



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

Prepared by:
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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

ALMP	Active Labor Market Policy
CSO	Civil Society Organisation
DNM	Department of National Minorities
E000	Equal Opportunities Ombudsman Office
EURSF	EU Roma Strategic Framework for Equality, Inclusion and Participation
MEB	Minimum Expenditure Basket
MSSL	Ministry of Social Security and Labour
NEA	National Education Agency
NEET	(youth) Not in Education, Employment or Training
NGO	Non-governmental Organisation
NRSF	National Roma Strategic Framework 2024-2030
NVO PP	CSO <i>Padék Pritapti</i> [Help to Integrate]
PI	Public Institution (CSO non-profit legal form used for activities in public interest)
PSD	Health insurance
RCC	Roma Community Centre
RCM	Roma Civil Monitor
NRSF 2022-203	Roma Integration Plan 2022-2023
STPCI	State Territorial Planning and Construction Inspectorate under the Ministry of Environment

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This report presents civil society findings on the implementation of Lithuania's National Roma Strategic Framework (NRSF), namely the Roma Integration Plan 2022–2023 (NRSF 2022–2023) and the Roma Inclusion Action Plan 2024–2030 (NRSF (2024–2030)). The report recognises limited systemic progress and highlights structural weaknesses in both the design and implementation of these policy instruments.

The NRSF 2022–2023 was primarily focused on short-term, fragmented activities with an emphasis on cultural promotion and limited interventions in employment and education. It lacked a transparent budgeting framework, had no dedicated monitoring and evaluation mechanism, and was developed without meaningful Roma participation. As a result, its implementation had minimal impact on structural inequalities faced by Roma communities.

The subsequent NRSF 2024–2030 presents a broader and more comprehensive vision, aligning partially with EU-level objectives and expanding its scope to include key themes such as antigypsyism, housing exclusion, and access to healthcare. Despite these improvements, the strategy still suffers from serious shortcomings. It remains largely aspirational and mainstream, not focused on unique Roma community challenges and with ambiguous measures, no allocated national budget, and excessive dependence on EU project-based funding. There is no effective mechanism for Roma participation in governance, and Roma involvement remains mostly symbolic and tokenistic, limited to project-level activities such as mediation and cultural events.

Implementation of the NRSF

Practical implementation still lags, with fragmented institutional responsibilities and a lack of clearly allocated resources. The absence of measurable progress indicators further complicates assessing the real impact of the NRSF.

While some initiatives, such as Roma mediators in schools and local partnerships with municipalities, have shown promise, large-scale systemic improvements remain very limited.

Monitoring and accountability are the main concerns, as reports on implementation progress are not publicly accessible. Moreover, Roma participation in decision-making remains very limited.

Review of country situation by area

Discrimination: The NRSF acknowledges antigypsyism (“antičigonizmas” in Lithuanian language) as a systemic issue and introduces legal improvements, awareness campaigns, and Roma-community collaboration initiatives. Although legislative changes were introduced, the overall implementation of anti-discrimination and antigypsyism measures remains weak. Trust in complaint mechanisms remains low, while reporting rates are stagnant. Civil society remains the main driver of progress, as state efforts have yet to produce tangible outcomes.

Education: While the NRSF introduced measures to improve Roma children's school attendance and access to education, challenges persist due to discrimination, segregation, and the lack of culturally sensitive teaching practices. High dropout rates remain a concern, and initiatives targeting Roma youth need better support and long-term funding.

Employment: Employment measures under the NRSF remain largely general in nature, with limited targeting and no disaggregated monitoring. Promising local initiatives exist, particularly in Vilnius, but structural disincentives and a lack of tailored support persist. Roma participation is not systematically tracked, and long-term progress will depend on stronger data, coordination, and inclusive economic policy reforms.

Healthcare: The NRSF addresses some health inequalities but does not adequately tackle structural discrimination in healthcare services. Healthcare actions under the NRSF have shown limited reach and visibility. Without targeted measures, Roma-specific monitoring, or inclusive follow-up, existing interventions are unlikely to reduce persistent health inequalities. Broader health strategies may offer opportunities, but their effect on Roma inclusion remains uncertain.

Housing: The Roma housing crisis, especially in Vilnius, remains unresolved. The segregated Kirtimai settlement was itself a manifestation of marginalisation, however its demolition has further deepened social exclusion.

Discrimination in the private rental market and critical shortage of social housing (in the time of demolition, the waiting list for municipal housing included over 1,600 applications) leaves Roma families without adequate housing.

Social Protection: Despite improvements in social benefits, many Roma families remain impoverished. The NRSF lacks targeted policies to bridge the economic gap, and social services remain inaccessible due to administrative barriers and systemic biases.

Social services: Social services remain largely inaccessible or ineffective for many Roma due to systemic underinvestment, lack of tailored support, and limited cultural competence among providers. While isolated local efforts exist, the NRSF does not include specific measures to improve service delivery for Roma communities.

Child protection: While some general child welfare measures have been implemented, the NRSF fails to address the specific vulnerabilities of Roma children. Discriminatory practices, institutional care overuse, and a lack of culturally sensitive services persist. Roma families remain underserved, with NGOs often compensating for gaps in the public system.

Promoting (awareness of) Roma arts, culture, and history: While Roma culture and history are receiving more visibility through public events, funding remains insufficient. Negative media portrayals contribute to persistent stereotypes, and the NRSF does not include media literacy programmes to counter these issues.

Focus on key issues affecting the Roma

The Kirtimai settlement, located on outskirts of Vilnius, was the largest Roma community in the Baltic region, housing over 500 individuals in approximately 100 families. It was established during the Soviet era, the many of settlement's buildings were constructed without official permits leading to challenges in accessing public utilities and services. Residents with very limited access to healthcare, education, employment faced significant social exclusion. In 2016, Vilnius authorities initiated a plan to demolish the segregated Kirtimai settlement to tackle the problem of drug trafficking. They claimed that the demolition will launch the start of the process of integration of Roma inhabitants of the neighbourhood.

By June 2020, the settlement had been completely dismantled. However, the relocation has faced significant challenges: shortage of social housing and discrimination in private market. Vilnius city government provided housing support for 60 social housing units for Roma families, and 47 more receive rent subsidies, but the whereabouts and living conditions of the remaining individuals and families are unknown.

INTRODUCTION

National Roma strategic framework

This report examines the implementation of two consecutive strategies concerning the Roma equality, inclusion and participation in Lithuania – the *Action Plan for Integration of Roma into Lithuanian Society for 2022-2023* (NRSF 2022-2023),¹ and the *Action Plan for Roma Inclusion 2030* (NRSF 2024-2030).² While the former set up short-term targets in limited number of areas,³ the latter widens its scope both in the timeframe and thematic coverage.

The NRSF 2022-2023 has drawn criticism for its top-down approach, which may have overlooked important perspectives from the Roma communities. CSOs have raised doubts about the strategy's capacity to adequately reflect Roma's real-life struggles and the complex issues they encounter.⁴

In contrast, the NRSF 2024-2030 was created through a more collaborative effort that actively engaged Roma as well as pro-Roma activists and civil society members throughout its implementation. It incorporates a range of mainstream actions and Roma-specific initiatives into national policies. The data-centred NRSF framework corresponds with the EU Roma Strategic Framework (EURSF), laying out specific and measurable goals to reach by 2030. However, it lacks a plan of actions, funding and responsibilities allocation, and the timeframe necessary to bring about lasting improvements for the Roma community in Lithuania.

The National Roma Contact Point (NRCP) in Lithuania is the Department of National Minorities (DNM) as part of the office of the Government of the Republic of Lithuania (*Tautinių mažumų departamentas prie Lietuvos Respublikos Vyriausybės*). DNM is responsible for implementing national minority policies, protecting the rights of ethnic minorities, and promoting their integration into Lithuanian society.

While the public can access strategies online, detailed documentation concerning their execution is scarce, and only periodic updates are posted sporadically on the DNM website.

About this report

As detailed in this report, both strategic documents encounter challenges in their implementation and effectiveness assessment processes. There is a concern that the implementation might only focus on small-scale initiatives without making the structural changes needed to tackle issues like housing, education, and health effectively. The lack of significant involvement of Roma in decision-making processes remains a crucial issue, and efforts have not fully incorporated Roma perspectives into the policy development process. Other concerns are related to the ineffective alignment with other government policies, or lack of tools for combating discrimination.

The methodology used for development of this report included discussions with individuals from Roma communities and different government institutions. Four interviews (one with a Roma activist and three with authorities) took place in January and February 2025; diverse strategic documents released in the last five years were reviewed; and online conversations and face-to-face discussions with CSOs and experts provided insights from different angles on the strategies in place and for validation purposes. Additionally included were

¹ Available at: https://commission.europa.eu/system/files/2022-10/1_1_lithuania_action_plan_for_roma_inclusion_2022-2023_en.pdf.

² Available at: <https://tmde.lrv.lt/media/viesa/saugykla/2024/2/EwBBKB9fONY.pdf>.

³ The NRSF 2022-2023 included these areas:

- Promotion of intercultural dialogue
- Promotion of dissemination of positive information about Roma
- Increase of empowerment of the Roma community
- Promotion of employment of the Roma people
- Raising awareness among Roma about access to health services
- Promotion of participation of the Roma children in the education.

⁴ See: Roma Civil Monitor, 2022, *Civil society monitoring report on the quality of the national strategic framework for Roma equality, inclusion, and participation in Lithuania*. Publication Office of the European Union. Available at: <https://romacivilmonitoring.eu/wp-content/uploads/2023/08/RCM2-2022-C4-Lithuania-CATALOGUE.pdf>.

data sources, such as survey results detailing instances of discrimination encountered by Roma community members.

The CSO Poma Community Centre drafted the report with the involvement of Egle Viskantaite and Svetlana Novopolskaja and the support of Ana Rozanova from European Roma Grassroots Organisations' (ERGO) Network.

1. IMPLEMENTATION OF THE NRSF

1.1. Key developments and effectiveness of implementation

1.1.1. Changes in the NRSF

NRSF 2022–2023 focused on promoting Roma culture and increasing community engagement through short-term initiatives. However, it was widely criticised for its top-down approach, limited Roma participation, and the absence of data sources for monitoring and evaluation. The NRSF 2022–2023's activities were primarily focused on cultural promotion and awareness-raising, and only marginally on core issues such as education, employment and healthcare (moreover, in these fields, the proposed measures and their scope⁵ were not matching Roma's needs); other fields such as housing were missing at all. Its two-year timeframe, lack of a defined budget, and weak institutional engagement further reduced its effectiveness.

In response to these shortcomings, an updated NRSF 2024–2030 was developed to provide a more comprehensive and sustainable approach. It broadened the scope to include structural challenges, such as antigypsyism, poverty, and access to education and health. It was built on research, demographic data, and consultations with Roma and pro-Roma organisations. While this marked a step forward, CSOs have pointed out that the participation of civil society remained limited in practice.⁶ That engagement was not sustained throughout the development of the strategy. Moreover, it mostly lacks clearly defined output and result targets at the level of measures (instead, the document includes only impact indicators to be reached by 2030) as well as a clear allocation of budget.

The NRSF outlines responsibilities for multiple institutions and aligns with the EU Roma Strategic Framework. Nevertheless, it lacks a detailed action plan, funding allocations for specific measures, and clear timelines. These gaps pose a risk to its effective implementation.

1.1.2. Progress in implementation

As of early 2025, it is not possible to assess the implementation of the measures included in the NRSF. No official monitoring meetings have taken place between 2022 and 2024, and no implementation reports have been published by the responsible institutions.⁷ This significantly limits the ability of civil society and other stakeholders to evaluate whether the commitments under the NRSF are being fulfilled.

Available evidence suggests that implementation to date has been driven almost exclusively by the Department of National Minorities (DNM), while other responsible institutions have mainly remained inactive or unaccountable. The limited transparency surrounding institutional responsibilities, resource allocation, and progress tracking remains a central obstacle to effective oversight. Since 2016, the DNM has continued the programme “Local Roma Platforms: Building Partnerships with Municipalities,” supporting cooperation in municipalities with higher Roma populations, including Vilnius, Šiauliai, Panevėžys, Marijampolė, and Šalčininkai. However, implementation remains uneven. Most attention has focused on the Roma community in Vilnius, while communities in other regions have received limited institutional engagement or tailored support.⁸

One of the few new developments under the NRSF is the deployment of Roma mediators in schools in Vilnius. These mediators serve as intermediaries between Roma families, schools, and child protection services. According to reports from CSOs and local institutions, this initiative has improved communication with families and contributed to increased school attendance among Roma pupils. However, the mediators operate only in Vilnius and their work has not been formally evaluated to date.

⁵ Target numbers of participants were very limited. For example, employment services were planned only for 50 persons, Lithuanian language courses only for 10 persons, number of people participating in activities in community centres was 10, or 20 persons participating in health-related activities. Source: Lithuania operational action plan for Roma integration 2022–2023, available at: https://commission.europa.eu/document/download/c8569346-5e2a-4bcc-b0d2-ff5f2ed7b1d2_en?filename=1_2_lithuania_roma_action_plan_2022-2023_en.pdf.

⁶ Interview 3.

⁷ Interview 4.

⁸ *Local Roma Platforms – the Path to Cooperation with Municipalities*. Available at: <https://www.romuplatforma.lt/>.

While the DNM has organised public events to promote Roma culture and published some updates on its website, there is no available information on the activities of other institutions involved in implementing NRSF measures. The lack of cross-sectoral reporting, independent evaluation, and publicly accessible data significantly limits transparency and accountability.

1.1.3. Effectiveness of monitoring

The DNM was responsible for coordinating the implementation of the NRSF 2022-2023, with a permanent working group tasked with annual monitoring of results.

Under the NRSF 2024-2030, a new inter-institutional monitoring group was established by the DNM in cooperation with the Ministry of the Interior. The group is intended to include representatives from state and municipal institutions, academia, and Roma and pro-Roma civil society organisations. According to the framework, this group should meet at least once per year to review implementation progress. However, as of early 2025, no such meetings have taken place.⁹

Although the NRSF 2024-2030 outlines a formal structure for monitoring, there is little evidence that this mechanism is functioning effectively in practice. No official monitoring reports have been published, and progress is currently tracked only through annual activity reports issued by the DNM, which do not provide disaggregated or detailed updates on the implementation of specific NRSF measures.

The NRSF 2024-2030 includes a set of measurable targets¹⁰ intended for long-term evaluation. A sociological study is planned for 2030 to assess progress against these indicators. However, in the absence of regular interim monitoring, this evaluation risks becoming a retrospective exercise rather than a tool for continuous improvement.

1.1.4. Data collection

NRSF 2022-2023 and NRSF 2024-2030 both drew on the 2020 sociological study, “The Situation of Persons of Roma Ethnicity”,¹¹ to inform their objectives. However, the NRSF 2024-2030 is grounded in a broader range of data sources. In addition to the 2020 study, it incorporates findings from the 2021 Lithuanian population census, the socio-demographic analysis of Lithuanian Roma,¹² and research¹³ conducted by the Lithuanian Human Rights Centre and the Office of the Equal Opportunities Ombudsperson (EOOO).

This variety of data sources offers a more comprehensive view of the challenges faced by Roma communities in Lithuania and has informed the NRSF’s strategic priorities. However, the accuracy and timeliness of this data remain a concern.

Previous census methods, which relied heavily on household surveys, often failed to adequately capture the most marginalised Roma communities, particularly those experiencing extreme poverty or living in informal conditions. The 2021 census¹⁴ marked an improvement, offering more precise data on the Roma population and enabling better targeting of inclusion measures.

⁹ Interview 3.

¹⁰ Those are mostly impact-level targets such as increase of employment rate among Roma by 2030.

¹¹ Dr. Vita Kontvainė. Diversity Development Group, 2020, *The Situation of Persons of Roma Ethnicity*. Available at: [https://tmde.lrv.lt/uploads/tmde/documents/files/Rom%C5%B3%20pad%C4%97tis%202020_TYRIMO%20ATASKAITA_galutin%C4%97%20\(002\).pdf](https://tmde.lrv.lt/uploads/tmde/documents/files/Rom%C5%B3%20pad%C4%97tis%202020_TYRIMO%20ATASKAITA_galutin%C4%97%20(002).pdf).

¹² Dr. Daumantas Stumbrys, Lithuanian Social Science Centre, Institute of Sociology, 2021, *Socio-demographic analysis of Lithuanian Roma*. Available at: https://tmde.lrv.lt/uploads/tmde/documents/files/TMD%20romai_lietuvoje_2022.pdf?utm_source=chatgpt.com.

¹³ Lithuanian Human Rights Centre, 2011, *Shadow Report to UN CEDR in response to the Lithuanian Government’s fourth and fifth periodic reports due in 2008*. Available at: https://tbinternet.ohchr.org/_layouts/15/TreatyBodyExternal/DownloadDraft.aspx?key=X+APURA6X6+EFCUmmxzV4ay+tA7eP8fwqW9VnHPvYk5b5wFbROXX/FTdeNNcPbP.

¹⁴ Official Statistics Portal, 2021, *Results of the 2021 Population and Housing Census of the Republic of Lithuania*. Available at: https://osp.stat.gov.lt/en_GB/2021-gyventoju-ir-bustu-surasyimo-rezultatai/pratarme.

Nevertheless, the bulk of the baseline data underpinning the NRSF was collected before the COVID-19 pandemic. The pandemic likely exacerbated existing inequalities in housing, education, employment, and healthcare. As a result, relying solely on pre-pandemic data risks underestimating current needs and formulating policies that may not reflect the urgency or depth of the challenges faced by Roma communities today.

Ongoing and disaggregated data collection is crucial for effectively monitoring the implementation of the NRSF. Without updated evidence, the strategy risks becoming disconnected from the evolving social and economic realities on the ground.

1.2. NRSF's synergy with domestic and EU actions

1.2.1. Complementary policies

The NRSF 2024-2030 is designed to align with broader national and EU policies across multiple sectors, including education, employment, health, housing, and social protection. In principle, this mainstreaming approach ensures Roma inclusion is embedded in general policy structures. However, without targeted actions addressing antigypsyism, tailored education and employment support, and the specific barriers faced by Roma communities, this approach risks being ineffective.¹⁵

The NRSF is formally complementary to several national development programmes:

- Poverty reduction and social inclusion are addressed through the *Income Inequality Reduction Development Programme 2021–2030*,¹⁶ the *Family Policy Strengthening Programme 2021–2030*,¹⁷ the *Social Cohesion Development Programme 2021–2030*,¹⁸ and the *Programme for an Environment Suitable for People with Disabilities*.¹⁹
- Education inclusion is supported by the *Education Development Programme 2021–2030*,²⁰ and the *Science Development Programme 2021–2030*.²¹
- Employment measures draw from general Active Labour Market Policy (ALMP) tools.²²

¹⁵ Interview 3.

¹⁶ *Income Inequality Reduction Development Programme 2021–2030*, Available at: <https://socmin.lrv.lt/lt/veiklos-sritys/strateginis-valdymas/aktualus-strateginiai-dokumentai/pletros-programu-pazangos-priemones/pajamu-nelygybes-mazinimo-pletros-programos-priemones/>.

¹⁷ *Family Policy Strengthening Programme 2021–2030*. Available at: <https://socmin.lrv.lt/lt/veiklos-sritys/strateginis-valdymas/aktualus-strateginiai-dokumentai/pletros-programu-pazangos-priemones/seimos-politikos-stiprinimo-pletros-programos-priemones/>.

¹⁸ *Social Cohesion Development Programme 2021–2030*. Available at: <https://socmin.lrv.lt/lt/veiklos-sritys/strateginis-valdymas/aktualus-strateginiai-dokumentai/pletros-programu-pazangos-priemones/socialines-sutelkties-pletros-programos-priemones/>.

¹⁹ *Programme for an Environment Suitable for People with Disabilities*. Available at: <https://socmin.lrv.lt/lt/veiklos-sritys/strateginis-valdymas/aktualus-strateginiai-dokumentai/pletros-programu-pazangos-priemones/neigaliesiems-tinkamos-aplinkos-visose-gyvenimo-srityse-pletros-programos-priemones/>.

²⁰ *Education Development Programme 2021–2030*. Available at: [https://smsm.lrv.lt/uploads/smsm/documents/files/Administracine%20informacija/planavimo%20dokumentai/pletros%20programos/%C5%AOPP%20projekto%20\(2020-07-24\).pdf](https://smsm.lrv.lt/uploads/smsm/documents/files/Administracine%20informacija/planavimo%20dokumentai/pletros%20programos/%C5%AOPP%20projekto%20(2020-07-24).pdf).

²¹ *Science Development Programme 2021–2030*. Available at: <https://smsm.lrv.lt/uploads/smsm/documents/files/Administracine%20informacija/planavimo%20dokumentai/pletros%20programos/2020-10->

²² *Inclusive Labor Market Development Programme 2021–2030*. Available at: https://socmin.lrv.lt/uploads/socmin/documents/files/administracine-informacija/Pletros%20programos/%C4%AEtraukios%20darbo%20rinkos%20PP_forma%20A.pdf.

- Health policies rely on the *Health Promotion Programme*²³ and the *Healthcare Quality and Efficiency Programme*.²⁴
- Housing support is covered under the *Law on Support for the Acquisition or Renting of Housing*.²⁵

Although these programmes are relevant, their generalised nature means that Roma-specific challenges—particularly those rooted in structural discrimination—often remain unaddressed. Mainstream instruments often overlook the need for culturally sensitive services, targeted outreach, or intersectional approaches. In practice, this results in limited accessibility and effectiveness for Roma communities.²⁶

Moreover, the NRSF faces serious implementation challenges due to the absence of additional funding for newly defined Roma-specific actions; authorities need to find funding for the measures outlined in the strategy in their already approved budgets.

While the DNM formally coordinates the strategy with the Ministry of Social Security and Labour (MSSL), the Ministry of Education, and other institutions, most line ministries lack specifically allocated budgets for Roma-targeted measures. Consequently, only generic services are applied, which do not address the distinct realities or needs of Roma individuals.

The current NRSF 2024-2030 allocates 200,000 EUR annually from the DNM and EU funds, a modest improvement compared to the NRSF 2022-203, which lacked any financial framework. However, this allocation is not linked to a detailed budgeted action plan. Civil society organisations (CSOs) interviewed for this report have repeatedly expressed concern over this issue:

“The national budget for the implementation of the Plan is practically unavailable. The failure to secure European Commission funding has left the Action Plan with only general, but not targeted, measures to ensure Roma inclusion and equality.”

Heavy reliance on unpredictable EU funding, coupled with the absence of national co-financing, continues to undermine the sustainability and impact of Roma inclusion efforts in Lithuania.

1.2.2. Alignment with EU actions

The implementation of the Lithuanian NRSF is influenced by several EU-level policies and trends, both directly through financial mechanisms and indirectly via broader political and policy developments.²⁷

The NRSF relies heavily on European Union funding instruments, particularly the European Social Fund Plus (ESF+). However, delays or failures in securing such funding have already constrained the implementation of targeted measures for Roma inclusion. According to civil society organisations, the lack of dedicated funding, in particular usage of available EU funds, in recent years has left the NRSF underfunded, with only limited general measures available.²⁸

²³ *Health Promotion Programme*. Available at: https://socmin.lrv.lt/uploads/socmin/documents/files/administracine-informacija/Pletros%20programos/%C4%AEtraukios%20dr%20pp/Itraukios%20darbo%20rinkos%20PP_forma%20A.pdf.

²⁴ *Healthcare Quality and Efficiency Programme*. Available at: <https://sam.lrv.lt/lt/administracine-informacija/planavimo-dokumentai/pletros-programos/sveikatos-issaugojimo-ir-stiprinimo-pletros-programa/>.

²⁵ *Law on Support for the Acquisition or Renting of Housing*. Available at: <https://socmin.lrv.lt/lt/veiklos-sritys/seima-ir-vaikai/parama-bustui-isigyti-ar-issinuomot/>.

²⁶ Interview 4.

²⁷ Roma Civil Monitor, 2022, *Civil Society Monitoring Report on the Quality of the National Strategic Framework for Roma Equality, Inclusion, and Participation in Lithuania*, p. 24. Available at: <https://romacivilmonitoring.eu/wp-content/uploads/2023/08/RCM2-2022-C4-Lithuania-CATALOGUE.pdf>.

²⁸ Lithuanian Equal Opportunities Ombudsperson, 2024, *Activity Report of the Lithuanian Equal Opportunities Ombudsperson 2023*, p. 66. Available at: <https://lygybe.lt/wp-content/uploads/2024/04/lygiu-galimybiu-kontrolieriaus-2023-metu-veiklos-ataskaita.pdf>.

Broader EU policy agendas also shape the Lithuanian context. The EU Security and Defence Agenda (2024–2029),²⁹ which encourages increased national defence spending, may limit national co-financing opportunities for social inclusion strategies, including the NRSF. The rise of right-wing political forces at the EU and national levels further undermines political will for Roma inclusion.

The EU Green Deal (2022–2030),³⁰ while transformative, remains disconnected from Roma inclusion policy in Lithuania. As green investments increasingly influence social and economic development priorities, Roma communities—often living in energy poverty or substandard housing—risk being left behind if inclusion measures do not explicitly address access to sustainable housing, energy efficiency, and green jobs.

Similarly, EU migration and external border policies may indirectly impact Roma communities, especially those with transnational ties. Lithuanian Roma who have migrated to the UK may be affected by the tightening of EU–UK migration regimes, with consequences for their legal status, employment, and remittances.

In summary, while the NRSF formally aligns with EU Roma policy objectives, its implementation is shaped positively and negatively by EU-level decisions on funding, defence spending, migration, and green transition. These developments must be monitored to ensure they do not inadvertently undermine Roma inclusion in Lithuania.

1.2.3. Addressing concerns of previous assessments

The current NRSF responds to several concerns raised in the 2022 RCM report,³¹ particularly in the areas of Roma participation, antigypsyism, housing, and monitoring.

The 2022 RCM report criticised the top-down nature of previous planning processes and the minimal involvement of Roma representatives. In response, the NRSF established a working group that includes some Roma and pro-Roma civil society organisations and activists. While this represents progress, concerns remain regarding the depth and continuity of Roma participation.³²

On antigypsyism, the 2022 RCM report noted that previous plans failed to recognise it as a structural and institutional phenomenon.³³ The new NRSF 2024–2030 attempts to address this gap by proposing actions such as social awareness campaigns, historical research, and training programmes for public officials. However, the extent to which these efforts challenge institutional practices remains to be assessed.

The issue of housing, which was largely absent in the previous plan, is now explicitly addressed in the NRSF. Proposed measures include promoting access to social housing, providing financial support for rent and housing loans, and purchasing additional social housing units. These measures mark a step forward, though implementation timelines and responsible institutions are not specified.

One partially addressed concern is the lack of dedicated funding. While the NRSF 2022–2030 lacked any specific budget lines, the current plan annually allocates 200,000 EUR from the DNM and EU sources. However, this amount is not linked to a detailed, costed action plan, and it remains unclear whether it will be sufficient to effectively implement the strategy's goals.

²⁹ European Commission, *EU Security and Defence Agenda 2024–2029*. Available at: https://commission.europa.eu/priorities-2024-2029/security-and-defence_en.

³⁰ European Commission, *The European Green Deal 2022–2030*. Available at: https://commission.europa.eu/strategy-and-policy/priorities-2019-2024/european-green-deal_en.

³¹ Roma Civil Monitor, 2022, *Civil Society Monitoring Report on the Quality of the National Strategic Framework for Roma Equality, Inclusion, and Participation in Lithuania*, p. 24. Available at: <https://romacivilmonitoring.eu/wp-content/uploads/2023/08/RCM2-2022-C4-Lithuania-CATALOGUE.pdf>.

³² Ibid.

³³ Ibid.

1.3. Roma participation in implementation and monitoring

1.3.1. Involvement of Roma CSOs in implementation

Initially, CSOs were not meaningfully involved in creating the NRSF 2022-2023 at the first stages, as mentioned in the RCM report 2022.³⁴ In the development of the NRSF 2024-2030, CSOs' involvement improved at least partially. There were two stages of preparation of the document. The first stage actively involved four Roma and three pro-Roma organisations and the Lithuanian Human Rights Centre; DNM arranged two personal meetings. However, this effort was insufficient to address the full spectrum of Roma issues, including intersectionality and the experiences of Roma from rural areas. However, during the second stage, NRSF 2024-2030 was adopted without finalising the discussions with CSOs.

CSOs have been only partially involved in execution of NRSF 2022-2023 and NRSF 2024-2030. Roma-led organisations often lacked sufficient institutional support, sustainable funding and opportunities to contribute meaningfully to decision-making process. This reduced their ability to impact the final results of the strategy significantly.³⁵

1.3.2. Roma in public institutions implementing the NRSF

Lack of Roma representation within public institutions continues to hinder inclusive governance. There is currently no Roma representatives employed long-term in national decision-making structures related to the implementation of the NRSF.

Most Roma participation are concentrated in supplementary or project-based roles, rather than within decision-making or strategic implementation bodies. In particular, Roma individuals were predominantly engaged through self-employment as health mediators, school assistants, or through involvement in public cultural events. These roles, while providing important visibility and fostering community trust in public services, were generally of limited scope, duration, and strategic impact overall. The involvement tended to focus on service delivery and visibility the real policy change or even full-time employment opportunity for Roma people.

The absence of Roma individuals in decision-making roles in public institutions removes those affected by policies and decisions from the opportunity to express their perspectives, which eventually hinders the inclusiveness and effectiveness of the inclusion strategy.

1.3.3. Roma participation in monitoring and evaluation

The NRSF outlines plans for establishing an inter-institutional working group responsible for monitoring and evaluating the implementation of the strategy. According to the NRSF, this group is to include representatives of state and municipal institutions, the academic community, and Roma and pro-Roma civil society organisations. This structure, in theory, could enable Roma participation in monitoring processes.

However, as of January 2025, the working group has not yet convened. No official meetings have been held to assess progress, and there is no publicly available evidence of any formal monitoring activities involving Roma representatives. As a result, Roma participation in monitoring and evaluation remains aspirational rather than operational.³⁶

While some Roma activists and NGOs have been invited to public events, such as the December 2022 seminar in Birštonas, where the NRSF was presented, their participation in evaluation processes has been largely symbolic.³⁷ Consultations have not resulted in evident influence over policy revision or implementation practices. Many Roma activists express mistrust towards governmental institutions and frustration over the

³⁴ Ibid.

³⁵ Interview 3.

³⁶ Ibid.

³⁷ Department of National Minorities Under the Government of Republic of Lithuania, 2022, *A seminar in Birštonas. "Roma Integrations strategy – What goals and measures will we implement by 2030?"*. Available at: <https://tmde.lrv.lt/lt/naujienos/birstone-vyksta-seminaras-romu-integracijos-strategija-kokius-tikslus-ir-priemones-igyvendinsime-iki-2030-metu/>.

lack of tangible improvements in living conditions, which further undermines meaningful engagement in oversight structures.³⁸

These limitations underline the urgent need for more robust, structured mechanisms to incorporate Roma perspectives into the monitoring and evaluation of the NRSF. Without formalised and consistent participation, the strategy risks losing legitimacy among the communities it is intended to support.

³⁸ Interview 1.

2. REVIEW BY THEMATIC AREA

2.1. Fighting antigypsyism and discrimination

Antigypsyism in Lithuania remains unacknowledged as a structural issue in public policy, despite Roma consistently reporting the highest levels of discrimination among ethnic groups. Negative attitudes are widespread, with over half of the population unwilling to live or work alongside Roma. Hate speech and racially motivated personal crimes are frequent and rarely prosecuted effectively. Discriminatory treatment by police, public officials, and service providers is common, and Roma often face systemic exclusion in education, housing, employment, and healthcare. Civil society highlights the absence of recognition of antigypsyism in national frameworks and stresses that without naming and analysing these patterns, institutional racism continues unchecked. No consistent training for civil servants or law enforcement exists, and public discourse largely reflects hostile or stereotyped portrayals. As a result, antigypsyist prejudice permeates many areas of daily life, reinforcing exclusion and social marginalisation.

Example: Conviction for Ethnic Discrimination Against Roma in Jonava Café

In 2024, three individuals in Jonava, Lithuania, were convicted for refusing service to Roma customers in a local café in 2022, based on their ethnicity. The Jonava court found them guilty of violating equal rights and imposed freedom-restricting penalties. While the verdict is not yet final, it constitutes an important precedent in Lithuanian criminal law, signalling that the state does not tolerate discrimination. The case underscores the persistence of racial discrimination in Lithuania and highlights both the active role of Roma in seeking justice and the legal system's responsibility in addressing such violations.³⁹

2.1.1. Effectiveness of the NRSF in addressing the problems

Despite the 2022 expansion of hate crime criteria to include skin colour and ethnic origin, the implementation of anti-discrimination protections for Roma remains limited. Only one ethnic discrimination case was investigated that year, reflecting continued mistrust or lack of awareness among Roma. In 2023, the number of inquiries or cooperation initiatives from Roma to the Department of National Minorities (DNM) declined further.⁴⁰ Individual cases—such as reports of harassment in medical institutions,⁴¹ and a complaint regarding a bakery product titled “Gypsy casserole”—were addressed by institutions, but without public reporting or formal sanctions,⁴² highlighting a superficial approach and the absence of systemic follow-up.

Under the NRSF objective to promote intercultural dialogue and spread positive information about Roma, the DNM annually supports Holocaust remembrance activities.⁴³ In 2022, the international conference “Rethinking Trauma: Research on Roma and Jewish History in the Baltic States and the USA” was held at the National Martynas Mažvydas Library in Vilnius.⁴⁴ In 2024, the Roma Community Centre (RCC) implemented a public awareness campaign titled “Know, so you don't need to fear.” While such campaigns may influence public opinion, their effectiveness remains unclear in the absence of impact evaluation.

The NRSF also introduced regular quarterly meetings of the Expert Commission on Antigypsyism under DNM coordination for 2024–2030. Although intended to improve institutional coordination, no noticeable impact has yet been observed. The plan included training sessions for Roma Platform mediators to identify and address

³⁹ See: <https://www.lrt.lt/naujienos/lietuvoje/2/2312135/jonavoje-trys-asmenys-nuteisti-del-romu-diskriminacijos-kavineje-apribos-laisve>.

⁴⁰ Lithuanian Equal Opportunities Ombudsperson, 2024, *Activity Report of the Lithuanian Equal Opportunities Ombudsperson 2023*, p. 31. Available at: <https://lygybe.lt/wp-content/uploads/2024/04/lygiu-galimybiu-kontrolieriaus-2023-metu-veiklos-ataskaita.pdf>.

⁴¹ Ibid., p. 35.

⁴² Ibid., p. 35.

⁴³ See: <https://tmde.lrv.lt/lt/naujienos/kvietimas-i-romu-genocido-dienos-minejimo-rengini/>.

⁴⁴ See: <https://www.15min.lt/naujiena/aktualu/istorija/permantant-trauma-ko-nezinome-apie-romu-ir-zydu-istorija-baltijos-salyse-582-1945282>.

discrimination; these were carried out, but the Equal Opportunities Ombudsperson Office (E000) has not reported any increase in complaints, indicating limited behavioural change.

The NRSF further aims to improve cooperation with the E000 and the Employment Service to address discrimination effectively. This step involves engaging with different stakeholders and represents an advancement compared to past plans, which had a narrower focus. However, the commitments regarding employment and institutional cooperation have not yet materialised meaningfully. The expected partnership improvements between Roma stakeholders, the Employment Service, and the E000 remain underdeveloped and insufficiently evidenced in practice. Stronger monitoring, inclusive planning, and Roma-led advocacy remain necessary for future progress.

Since 2016, the EU-funded projects of “Local Roma Platforms” has continued in five municipalities with larger Roma populations: Vilnius, Šalčininkai, Panevėžys, Šiauliai, and Marijampolė. The project supports legal services and cooperation with local authorities. A lawyer has assisted Roma mediators in complex legal matters.⁴⁵ However, discrimination remains deeply embedded in societal norms and structures, often overshadowed by a narrow focus on practical integration.

2.1.2. Addressing the problems beyond the NRSF

Beyond the NRSF, the National Minorities Act was adopted in 2024 to safeguard the rights of ethnic minorities in political, social, cultural, and civil life.⁴⁶ Despite this framework, Roma experience ongoing structural discrimination. In 2022–2024, CSOs continued to lead anti-discrimination efforts, providing legal assistance, advocacy, and awareness-raising initiatives aimed at challenging stereotypes and empowering Roma individuals.⁴⁷

2.2. Education

Roma children in Lithuania face severe educational disadvantage. Illiteracy remains disproportionately high, and many leave school after grades 7–8. Roma pupils are often concentrated in under-resourced schools with low academic standards and poor reputations, contributing to early dropout. Discrimination by staff and peers is widespread, including verbal abuse and stigmatising labels such as “gypsy class”. Participation in early childhood education is low, limiting school readiness. Few Roma access secondary or vocational education, and second-chance learning opportunities are rare. Roma families report feeling unwelcome in mainstream institutions, and systemic barriers—such as poverty, mobility, and lack of targeted support—remain unaddressed. Educational segregation persists informally, while digital illiteracy and limited support during the pandemic further disadvantaged Roma students. These entrenched inequalities hinder access to further education and employment, perpetuating cycles of marginalisation.

2.2.1. Effectiveness of the NRSF in addressing the problems

Implementation of education-related measures under the NRSF remains fragmented, with limited systemic impact on structural barriers facing Roma students. While some activities have been carried out—particularly at local level—many key issues such as early school leaving, poor enrolment in early childhood education, and lack of digital access remain insufficiently addressed.

In 2022, the DNM and NGO *Padėk Pritapti* implemented non-formal education activities aimed at strengthening Roma youth’s emotional intelligence and social skills. Thirty-five individuals participated in training sessions, and Lithuanian language courses were also delivered to support language acquisition. These efforts align with general youth support activities across Lithuania.

⁴⁵ Interview 4.

⁴⁶ https://www.lrs.lt/sip/portal.show?p_r=35403&p_k=1&p_t=289980.

⁴⁷ The groups of CSOs organised a two-day workshop aimed at learning about the traditions neighbouring communities and challenging negative stereotypes. It was the first attempt to bring educators together with representatives and speakers from two communities for a meaningful dialogue.

The National Education Agency (NEA), responsible for assisting schools in supporting Roma learners,⁴⁸ instead published in 2023 a methodical tool, *Experiences of Roma Children in Lithuanian General Education Schools*. The publication relied solely on educators' input and failed to engage Roma children or families. It framed Roma students through a deficit lens, overlooked structural discrimination, and reinforced stereotypes. Recommendations focused on superficial fixes rather than proposing inclusive structural reforms or acknowledging systemic bias in education. The report did highlight the influence of social and economic exclusion on Roma children's educational outcomes and identified training for teachers, anti-bullying strategies, and multicultural education as possible responses. However, it cautioned against segregated programmes and ultimately offered a shallow analysis of the barriers Roma pupils face.

National Education Agency: Reinforcing Stereotypes, Ignoring Structural Barriers

The publication by the National Education Agency claims:

*"The poor academic results of the Roma are compensated by the active and almost one hundred per cent participation in children's non-formal education activities. Joyful, playful, temperamental Roma children participate in field trips, bicycle competitions, football or cross-country competitions, quizzes, and singing of songs. Everyone participates in school programmes – they go on field trips, are active in traditional events and class community activities."*⁴⁹

This portrayal is deeply problematic. It frames low academic performance as offset by participation in extracurricular activities, reinforcing cultural stereotypes while overlooking the structural barriers Roma children face. The suggestion that nearly all Roma pupils join school trips and activities disregards the social and economic constraints many encounter. Extracurricular involvement cannot compensate for poor academic outcomes, which often lead to long-term disadvantages in education and employment. Such narratives deflect attention from the need for systemic reforms that would enable genuine educational inclusion and equal opportunities for Roma youth.

Amendments to the Law on Education introduced stricter attendance monitoring, requiring schools to notify parents immediately about absences and inform the State Child Rights Protection and Adoption Service if children under 16 are not attending. This is expected to improve school attendance among Roma children.

Positive developments were reported in Vilnius, where, under the NRSF, additional staff positions to support Roma students were funded by the municipality. Multi-disciplinary teams, including social pedagogues, psychologists, and assistants, were established in selected schools.⁵⁰ Since 2024, four Roma mediators-coordinators have been working in three schools in Vilnius with significant Roma student populations. According to civil society organisations engaged in education meetings in Vilnius, these mediators have improved communication between schools and Roma parents and contributed to better attendance.

A key gap in the NRSF lies in its lack of focus on increasing Roma children's enrolment in preschool, pre-primary, and mainstream education. While it addresses teacher training and support for enrolled students, it neglects access issues and thus fails to tackle the root causes of high dropout rates.⁵¹

2.2.2. Addressing the problems beyond the NRSF

Access to second-chance education, adult education, and lifelong learning remains largely absent from the NRSF and national strategies, limiting opportunities for integration. The State Study Fund manages a monthly scholarship of 318.50 EUR to support vocational education for disadvantaged students, but broader support is lacking.

⁴⁸ Department of National Minorities under the Government of the Republic of Lithuania, 2022, *Roma Integration Plan 2022–2023*, p. 10.

⁴⁹ National Education Agency, 2023, *Romų vaikų ugdymo patirtis bendrojo ugdymo mokyklose* [Educational Experiences of Roma Children in General Education Schools], p. 20.

⁵⁰ Ibid., p. 19.

⁵¹ Change, 2023, *Lietuvos nediskriminavimo politika: Lietuvos žydų ir romų bendruomenių atvejai* [Lithuania's Non-Discrimination Policy: The Cases of the Lithuanian Jewish and Roma Communities], p.14.

From 2024, the government will reserve 10% of publicly funded higher education places for applicants from disadvantaged backgrounds with work or volunteer experience, aiming to foster greater diversity.⁵²

However, two critical areas remain unaddressed in the NRSF: digital literacy and e-learning accessibility. Both children and adults in Roma communities lack basic digital skills, which increasingly form a barrier to education and employment. NGOs have attempted to fill this gap, but without adequate funding or coordination. The absence of any policy support for online or distance learning further compounds digital exclusion.

2.3. Employment

Access to employment for Roma in Lithuania remains severely limited due to discrimination, low qualifications, and entrenched social exclusion. Roma applicants frequently face rejection based on ethnicity during job interviews, and institutional bias from public employment services compounds these challenges. Structural barriers—such as lack of formal work experience, low digital skills, and limited vocational training—exacerbate exclusion. Although some Roma, particularly women and youth, participated in earlier EU-funded employment projects, sustainable job placements remain rare. Civil society reports a mismatch between training programmes and labour market needs, as well as a lack of follow-up or job placement support. The stigma attached to Roma identity continues to deter employers, reinforcing long-term unemployment. Roma often resort to informal work, which increases vulnerability and deepens poverty. Youth not in employment, education, or training (NEETs) are particularly affected, with few activation mechanisms in place.

2.3.1. Effectiveness of the NRSF in addressing the problems

Efforts to improve Roma employment under the NRSF have been uneven and lack clear data on effectiveness. While several institutions—the Ministry of Social Security and Labour (MSSL), the Department of National Minorities (DNM), and the Employment Service—are involved in implementing mainstream Active Labour Market Policy (ALMP) measures, these are not tailored to Roma-specific barriers. No disaggregated data is collected, and the actual number of Roma employed remains unknown. Employment impact statistics are only expected by 2030 through the NRSF monitoring system.

The Employment Service provides career consultations and psychological support to Roma jobseekers through general programmes. However, these services are not adapted to the specific socio-economic conditions of Roma communities. A rare example of targeted action came from Vilnius Municipality, where in 2023 one Roma individual was employed under a programme incorporating protective characteristics, including ethnicity.

Roma women's labour market integration received some attention. In May 2024, the DNM held a discussion in Vilnius titled "Attitudes of Roma Women and Employers Towards Labour Market Integration."⁵³ A related event, "Active Participation of Roma Women: Empowerment and Barriers," was organised in Marijampolė, focusing on career guidance and labour market access. Roma mediators continue to play a key role in supporting rights awareness and connecting individuals to employment resources.

NEET-targeting strategies by MSSL, in cooperation with the Employment Service and municipalities, aim to support social inclusion and education among Roma youth. These include vocational training, career counselling, and scholarships for 20 Roma students in grades 11 and 12.⁵⁴ However, as these efforts fall under general youth employment programmes and lack ethnic disaggregation, their actual reach and impact on Roma remain unclear.

At the municipal level, initiatives such as the "Vilnius City Municipality Employment Promotion Programme 2023" and the EU-funded Roma Platform aim to strengthen employment pathways. The Roma Platform has facilitated dialogue between authorities and Roma communities and supported mediator roles across municipalities, but outcomes—particularly employment placements—are not systematically monitored or publicly reported. Although there is some progress, persistent challenges such as high dropout rates and socio-

⁵² Ibid., p. 15.

⁵³ See: <https://tmde.lrv.lt/lt/naujienos/apvaliojo-stalo-diskusija-romiu-ir-darbdaviu-nuostatos-del-integracijos-i-darbo-rinka/>.

⁵⁴ See: <https://tmde.lrv.lt/lt/naujienos/pasirasyta-sutartis-su-europos-komisija-del-projekto-vietines-romu-platformos-kelias-link-bendradarbiavimo-su-savivaldybemis-septinto-etapo-igyvendinimo/>.

economic exclusion hinder Roma labour market participation. Stronger employer engagement and monitoring frameworks are needed.

2.3.2. Addressing the problems beyond the NRSF

A major unaddressed issue is the disincentive created by the current balance between social assistance and low wages. Many Roma remain outside the labour market due to the limited financial advantage of working. Unless this barrier is tackled, long-term integration into employment will remain elusive.

CSOs continue to fill critical gaps through empowerment and employment initiatives. “We – Capable and Empowered” (2021–ongoing), implemented by CSO *Padėk pritapti* and funded by Vilnius City Municipality, provides Lithuanian language training, career planning, and social skills development for Roma girls and women.⁵⁵ Civil society also promotes entrepreneurship as a viable path toward economic independence. Two success stories—the “Sukar Beauty Salon”⁵⁶ and “Dilya Mados Namai” fashion house, both led by Roma women—were supported by Vilnius Municipality and the NGO Lithuanian Falcon Association. These initiatives challenge stereotypes and demonstrate the potential of Roma-led enterprises when supported by training and financial assistance.

2.4. Healthcare

While Roma generally have formal access to basic healthcare,⁵⁷ persistent disparities in health outcomes and service utilisation reveal underlying exclusion.⁵⁸ Roma suffer higher rates of chronic illness, mental health issues, and reduced life expectancy. Discrimination by healthcare providers, including disrespectful treatment and dismissive attitudes, discourages Roma from seeking medical assistance. Services not covered by state insurance—such as dental or psychological care—remain out of reach for many Roma due to cost. Preventive care is also underused, with low vaccination and screening rates. Limited health literacy, language barriers, and mistrust in institutions further hinder access. Vulnerable subgroups—such as Roma women, elderly, and those with disabilities—face compounded challenges. Health promotion efforts rarely target Roma communities specifically, and outreach remains minimal. Consequently, health inequalities persist across generations, reinforcing broader patterns of marginalisation and social exclusion.

The NRSF includes a commitment for the period 2024–2030 to identify measures necessary to ensure psychological health and well-being in collaboration with the Roma community. These measures will be implemented in partnership with health care institutions and coordinated by the Department of National Minorities under the Government of the Republic of Lithuania.

2.4.1. Effectiveness of the NRSF in addressing the problems

Efforts under the NRSF to improve Roma access to healthcare remain limited in scope and impact. In 2024, the Department of National Minorities (DNM) organised training for Roma Platform coordinators to raise awareness about health rights and promote equitable access to services.⁵⁹ While relevant, the scale and effectiveness of this activity are not documented, and no follow-up assessments have been made public.

⁵⁵ See: <https://padekpritapti.lt/vietiniai/>.

⁵⁶ <https://madeinvilnius.lt/en/business/Vilnius-market/I-opened-the-door-to-a-beauty-parlor-room-set-up-in-Rome/>.

⁵⁷ In Lithuania, all individuals who declare their residence must pay compulsory health insurance (PSD) contributions. The state covers PSD contributions for socially vulnerable groups, including low-income residents receiving social assistance. See: <https://ligoniukasa.lv.lt/lt/veiklos-sritys/informacija-gyventojams/apie-privalomaji-sveikatos-draudima/psd-dalyviai/kas-yra-draudziami-psd/>.

⁵⁸ A population-level study highlights poorer health indicators among Roma in Lithuania compared to other ethnic groups. Recent epidemiological research (Jasilionis, Stumbrys, 2019) reveals significantly worse health outcomes for Roma residents. Mortality data linked with census records show that the average life expectancy for Roma men aged 20 was 11.83 years shorter than for Lithuanian men, while Roma women of the same age had a life expectancy 7.71 years shorter than their Lithuanian counterparts. From 2011 to 2017, the average life expectancy for Roma men was 40.39 years, and for Roma women, it was 53.58 years. Department of National Minorities under the Government of the Republic of Lithuania 2023, *Action Plan for Roma Inclusion 2030*, p. 25.

⁵⁹ Romų platforma, 2024, *Kvalifikacijos kelimo mokymai romų tarpininkams [Qualification Training for Roma Mediators]*, available at: <https://www.romuplatforma.lt/kvalifikacijos-kelimo-mokymai-romu-tarpininkams/>.

A planned measure on vaccination and communicable disease prevention lacked targeted implementation. Although the Ministry of Health conducted general outreach activities, no Roma-specific vaccination initiatives or reporting were identified. The actual impact on Roma communities appears minimal, especially given the absence of disaggregated monitoring or targeted health equity measures.

2.4.2. Addressing the problems beyond the NRSF

To improve public health Ministry of Health has introduced two initiatives for the period of 2022 to 2030—Health Preservation and Promotion and Enhancing the Quality and Efficiency of Health Care⁶⁰ programmes. These strategies set a roadmap for the decade, focusing on psychological well-being and resilience and promoting health protection. These two initiatives can improve Roma health by effectively addressing their healthcare needs. Still, the real impact will depend on how inclusive, accommodating the Roma community's needs and tackling discrimination in the Lithuanian healthcare system.

2.5. Housing, essential services, and environmental justice

Housing remains the most acute and unresolved issue for Roma in Lithuania. Many Roma live in overcrowded or substandard housing without basic infrastructure such as water, sanitation, or heating.⁶¹ Discrimination by private landlords⁶² prevents Roma from accessing the rental market,⁶³ even when municipal support is available. The demolition of the Kirtimai Roma settlement in Vilnius without proper resettlement planning forced families into further insecurity (for more details see chapter 3 of this report). Public housing allocation lacks transparency and often excludes Roma applicants. Local governments rarely engage in systematic efforts to improve Roma housing conditions. Many live in informal or segregated areas, facing daily risks of eviction or environmental hazards. Limited public transport, digital connectivity, and access to services further isolate these communities. The lack of official recognition of housing deprivation as a priority contributes to its invisibility in national policy frameworks, despite its profound effect on all other areas of inclusion.

2.5.1. Effectiveness of the NRSF in addressing the problems

Despite modest improvements since 2020, such as improved heating and other upgrades in the overall housing standards,⁶⁴ housing remains a persistent challenge for Roma in Lithuania. The National Roma Strategic Framework (NRSF) includes funding for social housing development and legal provisions supporting housing access, but structural barriers—especially discrimination in the private rental market—continue to limit real impact. Negative public attitudes towards Roma, insufficient municipal support, and administrative complexity obstruct efforts to secure stable housing.

⁶⁰ The Lithuanian Ministry of Health's 2022–2030 strategic programs aim to enhance public health and healthcare accessibility. The Health Preservation and Strengthening Program focuses on managing health risks, improving mental health, and expanding public health services in regional areas. The Healthcare Quality and Efficiency Program seeks to optimise health system administration, increase service accessibility, and advance modern technology and prevention methods to improve overall care quality. See: <https://sam.lrv.lt/lt/administracine-informacija/planavimo-dokumentai/pletros-programos/sveikatos-issaugojimo-ir-stiprinimo-pletros-programa/>.

⁶¹ European Anti-Poverty Network Lithuania, 2023, *Nuomos diskriminacija tyrimas [Rental discrimination study]*, available at: <https://www.smtinklas.lt/wp-content/uploads/2023/10/Skurdas-ir-socialinė-atskirtis-Lietuvoje-2023.pdf>.

⁶² The 2020 survey shows improved housing conditions for Roma, with fewer living in substandard homes (72% to 55%), more able to heat their homes adequately (48% to 75%), and increased household space. However, Roma housing quality remains below national standards. See: Rita Kontvainė and Diversity Development group, 2020, *Romų tautybės asmenų padėtis 2020. [The Situation of Roma People in 2020]*, p. 22, available at: [https://tmde.lrv.lt/uploads/tmde/documents/files/Romu%20padėtis%202020 TYRIMO%20ATASKAITA galutinė%20\(002\).pdf](https://tmde.lrv.lt/uploads/tmde/documents/files/Romu%20padėtis%202020 TYRIMO%20ATASKAITA galutinė%20(002).pdf).

⁶³ According to the 2022 research, 59 percent of Lithuania residents do not want to live in the neighbourhood with Roma. See: <https://www.romuplatforma.lt/visuomenes-nuostatos/>.

⁶⁴ Rita Kontvainė and Diversity Development group, 2020, *Romų tautybės asmenų padėtis 2020. [The Situation of Roma People in 2020]*, p. 29, available at: [https://tmde.lrv.lt/uploads/tmde/documents/files/Romu%20padėtis%202020 TYRIMO%20ATASKAITA galutinė%20\(002\).pdf](https://tmde.lrv.lt/uploads/tmde/documents/files/Romu%20padėtis%202020 TYRIMO%20ATASKAITA galutinė%20(002).pdf).

The COVID-19 pandemic exacerbated existing inequalities. Roma households experienced job losses, reduced income, and restricted access to services, further limiting their ability to afford or retain housing. Overcrowding and inadequate access to utilities remain common,⁶⁵ especially for families dependent on private rentals where landlords often refuse to rent to Roma.⁶⁶

Under the 2014 Law on Support for the Acquisition or Rental of Housing, municipalities including Vilnius, Kaunas, Šiauliai, and Panevėžys have allocated housing units to low-income and vulnerable groups, including Roma. Roma mediators report that some families have successfully accessed these units. The same law provides rent subsidies of up to 30% for eligible households. Mediators have also supported families in accessing private rental compensation, but the requirement for legal contracts and proof of income limits uptake—especially as most landlords refuse to formalise rental agreements with Roma tenants.

Following the relocation of families from the Kirtimai settlement, legal safeguards under Article 16 of the housing law required that no dwellings be dismantled without alternative housing or compensation. While this provision exists on paper, enforcement has been weak. Many relocated Roma families continue to live in overcrowded or unstable conditions, raising doubts about the system's capacity to prevent long-term exclusion.

The NRSF has enabled Roma mediator support in navigating social housing and rent subsidy systems, and Vilnius Municipality implemented a targeted rent reimbursement programme for former Kirtimai residents.⁶⁷ However, in 2024, amendments to the housing law tightened compensation eligibility. As a result, only six out of 86 Roma families previously eligible for subsidies retained this right. Vilnius municipality attempted to mitigate this by requiring Roma applicants to present proof of Roma ethnicity—such as a passport—introducing a discriminatory practice based on nationality.

Earlier municipal efforts, such as hiring a housing specialist for Kirtimai residents in 2017, also failed. The specialist resigned after six months, citing the task as unfeasible due to landlords' categorical refusal to rent to Roma. This illustrates the systemic nature of housing exclusion and the failure of institutional solutions to address underlying discrimination.

2.5.2. Addressing the problems beyond the NRSF

The NRSF neglects environmental issues entirely. In practice, the green energy projects like setting up solar panels⁶⁸ are not accessible to most of the Roma community due to financial limitations and a lack of digital proficiency. Additionally, many of these initiatives demand fees upfront before offering any reimbursement, which tends to alienate underprivileged communities even more. The absence of representation in decision-making processes intensifies these inequalities, resulting in excluding the Roma population from practices and environmental policies.

2.6. Social protection

Most Roma households rely on social benefits as their primary or sole source of income. However, the design of the social protection system often disincentivises formal employment, as benefits may exceed available low wages, particularly in large families. Roma face challenges in navigating the bureaucracy required to access support, with civil society often stepping in to mediate. There is little tailored outreach or case management to ensure entitlements reach those most in need. The existing benefits system fails to address the specific vulnerabilities of Roma, such as large household sizes or informality of income. Mistrust in authorities, stigma, and administrative burdens further discourage engagement. Roma women, single parents, and those with limited literacy are particularly disadvantaged. No mechanisms exist to assess the adequacy of support in relation to real living costs, leaving many in persistent poverty despite receiving assistance.

NRSF does not address the topic of social protection.

⁶⁵ See: https://www.europarl.europa.eu/doceo/document/TA-9-2022-0343_LT.html

⁶⁶ <https://www.lrt.lt/naujienos/lietuvoje/2/2400020/apklausa-65-proc-gyventoju-nenuomotu-busto-romams?srsId=AfmBOorqB-Ccx2XjubqK8G6rx5Hcr6NJsXHnKAdRiQojlTnnVNkd8k0>

⁶⁷ See: <https://e-seimas.lrs.lt/portal/legalAct/lt/TAD/c4e594306d3f11ecb2fe9975f8a9e52e?jfwid=-12v68gzlnv>

⁶⁸ See: https://apva.lrv.lt/fiziniu-asmenu-saules-elektriniu-isirengimas-namu-ukiuose_2024/

The recent social benefits improvements in Lithuania are intended to offer assistance to marginalised groups like Roma families, who are among the most disadvantaged communities in the nation. With 96% of Roma individuals at risk of poverty, these updates mark a stride towards tackling economic inequality.

Significant enhancements include the bump in benefits for families with kids now raised from 96.25 EUR to 122.50 EUR, and an increase for children with disabilities from 152.90 EUR to 194.60 EUR. Newborns now benefit from 770 EUR (from 605 EUR) offer – crucial assistance to families during this critical phase of life. Moreover, children are raised in foster care settings, and the settlement allowance for these children has been raised from 4,125 EUR to 5,250 EUR, giving them support in adapting to independent living environments.

The impact of these actions on Roma communities is not entirely clear since they offer some support in a situation where the Minimum Expenditure Basket (MEB), an indicator in Lithuania, stands at 450 EUR.⁶⁹ However, with the rise in benefits, numerous Roma families continue to struggle to meet requirements, underscoring the shortcomings of these aids in tackling systemic poverty. Following COVID-19 in Lithuania, there were economic difficulties that arose, like high inflation due to the energy crisis associated with the Russian war in Ukraine, so price hikes affected groups like the Roma community. Despite efforts to increase social support through benefits, these measures remain insufficient to meet the MEB and address the poverty faced by Roma.

2.7. Social services

Although Roma can formally access social services, their effectiveness is undermined by poor quality, lack of coordination, and under-trained personnel. Social workers often lack cultural competence and the tools to respond to complex family situations, leading to superficial interventions.⁷⁰ Support is limited by staff shortages, insufficient funding, and weak links with other public services such as employment or education. Roma families at risk rarely receive comprehensive case management or long-term follow-up. Outreach to isolated or mistrustful communities is minimal, and few Roma proactively seek help due to negative past experiences or perceived discrimination. Services often fail to adapt to the linguistic or cultural needs of Roma, further limiting their accessibility. These gaps reduce the potential of social services to contribute meaningfully to social inclusion, especially in cases involving vulnerable children, families in crisis, or victims of domestic violence.

Civil society organisations have repeatedly called for targeted improvements, yet these proposals have not been integrated into the NRSF.

A major gap in current policy is the absence of tailored initiatives for Roma, particularly those facing intersecting vulnerabilities such as disability, substance use, mental health conditions, or children in foster care. Mainstream approaches dominate, but these fail to consider the structural discrimination, cultural barriers, and lack of trust that continue to prevent many Roma from accessing support.

An example of targeted engagement—the 2022 discussions on social care and Roma needs held by the DNM and NGOs in Radviliškis and Šeduva—illustrates efforts to bridge gaps between service providers and users.⁷¹ However, these remain isolated events with limited impact.

Broader government strategies, such as the Family Policy Strengthening Development Programme led by the Ministry of Social Security and Labour,⁷² focus on improving service quality and accessibility in areas like child welfare, crisis support, and gender equality. Yet the programme does not acknowledge or address the specific challenges Roma face when accessing services—such as discrimination, language barriers, or lack of cultural sensitivity among providers.

⁶⁹ See: <https://www.tagidas.lt/savadai/9037/>

⁷⁰ S4Change, 2023, *Lietuvos nediskriminavimo politika: Lietuvos žydų ir romų bendruomenių atvejai [Lithuania's Non-Discrimination Policy: The Cases of the Lithuanian Jewish and Roma Communities]*, p. 96.

⁷¹ See: <https://tmde.lrv.lt/lt/naujienu/radviliskyje-ir-seduvoje-vyko-diskusija-apie-romu-kultura-ir-socialini-darba-su-romu-seimomis/>

⁷² See: <https://socmin.lrv.lt/lt/veiklos-sritys/strateginis-valdymas/aktualus-strateginiai-dokumentai/pletros-programu-pazangos-priemones/seimos-politikos-stiprinimo-pletros-programos-priemones/>

As a result, Roma individuals frequently encounter procedures they do not fully understand and are met by service professionals who lack the intercultural awareness to respond effectively. Without tailored outreach and a stronger emphasis on inclusion, mainstream services fail to reach those most in need.

2.8. Child protection

Roma children are disproportionately represented in child protection cases, particularly in Vilnius. Children are often removed from families following parental criminal charges, with limited consideration for kinship care or family reunification. Due to weak civil registration and antigypsyist bias, relatives are frequently deemed ineligible for guardianship, resulting in institutionalisation and sibling separation. Roma civil society reports aggressive prosecutorial practices and a lack of transparency in child welfare decisions. The child protection system does not acknowledge or address cultural, social, or structural factors that contribute to risk. No data are publicly available on the number of Roma children in care or on outcomes after removal. Despite repeated concerns, these issues are overlooked in national policy debates. The child welfare system continues to operate without dedicated safeguards for Roma children, perpetuating cycles of trauma, distrust, and exclusion from mainstream support networks.

Despite the NRSF does not include a dedicated part on child protection, there are relevant measures for the topic, mainly in the education-related parts.

The strategy's objectives in the area of child welfare and education have been partially implemented. Since 2021, preschool education has been made mandatory for children in vulnerable social circumstances, with the aim of universal access by 2025. Measures were introduced to strengthen state intervention in cases where parents fail to ensure school attendance, including enhanced attendance monitoring mechanisms. To address child poverty, the government has expanded support for children through the provision of free school meals and learning supplies, alongside funding for day-care centres. Preventive social services targeting single-parent households and housing support for at-risk families, particularly those with multiple children, have also been operationalised. Additionally, steps have been taken to increase the number of teacher assistants in classrooms to support inclusive learning and address educational disparities.

The NRSF notably overlooks several critical issues affecting the Roma community in Lithuania particularly the specific vulnerabilities of Romani children as victims of violence. There is a lack of consideration for the unique challenges faced by these children, leading to inadequate responses from child protection services that are often segregated and discriminatory. Additionally, activities designed to strengthening parental responsibility and skills are either unavailable or fail to effectively reach Roma parents. Additionally, the persistence of large-scale institutions, rather than the development of family-type arrangements has a bad influence on Roma children well-being and mental health.

Efforts beyond the NRSF have enhanced the assistance for children's requirements by increasing foster care allowances and settlement benefits that are felt by those in need of support within the Roma community in Lithuania. On the other hand, NRSF falls short of systematic issues, discrimination, and cultural awareness in foster care services. NGOs play a role in addressing child protection issues in the Roma community in Lithuania by advocating and mediating while also providing services to bridge gaps between Roma families and state institutions.

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

Public awareness of Roma history, culture, and contributions to Lithuanian society remains low. The dominant narrative continues to stigmatise Roma as marginal or criminalised, often reinforced by media representations. Roma culture is largely absent from national curricula, textbooks, and public institutions.

Although the Holocaust (*Samudaripen*) Remembrance Day is observed on 2 August⁷³ to highlight the unique suffering and resilience of the Roma community during the Holocaust, there is still a significant shortage of memorials dedicated specifically to honouring Roma history.

2.9.1. Effectiveness of the NRSF in addressing the problems

In 2023, a consultation at the Paneriai Memorial brought together government representatives, experts, and civil society to discuss commemoration of the Roma genocide and the challenges of securing its place within

⁷³ Lithuania is one of the few countries in Europe that officially recognised the Roma genocide in 2019.

broader Holocaust narratives.⁷⁴ The NRSF includes several cultural awareness initiatives coordinated by the Department of National Minorities (DNM). Between 2021 and 2023, the DNM funded 16 educational sessions exploring Roma and Lithuanian history, traditions, and culture. These events engaged over 300 young participants and promoted intercultural dialogue.⁷⁵ In 2022, the international conference “Re-working the Trauma: Research on Roma and Jews in the Baltics and USA” was held in Vilnius, providing a platform for scholars and experts to discuss memory, trauma, and cultural heritage.⁷⁶

Despite progress, public awareness of Roma contributions to Lithuanian and European heritage remains low. The NRSF acknowledges this gap but addresses it superficially. Roma communities are still largely excluded from national cultural narratives. Civil society organisations have played a central role in promoting Roma culture. Examples include the “Amaro šukaripen” fashion show and exhibition on Roma fashion by NGO Padėk Pritapti and NMD, the “Tamburinas” music festival in Šiauliai organised by the Roma Integration Centre, and RCC’s support for the “De Drom” children’s ensemble, which preserves Roma dance and tradition.

Further initiatives include “Phase II of the Living Memory of Roma in Vilnius,” focused on cultural heritage preservation,⁷⁷ and the upcoming “Between Two Worlds: Stories of Vilnius Roma Youth,” which will culminate in a 2025 exhibition at the Vilnius Museum documenting memories of the Kirtimai settlement.

These projects contribute to cultural visibility but are often dependent on EU project funding, with no consistent national support.

Positive developments have emerged in education, with gradual integration of Roma history and representation of Roma individuals into school curricula. In 2022, Lithuania became one of the few European countries to update its general education curriculum to include information about the Roma minority across various subjects.

Nevertheless, harmful instances persist, like utilising “č”, for “čigonas” (which stands for “Gypsy”) in educational materials for spelling that reinforce prejudiced language and stereotypes.

2.9.2. Addressing the problems beyond the NRSF

However, some obstacles hinder the implementation of cultural and artistic projects; they are not allocated funding and heavily rely on EU projects. Additionally, the community encounters discrimination in the media, which reinforces a persistently unfavourable perception of the Roma population in Lithuania.

Portrayals in mainstream and social media frequently uphold these narratives. The NRSF did not put any focus on media, but it is essential to address negative portrayals of Roma in Lithuanian media. Even though the NRSF acknowledges the significance of this domain, it does not fully address the complexity or scale of the negative attitudes towards the Roma community, emphasising the need for more wide-ranging and impactful actions.

⁷⁴ See: <https://tmde.lrv.lt/lt/naujienos/paneriu-memorale-vyko-pasitarimas-del-romu-genocido-auku-iamzinimo/>

⁷⁵ See: <https://tmde.lrv.lt/lt/naujienos/seime-vyko-spaudos-konferencija-skirta-lietuvos-romams/>

⁷⁶ See: <https://tmde.lrv.lt/lt/naujienos/direktore-v-montvydaite-atidare-tarptautine-konferencija-re-working-the-trauma-research-on-roma-and-jews-in-the-baltics-and-usa/>

⁷⁷ See: https://gyvenimopraktika.lt/lietuvos-romu-gyvoji-atmintis-ii-as-etapas-vilniaus-romu-gyvoji-atmintis/?fbclid=IwY2xjawH-9qhleHRuA2FlbQlXMQABHUoVT2aEPCF7ooRPJq2m7tnrMls5S4LuZds-NBRRYclU8BCC4UjimpD_QtQ_aem_a2vqAETezayLpAxp8q8D5A

3. FOCUS ON KEY PROBLEMS AFFECTING ROMA

3.1. The Kirtimai Settlement and its Aftermath: A Case Study of Roma Housing in Vilnius

3.1.1. Background and history

The Roma settlement in Kirtimai, located on the outskirts of Vilnius, was one of the largest traditional Roma settlements (“tabor”) in the Baltic states. It was home to approximately 86 families—around 500 residents—many of whom were related.⁷⁸ The community’s roots trace back to the 1950s, following the 1956 Decree of the Supreme Soviet of the USSR prohibiting nomadism. In response, the state authorised the construction of a dormitory-type building, registering over 500 Roma residents at that address.

For decades, the settlement lacked basic infrastructure such as electricity, water, and sewage. On the eve of Lithuania’s accession to the European Union in the early 2000s, minimal improvements were made: electricity was installed, and water pumps and heating wood were provided. Despite its informal status, the settlement was widely considered by residents to be their only home.



1. Demolition and Forced Relocation (2016–2020)

In 2016, the Vilnius Municipality initiated a programme entitled *Roma (Kirtimai) Community Integration into Society 2016–2019*, aiming to dismantle informal housing and resettle residents.⁷⁹ Families received demolition orders and were threatened with heavy fines if they did not comply. Civil society organisations, including the Roma Community Centre and the Human Rights Organisations’ Coalition, opposed the evictions, urging authorities to first provide adequate housing. These appeals were ultimately unsuccessful.

⁷⁸ 15min.lt, 2018, *Vilnius camp is emptying out: not everyone agrees to move out*. Available at: <https://www.15min.lt/naujiena/aktualu/lietuva/vilniaus-tabore-tustejimo-metas-issikelti-sutinka-ne-ysi-56-1032284>

⁷⁹ Giedrė Peseckytė, 2020, *Lithuania’s Roma struggle to find new homes after mass eviction*. Available at: <https://www.aljazeera.com/features/2020/12/14/lithuanias-roma-struggle-to-find-new-homes-after-city-eviction>



By June 2020, the entire settlement had been demolished.⁸⁰ The State Territorial Planning and Construction Inspectorate (STPCI) justified the move by citing illegal construction on strategic land near infrastructure and high development interest. Media narratives portraying the settlement as a hub for drug trafficking further supported public acceptance of the eviction.⁸¹

Residents were offered two options:

1. Social housing, available only if eligibility criteria were met. In practice, due to a significant shortage of available housing, this often resulted in overcrowded and inadequate living arrangements.
2. Rental subsidies of 92.50 EUR per person per month, conditional on income declaration. These proved insufficient for securing adequate housing in the Vilnius rental market.

Consequences of the Demolition

The demolition displaced nearly 500 individuals, including children, the elderly, and persons with disabilities. Many families experienced severe overcrowding, such as ten people sharing a one-bedroom flat. Some were temporarily accommodated in crisis centres, such as a mother of four who lost her rental flat in 2024 due to rent subsidy policy changes. Lacking five children, she no longer qualified for priority in social housing and was pressured to vacate the centre.

The policy failed to account for the emotional and psychological impact of displacement. Residents reported feelings of loss, insecurity, and stress, particularly among children. Activists like Kristina Saidova have voiced disappointment, noting that the demolition led to disintegration of families and community networks without producing real improvements.

⁸⁰ Domante Platukyte, LRT.lt, *Kristina, who grew up in Tabor: five years have passed since its destruction, but her grandmother cries every night*. Available at: <https://www.lrt.lt/naujienos/lietuvoje/2/2159483/tabore-augusi-kristina-nuo-jo-sugriovimo-praejo-penkeri-metai-bet-mociute-kiekviena-nakti-verkia>

⁸¹ Giedrius Vitkauskas, LRT TV, 2020, *The end of Vilnius' Roma settlement: discrimination hampers relocation, drug trade remains*. Available at: https://www.lrt.lt/en/news-in-english/19/1177610/the-end-of-vilnius-roma-settlement-discrimination-hampers-relocation-drug-trade-remains?srltid=AfmBOop49WxBRpy6AaYypKvt9_1uOQS_rEvQEXYXK6f2Sifmkdhc0ece

Structural Causes and Policy Critique

The case of Kirtimai demonstrates how inadequate housing policy and urban development intersect with structural discrimination. By framing the settlement as illegal and problematic, the authorities failed to address systemic issues such as unemployment, poor education access, and social exclusion.

Research and field reports indicate that the demolition did not reduce drug-related crime but simply displaced it to other areas. Residents previously forced into informal economies for survival have remained unsupported in the transition. For example, one former resident reported returning to illicit activities due to lack of income and food for their children.⁸²

Furthermore, administrative and institutional fragmentation—such as unclear responsibilities between Vilnius Municipality and the Ministry of Social Security and Labour—continues to hinder effective support for Roma families. Many procedures remain inflexible, and discrimination in the private rental market persists, making it nearly impossible for Roma families to secure dignified housing.

Conclusion and Assessment

The demolition of the Kirtimai settlement has not led to successful integration or improved living conditions for Roma in Vilnius. Instead, it has deepened housing insecurity, social marginalisation, and mistrust towards public institutions. The relocation process lacked proper consultation, planning, and follow-up support. Crucially, the emotional and mental well-being of displaced families has been overlooked.

This case illustrates the urgent need for inclusive urban policies that combine housing rights, social support, and anti-discrimination safeguards. Addressing Roma housing challenges in Vilnius requires not just physical relocation, but structural reforms and investment in dignity, participation, and justice.

3.1.2. Effectiveness of the NRSF in addressing the problem

The NRSF aims to address poverty and improve access to social housing. Still, it has not resulted in clear improvements for Roma families in Vilnius affected by the demolition of the Kirtimai settlement. While general housing support measures, such as rent subsidies and social housing access, exist, they do not adequately address the specific barriers Roma face, including discrimination in the rental market and restrictive eligibility requirements.

Some potentially relevant initiatives are ongoing. A programme, coordinated by the Office of the Equal Opportunities Ombudsperson (2024–2026), aims to review laws and protocols related to social housing and rent assistance. Additionally, the Roma Community Centre has been gathering data on the housing conditions of families affected by the demolition.

To date, however, the NRSF has not led to specific housing solutions for displaced Roma families in Vilnius, and its measures remain too general to address their needs effectively.

3.1.3. Synergy with other actions

The Vilnius City Municipality Council approved a Roma inclusion programme for 2024–2026, aiming to reduce exclusion, improve employment, and enhance housing conditions. As part of this initiative, the municipal housing agency *Vilniaus miesto būstas* introduced additional rental compensation for Roma families in the private housing market. At the beginning of June, the Vilnius City council finally approved additional compensation for housing rent intended for Roma families in the amount of 109 EUR. As already noted in the previous report, with the adoption of changes to the housing rent law, only 5% of Roma families retained their right to compensation. After a revision of the changes six months later, the criteria were relaxed, and 13 families (11.8%) were able to return the compensation. Additional compensation from the City Council is due to these same 13 families if one of the family members can document his or her nationality as Roma. Eligibility requires Roma ethnicity to be listed in official documents, such as passports or birth certificates, and is limited to those already receiving regular state housing subsidies.

The initiative faces several challenges. Documentation requirements risk excluding many Roma, particularly younger individuals who choose not to declare their ethnicity due to stigma or outdated labels such as “Gypsy” in official records. Administrative hurdles and reliance on formal rental contracts further limit access: landlords

⁸² Ibid.

often avoid registering leases, making many Roma ineligible for the support. As of early 2025, only six out of 86 eligible families had successfully applied for the new compensation.

A broader issue is the limited use of existing rental subsidies in Lithuania. Although partial rent compensation is available for those on the social housing waiting list, only 9.06% of applicants receive it, representing just 1% of the national population. Informal rental practices and tax avoidance by landlords are major obstacles.

Addressing these issues requires simplifying eligibility criteria, formalising rental practices, and expanding outreach. Effective implementation also depends on stronger coordination between local and national authorities and the inclusion of Roma voices in housing policy design.

3.1.4. Roma participation

CSOs actively contribute to working groups and data collection—such as the project on the dismantled Kirtimai settlement—emphasising the importance of language by advocating for recuperation rather than mere compensation. Four CSOs have been invited to working group monitoring the implementation of Vilnius Municipality Roma inclusion programme for 2024–2026: all of them are very active, but, unfortunately, they cannot influence political and administrative decisions.

Even though they play a part in recognising the needs of the Roma community groupings, their impact on executing policies is restricted. To improve the efficiency of policies, it is crucial to include their insights into decision-making procedures and raise Roma's participation in government panels handling housing and social integration matters.

4. ADDITIONAL FINDINGS

One overlooked concern related to employment among the Roma community is the conditions in which they work. The same organisations hire Roma mediators through self-employed contract agreements that reduce their social security protections. This practice denies them access to benefits such as unemployment assistance, reduced sick leave pay and smaller pension contributions. This situation adversely affects their well-being and long-term security.

This practice goes against the core values of promoting the inclusion of Roma communities by subjecting Roma mediators to working conditions while entrusting them with facilitating community assimilation efforts. The absence of employment agreements hinders their ability to avail themselves of social safeguards and casts doubts on their financial stability in the long run.

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Lithuanian NRSF meets minimum EU requirements for Roma inclusion but lacks concrete accountability and allocated stable and reliable funding. While key issues such as discrimination, unemployment, and housing are acknowledged, it is not enough to sort that out. The plan lacks target-based specific implementation stages and deadlines, and as a result, plan implementation lacks accountability and scrappy execution.

A major red flag is the absence of funding, financial commitment, and over-reliance on mainstream policies for Roma inclusion. We are nowhere near the level of investment needed for Roma inclusion, so without concrete tools, funding NRSF risks being seen as nothing more than a paper-pushing routine.

The most visible and legible state action against the Roma community, which occurred in recent years, was the demolition of the Kirtimai Roma settlement in Vilnius. At the same time NRSF offered little support or guidance in terms of operations to counter the multidimensional social and housing issues, which emerged. In case the NRSF fails to tackle such striking issues, it creates significant doubts regarding its capacity to address less noticeable, but no less critical, challenges, such as structural discrimination and sufficient access to governmental services.

Recommendations to national authorities:

1. Ministry of Finance and the Government of Lithuania should allocate budget for Roma inclusion, guaranteeing foreseeable national co-financing beyond EU project cycles.
2. DNM should commission regular sociological studies on the impact of discrimination and antigypsyism in housing, education, policing, and employment in order to support evidence-based policymaking and NRSF implementation.
3. Ministry of Justice and Ministry of Interior should ensure enforcement of anti-discrimination laws, particularly in education, employment, and housing. They should also introduce clear sanctions in discrimination cases and publish annual reports on enforcement outcomes.
4. Government of Lithuania should adopt a comprehensive implementation plan for the NRSF, detailing responsible bodies, measurable targets, timelines, and funding sources, with a commitment to transparent monitoring and regular public reporting.
5. Ministry of Education, MSSL and local authorities should tailor mainstream policies to Roma-specific needs, particularly in education access, school mediators, and removal of bureaucratic housing barriers.
6. Prime Minister's Office and Ministry of Interior should publicly commit to Roma inclusion, ensuring that Roma representatives and civil society are included in NRSF coordination bodies, evaluation panels, and consultation processes.
7. For inclusivity to prevail, the DNM and CSOs must guarantee that Roma mediators are granted labour rights and protections as their counterparts in the public sector, which encompass entitlement to unemployment benefits, equitable paid sick leave and appropriate pension contributions.

Recommendations to European Institutions:

8. European Commission should ensure strict monitoring of NRSF implementation and audit the use of EU funds allocated for Roma inclusion, issuing public progress assessments and initiating infringement procedures where applicable.
9. European Commission should require anti-discrimination conditionality in EU-funded national and local projects, ensuring actions specifically address Roma exclusion in housing, education, and employment.
10. European Parliament and Council should request country-specific recommendations addressing Roma inclusion in annual EU Semester reports and call for compliance indicators in Member States' social policies.

Recommendations to civil society:

11. Roma and pro-Roma CSOs should implement community-based empowerment strategies that promote collective action, shared responsibility, and local Roma leadership (“nothing about us without us”).
12. Legal CSOs and human rights organisations should expand legal aid services, develop toolkits on anti-discrimination claims, and carry out nationwide awareness campaigns about reporting mechanisms and individual rights.
13. Roma and pro-Roma civil society actors should monitor and publish shadow reports on the implementation of NRSF, highlight good practices and gaps, and present these findings to the European Commission and national stakeholders. Support from mainstream civil society can help amplify Roma voices, improve accountability, and embed equality into national policymaking.
14. Roma youth groups and education-focused NGOs should be supported to engage in capacity-building, leadership training, and advocacy activities to foster new generations of informed Roma leaders.

Recommendations to other stakeholders.

15. MSSL should introduce affirmative action policies in public sector recruitment, including Roma-specific job schemes, internships and workplace diversity targets.
16. Vilnius City Municipality and other local governments should implement inclusive housing measures, such as providing tax incentives and rent subsidies to landlords who rent to Roma tenants as part of a certified inclusion programme.
17. Media councils, communication regulators, public broadcasters, and NGOs should coordinate anti-hate speech campaigns, while also supporting training programmes for Roma journalists and media professionals to increase authentic Roma representation.

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ANNEXE: LIST OF PROBLEMS AND CONDITIONS

Fighting antigypsyism and discrimination

Problems and conditions	Significance:	Identified by strategy:	Measures to address:	Targets defined:	Details of NRSF implementation relevant to the problem:
Antigypsyism not recognised as a specific problem in national policy frameworks	Significant problem	Not identified	Present but insufficient	Insufficient	Antigypsyism is recognised as a specific problem in national policy frameworks in 2023. However, there is still insufficient data to measure the effectiveness of the measures, their outreach or the quality of data collection.
Prejudice against Roma	Significant problem	Mentioned but not analysed sufficiently	Present but insufficient	Insufficient	Prejudice against Roma is recognised and training on cultural awareness and discrimination is being delivered to different audiences. However, there is no data available to measure the effectiveness of these measures or their outreach.
Hate crimes against Roma	Significant problem	Mentioned but not analysed sufficiently	Adequate but with the room for improvement	Adequate but with room for improvement	The NRSF 2022-2023 measure amended hate speech and hate crime laws to include "skin colour" and "ethnic origin." In 2022, the Seimas, under Ministry of Justice supervision, expanded these criteria—a crucial objective for reducing discrimination.
Hate speech towards and against Roma (online and offline)	Significant problem	Mentioned but not analysed sufficiently	Present but insufficient	Insufficient	The NRSF 2022-2023 measure amended hate speech and hate crime laws to include "skin colour" and "ethnic origin." In 2022, the Seimas, under Ministry of Justice supervision, expanded these criteria—a crucial objective for reducing discrimination.
Weak effectiveness of protection from discrimination	Significant problem	Mentioned but not analysed sufficiently	Present but insufficient	Insufficient	The NRSF aims increasing complaints to the EOOO by double the number of complaints by 2030. 2021 no complaints about discrimination against Roma were registered. In 2022 a single case related to ethnic Roma discrimination was investigated. 2023 according to EOOO report the number of contacts from persons of Roma ethnicity decreased, as did cooperation with the DNM. ⁸³

⁸³ Lygiu galimybiu raportas 2023 p. 31.

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Segregation in education, housing, or provision of public services	Significant problem	Mentioned but not analysed sufficiently	Present but insufficient	Insufficient	Both plans do not specifically address or provide solutions to this issue.
Misconduct and discriminatory behaviour by police (under-policing/under-policing)	Significant problem	Mentioned but not analysed sufficiently	Adequate but with room for improvement	Adequate but with room for improvement	Ethnic profiling and discriminatory policing against Roma remain prevalent issue in Lithuania. Despite this, no official strategies plans address these concerns, no do they include provisions for monitoring or disciplining police officers for misconduct related to ethnic discrimination.

Education

Problems and conditions	Significance:	Identified by strategy:	Measures to address:	Targets defined:	Details of NRSF implementation relevant to the problem:
High drop-out rate before completion of primary education	Significant problem	Mentioned but not analysed sufficiently	Adequate but with the room for improvement	Adequate but with room for improvement	Mandatory pre-school education is introduced for children at social risk and attendance enforcement has been strengthened. While there has been some progress in reducing the number of Roma children not finishing primary education, overall educational attainment remains low linked to the national average. Measures outreach: aimed in all municipalities.
Early leaving from secondary education	Significant problem	Mentioned but not analysed sufficiently	Adequate but with the room for improvement	Adequate but with room for improvement	Mandatory pre-school education is introduced for children at social risk, and attendance enforcement has been strengthened. While there has been some progress in reducing the number of Roma children not completing primary education, overall educational attainment remains low compared to the national average. Measures outreach: aimed in all municipalities

Secondary education/vocational training disconnected from labour market needs	Significant problem	Not identified in NRSF 2022-203, but identified in NRSF	Acceptable but has potential for enhancement	Absent in NRSF 2022-203, The NRSF goal: Roma persons with secondary education: 24.5% in 2021; 35% in 2030.	NRSF aims to better align the education system with the labour market and emphasizes career planning and counselling tools to help people adapt to the labour market, The plan aims to increase employment levels, however no target is set specifically for the link between vocational training and labour market needs. Measures outreach: aimed in all municipalities
Increased selectivity of the educational system resulting in concentration of Roma or other disadvantaged pupils in educational facilities of lower quality	Significant problem	Mentioned but not analysed sufficiently	Adequate but with the room for improvement	Adequate but with room for improvement	Individualised education needs and increases accessibility to education for disadvantaged groups. Measures outreach: aimed in all municipalities
Limited access to second-chance education, adult education, and lifelong learning	Significant problems	Not identified	Absent	Absent	Both plans do not specifically address or provide solutions to this issue.
Limited access to and support for online and distance learning if education and training institutions close, as	Significant problems	Not identified	Absent	Absent	Both plans do not specifically address or provide solutions to this issue.
Low level of digital skills and competences and limited opportunities for their development among pupils	Significant problems	Not identified	Absent	Absent	Both plans do not specifically address or provide solutions to this issue.

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Low level of digital skills and competences and limited opportunities for their development among adults	Significant problems	Not identified	Absent	Absent	Both plans do not specifically address or provide solutions to this issue.
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Employment

Problems and conditions	Significance:	Identified by strategy:	Measures to address:	Targets defined:	Details of NRSF implementation relevant to the problem:
Poor access to or low effectiveness of public employment services	Significant problem	Mentioned but not analysed sufficiently	Adequate but with the room for improvement	Adequate but with room for improvement	Individualised ALMP to promote collaboration between municipalities and business and measures to enhance employment opportunities. Measures effectiveness: no data available. Measures outreach: aimed in all municipalities.
Youth not in employment, education or training (NEET)	Significant problem	Mentioned but not analysed sufficiently	Adequate but with the room for improvement	Adequate but with room for improvement	Youth employment centres provide individual and group consultations. ALMP, Youth Guarantee initiative. Funding is available to support minority centers working with Roma students, youth, and adult Measures effectiveness: no data available. Measures outreach: aimed in all municipalities
Poor access to (re-) training, lifelong learning and skills development	Significant problem	Mentioned but not analysed sufficiently	Adequate but with the room for improvement	Adequate but with room for improvement	Both plans do not specifically address or provide solutions to this issue.
Discrimination on the labour market by employers	Significant problem	Mentioned but not analysed sufficiently	Adequate but with the room for improvement	Adequate but with room for improvement	Training is offered to employers on inequality and equal opportunities. Measures effectiveness: no data available. Measures outreach: aimed in all municipalities

Risk for Roma women and girls from disadvantaged areas of being subjected to trafficking and forced prostitution	Significant problem	Not identified	Absent	Absent	Both plans do not specifically address or provide solutions to this issue.
Barriers and disincentives to employment (such as indebtedness, low income from work compared to social income)	Significant problem	Not identified	Absent	Absent	Both plans do not specifically address or provide solutions to this issue.
Lack of activation measures, employment support	Significant problem	Mentioned but not analysed sufficiently	With the room for improvement	Adequate but with room for improvement	ALMP provides employment support system. Measures effectiveness: no data available. Measures outreach: aimed in all municipalities

Healthcare

Problems and conditions	Significance:	Identified by strategy:	Measures to address:	Targets defined:	Details of NRSF implementation relevant to the problem:
Poor access to preventive care (vaccination, check-ups, screenings, awareness-raising about healthy lifestyles)	Significant problem	Mentioned but not analysed sufficiently	Adequate but with the room for improvement	Adequate but with room for improvement	Adopted measures: DNM organised activities on infectious disease prevention, in order of increasing vaccination rates. Training was organised for Roma platform mediators, NGO on ensuring rights and accessibility to healthcare services. Measures' effectiveness: No data available. Measures outreach data: 40 participants in infectious disease prevention. Data collection: DNM.
Poor access to sexual/reproductive healthcare and family	Significant problem	Not identified in NRSF 2022-203, but identified in NRSF	Absent	Absent	Adopted measures: Ensuring the availability of family planning methods for Roma women in 2025-2030.

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Housing, essential services, and environmental justice

Problems and conditions	Significance:	Identified by strategy:	Measures to address:	Targets defined:	Details of NRSF implementation relevant to the problem:
Poor physical security of housing (ruined or slum housing)	Significant problem	Not identified in NRSF 2022-203, but identified in NRSF	With the room for improvement	Adequate but with room for improvement in NRSF	The regulations governing the conditions and procedures for support to acquire or rent housing are outlined in the Republic of Lithuania Measures' effectiveness: No data available. Measures outreach data: aimed in all municipalities Lithuania's Housing Support Law: Lietuvos Respublikos paramos būstui įsigyti ar išsinuomoti įstatymas 2014 [Republic of Lithuania Law on Support for the Acquisition or Rental of Housing 2014] .
Lack of access to sanitation	Significant problem	Not identified	Absent	Absent	Both plans do not specifically address or provide solutions to this issue.
Lack of access to electricity	Significant problem	Not identified	Absent	Absent	Both plans do not specifically address or provide solutions to this issue
Limited or absent public waste collection	Significant problem	Not identified	Absent	Absent	Both plans do not specifically address or provide solutions to this issue.
Restricted heating capability (families unable to heat all rooms/all times when	Significant problem	Not identified in NRSF 2022-203, but identified in NRSF	With the room for improvement	Adequate but with room for improvement	NRSF aims proportion of persons living in inadequately heated housing: 25% in 2020; 15% in 2030. No specific methods are mentioned for achieving the stated goal.
Lack of security of tenure (legal titles are not clear and secure)	Significant problem	Not identified	Absent	Absent	Both plans do not specifically address or provide solutions to this issue.

Lacking or limited access to social housing	Significant problem	Not identified in NRSF 2022-203, but identified in NRSF	With the room for improvement	With the room for improvement	<p>From 2024, the waiting period for social housing rental in Lithuania will be capped at 5 years, reducing to 3 years from 2026. The EU Investment Programme 2021-2027 allocates 94 million EUR to expand social housing, aiming to acquire 800 units for vulnerable groups. Additionally, rent compensation mechanisms and housing subsidies (15-30%) support low-income residents and young families in acquiring or renting homes.</p> <p>Measures' effectiveness: No data available.</p> <p>Measures outreach data: aimed in all municipalities</p> <p>Lithuania's Housing Support Law: Lietuvos Respublikos paramos būstui įsigyti ar išsinuomoti įstatymas 2014 [Republic of Lithuania Law on Support for the Acquisition or Rental of Housing 2014].</p>
Overcrowding (available space/room for families)	Significant problem	Not identified	Absent	Absent	Both plans do not specifically address or provide solutions to this issue.
Housing-related indebtedness at levels which may cause eviction	Significant problem	Not identified	Absent	Absent	Both plans do not specifically address or provide solutions to this issue
Limited or lacking access to public transport	Significant problem	Not identified	Absent	Absent	Both plans do not specifically address or provide solutions to this issue.
Limited or lacking internet access (e.g., public internet access. Points in deprived areas, areas not covered by broadband internet)	Significant problem	Not identified	Absent	Absent	Both plans do not specifically address or provide solutions to this issue.

Social protection

Problems and conditions	Significance:	Identified by strategy:	Measures to address:	Targets defined:	Details of NRSF implementation relevant to the problem:
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High at-risk-of-poverty rate and material and social deprivation	Significant problem	Not identified in NRSF 2022-203, but identified in NRSF	With the room for improvement	Adequate but with room for improvement	The plan aims to boost disposable income, enhance social services, strengthen income protection, and expand unemployment insurance. It includes pension increases for those without full service records, financial support for elderly and disabled individuals, and improved accessibility for people with disabilities. Additionally, it targets child poverty reduction through increased foster care support and free school meals. Measures outreach data: aimed in all municipalities
Income support programmes fail to guarantee an acceptable level of minimum income for every household	Significant problem	Not identified in NRSF 2022-203, but identified in NRSF	With the room for improvement	Not for every household	The plan aims to boost disposable income, enhance social services, strengthen income protection, and expand unemployment insurance. It includes pension increases for those without full service records, financial support for elderly and disabled individuals, and improved accessibility for people with disabilities. Additionally, it targets child poverty reduction through increased foster care support and free school meals. Measures effectiveness: no data. Measures outreach data: aimed in all municipalities
Ineffective eligibility rules (well-designed means-testing ensures that those who need support can get it; job-search conditions ensure the motivation for returning to work)	Significant problem	Not identified	Absent	Absent	Both plans do not specifically address or provide solutions to this issue
Low flexibility of income support programmes for addressing changing conditions of the household	Significant problem	Not identified	Absent	Absent	Both plans do not specifically address or provide solutions to this issue.

Discrimination by agencies managing income-support programmes	Significant problem	Not identified	Absent	Absent	Both plans do not specifically address or provide solutions to this issue.
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Social services

Problems and conditions	Significance:	Identified by strategy:	Measures to address:	Targets defined:	Details of NRSF implementation relevant to the problem:
Comprehensiveness of help provided by social services	Significant problem	Not identified in NRSF 2022-203, but identified in NRSF	Mentioned but not analysed sufficiently	Adequate but with room for improvement	The plan prioritises improving social service quality and accessibility as a key poverty reduction measure, recognizing that support extends beyond financial aid. It also focuses on developing preventive social services, emphasizing proactive interventions to address social issues before they escalate. Measures effectiveness: no data. Measures outreach data: aimed in all municipalities
Limited ability of social services to effectively work together with other agencies (e.g., public employment service) to help clients	Significant problem	Not identified	Absent	Absent	Both plans do not specifically address or provide solutions to this issue.

Child protection

Problems and conditions	Significance:	Identified by strategy:	Measures to address:	Targets defined:	Details of NRSF implementation relevant to the problem:
Child protection not considered in the NRSF	Significant problem	Not identified in NRSF 2022-203, but identified in NRSF	With a room for improvement	Mentioned but not analysed sufficiently	The plan strengthens early childhood education, enforcing mandatory pre-school for at-risk children and expanding universal access by 2025. It ensures compulsory education, monitors attendance, and increases teacher assistants for inclusion. To reduce child poverty, it provides free school meals, foster care support, day-care centres, and housing aid. Family-focused measures

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					include preventive social services and support for single parents. Measures effectiveness: no data. Measures outreach data: aimed in all municipalities
Specific vulnerability of Romani children as victims of violence not considered	Significant problem	Not identified	Absent	Absent	Both plans do not specifically address or provide solutions to this issue.
Segregated or discriminatory child-protection services provided to Roma	Significant problem	Not identified	Absent	Absent	Both plans do not specifically address or provide solutions to this issue.
Activities aimed at strengthening parental responsibility and skills not available or not reaching out to Roma parents	Significant problem	Not identified	Absent	Absent	Both plans do not specifically address or provide solutions to this issue.
Persistence of large-scale institutions rather than family-type arrangements	Significant problem	Not identified	Absent	Absent	Both plans do not specifically address or provide solutions to this issue.

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

Problems and conditions	Significance:	Identified by strategy:	Measures to address:	Targets defined:	Details of NRSF implementation relevant to the problem:
Poor or lacking awareness of the general population of the contribution of Roma art and culture to national and European heritage	Significant problem	Mentioned but not analysed sufficiently	Adequate but with the room for improvement	Adequate but with room for improvement	Promotion of Roma culture and intercultural dialogue through cultural projects, education, and annual awareness campaigns aimed at reducing discrimination Measures effectiveness: no data. Measures outreach data: aimed in all municipalities
Exclusion of Roma communities from national cultural narratives	Significant problem	Mentioned but not analysed sufficiently	Adequate but with the room for improvement	Adequate but with room for improvement	Gradual incorporation of Roma history into the school curriculum. Measures effectiveness: no data. Measures outreach data: aimed in all municipalities

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