and the extent of the needs of these communities.

Among the biggest issues in this area, we identify the uncertain stability and sustainability of services that are most widespread in marginalised Roma communities (such as field social work and community centres). Additionally, we note concerns about the quality of these social services and their alignment with the priorities defined in the NRSF, as well as the limited availability of other essential social services for residents of marginalised communities (e.g., crisis centres, senior care facilities, and others).

2.7.1. Effectiveness of the NRSF in addressing the problems

In the APs for employment and housing, community centres and field social work were listed at the level of activities and indicators. In the APs for health and education, programmes similar to social services were defined, such as health support assistants (as part of the National Project 'Healthy Communities') and early care programmes. Without questioning the value of these services and programmes, it is not possible to estimate their specific contributions to priority areas due to the lack of data that could be evaluated from this perspective. In the monitoring of the NRSF, social services were tracked through indicators such as the number of municipalities involved in National Projects or the number of employees. The National Projects themselves report the number of interventions, meaning they primarily provide quantitative data on the scale of the project rather than its actual impact.¹⁰⁶ It is important to note that evaluation reports from National Projects provide a wealth of information that allows for a better understanding of their activities and undeniable benefits for target groups in various areas of life. For example, in recent years, community centres have been striving to build civic communities by establishing community councils in MRC and implementing community planning.

The competencies of community centre and field social work employees in the priority areas of the NRSF remain questionable. For example, activities set out in the AP for housing, which aimed to educate social workers on specific issues related to housing quality (e.g., waste reduction, fire protection), were not implemented and were critically assessed by external evaluators. From this perspective, a positive development appears to be the

¹⁰⁵ See: <https://www.employment.gov.sk/sk/>

¹⁰⁶ To some extent, the *Omama* ("grandma") programme can be considered an exception, as it involved conducting research on the impact of early care activities on the development of children supported by the 'Omamas'. This project is run by the civic association Cesta von; however, the results of this research have not yet been published.

introduction of job positions providing counselling on housing and financial literacy within the field of social work.¹⁰⁷

This issue is also linked to the questionable alignment between the goals of the National Project of social services and the objectives set out in the NRSF, particularly in the case of the already mentioned field of social work and community centres. These are complex services that naturally respond to the diverse needs of target groups. However, better consideration of priority areas and improved cooperation between the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs and the OGPRC could enhance their effectiveness. A lack of communication and cooperation between these institutions is also implicitly suggested in an interview with representatives of the National Projects of field social work and community centres, who stated that they "do not consider the NRSF objectives as their own" and do not see their fulfilment as their responsibility.¹⁰⁸

There is relatively little publicly available information about the currently implemented National Project on field social work and community centres ('Together for Communities')¹⁰⁹.

2.7.2. Addressing the problems beyond the NRSF

We consider it important that the NRSF does not address the sustainability of community centres and field social work after the conclusion of National Projects. The NRSF also fails to identify the limited availability of other social services beyond field social work and community centres for vulnerable residents from the MRC. This particularly affects elderly and disabled individuals, as well as abused women and children, who require residential or outpatient social services. These include senior homes, day centres, facilities for people with disabilities, rehabilitation centres, and emergency housing facilities. These services remain largely inaccessible due to several factors, including financial barriers, low awareness within the MRC about their existence, administrative complexity, and generally complicated admission processes.

2.8. Child protection

The NRSF addresses this area only as a secondary outcome of activities and does not focus directly on improving child protection in all areas. Nor do we find proposals for systemic changes that would help to make the child rights protection system more effective, especially if the child comes from a poor or marginalised background.

2.8.1. Effectiveness of the NRSF in addressing the problems

The biased treatment of Roma children and youth by security forces is a significant problem in the area of child protection.¹¹⁰ Second, the topic Countering Antigypsyism and Promoting Participation can be found in the AP, where several training events on extremism and radicalisation have been implemented for members of the armed forces and force components. However, we are unable to assess whether the training in question included the topic of protecting children from unreasonable behaviour by security forces.¹¹¹

¹⁰⁷ *Monitoring Report on the Implementation of the Action Plans of the Strategy for Equality, Inclusion and Participation of Roma until 2030 for 2022*, available at:

https://romovia.vlada.gov.sk/site/assets/files/1113/ms_2022_sprava_final.pdf?csrt=14598545656017724858.

Monitoring Report on the Implementation of the Action Plans of the Strategy for Equality, Inclusion and Participation of Roma until 2030 for 2023, available at:

https://romovia.vlada.gov.sk/site/assets/files/1113/ms_2023_sprava_final-1.pdf?csrt=14598545656017724858.

¹⁰⁸ Interview conducted on 11 October 2024 with representatives of National Projects of field social work and community centres.

¹⁰⁹ This is likely a consequence of the change in the institution responsible for project implementation. The Implementation Agency (which oversaw National Projects in the previous period) was dissolved, and the National Project was integrated into the structure of ministry of labour and social affairs.

¹¹⁰ For example, see: <https://www.noviny.sk/krimi/1029535-policajt-na-vychode-mal-v-skole-udajne-zbit-romske-deti>, or: <https://www.noviny.sk/krimi/97928-policaiti-vraj-zbili-4-romske-deti-a-nepustili-ich-na-zachod>

¹¹¹ *Monitoring Report on the Implementation of the Action Plans of the Strategy for Equality, Inclusion and Participation of Roma until 2030 for 2022*, available at:

https://romovia.vlada.gov.sk/site/assets/files/1113/ms_2022_sprava_final.pdf?csrt=14598545656017724858.

2.8.2. Addressing the problems beyond the NRSF

The NRSF does not mention anything about Roma children in institutional care, despite the fact that they make up the majority of those in institutional homes for children. Although legislation¹¹² does not allow children to be placed in children's homes solely due to the material and technical conditions of their housing, this practice still occurs, especially in marginalised Roma communities. Thanks to research¹¹³ conducted by independent organisations, we can learn about this issue, which, however, remains outside the interest of the OGPRC.

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

At present, the Ministry of Culture in Slovakia is facing significant criticism from the public and the cultural community. Its highest representatives are expressing views that largely suppress democratic values and cultural diversity. They are seeking to impose their own vision of Slovak culture and exert considerable influence over the independence of expert institutions.

There is no AP for the support of Roma art, culture, and history in the NRSF. Instead, the cultural sector is included in the APs for education, combating antigypsyism, and promoting participation.

Critical problems in the cultural field, which also extend to other areas, include the absence of information about Roma culture and history in school curricula, insufficient and unsystematic support for Roma media and cultural institutions, inadequate backing for institutions established to preserve and promote Roma culture, and weak, largely unstructured support for research on Roma history, culture, and language. All of these problems are long-standing.

2.9.1. Effectiveness of the NRSF in addressing the problems

In the AP for education, measures and activities were defined to support the use of the Romani language in official communication, activities to promote research in the field of Romani language and culture, support for academic education concerning the Romani language, and activities aimed at integrating information about Romani history and culture into primary school textbooks. Most of these activities remained unimplemented or were supported only through the Fund for the Support of the Culture of National Minorities, which cannot be considered a systemic form of support. In the AP for combating antigypsyism and promoting participation, an Activity was included to support the establishment of permanent exhibitions of Romani history and art in all museums under regional government. This was not carried out because regional governments refused to implement it, citing insufficient financial and spatial capacities. Regional authorities were informed that they could apply for funding from the Fund for the Support of the Culture of National Minorities to implement this activity, but they did not take advantage of this opportunity. Another planned activity was the creation of an Ethical Code for the Representation of Minorities in the Media. However, the OGPRC did not implement this initiative, despite having the opportunity to collaborate with non-governmental organisations, which ultimately issued the code themselves.¹¹⁴

Monitoring Report on the Implementation of the Action Plans of the Strategy for Equality, Inclusion and Participation of Roma until 2030 for 2023, available at: https://romovia.vlada.gov.sk/site/assets/files/1113/ms_2023_sprava_final-1.pdf?csrt=14598545656017724858.

¹¹² Act no. 36/2005 Coll. On Family, available at: <https://www.slov-lex.sk/ezbierky/pravne-predpisy/SK/ZZ/2005/36/>

¹¹³ Gallová Kriglerová, E. (ed.). *Štátne deti na jednej lodi? Rómske deti v detských domovoch [State Children in the Same Boat? Roma Children in Children's Homes]* (2015), available at: <https://cvek.sk/wp-content/uploads/2015/11/Statne-deti-na-jednej-lodi.pdf>

¹¹⁴ *Monitoring Report on the Implementation of the Action Plans of the Strategy for Equality, Inclusion and Participation of Roma until 2030 for 2022*, available at: https://romovia.vlada.gov.sk/site/assets/files/1113/ms_2022_sprava_final.pdf?csrt=14598545656017724858.

Monitoring Report on the Implementation of the Action Plans of the Strategy for Equality, Inclusion and Participation of Roma until 2030 for 2023, available at: https://romovia.vlada.gov.sk/site/assets/files/1113/ms_2023_sprava_final-1.pdf?csrt=14598545656017724858.

It is worth mentioning the ‘Vision for the Development of Romani Culture, Language, and Identity Support’,¹¹⁵ which the Ministry of Culture submitted to the Slovak government in 2022, along with an Action Plan for 2022–2024. The document was created based on a government resolution related to the NRSF. The action plan was designed for five specific objectives, including support for the stability and development of institutions dedicated to Romani culture, support for Romani artists and art, support for Romani media, the development and preservation of the Romani language, and strengthening awareness of minority rights. The Action Plan included a total of 40 activities. At the end of 2024, the Ministry of Culture submitted a monitoring report¹¹⁶ on this Action Plan in which individual measures and activities are evaluated formally: a large part of them were not implemented, or the department reported on the activities of other departments, the OGPRC, etc. It is clear from this report that the Vision for the Development of Roma Culture has remained on the periphery of the ministry's attention.

2.9.2. Addressing the problems beyond the NRSF

The majority of financial support for Romani culture is distributed through grant calls from the Fund for the Culture of National Minorities. However, these projects can only be implemented in the year in which they receive financial support. This is a state fund that announces grant calls annually in three categories: amateur culture and arts, professional arts, media, and multicultural activities. Since its establishment in 2017, the fund has faced serious criticism regarding its decisions about grants for Romani culture. The selection of expert committee members is non-transparent, conflicts of interest among committee members are not clearly defined, and the expertise of committee members has been questioned. Additionally, the fund regularly delays decisions on project support and grant allocation for various reasons. As a result, applicants often receive funding only in the second half of the year. This situation can be considered nearly destructive of activities requiring year-round, continuous support, such as media. Since these are competitive grants with uncertain outcomes, this poses an insurmountable obstacle to long-term planning in the cultural sector. The fund also supports research activities, media, and professional culture. However, the support is inconsistent and depends on annual approval, making it difficult to set long-term goals. While this form of support may be suitable for organising cultural events, it is not appropriate for media or research activities, which require long-term planning and stable funding.

Romani cultural institutions mostly lack legal subjectivity (they function as departments or parts of other institutions) and have been underfunded for a long time. Their reach is primarily local, making them difficult for most Romani people to access. Their future is uncertain, and planning their own development is complicated.

There are few cultural institutions operating in Slovakia, and most struggle with existential problems.¹¹⁷ *Romano nevo l'il*, the oldest print media, has reduced its activities due to non-systematic financial support, dissolved its editorial team, significantly decreased the frequency of its publications, and has no internal employees. There is no research institution dedicated to the study of the Romani language or other cultural expressions. In the case of language, this is a critical issue, as experts warn that it is gradually disappearing from the everyday communication of Roma people.

¹¹⁵ Government Resolution No. 181 of 7 April 2021 on the Strategy for Equality, Inclusion and Participation of Roma until 2030, available at: <https://rokovania.gov.sk/RVL/Resolution/19150/1>

¹¹⁶ See: https://www.slov-lex.sk/elegislativa/legislativne-procesy/SK/LP/2025/99#error=login_required&state=d378a5b4-a4ce-44f8-af31-1d27139bf164

¹¹⁷ Romathan Theatre, Documentation-information Centre of Roma Culture, Museum of Roma Culture as part of the Slovak National Museum in Martin.

3. FOCUS ON KEY PROBLEMS AFFECTING ROMA

For this chapter, we decided to work on the topics of segregation in education, residential segregation, poor participation in the labour market, and capacity building of Roma CSOs. All of these areas are crucial for ensuring that Roma are fully integrated into society.

In a case of the **segregation of Roma children in education**, the European Commission initiated proceedings against the Slovak Republic in 2015 for two violations of the Racial Equality Directive. The first was the disproportionately large proportion of Roma children educated in parallel special education. The second was the segregation of Roma children through various means in mainstream schools, such as separate classes for Roma children only or in schools attended by Roma children only. A court case is currently ongoing and is still pending.

The issue of **residential segregation** and the associated generational poverty and exclusion from society go against the principles of the European Union. The prohibition of residential segregation is implicit in European legislation through the general principles of equality, non-discrimination, and the protection of human rights. It derives from the EU Charter of Fundamental Rights, the Treaty on the Functioning of the EU, the Racial Equality Directive, the European Convention for the Protection of Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms, and international obligations that influence EU legislation. Despite this, after 20 years of EU membership, residential segregation in the Slovak Republic is linked to living conditions that more closely resemble those in developing countries.

The **low level of participation of Roma in the labour market** is the result of structural discrimination, years of unsystematic measures, and non-inclusive public policies. In recent years, special positions created for Roma have started to appear, mostly in EU-funded projects. The creation of such jobs, on the one hand, helps to address the poor financial situation of Roma, but, on the other hand, has a stronger negative impact on inclusion, as the jobs are located in marginalised Roma communities and support their members. In consequence, the exploited Roma stay in their segregated setting with no contact outside the marginalised community. These jobs, therefore, do not support the social interactions and ties that would contribute to social integration.

The last area concerns the **capacity building of Roma CSOs**. The absence of a strong Roma civil sector with experts in various fields results in low Roma participation in public affairs.

3.1. Segregation in education

Addressing the school segregation of Roma children has indeed moved forward in recent years in the field of school policy. However, the risks of deepening educational segregation are unfortunately taking new forms. The latest data¹¹⁸ suggests that in Slovakia, 65% of 6 to 15-year-old Roma pupils attend schools where all or most pupils are of the same ethnicity, a 5% increase compared to 2016.¹¹⁹

Case study: Minority education as camouflage for segregation

On 24 June 2024, the Ministry of Education presented its intention to establish the first Roma ethnic minority school in the village of Rakúsy. This proposal was formalised through a memorandum¹²⁰ signed by the ministry, the municipal authority of Rakúsy, the Association of Private (Secondary) Schools Teaching the Roma Language, and the University of Prešov. This step was not discussed with representatives of the Roma ethnic minority

¹¹⁸ FRA, *Roma in 10 European countries, 2021*, available at: https://fra.europa.eu/sites/default/files/fra_uploads/fra-2022-roma-survey-2021-main-results2_en.pdf

¹¹⁹ See: <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2023/sep/28/roma-only-the-school-caught-up-in-a-slovakian-national-scandal>

¹²⁰ See: <https://romanoforum.dennikn.sk/nove-pravidla-desegregacie-v-skolach-su-derave-vylucenym-ziakom-nepomozu/>

within the Committee on National Minorities and Ethnic Groups, despite the fact that the Ministry of Education had been preparing this plan since December 2023.¹²¹

In April 2021, the municipality of Rakúsy had a total population of 3,190 inhabitants,¹²² 2,608 of whom are Roma, of whom 2,330 live in a Roma settlement approximately 5 km from the municipality.¹²³ If a child is born into a settlement in Rakúsy, they will go to primary school in as many as three places during their school life. They will complete the first year directly in the settlement, the fourth and fifth years in rented facilities in Kežmarok, and from the sixth to the ninth year, they will return to the village, which is 2 km away from the community. The children of Rakúsy thus have their school careers complicated by the lack of space in the village school and all the other barriers to a good education faced by families living in poverty and segregation.

In August 2024, CSOs and experts sent a call to the Minister of Education to stop the project at the very beginning.¹²⁴ They identified two problematic areas for the Ministry of Education. First, the Ministry of Education stated that the establishment of a Roma school in Rakúsy would contribute to combating the segregation of Roma children in education and referred in the memorandum to a methodological interpretation supporting the more effective application of the principles of desegregation and destigmatisation. However, nowhere in this document is minority education mentioned as a desegregation measure. Second, CSOs and experts referred to the UNESCO Convention in force, which applies the principle that the exception to segregated education is national education, which must, however, be based on the free will of the minority and the parents, be provided at the same quality as that provided by mainstream (Slovak) schools and, that parents must have the choice to place their child in a mainstream integrated school. The principle is formulated in the 1960 UNESCO Convention against Discrimination in Education, which is part of the current legal order of the Slovak Republic.

According to the available information, it can be concluded that parents of children affected by the measure do not have sufficient information about this step and its consequences, and will not have a choice between an equally accessible Roma nationality school and a school with Slovak as the language of instruction. If they do not choose a Roma ethnic school, their children will have to travel and, more importantly, it will be very difficult to find a school to take them to. Ultimately, there is a risk that children will attend a Roma ethnic school because of the difficulty of accessing another school, not because they have chosen it. Roma parents generally prefer education in the Slovak language, especially if the school is one of the few places where their children are in contact with majority Slovaks. Having contact with the children of the majority is important for inclusion, but this is not happening today, and will not happen even if a Roma ethnic school is established.

The Ministry of Education has argued that its intention to establish a Roma school is designed to ensure the constitutional right of the Roma minority to education in their native language.¹²⁵ However, minority education must be based on the demands of the minority itself and not on the position of the state. Since there is no such demand from the parents, this argument by the Ministry of Education is illegitimate concerning the establishment of a Roma school.

The Ministry thus began to use the argument that the Roma school would comply with the temporary compensatory measures under the Anti-Discrimination Act, but this argument was also disproved by a study conducted by the Slovak National Centre for Human Rights.¹²⁶

¹²¹ See: <https://spravy.rtvs.sk/2023/12/segregacia-deti-na-slovensku-sposobuje-ze-mnohi-skolaci-su-nepravom-v-specialnych-skolach-ministerstvo-navrhlo-riesenie/>

¹²² *Census, Houses and dwellings 2021*, available at: <https://www.scitanie.sk>

¹²³ *Atlas of Roma Communities 2019*, available at: <https://www.romovia.vlada.gov.sk/atlas-romskych-komunit/atlas-romskych-komunit-2019/>

¹²⁴ See: <https://romanoforum.dennikn.sk/vyzva-osobnosti-ministrovi-skolstva-zastavte-premenu-segregovanych-skol-na-romske-narodnostne-skoly/>

¹²⁵ See: <https://dennikn.sk/4224607/romska-narodnostna-skola-v-rakusoch-medzi-pravom-na-vzdelavanie-v-materinskom-jazyku-a-desegregaciou-si-nemozeme-vyberat/>

¹²⁶ Position paper available at: <https://www.snslp.sk/wp-content/uploads/OS-zamer-docasneho-vyrovnacieho-opatrenia-v-obci-Rakusy.pdf>

The wave of criticism did not stop the ministry from taking further action, and in October 2024, an amendment to the Education Law was passed that changed the definition of ethnic minority education.¹²⁷ According to the new definition, a school may be labelled an 'ethnic minority school' if it includes at least the subject of minority language and literature. This is a significant simplification of the logic supporting the establishment of ethnic minority schools, and in the case of the Roma minority, the fear that all segregated schools will begin to be transformed into Roma ethnic minority schools is justified.

Segregation will thus begin to be masked under ethnic minority education, and Roma children from poor localities will have no opportunity to be educated inclusively.

3.1.1. Effectiveness of the NRSF in addressing the problem

The NRSF, in the AP for education, has a partial goal, which systematically aims to prevent, reduce, and eliminate the manifestations of segregation in the educational process at all levels of the education system. There are three measures and five activities intended to support the partial goal of the NRSF to end segregation in education. The first measure focuses on preventing spatial and social segregation through methodological guidance and the application of desegregation tools. Within this measure, segregation should be defined in school legislation, methodological guidelines, or the Anti-Discrimination Act. This task was completed in May 2023. In 2024, the Ministry of Education decided to cosmetically change the definition after a year.¹²⁸ The problem is that such a change makes it impossible to effectively define educational policy in order to enforce desegregation in school practice, which has a negative impact on Roma children.

The second measure includes the same text as the entire sub-goal, namely: "systematically mitigate and eliminate manifestations of segregation in the educational process at all levels of the education system". As part of this measure, a system for monitoring segregation and desegregation practices in the Slovak school system was defined, and the implementation of desegregation monitoring was planned. In 2024, the Ministry of Education presented a pilot methodology and results of the monitoring of the risk of segregation in primary schools in the period 2022/2023.¹²⁹ Of a total of 2,067 primary schools, 468 schools were identified as being at risk of segregation. This monitoring did not focus on the disproportionately large share of Roma children enrolled in special schools and classes; the pilot report focuses only on mainstream primary schools and mainstream classes. The study does not mention specific schools or locations, but it presents the findings that in these schools, the quality of education is low and the expertise of teachers is insufficient. It also does not focus on researching the causes of the creation of segregated schools, which we consider problematic, as the root causes of segregation are key to its elimination. The next activity within this measure was supposed to focus on the implementation of desegregation projects at all levels of the education process. By the end of 2024, no National Project with this focus had been launched.

The third measure was intended to increase the access of students from MRC to mainstream education by supporting the transformation of the special education system. As part of this measure, an objective and culturally sensitive assessment of the individual educational needs of children and students from MRC was to be ensured in order to effectively identify and address them in an inclusive school environment. In 2023, related methodologies were developed. However, they focus on students regardless of their ethnic, linguistic, and social background. The documents do not provide a clear diagnostic approach for students from MRC; therefore, it is questionable how this measure will affect Roma children and students from MRC.¹³⁰

¹²⁷ See: https://www.slov-lex.sk/ezbierky/pravne-predpisy/SK/ZZ/2008/245/#error=login_required&state=9353a96e-e9c4-4aa8-8dc6-838da04046ac

¹²⁸ See: <https://romanoforum.dennikn.sk/nove-pravidla-desegregacie-v-skolach-su-derave-vylucenym-ziakom-nepomozu/>

¹²⁹ Available at: https://www.minedu.sk/data/att/3b8/31594.714778.pdf?fbclid=IwY2xjawGZskNleHRuA2FlbQlxMAABHUiSHkuBywXswbb2TgLUcTexheXAXNAj-iz1BwONZo7VKwMJnlo4GMCa9w_aem_wvD7D9KJs-CWKdL1wdRVXq

¹³⁰ *Monitoring Report on the Implementation of the Action Plans of the Strategy for Equality, Inclusion and Participation of Roma until 2030 for 2022*, available at: https://romovia.vlada.gov.sk/site/assets/files/1113/ms_2022_sprava_final.pdf?csrt=14598545656017724858.

Monitoring Report on the Implementation of the Action Plans of the Strategy for Equality, Inclusion and Participation of Roma until 2030 for 2023, available at: https://romovia.vlada.gov.sk/site/assets/files/1113/ms_2023_sprava_final-1.pdf?csrt=14598545656017724858.

If we look at this sub-goal as a whole and then examine the ministry's efforts in the field of minority education, we can see that these are two approaches that contradict each other. On one hand, the NRSF aims to eliminate segregation through inclusion, while on the other hand (as seen in the case study above), the Ministry of Education attempts to address segregation in education in a way that is far from inclusive. The problem is clearly that the Ministry of Education does not align with the NRSF and instead defines its own approaches to the education of Roma children.

3.1.2. Synergy with other actions

Desegregation and inclusion are established as principles in the Strategy for an Inclusive Approach in Education until 2030.¹³¹ For the period up to 2030, it sets out the need to address the problem of segregation, non-discrimination, and the intensification of interventions for combating antigypsyism among children and students in 'Roma schools,' guiding them toward inclusive education. The definition of this goal is questionable, as it refers to activities that should be implemented in 'Roma schools.' However, it is entirely unclear what this term means—what exactly are 'Roma schools'? From the perspective of desegregation, the use of this term is unacceptable. This example illustrates that the entire state policy on desegregation is fundamentally misdirected, as desegregation should specifically take place in areas where there is a risk of the emergence of ethnically homogeneous schools.

We find that segregated education is also supported within the Recovery Plan. An example is the construction of a primary school in a Roma locality in Trebišov¹³² from 2024 onwards, which was supposed to be built with funding from the 'Catching Up Regions' programme. This plan did not succeed, so in the end, the school was constructed with funding from the 'Recovery Plan', using a total of EUR 12 million. Even the project documents for the construction of the school show that the school will be built on parcels of land that are in the MRC.¹³³

3.1.3. Roma participation

It is disturbing that the Ministry of Education initiated the establishment of a pilot school in the village of Rakúsy without consultation or any official request from representatives of Roma parents and the community. This disregard for the voluntary nature of minority education violates international standards and undermines the right of Roma families to decide on their children's education. It is also worrying that before signing the memorandum, in the case of the pilot ethnic school in the municipality of Rakúsy, the Ministry of Education did not consult with Roma representatives in the Committee for National Minorities and Ethnic Groups of the Slovak Government Council for Human Rights, National Minorities and Gender Equality. This lack of consultation indicates a broader disregard for the voices and rights of the Roma community in Slovakia and is contrary to the principles of participatory decision-making when dealing with such or other similar events.¹³⁴ OGPRC has not officially commented on the case in Rakúsy, and we have not seen any concerns from OGPRC about the deepening of segregation involved in creating the first Roma school there. This only illustrates the OGPRC's lax attitude towards the government's proposals for the MRC.

3.2. Residential segregation in poor neighbourhoods

Residential segregation is a social and spatial phenomenon involving different groups of residents living separately based on certain characteristics such as ethnicity, race, religion, economic status, education, or other social factors. This phenomenon is often manifested by the creation of specific residential zones or neighbourhoods where people with similar characteristics are concentrated, while other population groups live in different parts of the city or region. The consequences of residential segregation lead to social deprivation, ghettoisation, and, not least, inter-community tensions.

The residential segregation of Roma is a problem that goes back deep into the past. It is linked to the regulations that were introduced practically after the arrival of the Roma in Europe. In the fascist Slovak state during World

¹³¹ See: <https://www.minedu.sk/data/att/928/23120.ae7062.pdf>

¹³² See: <https://www.crz.gov.sk/data/att/5392935.pdf>

¹³³ See: <https://www.uvo.gov.sk/vyhľadavanie/vyhľadavanie-zakaziek/dokumenty/508847?cHash=5bed082d69f4e567e106df0b41cf0233>

¹³⁴ Zuzana Havirova, *Nemáme právo hazardovať s budúcnosťou rómskych detí. [We have no right to gamble with the future of Roma children.]*, available at: <https://romanoforum.dennikn.sk/nemame-pravo-hazardovat-s-buducnostou-romskych-deti/>

War II, racial laws were passed that made the Roma a second category of people without basic human rights and freedoms. In 1941, a decree was issued that prohibited nomadism, and the dwellings of Roma had to be built separately from those of the other inhabitants in a designated place.¹³⁵ After the end of World War II, the communist ideology supported that the Roma would be best served by assimilating into the majority society, but their policies meant that the position of the Roma in society did not improve in several localities.¹³⁶

As we can see from Table 1, Mapping of Roma communities in Slovakia, the numbers of Roma communities in different categories are significantly different, but this does not mean that this is the result of well-adjusted public policies. It is the result of a change in the methodology for identifying localities.

Table 1: Mapping of Roma communities in Slovakia

		Banska Bystrica region	Košice region	Prešov region	Bratislava region	Trenčín region	Žilina region	Trnava region	Nitra region	Total
At the edge of the village	Year 2013	40	102	128	9	5	6	21	13	324
	Year 2019	82	177	162	15	12	11	17	26	502
Outside of the village	Year 2013	51	76	80	3	2	4	10	7	233
	Year 2019	49	53	65	2	1	1	5	18	194
Inside the village	Year 2013	51	52	46	7	6	9	30	45	246
	Year 2019	0	0	0	0	0	11	0	0	11
Total number of Roma communities										
Year 2013	803									
Year 2019	707									

Source: Atlas of Roma communities 2013 and 2019, authors' elaboration

In connection with the mapping of Roma communities, ethical issues arise related to the identification of Roma, i.e., the ascribed ethnicity on the basis of which the data for the mapping is collected. It is debatable whether the *Atlas of Roma Communities* really supports the effective functioning of public policies. In the external evaluation of the NRSF for the years 2022 and 2023¹³⁷ there were also criticisms of the impact of public

¹³⁵ Kamil Janas, *Perzekúcie Rómov v Slovenskej republike (1939–1945). [Persecution of Roma in the Slovak Republic (1939–1945).]* (Bratislava: Ústav pamäti národa. 2010).

¹³⁶ Jarmila Lajčáková, *Na základe šetrenia výsledkov Európskej komisie sme pripustili existenciu problému segregácie vo vzdelávaní. Zostáva ho riešiť. [Based on the European Commission's findings, we acknowledged the existence of segregation in education. The challenge now is to address it.]* (Bratislava: CVEK, 2016)

¹³⁷ *Monitoring Report on the Implementation of the Action Plans of the Strategy for Equality, Inclusion and Participation of Roma until 2030 for 2022*, available at: https://romovia.vlada.gov.sk/site/assets/files/1113/ms_2022_sprava_final.pdf?csrt=14598545656017724858.

policies on Roma. In fact, the state administration is not able to cross-reference its data with the existing *Atlas of Roma Communities*, thus it is not possible to evaluate whether the National Projects have really affected the excluded Roma communities.

3.2.1. Effectiveness of the NRSF in addressing the problem

The NRSF defined the specific objective of reducing the residential segregation of Roma, and within it, two activities were specified. In the first, municipalities were to prepare rental housing projects with the relevant ministries to reduce residential segregation. As an indicator of the implementation of the activity, data for four municipalities were defined as the baseline indicators in 2023, and four municipalities in 2024. No funds from the state budget or EU funds were allocated for the activity, i.e., the whole activity came under the responsibility of municipalities. The municipalities of Trebišov, Spišský Štiavnik, Gánovce, and Betlanovce were involved in the implementation in 2023, preparing documentation associated with rental housing. This is how it was reported in OGPRC's 2023 monitoring report.¹³⁸ It is interesting to note, however, that the municipality of Betlanovce does not currently own land that could be designated for the construction of rental housing. Currently, this municipality is implementing two projects: simple land adjustments in a locality inhabited by the MRC and assistance to municipalities with the presence of MRC in terms of the arrangement of legal relations with land within settlements.¹³⁹ Thus, it is evident that activities that could begin to eliminate residential segregation will not be implemented in this municipality.

The second activity was an analysis of possible approaches to reducing Roma residential segregation in relation to specific spatial and ownership arrangements in the municipalities. The result of this activity was the change in the methodological document for the effective application of the principles of desegregation, destigmatisation, and deghettoisation.¹⁴⁰ The topic will be further elaborated in Chapter 4.

The entire housing Action Plan focuses on improving infrastructure, land legislation, and improving the quality of housing in the MRC – activities that will not lead to desegregation but rather to the improvement of living conditions in segregated settlements. In a way, it could be said that Roma inclusion in housing has been partially understood, and there is clear resignation about the fact that residential segregation will not be eliminated.

3.2.2. Synergy with other actions

The long-term objective of state housing policy until 2030 is to achieve an increase in the availability and quality of housing in the Slovak Republic, with a focus on increasing the affordability and physical accessibility of housing and an emphasis on the development of all forms of rental housing. Improving the quality of the existing housing stock is an obvious part of this vision. The basic vision of the State is to create legislative, economic, and technical conditions so that housing is affordable for the population and that every household can secure housing appropriate to its needs and its own income level. Housing Policy 2030 also defines how to address the housing conditions of vulnerable population groups. This group includes marginalised Roma communities, although it does not mention them directly. The Ministry of Transport proposed to strengthen staff capacities for carrying out social work with vulnerable groups in the field of housing, to prepare recommendations for local governments in cooperation with relevant partners in the selection of tenants and allocation of rental housing intended for social housing, to motivate local governments to build affordable housing and barrier-free usable rental housing and to systematically link social rental housing with the provision of supportive social services in justified cases. The Action Plan to 2025 contained 11 measures, and OGPRC is mentioned in only two of them: the establishment of a supra-ministerial coordination platform for housing policy and the development of a methodology for municipalities concerning the selection of tenants

Monitoring Report on the Implementation of the Action Plans of the Strategy for Equality, Inclusion and Participation of Roma until 2030 for 2023, available at:
https://romovia.vlada.gov.sk/site/assets/files/1113/ms_2023_sprava_final-1.pdf?csrt=14598545656017724858.

¹³⁸ *Monitoring report for 2023*. Available at:
https://romovia.vlada.gov.sk/site/assets/files/1113/ms_2023_sprava_final.pdf?csrt=5073062753059547304

¹³⁹ Written answer from the Betlanovce municipal office, sent on 10.1.2025

¹⁴⁰ *Monitoring report for 2023*. Available at:
https://romovia.vlada.gov.sk/site/assets/files/1113/ms_2023_sprava_final.pdf?csrt=5073062753059547304

and allocation of rental housing for social housing.¹⁴¹ We consider this a missed opportunity, as well as the fact that Roma are not mentioned in the vision as a target group of state policy.

3.2.3. Roma participation

Unfortunately, we do not have information on whether the Ministry of Transport, the body responsible for housing policymaking, employs Roma, who would then be directly involved in the development of national housing policies. Roma are employees of OGPRC, and there is also a Roma in the OGPRC leadership, but this does not guarantee that residential segregation is being eliminated. This needs to be addressed at the local level. However, what we observe at the local level is the lack of funding and the lack of common micro-local strategies that could create space for the elimination of residential segregation.

3.3. Projects promoting temporary segregated jobs

The most recent research from 2022,¹⁴² conducted at the University of Constantine the Philosopher in Nitra, shows that discrimination, a lack of education, a lack of work opportunities, and commuting costs are among the biggest barriers keeping Roma from entering the labour market.

A failure to understand the structural reasons and barriers preventing Roma from entering the labour market leads to the development of ineffective measures, which in practice only serve to deepen existing inequalities. Rather than introducing effective tools to tackle employer discrimination in access to employment, the government has pursued a strategy that promotes occupational segregation, further isolating Roma communities.

Over the past 15 years, we have witnessed the emergence of job roles designed specifically for Roma. This trend began with the idea that it would benefit marginalised Roma communities if Roma were employed directly within their own communities in roles such as field social work assistants, community workers, local civil order officers, health mediators, or teaching assistants. While the original concept was not without merit, these positions were based in already excluded communities and failed to offer any added value that would support the transition into mainstream employment once the project funding ended.

According to social ties theory¹⁴³ individuals who live and work in closed communities tend to form homogenous networks, with limited interactions beyond their immediate environment. This lack of diverse connections reduces their chances of integration, as they have little or no contact with the broader society. As a result, such parallel occupations typically exist only for the duration of the project and primarily benefit participants through the short-term security of a full-time wage.

Moreover, when mainstream vacancies arise—such as in schools—they are filled based on formal qualifications, with ethnicity or prior experience in project-based roles playing little to no role in candidate selection. In this context, the creation of parallel jobs for Roma cannot be considered inclusive. On the contrary, such approaches reinforce segregation and social exclusion.

In majority society, the belief persists that employment is the pathway out of poverty. However, as experience has shown, project-based employment alone does not guarantee inclusion or equal opportunities for Roma in society.

Case study: National project Development teams (DT)

The project involves 60 municipalities. It started in September 2023 and will run for 38 months until the end of September 2026.¹⁴⁴

¹⁴¹ *Housing Action Plan*, available at:

https://www.romovia.vlada.gov.sk/site/assets/files/1113/akcne_plany_strategie_2030_na_roky_2022_2024_final.pdf?csrt=3030421130587460759

¹⁴² See, for example Zuzana Havirova, *Labour market exclusion in the context of antigypsyism* (Nitra, 2022), available at:

https://www.researchgate.net/publication/367246046_Vylucenie_z_trhu_prace_v_kontexte_protiromskeho_rasizmu

¹⁴³ Mark Granovetter, *Economic Action and Social Structure: The Problem of Embeddedness*. (American Journal of Sociology, 1985).

¹⁴⁴ See: <https://portal.itms21.sk/ziadost?id=31057>

DTs consist of a Development Officer for Planning, a Social worker, an Employment Development Officer, a Housing Development Officer, a “Nene”, a Nene-mentor, a Youth Development Worker, and additional positions. Depending on the size of the municipality, the positions are then filled. For example, the municipality of Toporec (1861 inhabitants) has 16 employees in DT, and the municipality of Rudňany (4186 inhabitants) has 31 employees in DT.

The main activity of this National Project is to support the social inclusion of the MRC through a comprehensive integrated approach with an impact on the whole settlement community; i.e., it aims to interconnect ESF+ and ERDF interventions and to ensure the interconnection of soft activities in the field of education, housing, employment and antigypsyism with the necessary infrastructure investments to improve the standard of living of the inhabitants of the whole municipality and based on the needs of the municipality.¹⁴⁵ Social inclusion is the process of ensuring that all people, regardless of their social, economic, cultural, physical, or other characteristics, have equal opportunities to participate fully in society. It aims to remove the barriers, discrimination, and marginalisation that might prevent individuals or groups from being part of social life.¹⁴⁶

We looked at some of the activities that DTs carry out in the localities, and in most cases, we found that DT workers only carry out activities with members of the Roma community.¹⁴⁷ For example, in the village of Šumiac, only Roma children's groups have been set up to reprimand Roma who dispose of rubbish where it does not belong, and twice a week, they collect discarded packaging and make sure that Roma children behave properly. This activity is inspired by the ‘Local Civic and Order Services’ project, through which Roma people keep order in Roma neighbourhoods.¹⁴⁸ Another example is the municipality of Rudňany, for example, where meetings with seniors are held, but only with seniors from the majority; Roma seniors are not at the meetings.¹⁴⁹ We have also identified a location where the majority and the Roma meet to engage in activities: Vyšné Ružbachy. Also, in this case, it is true that in villages where there is already natural social interaction between Roma and the majority, the activities of the DTs take place in groups where Roma and non-Roma come together. Unfortunately, in villages where there is no natural social interaction, inclusive activities do not take place. This suggests that there is a lack of external professional support and supervision for local teams implementing the project, so that local teams can replicate existing conditions /inter-ethnic interaction patterns.

We also looked at the qualifications required to fill the positions. It can be concluded that the positions that are intended to have a significant impact on social interactions in the localities do not require high skills or qualifications, either formal or informal. Nene workers visit only Roma families, and this is how the job description is defined in the project documentation. They also have the task of supporting the healthy growth of children up to six years of age, helping overcome the linguistic, health, social, and cultural barriers of children from the MRC and their parents, and supporting their successful adaptation to pre-primary education. Many studies say that working with children from birth to three years old is very important as it stimulates their brains and develops various cognitive skills. However, when we look at the qualification requirements for this position in the DT, we see that there are no conditions for educational attainment; the only conditions are that the person must be literate, have a knowledge of the Slovak language, be from the community and know the children's mother tongue, i.e. Romani.

We believe that such persons should have a higher education, whether formal or informal, and much stricter demands should be associated with the positions, because the goal of the project is not playing with children or cooking with mothers in ethnically segregated groups, but social inclusion, and this needs to be done competently with an emphasis on involving the majority in daily activities. Alternatively, the project could include training, provide proper qualifications, job counselling, wage subsidies, or other tools to tackle employer discrimination. Thus, once again, it appears that this project will be presented as one that will employ a large number of Roma who will not be integrated into the mainstream labour market once the project is over.

¹⁴⁵ *Guide for users involved in the National Project ‘Development Teams I.’* available at: https://www.romovia.vlada.gov.sk/site/assets/files/1754/sprievodca_pre_uzivatelov_-_verzia_1_3.pdf?csrc=280458576853261656

¹⁴⁶ Representative of OGPRC, written response, 27 January 2025

¹⁴⁷ Many Development Teams have Facebook pages where they share activities through photos or videos.

¹⁴⁸ See: <https://romovia.vlada.gov.sk/narodne-projekty/narodny-projekt-rozvoje-timy-i/aktuality/detske-hliadky-pomahat-a-separovat/?csrc=15156194463800473067>

¹⁴⁹ See: Facebook page RT Rudňany

The OGPRC promotes the idea that it is better if Roma have jobs at least for the duration of the National Projects, so, of course, new projects are being created all the time in which special jobs are created for Roma. However, these are often jobs that, in their content, basically confirm prejudices and stereotypes about the Roma. Such is the case with the 'Give a Chance project', which falls under the umbrella of the Railway Company Slovakia – the national carrier.¹⁵⁰ This project was already implemented in 2019, but Roma experts objected to it because Roma assistants accompanied the majority train conductors and were tasked with preventing and solving conflicts with passengers from MRC. Roma experts made an official complaint to the European Commission in respect of this project in 2019–2020, and it was stopped in 2020, both because of the COVID-19 pandemic and the lack of support from the former Plenipotentiary for Roma communities, Andrea Bučková. In December 2024, the OGPRC announced that the project would resume because it had been successful, despite the fact that there was no evaluation report confirming the success of the project. According to the national carrier, Roma workers were involved in maintaining order on trains and at stations and engaged in education aimed at promoting the proper use of the railway's services – for example, informing customers about the need to buy tickets and protecting railway property. The project presented in this way implies that only MRC passengers do not buy tickets and destroy railway property. And at the same time, it says that non-Roma railway employees do not want to talk to Roma passengers, so they need to have special Roma assistants. It is interesting that the railways are short of staff in various sections, but nowhere does it call for Roma to be train conductors, or 'proper' conductors like the non-Roma ones, sell rail tickets, or do exactly the same jobs as non-Roma do. And if one looks at the education required for these fields, there is no mention anywhere of how to raise the level of education of Roma closer to this.¹⁵¹

3.3.1. Effectiveness of the NRSF in addressing the problem

In the AP for Employment, under Specific Objective 2—"Increase the effectiveness, quality, and accessibility of public and non-public employment services and active labour market measures for MRC"—three key measures are outlined. The first measure aims to support equal access to employment for individuals from MRC in both the public and private sectors through actions such as affirmative measures, employer support systems, and improved access to employment services, including active labour market policies. Five activities were planned under this measure. One of the activities was the preparation of a specific call for Supported Employment Agencies. These agencies were intended to facilitate the employment of hard-to-employ individuals. According to Section 58, Paragraph 1 of the Employment Services Act, a Supported Employment Agency provides services to citizens with disabilities and long-term unemployed individuals. These services aim to facilitate job acquisition and job retention or assist employers in hiring individuals from among citizens with disabilities and the long-term unemployed. By the end of 2023, this call had not been implemented. We believe that a legislative change should have been made to expand the group of individuals that Supported Employment Agencies work with.

Another activity was the implementation of a comprehensive approach to employability in 2024. The indicator for this activity was 5,000 MRC individuals utilising development team services for employment. By the end of 2024, no data was available on whether this target had been met. However, the indicator itself does not measure whether the individuals who used these services were actually placed in the labour market. The next activity was implementing preventive and informational programmes. These programmes aimed to increase civic responsibility and improve social coexistence. The reported activity under this measure was the National Project 'Local Civic and Preventive Services'. However, Roma who were employed in this project did not receive the necessary training to qualify for positions in law enforcement under the Ministry of the Interior after completing the programme.

Programmes to increase employment and employability in MRC areas were the third activity. This included the restoration of cultural heritage as an employment measure. The National Project 'People and Castles' was implemented under this activity. By the end of 2023, 465 individuals had been employed under this project, including 330 Roma (meeting the project's 60% Roma employment requirement). A total of 8.8 million EUR was allocated to this initiative. In March 2024, the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs published a call for a new

¹⁵⁰ See: <https://www.zssk.sk/aktuality/projekt-daj-sancu-je-v-plnom-prude-vo-vlakoch-zssk-uz-sedem-mesiakov-posobia-asistenti-vlakveducich/>

¹⁵¹ Instagram of OGPRC from 14.12.2024, available at: https://www.instagram.com/usvrk_sk/p/DDjSSqNNX4n?img_index=1

project, 'People and Castles – a Step to Social Economy', which is a continuation of the previous project. Persons will work under this project for a maximum of 18 months, starting from May 2025 until December 2026.

From our perspective, the measure is correctly defined, but the activities designed to fulfil these measures are not properly formulated, nor are the indicators appropriately defined.

3.3.2. Synergy with other actions

The 'Strategic Priorities for Employment Development in the Slovak Republic until 2030' clearly defines the key challenges associated with employment growth.¹⁵² Within the framework of labour market support in the context of a stable and resilient economy, it is stated that certain groups continue to face significant barriers in the labour market. These include women, older workers, low-skilled individuals, people with disabilities, those living in rural areas, Roma, and other ethnic or racial minorities who are particularly at risk of exclusion or discrimination in the labour market. However, when we examine the thematic framework for the preparation, creation, and focus of employment development or support activities in Slovakia until 2030, we find that support for individuals from MRC is supposed to continue, yet it is unclear what kind of support this entails.

3.3.3. Roma participation

Roma participation in the implementation of such projects is always ensured through the OGPRC. Since these are National Projects managed by OGPRC, the project employees also include Roma at various levels—from management positions to field workers. However, we do not have exact data on their numbers. In the case of the 'Step by Step' project, Roma organisations were also involved in its implementation.

3.4. Capacity building/empowerment of Roma civil society organisations

Support for the participation of the Roma minority was defined in the AP 2022-2024 for Combating Antigypsyism and Promoting Participation. The document identified targeted support for Roma participation in policies that affect Roma or support Roma and pro-Roma CSOs. Implementation was not realised during the planned period. This was mainly due to the early elections and the unfavourable political situation in Slovakia.

When the fourth government of Robert Fico came to power in October 2023, it was marked by a frontal assault on and a targeted weakening of CSOs in Slovakia. This established political trend has also been copied by the OGPRC and its Plenipotentiary, Alexander Daško, who is a direct nominee of Prime Minister Robert Fico.

Since the elections, the OGPRC has hindered the proper implementation of activities in the area of combating anti-gypsyism and promoting Roma participation. Activity 3.1.1 stopped the organisation of the Roma Youth Congress.¹⁵³ The aim of the congress was for the upcoming generation of young Roma to have the opportunity to co-determine and participate in the shaping of individual inclusion policies for Roma in Slovakia, as well as to participate in the regular monitoring of the implementation of the entire strategy.

3.4.1. Effectiveness of the NRSF in addressing the problem

In the recent past, the capacity building and empowerment of Roma organisations in civil society in Slovakia were rather the domain of international institutions and foundations. On the side of domestic public and state institutions, such a separate objective has never been formulated. In 2017, the Minority Culture Fund¹⁵⁴ was established and, since then, has played a significant role in supporting the activities of Roma organisations in Slovakia in the field of cultural activities. Furthermore, support for the activities of the Roma minority and Roma and pro-Roma CSOs from 2021 is defined in the NRSF. However, putting into practice the principles supporting the participation of Roma and their organisations in building an inclusive and open society in Slovakia is problematic and often politically restricted.

The creators of the NRSF were also aware of this problem and therefore directly included in the AP 2022-2024 Combating Antigypsyism and Promoting Roma participation activities that were intended to help build the capacity of Roma CSOs. Most Roma CSOs in Slovakia are mostly made up of local cultural and community

¹⁵² See: <https://www.employment.gov.sk/files/sk/praca-zamestnanost/podpora-zamestnanosti/strategicke-dokumenty-oblasti-zamestnanosti-do-roku-2030/strategicke-priority-rozvoja-zamestnanosti-2030.pdf>

¹⁵³ More about the congress: <https://www.romovia.vlada.gov.sk/kongres-mladych-romok-a-romov/>

¹⁵⁴ See about the Fund: <https://www.kultminor.sk/sk/>

associations, organisations that work at the local level and, in smaller cases, also support the inclusion of the local excluded community. These are mostly organisations with one or two people that do not engage in regular, long-term, and systematic activity.

In the AP for education 2022-2024,¹⁵⁵ Objective 6 outlines support for museums, galleries, cultural associations, print, television, and radio media, along with the development and promotion of the Roma language. However, this support is not systemic or sustainably embedded within state or public institutions. Instead, it focuses on short-term financial backing for organisations and institutions that want to implement these, without a long-term institutional vision and sustainability. The Fund's role is primarily to support minority culture and not to build the capacity of Roma CSOs, especially since projects are limited to one-year timelines and offer minimal support for staffing costs. That said, with strong management and well-prepared projects, organisations can apply for funding for capacity every year. If such projects are evaluated as high quality, it is possible to support them annually and thus gradually build capacity in the organisation to take care of the implementation of the projects each year.

Most of the educated Roma currently work for the state and public administration or are employed in the national development projects of the Office of the Government Plenipotentiary for Roma Communities. In many cases, these Roma are also statutory members of civic associations and thus, when it is necessary to take independent positions, they do not do so because they are civil servants. This was the case in June 2024 concerning the Committee on National Minorities and Ethnic Groups, where four members were Roma. When the voting involved expressing concern about the establishment of a segregated Roma ethnic school in Rakúsy and asking the OGPRC to take a statement about it, only one member (who is not a civil servant) voted positively, while the other three members did not vote or voted against the resolution, despite the fact that they represent civil society in this committee.¹⁵⁶ If the other members had also voted in favour of adopting the resolution, it would have sent a clear signal to the Ministry of Education to regard the representatives of the Roma minority in the Committee for National Minorities as relevant partners in shaping educational policies for Roma children. Thus, on such important issues, neutrality and objectivity are key in the fight for Roma rights.

There are very few active Roma professional organisations in Slovakia that implement regular activities throughout the year, with a nationwide scope. This long-standing gap in civil society is filled by non-Roma organisations and religious associations that are dedicated to Roma inclusion on the ground, mostly in the form of providing social services, with fewer in the field of research and advocacy.

It is no different for Roma media in the field of Roma minority journalism, which in Slovakia is divided into national television and radio magazines under the umbrella of the public Slovak Television and Radio, private television and radio stations, and non-governmental initiatives in the form of podcasts, online magazines and media outreach projects. Slovak media – with a few exceptions – do not purposefully develop and deliver critical reflection about society and its institutions in relation to improving the overall situation of Roma in Slovakia.

3.4.2. Synergy with other actions

Unfortunately, systematic financial support for Roma organisations is not found in other documents or policies, nor is there any consistent capacity-building support from other government bodies.

3.4.3. Roma participation

The OGPRC has interrupted cooperation with Roma and pro-Roma CSOs that have been officially associated with the Council of the Government Plenipotentiary for Roma Communities for Non-Governmental Non-Profit Organisations since 2022.¹⁵⁷ The aim of the Board was to provide expertise, advice, consultation, and critical reflection regarding the implementation of the tasks of the new 2030 Strategy. Finally, the Office of the

¹⁵⁵ *Education Action Plan*. Available at:

https://www.romovia.vlada.gov.sk/site/assets/files/1113/akcne_plany_strategie_2030_na_roky_2022_2024_final.pdf?csrt=3030421130587460759

¹⁵⁶ See: <https://romanoforum.dennikn.sk/nemame-pravo-hazardovat-s-buducnostou-romskych-deti/>

¹⁵⁷ Read more about the status and objectives of the Council: <https://romovia.vlada.gov.sk/poradne-organy/poradny-organ-splnomocnenca-pre-oblast-mno/?csrt=5020774287599083>

Plenipotentiary did not launch a grant call for institutional development and capacity building of Roma and pro-Roma CSOs from 2022 to 2024, which is listed in Activity 3.2.1 in the AP.¹⁵⁸

We know from experience that in 2023 and 2024, the active participation of Roma experts and organisations in the development of Action Plans and their evaluation decreased. At the same time, it is becoming a rule in Slovakia that the OGPRC is seen as a sufficient substitute by governmental officials. Without the critical voices of CSOs, the OGPRC can quietly approve any government policies affecting Roma communities.

¹⁵⁸ More about the Action Plan:

p. 53: https://www.romovia.vlada.gov.sk/site/assets/files/1113/akcne_plany_strategie_2030_na_roky_2022_2024_final.pdf

4. USE OF EU FUNDING INSTRUMENTS

4.1. Conditions for EU funds implementation for Roma equality

Almost the entire policy of quality, inclusion, and participation of Roma in Slovakia relies on EU funds, and only minimal national resources are invested.

Policies for Roma inclusion within the 2021-2027 programming period are outlined in the Partnership Agreement under Objective 4, entitled 'A More Social and Inclusive Europe Implementing the European Pillar of Social Rights.' Under this objective, several measures are defined, including: an adaptable and accessible labour market, quality and inclusive education, skills for better adaptability and inclusion, the Youth Guarantee, active inclusion and accessible services, active inclusion of Roma communities, and addressing food and material deprivation.¹⁵⁹

Funds are divided between less and more developed regions of Slovakia, as more investment is needed in less developed regions to reduce regional disparities.

Responsibility for the use of funds under National Projects or other calls belongs to different ministries, but the exact distribution of funds that will impact the MRC can only be identified for the OGPRC.

Table 2 Financial allocation (EUR) – Program Slovakia 21-27: Objective 4

	ESF +	ERDF
Less developed regions	2,221,754,335	945,877,229
More developed regions	50,000,000	33,972,771
Total:	2,271,754,335	979,850,000
Grand total:	3,251,604,335	
Total allocation for OGPRC	518,235,301	

Source: Partnership Agreement

The utilisation of EU funds for Roma inclusion takes place through the activities defined in the NRSF and outside of it. This means that some National Projects are funded by EU Funds under 'Program Slovakia 2021-2027', but were not defined in the NRSF and AP for 2022-2024. An example is the National Project 'Comprehensive Support System for Marginalized Roma Communities through Missionary-Pastoral Centres' (NP MPSC), which was announced by OGPRC in December 2024 with an allocated amount from ESF+ of 4.5 million EUR.¹⁶⁰ In reality, we do not have qualitative research on whether earlier pastoral activities in MRC were highly effective. Therefore, it is unclear on what basis OGPRC announced this call.

Other measures mentioned in the Partnership Agreement but not included in the APs for 2022-2024 of NRSF are: 1. the removal of key bottlenecks in road infrastructure and the improvement of regional mobility through the modernisation and construction of second- and third-class roads, and 2. Improving local roads. A total allocation of 30.5 million EUR from the ERDF has been designated for both measures.¹⁶¹ We consider it important to repair the road infrastructure, but we note the lack, for example, of a focus on building cycling paths. For both the majority and the Roma, there should be good connections between the MRC and the municipalities, e.g., to support children's attendance at schools in the municipalities.

Table 3: Drawing on EU funds from Program Slovakia as of 10.2.2025 at OGPRC

¹⁵⁹ See: <https://eurofondy.gov.sk/program-slovensko/financne-plan-y-programu-slovensko-2021-2027/financny-plan-program-slovensko-2021-2027-2/>

¹⁶⁰ See: <https://romovia.vlada.gov.sk/archiv-tlacovych-sprav/vyhlasenie-vyzvy-s-nazvom-komplexny-system-podpory-marginalizovanych-romskych-komunit-prostrednictvom-misijno-pastoracnych/?csrc=3755061278942347623>

¹⁶¹ See: https://www.eurofondy.gov.sk/wp-content/uploads/2022/11/221115_PSK_Final.pdf

		ESF+	ERDF	Number of announced calls
Demand-oriented projects	320,704,413.84	105,316,617.40	215,387,796.44	8
National projects	112,143,353.53	112,143,353.53	0	5
Total allocation of announced calls as of 10.2.2025	432,847,767.37			
Total available allocation	518,235,301			

Source: OGPRC

Table 4: Distribution of fund utilisation by applications

	Number of applications as of 10.2.2025	Number of projects in implementation as of 10.2.2025
Demand-oriented projects	1121	525
National projects	4	3
Total	1125	528

Source: OGPRC

On the positive side, the allocation of funds managed by OGPRC has almost been spent as of 10.2.2025. However, as noted in the chapters above, this largely goes on projects whose long-term sustainability is problematic and even questionable, at the very least. We consider it most problematic that very little funding from the state budget is allocated to Roma inclusion. In 2022, a total of 85 million EUR was used to implement activities from the NRSF. However, only less than 12.3 million EUR of this amount came from the state budget.¹⁶² In 2023, a total of 261.5 million EUR was used to implement activities from the NRSF. However, only 45.4 million EUR of this amount came from the state budget.¹⁶³

Case study: Change in 3D principles in 2024

One of the important conditions for the implementation of EU funds for Roma equality and inclusion is the preservation of the so-called 3D principles. These principles first appeared in the 'Roma Integration Strategy for 2020', which was adopted in 2012.¹⁶⁴ The Strategy 2020 made the success of public policies in the field of inclusion conditional on the acceptance of the principles of destigmatisation,¹⁶⁵ desegregation,¹⁶⁶ and ghettoisation.¹⁶⁷ These principles were then defined in the Operational Programme Human Resources 2014-

¹⁶² See:

https://romovia.vlada.gov.sk/site/assets/files/1113/ms_2022_sprava_final.pdf?csrt=3755061278942347623

¹⁶³ See: https://romovia.vlada.gov.sk/site/assets/files/1113/ms_2023_sprava_final-1.pdf?csrt=3755061278942347623

¹⁶⁴ *Strategy for Roma Integration Until 2020*, available at: <https://www.romovia.vlada.gov.sk/strategie/strategia-pre-integraciu-romov-do-roku-2020/>

¹⁶⁵ Stigmatisation is a process of social labelling whereby an individual or social group is given a 'label' by society that attributes to them traits derived from a stereotype rather than from knowledge of their actual behaviour. The negative consequence of this is discrimination and persecution of the stigmatised persons. Destigmatisation should take place both institutionally and in immediate social relations.

¹⁶⁶ Segregation means the isolation of persons and groups that share similar social characteristics in a particular geographical or social space. Racial and ethnic segregation, which occurs at formal and informal levels in different spheres, leads to inequalities, different living conditions, and different access to services between the majority community and the ethnically or racially different group - in education, housing, and employment. Segregation also results in inequality of opportunity and unequal access to basic services. Desegregation thus means eliminating structural and institutional discrimination.

¹⁶⁷ The process of ghettoisation has structural causes over which the individual has no fundamental influence. As a result of marginalisation, stigmatisation and segregation, the affected group seeks a place where it will be accepted, where it will not be judged, stigmatised or threatened. However, such places are usually located outside the area where

2020, so that applicants for EU funds were obliged to comply with these principles in inclusion projects. The aim of introducing them was to increase the social inclusion of the MRCs who are affected by generational poverty, unacceptable living conditions, and discrimination. The consequence of adhering to the 3D principles in the use of EU funds was to ensure a reduction in the exclusion of the MRC from the rest of the population. This condition was defined in the 'Guidelines on the use of European Structural and Investment Funds to address segregation in education and residential segregation of 2015'.¹⁶⁸

In July 2024, OGPRC¹⁶⁹ approved a 'Methodological Interpretation for the effective application of the principles of desegregation, destigmatisation, deghettoisation (3D principles)' in the calls of the OP Slovakia 2021-2027 programme.¹⁷⁰ OGPRC is the focal point for assessing the compliance of proposed calls with these principles.

In the document, the individual principles are then elaborated in specific areas. Section 4.1. gives examples of the application of the principle of desegregation. For education, there is a section in the text which states that if spatial segregation is demonstrably unavoidable for various reasons, it is important to demonstrate the objective reasons that make it impossible to apply desegregation measures when expanding the capacity of an existing school in a segregated area or building a new school in a segregated area. These include, for example, evidence of land ownership, spatial planning documentation, assessment of the distance (physical/geographical accessibility) of the school facility in the municipality, assuming it exists, and assessment of the capacity of the existing school facility. However, these 'objective reasons' provide excuses for municipalities that do not look for ways to desegregate in education, giving them an easy way to avoid the condition of compliance with the principle of desegregation in the case of the construction of a new school building in a segregated location.

It is further stated that the standards of quality of education and school facilities for pupils from the MRC should be maintained to the same extent and quality as for children from the majority. Several research studies show that even if the quality of education in a segregated environment is high, it does not automatically lead to equal chances of achieving the same status in society. Moreover, we have not yet observed a segregated school in Slovakia where the teaching process is at the same (if not a higher) level than in a majority school; i.e., the findings of the state school inspections and monitoring of pupils' educational results show¹⁷¹ that the educational process in segregated schools attended by Roma children has been of significantly lower quality for several years, and despite these reports and measurements, there has been no improvement.

A further measure that loosens the desegregation principle regards the call for the implementation of activities that support the inclusion of pupils from MRC into the wider school community, as well as programmes to improve the educational outcomes of pupils from the MRC. In Slovakia, for several years, various National Projects have been implemented, as well as projects of non-profit organisations, which, although intended to be inclusive, can actually be understood as non-inclusive under close examination. In fact, while these projects talk about inclusive activities, the latter are mostly single cultural events that have absolutely no impact on the inclusion of children from the MRC. Inclusion in the wider school community could only be promoted by ensuring their presence in the wider school community on a daily basis, and this would only be possible by having children from the MRC attend non-segregated schools together with non-Roma children.

Section 4.2 deals with the principle of destigmatisation, and it is evident from the first parts of this document that the authors have misunderstood the need to destigmatise the Roma. As an effective tool for destigmatisation, the authors refer to field social work, which is carried out at an individual level in the MRC, in particular by raising the level of education, employability on the open labour market, hygiene standards, or addressing housing conditions. It is further argued that other interventions by the helping professions, such as

people from mainstream society normally reside, and the latter will eventually come to see the former as places to avoid. In this way, a 'two-sided enclosure' of such places occurs.

¹⁶⁸ See: https://ec.europa.eu/regional_policy/sources/guidance/thematic_guidance_fiche_segregation_en.pdf

¹⁶⁹ In the programming period 2021 – 2027, OGPRC, as an independent organisational component of the Office of the Government of the Slovak Republic, performs the role of coordinator and implementer of the inclusion policy and intermediary body for ERDF and ESF+ interventions. OGPRC also fulfils the role of an intermediary body in the field of support for the integration of the MRC.

¹⁷⁰ See: https://www.romovia.vlada.gov.sk/site/assets/files/1757/metodicky_vyklad_pre_efektivne_uplatnovanie_principov_desegregacie_destigmatizacie_deghettoizacie_principov_3d_v2_0.pdf?csrt=7878632348697876683

¹⁷¹ See the reports of the State School Inspectorate.

health promotion assistants or local civic and preventive services, are also important. This means that in order to combat the stigmatisation of Roma by the majority, Roma in segregated and isolated localities, often without basic infrastructure, must try to live life like the majority, even if they do not have similar living conditions. The authors of the manual paid maximum attention to changing the behaviour of Roma, but theories of stigmatisation suggest that in the process of destigmatisation, the focus should be on educating the majority, or the group that stigmatises the other group, because stigmatisation is primarily based on fear and ignorance of the unknown. What is needed in this area is education, inclusive language, and, above all, the elimination of discriminatory policies. However, reference to this cannot be found in this manual.

Section 4.3 discusses the principle of deghettoisation. Interesting is the part that says that unlike desegregation, the ultimate goal of which is the gradual elimination of segregated localities by integrating their inhabitants into the mainstream of society, deghettoisation assumes that a ghettoised locality can be integrated as a whole and, through appropriate interventions, transformed into a fully functional part of the municipality, visited and used by all of its inhabitants.

This means that, in the process of deghettoisation, it is not a priority to promote mixed housing, i.e., to create diverse residential zones where people of different social statuses and ethnicities live. Instead, more care will be taken to make segregated localities look nice as a whole. Also, this section does not mention prevention, such as urban planning.

4.2. Roma civil society and the implementation of EU funds

For the 'Program Slovakia 21-27', a Monitoring Committee has been set up. This Monitoring Committee is composed of committees for each individual area. Thus, eight commissions have been set up: Smarter Europe, Greener Low Carbon Europe, Connected Europe, More Social and Inclusive Europe, Integrated Sustainable Development for Objective 5, Equitable Transformation Fund, Marginalised Roma Communities, and Administrative Capacity. OGPRC reports that in 2022, the preparatory phase for the establishment of a commission under the Monitoring Committee for the Program Slovakia 21-27 for Marginalised Roma Communities took place. Three representatives of Roma CSOs were delegated to the Commission – one through a transparent nomination mechanism administered by the Office of the Slovak Government Plenipotentiary for Civil Society Development (the Slovak Government Plenipotentiary for CSOs), and two representatives of the Council of CSOs of the OGPRC. According to the information on the lists of members of the individual commissions, it appears that one representative of a Roma civic organisation is present in the Commission for Marginalized Roma Communities: Klára Orgovánová, as a representative of the Roma Institute, and two representatives represent the Council for CSOs of the OGPRC. We have requested information to update this data, but OGPRC has not commented. The Ministry of Informatization and Regional Development stated that in order to fulfil the activity defined in the AP for Combating Antigypsyism and Promoting Participation, they offered OGPRC the opportunity to nominate representatives of CSOs to the Program Slovakia 21-27 Monitoring Committee to the position of observers on a temporary basis. OGPRC did not send any nominations.¹⁷² No other commission has a Roma CSO representative present, despite the fact that in the AP for the area of Combating Antigypsyism and Promoting Participation a measure was defined that was related to the participation of five Roma CSOs in the monitoring and evaluation of the implementation of activities and objectives in the field of Roma integration and inclusion in PSK 21-27.¹⁷³ According to the statute, the Commission for Marginalized Roma Communities approves the concepts of National Projects. Therefore, it is crucial that experts from the Roma community are represented in the Commission for Marginalized Roma Communities, ensuring the provision of a critical perspective and providing input on proposed National Projects aimed at improving the quality of life in MRC.¹⁷⁴

Case study: Lack of participation of Roma civil society

In 2022, the process of establishing a government advisory body on the inclusion of the MRC began. This body was to be created to streamline the inclusion of the MRC and the use of EU or domestic funds. The Prime Minister at the time was Eduard Heger, and the Government Plenipotentiary for Roma Communities was Ján Hero. The Office of the Government of SR submitted this proposal for an abbreviated comment procedure. The

¹⁷² External evaluation of Action Plans for 2023

¹⁷³ See: <https://eurofondy.gov.sk/wp-content/uploads/2025/01/Zoznam-clenov-Komisie-MRC-ver.-18.1.pdf>

¹⁷⁴ See: https://www.romovia.vlada.gov.sk/site/assets/files/2030/tatut_komisie_MRC_konsolidovany-dodatok_c_2.pdf?csrt=2135136513457225631

aim was to streamline the cooperation of the Office of the Government, OGPRC, with other central government bodies and representative organisations of territorial and self-government units. A secondary objective was the effective coordination of funding sources from the European Union and national funds, which were intended to promote the equality and socio-economic inclusion of Roma. The council was to have a chairman, who was to be the prime minister of the Slovak Republic, and four vice-chairmen, one of whom was to be the government's commissioner for Roma communities. The other members were to be state secretaries of ministries, government plenipotentiaries for the development of civil society and national minorities, and representatives of umbrella self-government associations. The council was to meet, as a rule, every three months. The creation of the council followed a government decision of 26 October 2022, which expanded the remit of the CSO to include the coordination of the inclusion of the MRC from November 2022.¹⁷⁵

In November 2022, representatives of the Roma community addressed a letter to Prime Minister Eduard Heger in which they asked him to reconsider the composition of the Government Council for the Inclusion of Marginalised Roma Communities. According to published information, the inclusion of neither Roma civil society nor Roma academics or experts was counted on. The Roma Advocacy and Research Centre also addressed this request in the comment procedure.¹⁷⁶

According to information from OGPRC, after the new Prime Minister Róbert Fico took office in 2023, the Government Council for the Inclusion of the MRC was abolished.

The idea of establishing a separate council was not met with enthusiasm, and its abolition can therefore be seen as a positive step. On the other hand, it must be said that the participation of Roma experts in the implementation of EU funds for the inclusion of the MRC is insufficient. The fact that OGPRC has become an intermediary body for EU funds means that OGPRC representatives are invited to various meetings, and their participation is considered to be a condition of fulfilling the requirement of Roma participation. This is considered unacceptable as the OGPRC does not represent the attitudes of Roma civil society, and such an approach is not present even in the majority society.

¹⁷⁵ See: <https://partnerskadohoda.gov.sk/novym-poradnym-organom-kabinetu-ma-byt-rada-vlady-sr-pre-inkluziu-MRC?csrt=21134526882504292>

¹⁷⁶ The information was provided by the Chair of the Roma Advocacy and Research Centre, Zuzana Havířová.

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This report aims to provide the most accurate assessment possible of the implementation of the NRSF for the period 2022-2024. It must be noted that the implementation across various areas is not proceeding as planned. Concerning the implementation of several activities, there appears to be a lack of understanding of the principles of inclusion and participation among implementers or tenderers. To some extent, the monitoring process can be considered a strength of the NRSF's implementation. However, even in this area, there is a need for clearer and more detailed methodology to guide external evaluators. Key weaknesses include the quality of the implementation of activities, the actual execution of planned measures, and how these efforts are presented. Furthermore, we lack an understanding of the NRSF's complexity, including the continued exclusion of the marginalised Roma communities (MRC) in the future. The biggest problem remains the lack of involvement of the majority population in the NRSF's implementation. Without broader majority support for MRC inclusion, these activities will not be successful. The persistent lack or minimal presence of qualitative assessment of the complexity of the NRSF is also identified as a significant shortcoming.

Recommendations to national authorities

1. Establish a permanent independent oversight body with representation in each region to monitor the effective implementation of the NRSF.
2. Revise APs so that they also involve qualitative assessment.
3. Include compulsory education for workers when calls for EU funds are prepared to increase their chances of better inclusion after the end of the project.
4. Guarantee the presence of Roma in all Monitoring Committees for EU funds under 'Program Slovakia 21-27', not only in the MRC Monitoring Committee.
5. Include Roma with relevant expertise in ministerial working groups.
6. Include more diverse groups in the processes of creating public policies, such as youth, seniors, and women.
7. Immediately stop the Ministry of Education's planning for the establishment of ethnic minority Roma schools.
8. Adopt a governmental resolution regarding the desegregation of Roma in all spheres of life.
9. Provide the OGPRC communication department staff with antigypsyism training.
10. Open a broad discussion with relevant professionals on 3D principles, followed by revision of the 3D methodological document.
11. Enforce desegregation standards in education.
12. Transparently inform about the use of EU funds as concerns MRC.

Recommendations to European institutions

13. Approve broader-scope inclusion projects, which, along with job creation, also focus on increasing participants' education qualifications and enhancing social capital.
14. Request that the voices of independent experts from Roma communities be included in the OGPRC monitoring reports on the implementation of the NRSF.
15. Financially support capacity building for monitoring Roma inclusion, the rights of Roma, and public policies affecting the lives and socioeconomic status of Roma in Slovakia, particularly by CSOs.
16. Monitor risks of segregation in all areas and demand desegregation.
17. Establish a simple mechanism to support grassroots organisations engaged in research, monitoring, and advocacy.
18. Establish monitoring mechanisms for the reporting process applicable to the use of EU funds for addressing MRC.

Recommendations to civil society

19. Research and document the situation of Roma in education, housing, health, employment, and antigypsyism.

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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 is not recognised as a specific problem in national policies	significant problem	identified and analysed sufficiently	present but insufficient	adequate but with room for improvement	<p>measures adopted: definition of antigypsyism as part of Concept for Combating Radicalisation and Extremism by 2024 (2021) - No other direct or indirect measures have been adopted</p> <p>effectiveness of measures: Adoption of the definition mainly involved symbolic recognition because several representatives of political power do not understand what antigypsyism means.</p> <p>reach of measures: Roma citizens do not benefit directly from the measures. On the other hand, the government officially recognised antigypsyism as an issue. This may be used in legal or administrative procedures, e.g., in the discriminatory decisions of municipalities.</p> <p>data collection: No data available</p>
Prejudice against Roma	significant problem	identified and analysed sufficiently	present but insufficient	adequate but with room for improvement	<p>measures adopted: No systemic measures adopted at the state level; Lectures in schools – mostly delivered by CSOs and dependent on the school decision to allow such lectures; Occasional public messaging by the newly appointed plenipotentiary of the Slovak govt. for Roma communities.</p> <p>effectiveness of measures: Little or none</p> <p>reach of measures: In general, messaging is directed towards an audience already familiar with the issue (e.g., plenipotentiary social media, CSO</p>

					<p>social platforms, etc.)</p> <p>data collection: Fundamental rights agency, EU Midis II, Thematic research, stereotypes and attitudes towards Roma in local politics (22)</p>
Hate speech about and against Roma (online and offline)	significant problem	mentioned but not analysed sufficiently	present but insufficient	some targets but not relevant	<p>measures adopted: No systemic measures were adopted at the state level; Anti-Roma has been tolerated and encouraged by state representatives, including the prime minister. CSOs have filed a criminal complaint for hate speech against Roma</p> <p>effectiveness of measures: Unclear</p> <p>reach of measures: Unclear</p> <p>data collection: Eurostat, Monitoring of Hate Speech and Extremism (SNSLP 2022)</p>
Weak effectiveness of protection against discrimination	significant problem	mentioned but not analysed sufficiently	present but insufficient	adequate but with room for improvement	<p>measures adopted: Methodologies, papers, education training</p> <p>effectiveness of measures: Hard to evaluate so far. From the available data, it seems that the number of discrimination cases has stagnated. If cases are brought before the authorities, it is done mostly by CSOs specializing in such litigation.</p> <p>reach of measures: Some citizens were provided with training about their rights. This training is not sufficient, and there is no evidence that it leads to more discrimination cases being brought before authorities.</p> <p>data collection: Judikaty.info, otvorenesudy.sk, SNSLP, Statistics of the Ministry of Justice, Criminality statistics of Police</p>

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Segregation in education, housing, or public services	critical problem	understood with limitations	adequate but with room for improvement	adequate but with room for improvement	<p>measures adopted</p> <p>Education: Legal definition of segregation in education in the School Act; Methodology of desegregation in education; Monitoring of risk of segregation.</p> <p>Housing and Public Services: No measures adopted</p> <p>effectiveness of measures: Without policies motivating schools to desegregate and providing sufficient resources to schools, individual measures are not sufficient. However, the legal definition should make it easier for State School Inspectors to declare and sanction segregation in particular schools. The methodology and monitoring serve as a source of data and proof that the state is aware of the state and the means of segregation in education.</p> <p>reach of measures: The measures are intended to affect school founders, directors, and municipalities. Roma citizens are not direct beneficiaries.</p> <p>data collection: Monitoring of Segregation Risks; upcoming works of the Institute of Education Policies; Atlas of Roma communities, to some extent.</p>
Police misconduct and discriminatory behaviour (poor policing)	critical problem	mentioned but not analysed sufficiently	present but insufficient	some targets but not relevant	<p>measures adopted: Police body cameras tested in Bratislava and Košice. No other measures.</p> <p>effectiveness of measures: No effect yet. The situation has arguably worsened since the previous monitored period</p> <p>reach of measures: No effect, data collection: No data available</p>

Education

Problems and conditions:	Significance:	Identified by strategy:	Measures to address:	Targets defined:	Details of NRSF implementation relevant to the problem:
Lack of available and accessible pre-school education and ECEC services for Roma	significant problem	understood with limitations	adequate but with room for improvement	adequate but with room for improvement	<p>measures adopted: a partial measure in the form of compulsory pre-school education for 5-year-olds</p> <p>effectiveness of measures: Education in a segregated environment is not effective</p> <p>reach of measures: given that there is insufficient capacity in some locations, outreach is also very poor; it is still the case that parents leave their children at home if they can</p> <p>data collection: UNDP study, FRA, EU MIDIS II MRC</p>
Lower quality of pre-school education and ECEC services for Roma	significant problem	mentioned but not analysed sufficiently	adequate but with room for improvement	adequate but with room for improvement	<p>measures adopted: no measures adopted</p> <p>effectiveness of measures: none</p> <p>reach of measures: no outreach</p> <p>data collection: state school inspection, NUCEM, international metrics</p>
High drop-out rate before completion of primary education	significant problem	mentioned but not analysed sufficiently	present but insufficient	some targets but not relevant	<p>measures adopted: no systematic measures adopted</p> <p>effectiveness of measures: irrelevant</p> <p>reach of measures: no outreach</p> <p>data collection: no data collection</p>

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Early leaving from secondary education	significant problem	mentioned but not analysed sufficiently	present but insufficient	some targets but not relevant	<p>measures adopted: no systematic measures adopted</p> <p>effectiveness of measures: irrelevant</p> <p>reach of measures: no outreach</p> <p>data collection: statistics.sk, statistics from the Ministry of Labour, Social Affairs and Family</p>
Secondary education/vocational training disconnected from labour market needs	critical problem	mentioned but not analysed sufficiently	present but insufficient	some targets but not relevant	<p>measures adopted: no systematic measures adopted</p> <p>effectiveness of measures: irrelevant</p> <p>reach of measures: no outreach</p> <p>data collection: statistics.sk, statistics from the Ministry of Labour, Social Affairs and Family</p>
Misplacement of Roma pupils into special education	critical problem	understood with limitations	present but insufficient	some targets but not relevant	<p>measures adopted: new approaches to assessing school maturity</p> <p>effectiveness of measures: very low efficiency</p> <p>reach of measures: impact may be observed up to several years later</p> <p>data collection: CSOs research, NUCEM, state school inspection</p>

Education segregation of Roma pupils	significant problem	understood with limitations	adequate but with room for improvement	adequate but with room for improvement	measures adopted: no systematic measures effectiveness of measures: irrelevant reach of measures: irrelevant data collection: CSOs research, NUCEM, state school inspection, FRA, UNDP
Increased selectivity of the educational system, resulting in the concentration of Roma or other disadvantaged pupils in educational facilities of lower quality	critical problem	understood with limitations	present but insufficient	some targets but not relevant	measures adopted: no systematic measures effectiveness of measures: irrelevant reach of measures: irrelevant data collection: CSOs research, NUCEM, state school inspection, FRA, UNDP
Limited access to second-chance education, adult education, and lifelong learning	significant problem	understood with limitations	present but insufficient	some targets but not relevant	measures adopted: no systematic measures effectiveness of measures: irrelevant reach of measures: irrelevant data collection: CSOs research, NUCEM, state school inspection, FRA, UNDP
Limited access to and support for online and distance learning if education and training institutions close, as occurred during	critical problem	mentioned but not analysed sufficiently	absent	absent	measures adopted: no systematic measures effectiveness of measures: irrelevant reach of measures: irrelevant data collection: CSOs research, NUCEM, state

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the coronavirus pandemic					school inspection, FRA, UNDP
Low level of digital skills and competences, and limited opportunities for their development among pupils	critical problem	understood with limitations	absent	absent	measures adopted: no systematic measures effectiveness of measures: irrelevant reach of measures: irrelevant data collection: CSOs research, NUCEM, state school inspection, FRA, UNDP
Low level of digital skills and competences, and limited opportunities for their development among adults	critical problem	understood with limitations	absent	absent	measures adopted: no systematic measures effectiveness of measures: irrelevant reach of measures: irrelevant data collection: CSOs research, NUCEM, state school inspection, FRA, UNDP

Employment

Problems and conditions:	Significance:	Identified by strategy:	Measures to address:	Targets defined:	Details of NRSF implementation relevant to the problem:
Youth not in employment, education, or training (NEET)	significant problem	identified and analysed sufficiently	present but insufficient	some targets are not relevant	measures adopted: National project 'Step by Step' effectiveness of measures: Effectiveness of the measure is questionable as the project was aimed at the general population reach of measures: Impact of the project is difficult

					<p>to assess because there is no data on how many Roma were targeted</p> <p>data collection: none available</p>
Poor access to (re)qualification, lifelong learning, and skills development	significant problem	understood with limitations	adequate but with room for improvement	adequate but with room for improvement	<p>measures adopted: National Project 'Step by Step'</p> <p>effectiveness of measures: Effectiveness of measure is questionable as the project was aimed at the general population</p> <p>reach of measures: Impact of project is difficult to assess because there is no data on how many Roma were targeted</p> <p>data collection: none available</p>
Discrimination in the labour market by employers	critical problem	mentioned but not analysed sufficiently	present but insufficient	some targets but not relevant	<p>measures adopted: training</p> <p>effectiveness of measures: training can be considered an effective measure, especially if it is addressed at a small number of the target group</p> <p>reach of measures: the impact of the training is low, as it was targeted at five employers</p> <p>data collection: there is a lot of research both from the FRA and the University of Constantine the Philosopher in Nitra</p>

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Job opportunities from the primary labour market are being replaced by public (activation) works	critical problem	understood with limitations	absent	absent	measures adopted: not adopted effectiveness of measures: irrelevant reach of measures: irrelevant data collection: much research (CVEK, FRA)
Barriers and disincentives to employment	significant problem	understood with limitations	adequate but with room for improvement	adequate but with room for improvement	measures adopted: in particular, National Projects which also deal with counselling effectiveness of measures: not possible to evaluate effectiveness because there are no evaluation reports with an impact on the MRC reach of measures: Not possible to clearly assess the outreach because there are no evaluation reports with impact on the MRC data collection: no data collection

Healthcare

Problems and conditions:	Significance:	Identified by strategy:	Measures to address:	Targets defined:	Details of NRSF implementation relevant to the problem:
Poor provision/availability of healthcare (incl. lack of resources to cover costs outside health insurance)	significant problem	identified and analysed sufficiently	present but insufficient	relevant targets well defined	Measures adopted: Measures to address this problem partly include the 'National Healthy Communities' project, which was implemented in 2017 and employs unqualified health education assistants in marginalised Roma communities. The project is implemented regardless of the AP. Effectiveness of measures: the 'Healthy Regions'

					<p>project is useful; health education assistants also act as mediators of communication between doctors and the population of the MRC. The project is regularly evaluated, but its effectiveness is not measured (due to the nature of the project, this is complicated). At the same time, it does not significantly affect access to health care.</p> <p>Outreach of measures: Health education assistants work directly in the communities, so they have a direct impact on their residents. This is rather unskilled health and social outreach, so the impact of the project on improving access to health care is limited.</p> <p>Data collection: there is no data on the effectiveness of the project; however, there are evaluation reports about the project.</p>
Limited access to antenatal and postnatal care	critical problem	understood with limitations	present but insufficient	some targets but not relevant	<p>measures adopted: Measures have been adopted, but due to poor implementation, they have no impact</p> <p>effectiveness of measures: an activity was included in the AP that involved home visits by the paediatrician to the parents. Home visits are an effective solution for several reasons, mainly because they eliminate barriers to accessing health care service</p> <p>Outreach of measures: there is very little or no outreach to Roma</p> <p>data collection: none</p>
Poor availability of preventive care (vaccination, preventive	significant problem	identified and analysed sufficiently	present but insufficient	relevant targets well defined	<p>measures adopted: partly covered by the national 'Healthy Communities' project. These are vaccination campaigns and educational activities about healthy lifestyles. The latter was critically evaluated. All</p>

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check-ups, screening, education on healthy lifestyle)					<p>activities are implemented regardless of AP.</p> <p>Effectiveness of measures: The 'Healthy Regions' project can be considered useful, although it is an outreach activity undertaken by unqualified staff.</p> <p>Outreach of measures: the Healthy Regions project</p> <p>Data collection: There is no data on the effectiveness of the project; there are evaluation reports on the project. There are no data on the other named activities</p>
Poor access to sexual and reproductive health care and family planning services	significant problem	mentioned but not analysed sufficiently	absent	absent	<p>measures adopted: there are no measures on this issue</p> <p>effectiveness of measures, outreach of measures: since no measures have been adopted, neither their effectiveness nor their outreach can be commented on</p> <p>data collection: none</p>
Discrimination/anti-gypsyism in healthcare (e.g., segregated services, forced sterilisation)	Critical problem	identified and analysed sufficiently	present but insufficient	some targets but not relevant	<p>measures adopted: The Slovak National Centre for Human Rights has produced a manual on addressing discrimination in the health sector in three language versions, but it has not yet been published in print and is only available on the internet.</p> <p>Effectiveness of measures: a platform has been established with the aim of protecting the rights of persons in the health sector. The platform does not have members from the target groups; it is mainly composed of various state institutions and representatives of the NP Health Regions. It has been in existence for two years and is not yet</p>

					<p>associated with any activity.</p> <p>Outreach of measures: the impact of these activities is currently non-existent.</p> <p>data collection: none</p>
Inequalities in measures to combat and prevent potential disease outbreaks in marginalised or remote locations	Significant problem	identified and analysed sufficiently	adequate but with room for improvement	adequate but with room for improvement	<p>measures adopted: a monitoring system for the occurrence of COVID-19 in the MRC has been established</p> <p>effectiveness of measures: the monitoring of the incidence of the disease is the responsibility of the Health Education Assistants of the 'Healthy Communities' NP, followed by the project management communicating with the so-called intervention team of the Ministry of Health.</p> <p>outreach of measures: In the opinion of the authors of this report, after the experience of confining entire MRCs to isolation, this is a sensitive issue, and it is uncertain whether it will be treated ethically and in accordance with the rights of community residents in the event of a recurrent epidemic or pandemic.</p> <p>data collection: none</p>
Comprehensive solutions to problems related to the determinants of health (environment, finance, housing)	Critical problem	identified and analysed sufficiently	present but insufficient	some targets but not relevant	<p>measures adopted: creation of an inter-ministerial working group</p> <p>effectiveness of measures: the interministerial working group met, but the range of participating entities was quite narrow (MH, Health communities, OGPRC)</p> <p>outreach of measures: no clear outputs</p>

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					data collection: none
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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:
Lack of access to drinking water	critical problem	identified and analysed sufficiently	appropriate	relevant targets well defined	<p>measures adopted: 2022–2024: Projects supporting access to drinking water in MRC</p> <p>effectiveness of measures: progress achieved, despite setting low target indicators</p> <p>outreach of measures: Low-set indicators significantly limited the overall impact of the implemented projects. Although improvements were achieved in some locations, the scope of support still does not reach a level that would ensure a systematic solution to improving access to drinking water</p> <p>data collection: Atlas of Roma Communities 2019</p>
Lack of access to sanitation	critical problem	identified and analysed sufficiently	adequate but with room for improvement	adequate but with room for improvement	<p>measures adopted: self-help construction through the Domov project</p> <p>effectiveness of measures: a low number of participating families</p> <p>outreach of measures: low-set indicators significantly limited the overall impact of the implemented projects.</p> <p>data collection: Atlas of Roma Communities 2019</p>

Lack of access to electricity	critical problem	identified and analysed sufficiently	adequate but with room for improvement	adequate but with room for improvement	<p>measures adopted: construction of utility networks</p> <p>effectiveness of measures: slow and lengthy process</p> <p>outreach of measures: the recipient is usually the entire municipality, the majority population</p> <p>data collection: Atlas of Roma Communities 2019</p>
Lack of or limited access to social housing	significant problem	identified and analysed sufficiently	adequate but with room for improvement	adequate but with room for improvement	<p>measures adopted: construction of social rental housing</p> <p>effectiveness of measures: lengthy legislative process</p> <p>outreach of measures: low number of participating municipalities</p> <p>data collection: No data available</p>
Housing in segregated areas	critical problem	identified and analysed sufficiently	appropriate	relevant targets well defined	<p>measures adopted: implemented projects focused on land settlement under the MRC settlements</p> <p>effectiveness of measures: despite sufficient financial resources, a low-set indicator</p> <p>outreach of measures: the lack of legislation prevents comprehensive land settlement for Roma dwellings</p> <p>data collection: Atlas of Roma Communities 2019</p>
Housing in informal or illegal settlements/n neighbourhoods	critical problem	identified and analysed sufficiently	appropriate	relevant targets well defined	<p>measures adopted: partial success of the Domov project aimed at improving housing in the MRC</p> <p>effectiveness of measures: improvement in housing, but only for a few Roma families</p>

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					outreach of measures: low number of Roma participants data collection: Atlas of Roma Communities 2019
Limited or lack of access to internet connectivity (e.g., public internet access in excluded areas, regions without high-speed internet coverage)	critical problem	irrelevant	absent	absent	measures adopted: absent effectiveness of measures: absent outreach of measures: absent data collection: Atlas of Roma Communities 2019
Roma excluded from environmental democracy	significant problem	irrelevant	absent	absent	measures adopted: absent effectiveness of measures: absent outreach of measures: absent data collection: No data available

Social protection

Problems and conditions:	Significance:	Identified by strategy:	Measures to address:	Targets defined:	Details of NRSF implementation relevant to the problem:
A high risk of falling into poverty and material and social deprivation	critical problem	identified and analysed sufficiently	appropriate	relevant targets well defined	measures adopted: the minimum subsistence level has been increased annually, from which various social benefits are then derived, but this is not directly defined in the NRSF effectiveness of measures: such increases are not

					<p>sufficient</p> <p>outreach of measures: support often bypasses vulnerable groups, including Roma families, due to administrative barriers, insufficient outreach, and lack of targeted interventions</p> <p>data collection: No data available</p>
Income support programmes fail to ensure an adequate level of minimum income for every household.	critical problem	mentioned but not analysed sufficiently	present but insufficient	some targets but not relevant	<p>measures adopted: no measures adopted</p> <p>effectiveness of measures: existing programmes are insufficient and fail to meet the needs of vulnerable groups, particularly marginalised communities</p> <p>outreach of measures: Roma families often lack access to support due to low awareness, complex administration, and stigma</p> <p>data collection: No data available</p>
Limited access to income support schemes (low awareness, barriers in the form of administrative obstacles, and associated stigma)	critical problem	mentioned but not analysed sufficiently	present but insufficient	some targets but not relevant	<p>measures adopted: National Programme Development Teams</p> <p>effectiveness of measures: difficult to evaluate, as the National Project does not make sub-analyses of activities</p> <p>outreach of measures: development teams work directly with residents, so outreach can be good</p> <p>data collection: no data available</p>

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The existence of poverty in Roma communities	significant problem	irrelevant	absent	absent	measures adopted: absent effectiveness of measures: absent outreach of measures: absent data collection: no data available
The current social protection system in Slovakia	significant problem	irrelevant	absent	absent	measures adopted: absent effectiveness of measures: absent outreach of measures: absent data collection: no data available

Social services

Problems and conditions:	Significance:	Identified by strategy:	Measures to address:	Targets defined:	Details of NRSF implementation relevant to the problem:
Uncertain stability of the most widespread social services	significant problem	Irrelevant	Absent	Absent	measures adopted: no action on this problem effectiveness of measures and outreach of measures: since no measures have been adopted, neither their effectiveness nor their outreach can be specified. The community centre is defined in the Slovak legislation, but no provision is made for its financing from the state budget. Social outreach work is not even enshrined in legislation in this form data collection: the problem is defined, for example, in the evaluation reports of National

					Projects on field social work and community centres
Weak link between the objectives of social services operating in the MRC and the objectives of the NRSF	significant problem	Irrelevant	Absent	Absent	<p>measures adopted: there are no measures related to this issue</p> <p>effectiveness of measures, outreach of measures: since no measures have been adopted, neither their effectiveness nor their outreach can be specified</p> <p>data collection: none available</p>
Risk of reduced participation of Roma in the implementation of social services operating in the MRC (especially in management)	significant problem	Irrelevant	Absent	Absent	<p>measures adopted: measures regarding this problem are absent in the NRSF; the potential problem only became apparent after its adoption</p> <p>effectiveness of measures, outreach of measures: since measures have not been adopted, neither their effectiveness nor their outreach can be specified</p> <p>data collection: none available</p>
Absence of data on measurable results of social services in priority areas	significant problem	Irrelevant	Absent	Absent	<p>measures adopted: no action on this problem</p> <p>effectiveness of measures, outreach of measures: since no measures have been adopted, neither their effectiveness nor their outreach can be specified</p> <p>data collection: There are evaluation reports on outreach social work and community centres, but there are no impact indicators in the areas of education, employment, housing, and health</p>
Competence and	significant	mentioned	present but	Absent	measures adopted: the planned training of TSPs

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quality of social services operating in the MRC	problem	but not analysed sufficiently	insufficient		<p>and CC staff was not implemented; positions were created within TSPs to specialise in housing and financial counselling</p> <p>effectiveness of measures, outreach of measures: it is not yet possible to estimate the impact of the implemented measure or its effectiveness</p> <p>data collection: none available</p>
Poor availability of social services in the MRC, beyond those directly addressed to them.	Significant problem	Irrelevant	absent	absent	<p>measures adopted: no action on this problem</p> <p>effectiveness of measures, outreach of measures: since no measures have been adopted, neither their effectiveness nor their outreach can be specified</p> <p>data collection: none available</p>

Child protection

Problems and conditions:	Significance:	Identified by strategy:	Measures to address:	Targets defined:	Details of NRSF implementation relevant to the problem:
Biased treatment of Roma youth by security forces	significant problem	mentioned but not analysed sufficiently	absent	absent	<p>measures adopted: no special measures adopted</p> <p>effectiveness of measures: irrelevant</p> <p>outreach of measures: irrelevant</p> <p>data collection: none available</p>

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 insufficient awareness among the general population of how Roma arts and culture contribute to national and European heritage	critical problem	identified and analysed sufficiently	appropriate	relevant targets well defined	<p>measures adopted: the measures were only formally counted; the Ministry of Culture, which assumed responsibility for their implementation, used the activities of projects associated with other ministries and included them in the monitoring report</p> <p>effectiveness of measures, outreach of measures: as the planned activities were not implemented, neither their effectiveness nor their impact can be specified</p> <p>data collection: No data available</p>
Exclusion of the Roma minority from national cultural narratives	significant problem	identified and analysed sufficiently	appropriate	relevant targets well defined	<p>measures adopted: measures have not been implemented</p> <p>effectiveness of measures, outreach of measures: since the planned activities were not implemented, neither their effectiveness nor their impact can be commented on</p> <p>data collection: No data available</p>
Poor awareness of the general population about Roma as a national minority (history, culture, etc.)	significant problem	identified and analysed sufficiently	appropriate	relevant targets well defined	<p>measures adopted: the measures were only formally counted; the Ministry of Culture, which assumed responsibility for their implementation, used the activities of projects in other ministries and included them in the monitoring report</p>

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					<p>effectiveness of measures, outreach of measures: as the planned activities were not implemented, neither their effectiveness nor their impact can be commented on</p> <p>data collection: No data available</p>
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