



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

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and Consumers*



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## LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

AF	Swedish Public Employment Service
BRÅ	Swedish National Council for Crime Prevention
CABS	County Administrative Board of Stockholm
CoE	Council of Europe
DO	Swedish Equality Ombudsman ( <i>Diskrimineringsombudsmannen</i> )
EURSF	EU Roma Strategic Framework
FRA	Fundamental Rights Agency
GO	Government Offices of Sweden
JO	Parliamentary Ombudsman
MUCF	Swedish Agency for Youth and Society
NBHP	National Board of Housing, Building and Planning
NBHW	National Board of Health and Welfare
NRIS	National Roma Inclusion Strategy
RCM	Roma Civil Monitor
SKR	Association of Local Authorities and Regions
SNAE	Swedish National Agency for Education
UHR	Swedish Higher Education Authority



## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Sweden's National Roma Inclusion Strategy (NRIS), adopted in 2012 as a 20-year policy framework, reflects an important political recognition of the need to address the structural exclusion of Roma communities. The strategy's greatest strength lies in its long-term scope, its grounding in Sweden's minority policy, and its holistic approach across key sectors: the right to education, work, housing, health, social care and security, language, culture and participation. It also provides a national framework intended to guide local implementation, and it has helped generate a number of positive initiatives, such as the employment of Roma bridge-builders in education and improved efforts by certain agencies — like the County Administrative Board of Stockholm, serving as the national coordinator — to consult Roma representatives more consistently. The creation of Roma reference groups and sporadic inclusion of Roma experts in specific stages of implementation are also noteworthy steps.

Despite these strengths, the NRIS suffers from several serious weaknesses that undermine its effectiveness. Chief among these is the fact that the strategy has never been revised since its inception, and it has not been aligned with the 2020 EU Roma Strategic Framework or the 2021 Council recommendation. Implementation is uneven and largely project-based, with insufficient coordination between national and municipal levels and no permanent structures for oversight or evaluation. Funding is often short-term and inadequate, while Roma participation remains more consultative than co-decisive. Moreover, the rising levels of antigypsyism in society have not been met with a corresponding policy response, and Roma rights are frequently sidelined in broader anti-discrimination and inclusion agendas. As a result, the strategy has struggled to produce meaningful structural change or significantly improve Roma living conditions.

### Implementation of the NRIS

Since 2012, the NRIS has remained formally in place, but no government has initiated a revision of its content, goals, or implementation mechanisms. While the strategy is national in scope, actual implementation depends heavily on municipalities, many of which lack the resources, political will, or capacity to carry out Roma inclusion efforts. Some pilot municipalities have shown good practices, but the lack of binding obligations or sustainable funding models makes replication and scaling difficult. In addition, there is no robust monitoring or data collection system in place, which makes it nearly impossible to measure progress or evaluate outcomes in a systematic way.

### Review by thematic areas

**Fighting antigypsyism and discrimination:** Despite Sweden's formal legal commitments to minority rights and anti-discrimination, antigypsyism remains pervasive and structurally entrenched across Swedish society. Roma individuals face daily barriers in accessing education, employment, housing, and justice, often opting to conceal their identity due to fear of stigmatization. Key institutions, such as the Equality Ombudsman (DO), lack both the resources and mandate to systematically address antigypsyism, while hate crimes and discrimination are severely underreported and insufficiently prosecuted. Initiatives like bridge-building programs and public consultations suffer from fragmented implementation and minimal Roma involvement, leading to ineffective and misaligned measures. Roma civil society continues to document abuses and advocate for structural reforms, but their contributions are frequently disregarded.

**Education:** Educational disadvantage remains one of the most pressing issues facing Roma communities in Sweden. While enrolment rates among children aged 6–15 are relatively high, a significant proportion of Roma youth drop out early, with one-third attaining only primary education and around 30 percent not continuing to any form of further education or training. Structural factors — such as poverty, residential segregation, and limited access to educational support — contribute to this gap, alongside a school environment often marked by bullying, discrimination, and a lack of cultural understanding. Many Roma students conceal their identity out of fear, resulting in a weakened sense of belonging and disengagement from school. The absence of ethnic data collection prevents effective monitoring of educational outcomes, making it impossible to assess whether national strategies are having the intended impact. Despite the NRIS highlighting education as a key priority, there are no systemic follow-up mechanisms, evaluations, or targeted reforms in place.

**Employment:** Roma individuals in Sweden continue to encounter widespread discrimination and exclusion from the labour market. Structural antigypsyism, including biased recruitment practices and prejudice, compels many Roma to conceal their ethnic identity, thereby deepening social and economic marginalisation. Despite the NRIS

formally prioritising employment, there has been no measurable national progress or coherent policy to address Roma exclusion in this area since 2014. While the Swedish Public Employment Service (AF) implemented targeted measures between 2020 and 2023 — such as training programmes, language access, and Roma consultations — these efforts remain fragmented, lack independent evaluation, and are unsupported by ethnic data, which hinders the ability to assess their impact. Roma civil society highlights that while dialogue has improved, systemic follow-up and resourcing are lacking. Moreover, there is no inter-ministerial coordination or accountability framework to mainstream Roma inclusion within national employment policies. Compared to EU expectations, Sweden falls short in aligning labour market measures with the principles of participation, equality, and targeted monitoring.

**Healthcare:** Despite Sweden's commitment to equal health conditions for all, Roma communities continue to experience significant health disparities compared to the majority population. Structural exclusion, limited access to culturally appropriate care, and widespread mistrust of the healthcare system undermine health outcomes — particularly for Roma women, elderly persons, and those facing digital or linguistic barriers. Targeted initiatives launched over the past decade have mostly been short-term and project-based, with little continuity or integration into mainstream healthcare structures. Discrimination in healthcare settings, combined with low cultural competence among professionals, further discourages Roma from seeking necessary care. While a health promotion grant has supported limited Roma-led outreach efforts, this funding has been short-lived and not institutionalised. There has been no comprehensive follow-up on the findings of the 2018 national report on Roma health, and many of its key recommendations remain unimplemented.

**Housing, essential services, and environmental justice:** Access to adequate housing remains a critical and unresolved issue for Roma in Sweden. Despite the NRIS identifying housing discrimination as a long-term priority, there has been little follow-through on proposed measures. The main national initiative—web-based training for housing providers—was completed in 2020 and reached only a limited number of participants, with no monitoring or institutional commitment to ensure its continued use. Roma continue to face direct and structural discrimination in the housing market, including rejection based on ethnic identity, credit status, and lack of guarantors. These barriers result in informal clustering, exclusion from mainstream housing, and reinforced marginalisation. A persistent reluctance to adopt targeted, ethnicity-sensitive policies undercuts effective action, as authorities default to colour-blind frameworks. There is currently no national coordination, no concrete targets, and no enforcement mechanism to uphold Roma housing rights.

**Social protection:** Although Sweden's social protection system is considered comprehensive, it fails to address the specific structural barriers that Roma communities face in achieving long-term economic independence. The NRIS lacks a strategic framework to support Roma in transitioning from benefit dependency to active inclusion, and overlooks the disproportionate burden of over-indebtedness that affects many Roma from a young age. This financial exclusion restricts access to housing, employment, and credit, creating intergenerational cycles of poverty. Despite clear evidence of need, no targeted policy instruments—such as debt advisory services, access to fair credit, or financial education — have been introduced. Furthermore, social protection remains disconnected from the broader Roma inclusion agenda, with no updates to the NRIS since its adoption in 2012. As a result, the system functions more as a stabilising force than as a pathway toward empowerment and equality.

**Social services:** Roma communities in Sweden continue to encounter systemic barriers and mistrust in their interactions with social services, with little evidence of significant progress in addressing antigypsyism within the sector. While the National Board of Health and Welfare (NBHW) has introduced initiatives such as bridge-builder training programs and awareness-raising projects co-developed with Roma civil society, these efforts remain limited in scale and largely project-based. New programs, such as the training launched at Södertörn University and local inclusion projects in Stockholm, demonstrate promise but lack the scope and permanence needed for systemic change. Moreover, competence-building has not been matched by structural reforms or legal accountability, and Roma-specific needs continue to be addressed inconsistently across municipalities.

**Child protection:** The issue of child protection, particularly the use of compulsory care under the LVU law, remains a highly sensitive and under-addressed area in Sweden's Roma inclusion strategy. Roma families report systemic failures in ensuring their children's rights to cultural identity, family unity, and meaningful participation during child protection proceedings. Legal safeguards requiring attention to Roma identity are often not implemented, and social services frequently exclude Roma bridge-builders and cultural mediators who could improve understanding and build trust. A landmark case involving the wrongful placement of four Roma children without regard for their cultural and linguistic rights underscores the severity of institutional

shortcomings, despite eventual legal recognition of the violation. Yet, child protection is entirely absent from the NRIS, representing a critical policy gap.

**Promoting (awareness of) Roma arts, culture and history:** Sweden has declared an ambition to integrate Roma culture into the national cultural heritage, but this goal has not been matched by a coordinated or well-funded strategy. Cultural initiatives are generally short-term, project-based, and limited in their outreach beyond Roma communities, resulting in low awareness within majority society. Municipalities often lack the knowledge, resources, or mandate to actively support Roma cultural expression, and national funding remains inadequate. While isolated efforts by institutions like the Living History Forum and the Swedish Higher Education Authority have brought attention to gaps in awareness and education, these remain fragmented and insufficient. Education on Roma history and antigypsyism is poorly integrated in school curricula, with teachers often lacking basic knowledge and tools. Broadcasting in Romani Chib is inconsistent, and higher education offerings on Roma issues are sparse, with limited participation. Overall, the absence of a national framework and sustained investment means that Roma arts, language, and history remain underrepresented and undervalued in Swedish public life.

### Focus on key problems affecting Roma

**Antigypsyism:** The racism against Roma remains one of the most deeply rooted and systemic barriers to Roma inclusion, equality, and participation in Sweden. Despite legal frameworks against discrimination and hate crimes, antigypsyism persists across public institutions, media, education, and daily life. The 2022–2024 period saw a resurgence of public antigypsyist rhetoric, culminating in a widely publicized media and political scandal that framed Roma culture as inherently deviant. Roma individuals continue to face hate speech, exclusion from services, and institutional invisibility. Fear and mistrust discourage reporting of discrimination and reduce access to justice. While the NRIS identifies antigypsyism as a cross-cutting issue, its practical implementation remains weak. The strategy lacks disaggregated data, clear indicators, and mechanisms for monitoring or enforcement. Local initiatives—such as those in Malmö, Gothenburg, and Helsingborg—show potential, but efforts remain fragmented, short-term, and underfunded. Roma participation has grown through project-based initiatives, youth ambassador programmes, and grassroots advocacy. However, structural inclusion is still lacking. Roma voices are often sidelined in formal consultations, and roles like municipal bridge-builders remain precarious. Calls from civil society stress the need for permanent consultation mechanisms, sustained funding, and inclusion of diverse Roma perspectives—including women, youth, and LGBTQ+ individuals.

**Antigypsyism in schools:** The racism against Roma remains a pervasive and under addressed issue also within the Swedish school system. Although the NRIS contains general goals related to Roma inclusion in education, it fails to acknowledge antigypsyism as a distinct structural problem requiring targeted interventions. Roma students face frequent exclusion, harassment, and invisibility, and school environments often lack both cultural competence and institutional accountability. While formal measures such as mother tongue instruction in Romani Chib exist, participation remains critically low due to systemic distrust, lack of awareness, and teacher shortages. National and local studies confirm widespread bias and low expectations among educators, contributing to Roma students' marginalisation and early school leaving. Despite some promising initiatives—such as training modules and locally driven research—the lack of structured monitoring, binding goals, and meaningful Roma participation continues to undermine progress. Without an explicit, well-resourced, and participatory strategy to counter antigypsyism in schools, the education system risks perpetuating the very exclusion it is meant to dismantle.

The **bridge-builder (or Roma mediator) model** has been a cornerstone of Sweden's Roma inclusion strategy since 2012, particularly in the education sector. Designed to foster trust and communication between Roma families and public institutions, bridge-builders act as cultural mediators, rights educators, and support persons within schools and, to a lesser extent, healthcare and social services. Despite its potential, the model suffers from systemic weaknesses. Participation in national training programs remains low, and implementation is inconsistent due to the lack of a binding national framework, mandatory funding, or structured follow-up mechanisms. While anecdotal evidence suggests positive outcomes—including increased school attendance and improved trust—no national evaluations have been conducted to assess the long-term impact. Local examples from Gothenburg, Malmö, and Helsingborg show promise, with successful projects targeting absenteeism and parental engagement. However, these remain isolated and highly dependent on individual municipalities' goodwill and resources. Roma participation in the design and evaluation of bridge-builder initiatives remains limited and largely informal. Many Roma civil society representatives have called for clearer mandates, sustained funding, and greater co-ownership of the model. Without these structural improvements,

bridge-builders risk becoming overburdened and misused, undermining their intended role. To realise the full potential of this model, Sweden must establish national coordination, scale effective practices, and formally include Roma voices in shaping and monitoring these efforts.

## INTRODUCTION

In 2012, the Swedish Parliament adopted a long-term strategy for Roma inclusion (NRIS), aiming to close the gap between Roma and non-Roma in key areas of life within a 20-year timeframe (2012–2032).<sup>1</sup> The overall goal of the strategy was defined as: “A Roma child born in 2012 should have the same life opportunities as a non-Roma child by 2032.” This ambition was grounded in the principles of Sweden’s minority policy and represented a significant extension of minority rights through targeted actions for Roma equality.

The strategy was designed to be both cross-sectoral and sustainable, covering five main areas: education, employment, housing, health and social care, and civil society participation. Each area was linked to specific goals and responsibilities, with national authorities assigned to coordinate implementation and monitoring.<sup>2</sup>

While the strategy initially had strong political support and high expectations, its impact over the first twelve years has been mixed. Sweden has not updated or revised its national strategy following the 2020 EU Roma Strategic Framework and the Council Recommendation of 2021, despite the fact that the European framework introduced new targets, strengthened monitoring requirements, and emphasized Roma participation.<sup>3</sup> The Swedish Government argued that the existing framework already fulfilled the necessary criteria, a position that has been questioned by Roma civil society and international observers.<sup>4</sup>

One of the key criticisms from Roma organizations is that the Swedish strategy has not delivered concrete and sustainable improvements in living conditions, reducing antigypsyism or in increasing participation.<sup>5</sup> There is also a widely recognized gap between national commitments and local implementation, where many municipalities either lack the resources or the political will to take long-term action.<sup>6</sup>

The Swedish National Roma Strategic Framework (NRIS) remains a stand-alone policy, with the intention to be mainstreamed through broader public policy. Although the strategy sets out clear objectives for Roma inclusion, its implementation relies heavily on general measures intended for the wider population. This approach has not sufficiently addressed the specific barriers that Roma face, particularly in relation to discrimination, marginalization, and exclusion from services.<sup>7</sup>

The Swedish Government has assigned the County Administrative Board of Stockholm (CABS), with the responsibilities to implement and annually report on progress nation-wide, in addition to targeted missions and bi-annual reports from the National Agency for Education, and the National Board of Health and Welfare. The CABS reports focus on allowing stakeholders to assess trends, gaps, and results. However, many of these reports focus more on activities carried out than on outcomes achieved. There is no overarching mechanism for impact evaluation, nor is there consistent data collection disaggregated by ethnicity, which limits the ability to measure improvements in Roma inclusion. The lack of systematic follow-up has been raised in both national reviews and by the Council of Europe and European Commission monitoring bodies.<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Swedish national Roma strategy 2012–2032 “Romers rätt – en strategi för romer i Sverige” [Roma Rights – A Strategy for Roma in Sweden], Government Offices (in Sweden), available at: <https://www.regeringen.se/rattsliga-dokument/statens-offentliga-utredningar/2010/07/sou-201055/>

<sup>2</sup> Government Offices, Roma inclusion, available at: <https://www.regeringen.se/artiklar/2023/03/romsk-inkludering/>

<sup>3</sup> Council of the EU. 2021. *Council Recommendation on Roma equality, inclusion and participation [2021/C93/01] of 12 March 2021. Council of the European Union:* [https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=OJ%3AJOC\\_2021\\_093\\_R\\_0001](https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=OJ%3AJOC_2021_093_R_0001)

<sup>4</sup> Government Offices PM Ku 2021–10–21. *Report on the EU Roma Framework 2020–2030:* 7184 (minoritet.se)

<sup>5</sup> Interview with Roma representatives to the government reference group, 2024–10–12

<sup>6</sup> CABS KU2019/02101/CSM 2022–04–07. *Follow-up on Roma Inclusion:* 7402 (minoritet.se)

<sup>7</sup> Government Offices, Roma inclusion, available at: <https://www.regeringen.se/artiklar/2023/03/romsk-inkludering/>

<sup>8</sup> Advisory Committee on the Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities (2024). *Fifth Opinion on Sweden* Available at <https://rm.coe.int/5th-op-sweden-en/1680ae851a>

The strategy includes a commitment to Roma participation, most visibly through the national Roma reference group established by the Government. While this is an important platform, it has limited influence over political decision-making and strategic planning. Several Roma organizations have expressed frustration that participation is often symbolic and does not lead to co-creation of policies. On a positive note, the County Administrative Board of Stockholm has in recent years improved its consultation practices, involving Roma experts and organizations more meaningfully in the preparation of reports and survey instruments. This model, however, is not consistently applied by other agencies or municipalities.<sup>9</sup>

One of the core weaknesses of the strategy has been the lack of effective coordination between the state and local governments. Although the strategy is national, only a handful of municipalities—often supported by temporary pilot funds—have actively implemented inclusion measures. This fragmented approach has led to random initiatives and few concrete improvements, with Roma in some municipalities benefiting from active participation and inclusion measures, while others are left without any developments in accessing basic services or rights protection. A common barrier cited by municipalities is lack of financial resources and competing priorities. Funding structures are short-term and project-based, leading to uncertainty and undermining trust between Roma communities and local institutions.<sup>10</sup>

Sweden's decision not to revise the national strategy in light of the new EU Roma Strategic Framework (2020–2030) represents a missed opportunity to align national policy with European standards. Key features of the new EU framework—such as the inclusion of antigypsyism as a horizontal goal, targets on Roma youth participation, and stronger accountability measures—have not been incorporated into Swedish practice. This creates a risk that Sweden falls behind in addressing structural discrimination and delivering meaningful change.

New developments: Over the past few years, reports indicate an increase in hate speech and societal polarization in Sweden, which has particularly affected Roma and other vulnerable minorities. The media and political discourse have hardened, sometimes including stigmatising language that undermines the principles of the strategy. High-profile incidents, including hate crimes and negative media portrayal, have highlighted the continued vulnerability of Roma in Swedish society. At the same time, Roma civil society has grown stronger and more vocal, demanding transparency, accountability, and deeper participation in shaping public policy.

The implementation of the strategy across the five sectors remains uneven. While some improvements have been reported in school attendance and teacher training, antigypsyism in schools remains widespread and the dropout rate among Roma pupils is high. Targeted support for employment is rare, and discrimination in recruitment remains a significant barrier. Access to adequate and stable housing is still a major issue, as underlying structural barriers have not been addressed, and for newly arrived Roma from other EU countries the situation is harsh, as they often excluded from basic municipal support. When it comes to health and social care trust in public institutions is low among many Roma families, and few tailored measures have been introduced to address health disparities. For civil society participation, Roma organizations play an important role, but their capacity is limited by short-term funding and lack of institutional support.

In conclusion, Sweden's national Roma strategy remains a significant symbolic commitment, but its operationalization falls short of expectations. Without alignment with the EU framework, stronger local engagement, improved monitoring systems, and deeper Roma participation, the risk remains that the vision for 2032 will not be realized. Structural change requires structural investment—both financial and political—and a commitment to co-governance with the Roma minority.

### About this report

This report provides an independent, participatory, and Roma-led monitoring analysis of the implementation of Sweden's NRIS between 2022 and 2024. The aim is to assess how the strategy has been applied in practice, particularly from the perspective of Roma communities and civil society, and to evaluate progress, shortcomings, and opportunities for improvement. Since the Swedish strategy has not been revised in light of

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<sup>9</sup> Interview with Roma representatives to the government reference group, 2024-10-12

<sup>10</sup> CABS *Annual report on Roma Inclusion* (2024). Available at: <https://www.lansstyrelsen.se/download/18.1b1d393819324610c3748491/1732515561869/Romskinkludering%C3%A5rsrapport2023.pdf>



the 2020 EU Roma Framework, the report also seeks to assess its continued relevance and effectiveness in the current policy context.

The report covers key thematic areas such as antigypsyism, education, Roma participation, and institutional coordination. Each section includes an evidence-based analysis of current measures, effectiveness, synergies with other policies, and the level of Roma participation.

This report is based on a mixed-method approach, combining document analysis, key informant interviews, and consultations with civil society experts. A total of six semi-structured interviews were conducted between September and December 2024. These included: three representatives of public authorities involved in the implementation of the NRIS at national level (including two representatives from the County Administrative Board of Stockholm and one from a national agency); four municipal officials working with local Roma inclusion programs; three independent experts with specific knowledge of Roma rights and policy monitoring in Sweden. Dialogue was carried out with four Roma civil society organizations, mainly through a combination of in-person roundtables, hybrid meetings, and targeted correspondence. Experts from academia and community-based advocacy initiatives contributed thematic input, especially in the areas of education and antigypsyism.

The report draws on a systematic review of policy documents, evaluations and official publications produced between 2021 and 2024, including:

- Annual reports from the County Administrative Board of Stockholm on the implementation of Roma inclusion.
- Reports from the Equality Ombudsman (DO), MUCF, and the National Board of Health and Welfare.
- Civil society reports such as previous Roma Civil Monitor report, Roma women's open letter "Nothing about us without us!" (*Inget om oss utan oss!*)<sup>11</sup> and civil society reporting to the European Council committees.
- EU-level sources including the 2020–2030 EU Roma Strategic Framework and FRA reports on Roma inclusion in Europe.

A draft version of this report was circulated among selected Roma experts and CSOs for feedback and validation. Their comments were used to refine and clarify the final version of the report, ensuring that the findings are representative and grounded in lived Roma experiences. The collected qualitative data were subject to thematic analysis using grounded theory principles. Document findings were triangulated with the interview material to identify trends, contradictions, and gaps in implementation.

The report was authored by Katarina Memetovic and Trajosko Drom, an independent Roma women's organization based in Gothenburg, Sweden, committed to Roma advocacy, empowerment, and policy work. The author of the report would like to thank all contributors, including representatives from public institutions, Roma community leaders, and expert advisors who provided their insights and time during interviews and consultations.

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<sup>11</sup> DIKKO (2023). *Inget om oss utan oss*. Available at: <https://dikko.nu/oppet-brev-till-myndigheter-i-sverige-inget-om-oss-utan-oss/>

# 1. IMPLEMENTATION OF THE NRIS

## 1.1. Key developments and effectiveness of implementation

This section outlines the main developments in the implementation of Sweden's National Roma Inclusion Strategy (NRIS) and assesses its effectiveness over time. As stated in the introduction, the NRIS is a long-term commitment spanning 2012 to 2032, with the overarching objective that “a Roma child born in 2012 will have the same opportunities in life as a non-Roma child by the age of 20.”

Despite this long-term vision, no Swedish government since the strategy's adoption has initiated a revision, update, or reform of the framework to align it with evolving societal challenges or the new EU Roma Strategic Framework 2020–2030. Likewise, while some initiatives have been launched at the local and regional level, these have often lacked sufficient scope, continuity, or integration into broader structural policy frameworks to produce lasting systemic change.

The implementation of the NRIS has therefore been characterized more by fragmented, short-term measures than by sustained, coordinated efforts. This limited ambition has constrained the strategy's ability to address persistent structural barriers to Roma inclusion and equality.

### 1.1.1. Changes in the NRIS and progress in implementation

During the period 2022–2024, no comprehensive revision has been made to Sweden's National Roma Inclusion Strategy (NRIS). However, several related initiatives have been introduced by the government, including an action plan against various forms of racism — explicitly including antigypsyism — and a plan for the protection and promotion of national minority languages, including Romani Chib. A revised version of the anti-racism plan was adopted in 2024.<sup>12</sup> Parallel to this, investments have been made to strengthen Roma cultural and linguistic identity through mandates assigned to institutions such as the Institute for Language and Folklore (Isof), Södertörn University, the Royal Library, and the Swedish Arts Council. These efforts included temporary increases in funding.<sup>13</sup> Whether these mandates will be extended remains uncertain, and the County Administrative Board (CABS) emphasize that long-term commitment is essential for achieving any tangible change.<sup>14</sup>

The development and implementation of local Roma inclusion action plans have progressed somewhat in recent years, particularly through increased involvement of Roma stakeholders. Roma civil society organizations, experts, and youth have participated in activities such as co-designing interview questions, analysing data, and providing input during consultations. While this represents a positive shift toward more inclusive processes, Roma representatives frequently express concerns that their input is not adequately reflected in decision-making. As one interviewee put it, “We are invited to participate, but our perspectives rarely have real impact”. This highlights the need to transition from symbolic participation to meaningful power-sharing in implementation processes.<sup>15</sup>

Since 2022, action plans and targeted programs have also included renewed investments in training for Roma “bridge-builders”—individuals trained to act as intermediaries between Roma communities and public authorities. These programs aim to increase Roma engagement and trust in services such as education and social care. However, the initiative has faced criticism for insufficient implementation and weak follow-up mechanisms.<sup>16</sup>

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<sup>12</sup> Government Offices (2024). *Action plan against racism and hate crimes*. [Handlingsplan mot rasism och hatbrott](#)

<sup>13</sup> Government Offices (2023). Förstärkning av de nationella minoritetsspråken. [https://www.regeringen.se/pressmeddelanden/2023/10/forstarkning-av-de-nationella-minoritetsspraken/?utm\\_source=chatgpt.com](https://www.regeringen.se/pressmeddelanden/2023/10/forstarkning-av-de-nationella-minoritetsspraken/?utm_source=chatgpt.com)

<sup>14</sup> Interview with CABS, 2024-10-30

<sup>15</sup> Interview with Roma NGOs, 2024-10-01

<sup>16</sup> Solvor Mjøberg Lauritzen och Jan Selling, *Exclusion in the Name of Inclusion?*, nordics.info, 27 april 2022, <https://nordics.info/show/artikel/exclusion-in-the-name-of-inclusion>



The European Commission has also issued recommendations to Sweden, emphasizing the need to clarify responsibilities between central and local authorities, strengthen coordination, and expand Roma participation in decision-making processes. The Commission has also called for Sweden to improve its efforts to combat antigypsyism and discrimination, and to enhance transparency by publishing detailed implementation reports outlining progress and remaining challenges.<sup>17</sup>

The national action plans adopted for 2022–2024 partly meet the EU Roma Strategic Framework criteria for Roma participation. Consultations have involved Roma organizations through dialogue groups and public meetings. Roma mediators and bridge-builders are playing a role in local-level efforts to promote participation, particularly in the areas of education and social services. However, formal participation procedures and roles of Roma representatives in the monitoring and evaluation of these plans remain lacking.

Established consultation mechanisms — such as Roma dialogue groups and civil society roundtables — continue to operate and support ongoing information exchange. Inclusion measures outlined in the action plans often target local Roma capacity-building through education programs and direct support for Roma associations. However, only three of Sweden’s 290 municipalities reported any active Roma inclusion efforts in CABS’s 2022 survey, underlining the highly uneven implementation of the strategy at the local level. The lack of a supervisory authority with oversight and enforcement capacity has been noted as a systemic weakness.<sup>18</sup>

Some municipal units dedicated to Roma inclusion efforts report a growing disconnect between national-level actors and municipalities. Compared to earlier years, the exchange with CABS has become more one-directional and is often limited to collecting data through surveys, with little feedback or practical support in return. The closure of direct communication channels between municipalities and the government has also made it more difficult to achieve long-term progress. Municipal actors report that they are no longer consulted about their needs, nor offered structured opportunities for collaboration or policy input. While pioneering models such as the Roma Information and Knowledge Center (RIKC) in Malmö<sup>19</sup> once received active attention from policymakers, including ministerial visits, these high-level acknowledgements have largely disappeared in recent years. As one local actor stated, “The recognition we received in earlier years made a difference—it showed that our work mattered. Now, the silence is palpable.”<sup>20</sup>

This decline in political attention occurs in a broader European context marked by increased antigypsyism, rising xenophobic rhetoric, and diminishing political will to uphold minority rights. Sweden is no exception. While existing plans recognize antigypsyism as a structural issue, the absence of sustained funding and national coordination limits their impact.

In conclusion, while there has been some movement in the right direction — particularly in consultation processes and symbolic recognition — progress in implementing the NRIS remains limited, fragmented, and uneven. Stronger national leadership, clearer division of responsibilities, and binding frameworks for Roma participation and local implementation are urgently needed.

### 1.1.2. Effectiveness of monitoring

According to a government mandate CABS has been tasked with coordinating, implementing, and monitoring efforts under Sweden’s National Roma Inclusion Strategy (NRIS). This includes supporting municipalities in their Roma inclusion work, developing methodologies, conducting follow-ups, and increasing knowledge about Roma history, current living conditions, and the Roma’s status as a national minority. As part of this mission, educational material such as “*Antiziganismen i Sverige*” has been distributed to public institutions.<sup>21</sup>

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<sup>17</sup> European Commission (2024), COM(2024) 422. [EUR-Lex - 52024DC0422 - EN - EUR-Lex](#)

<sup>18</sup> CABS, *Statsbidrag till kommuner för att främja romsk inkludering*, <https://www.lansstyrelsen.se/stockholm/samhalle/social-hallbarhet/manskliga-rattigheter-och-demokrati/nationella-minoriteter-och-minoritetsprak/statsbidrag-till-kommuner-for-att-framja-romsk-inkludering.html>

<sup>19</sup> <https://malmo.se/Romskt-informations--och-kunskapscenter-RIKC.html>

<sup>20</sup> Interview with the Roma Municipal Unit in Malmö (RIKC), 2024-10-10

<sup>21</sup> Government Offices (2019). *Uppdrag till Länsstyrelsen i Stockholms län att samordna, följa upp och genomföra insatser inom ramen för strategin för romsk inkludering*. Available

CABS has developed a structured follow-up system in which various thematic areas under the strategy are reviewed either annually (e.g. culture and language), every two years (e.g. employment and education), or every four years (e.g. health, housing, and social services). This monitoring relies on documentation submitted by relevant government agencies, municipalities, and actors working under the minority policy framework. It also incorporates results from studies and surveys, as well as consultations with Roma stakeholders, dialogue forums, and targeted interviews.

Despite these measures, Roma civil society actors frequently express concern that their own contributions are not meaningfully included in the monitoring process. There is a widespread perception that while state actors are approached by CABS with follow-up questions for their reports, no oversight mechanism exists for ensuring strategic coherence or follow-through across different governance levels. As CABS itself has acknowledged, “a strategy cannot be supervised in a legal sense, as it is not legislated”.<sup>22</sup>

This structural limitation creates a gap; while some form of follow-up exists, it is not comprehensive or strong enough to ensure that any proposed measures are planned for or activities are implemented in full, or that they generate concrete outcomes. Furthermore, the lack of legal mandate for enforcement means that the monitoring process remains largely descriptive rather than corrective. Civil society representatives have also noted that the follow-up focuses heavily on state and municipal actors' reporting, with insufficient attention to evaluating the role, experience, and outcomes generated by Roma-led initiatives or Roma organizations engaged in Roma inclusion efforts and antigypsyism prevention.<sup>23</sup>

A more extensive and regionally anchored approach to monitoring could enhance quality and continuity in how municipalities are held accountable for their Roma inclusion commitments. Currently, only a small number of municipalities report active engagement with the strategy. In this context, the absence of a coordinating mechanism or supervisory body with capacity to track systemic progress remains a significant barrier to effective implementation.

While a technical monitoring structure exists and some consultation mechanisms are in place, the overall effectiveness of data collection and evaluation remains weak. Roma inclusion efforts require a stronger, more transparent monitoring system—one that includes civil society contributions, assesses impact at both local and national levels, and is capable of informing political decision-making.

### 1.1.3. Data collection

Sweden does not maintain official statistics disaggregated by ethnic origin, including for the Roma population. This absence of data is primarily due to legal and ethical considerations, as Swedish law prohibits the collection of personal data revealing racial or ethnic origin without explicit consent, in line with the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR). Consequently, CABS has reported no plans for systematic data collection on Roma individuals.<sup>24</sup> The lack of disaggregated data poses significant challenges in assessing the effectiveness of policies aimed at Roma inclusion. Without concrete data, it is difficult to identify structural problems, measure progress, or tailor interventions to the specific needs of the Roma community. This data gap hinders the ability to provide concrete answers and analyses, complicating efforts to map and remedy structural issues.

To address this gap, it is necessary to review existing structures and their impact on data collection capabilities. One approach could involve analysing the consequences for individuals and supplementing with other relevant variables. Racism creates unequal living conditions and serves as a systematic tool for distributing status, positions, resources, and power structures. It determines people's opportunities based solely on their categorization and group affiliation. However, there is considerable concern within Roma communities regarding the collection of ethnic data. Historical experiences have shown that such mapping can pose serious risks, leading to reluctance among organizations to handle personal data, including registering names in

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at <https://www.regeringen.se/regeringsuppdrag/2019/12/uppdrag-till-lansstyrelsen-i-stockholms-lan-att-samordna-folja-upp-och-qenomfora-insatser-inom-ramen-for-strategin-for-romsk-inkludering>.

<sup>22</sup> Interview with CABS, 2024-10-30

<sup>23</sup> Interview with Roma NGOs, 2024-10-01

<sup>24</sup> Interview with CABS, 2024-10-30

association contexts.<sup>25</sup> The issue of data collection is complex and requires a careful balance between the need for knowledge and the protection of individuals' privacy.

While direct registration based on ethnicity is illegal, it is important to note that the GDPR allows for the processing of special categories of personal data, including racial or ethnic origin, under certain conditions, such as explicit consent or substantial public interest. Therefore, the interpretation of GDPR principles in relation to data collection for promoting equality, such as equality data, is crucial. The most important aspect is how these principles are applied to ensure both the legitimacy of data collection efforts and the protection of individual rights.<sup>26</sup>

Data collection on Roma individuals in Sweden is a complex issue that requires careful consideration of legal, ethical, and historical factors. Developing methods that respect privacy while providing necessary data for policymaking is essential for advancing Roma inclusion efforts.

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

Sweden has not revised its National Roma Inclusion Strategy (NRIS) since its adoption in 2012, despite the European Commission's introduction of a new EU Roma Strategic Framework for Equality, Inclusion and Participation in 2020. This lack of adaptation was already noted in the previous Roma Civil Monitor report for Sweden and remains unchanged during the 2022–2024 period.<sup>27</sup>

The EU framework introduced in 2020 called on Member States to renew their national strategies, align them with clearer targets and indicators, and strengthen accountability, particularly by addressing antigypsyism as a structural and cross-cutting issue.<sup>28</sup> In addition, the Council Recommendation further reinforced the call for robust monitoring and stronger engagement with Roma civil society.<sup>29</sup>

In contrast, Swedish authorities argued that the existing NRIS already aligned with the goals of the renewed EU framework and therefore saw no need for revision. This stance has been questioned by Roma civil society, who highlight that the current strategy does not include updated goals, indicators, or implementation tools in line with the new EU standards. Moreover, the national strategy predates the more comprehensive understanding of antigypsyism that now frames EU-level efforts, which weakens its ability to function as a contemporary policy instrument.

While the strategy itself has not been revised, some domestic policies have evolved in partial synergy with EU-level objectives. For instance, the government has adopted action plans against racism (including antigypsyism) and taken steps to support the revitalisation of national minority languages. Yet these actions are not explicitly framed as part of the NRIS, nor coordinated through a single implementation mechanism. The fragmented nature of Roma-related initiatives in Sweden further distances national practice from the EU's strategic coherence goals.

The European Commission's 2024 staff working document on implementation noted that a number of Member States, including Sweden, had yet to fully align their national frameworks with the renewed EU strategy. The same report also emphasized the importance of mainstreaming Roma equality into broader non-discrimination

<sup>25</sup> Interview with the Roma Municipal Unit in Malmö, 241010; Interview with Roma NGOs, 241001

<sup>26</sup> European Commission: Directorate-General for Justice and Consumers and High Level Group on Non-discrimination Equality and Diversity. Subgroup on Equality Data, *Guidelines on improving the collection and use of equality data*, Publications Office, 2021, <https://data.europa.eu/doi/10.2838/9725>

<sup>27</sup> Roma Civil Monitor (2022) *Civil society monitoring report on the quality of the national strategic framework for Roma equality, inclusion and participation in Sweden*. [RCM2-2022-C3-Sweden-CATALOGUE.pdf](#)

<sup>28</sup> European Commission. (2020). *A Union of Equality: EU Roma strategic framework for equality, inclusion and participation (COM(2020) 620 final)*. [eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/HTML/?uri=CELEX:52020DC0620](https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/HTML/?uri=CELEX:52020DC0620)

<sup>29</sup> Council of the EU. 2021. *Council Recommendation on Roma equality, inclusion and participation [2021/C93/01] of 12 March 2021. Council of the European Union*: [https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=OJ%3AJOC\\_2021\\_093\\_R\\_0001](https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=OJ%3AJOC_2021_093_R_0001)

and inclusion policies – an area where Sweden has some domestic infrastructure, but where links to the NRIS remain vague and largely symbolic.<sup>30</sup>

In conclusion, while Sweden continues to implement certain Roma-related measures, the absence of a revised and EU-aligned strategy remains a major gap. The lack of updated national objectives, indicators, and integration with broader EU goals undermines the potential for synergistic implementation. A formal review of the NRIS and its coherence with both domestic anti-discrimination frameworks and EU expectations is urgently needed to move from symbolic policy to measurable progress.

### 1.3. Roma participation in implementation and monitoring

#### 1.3.1. Provisions in the NRIS and structures of participation

Chapter 10 of the Swedish NRIS emphasizes the importance of active Roma participation in all phases of the policy process — from planning to implementation and monitoring. The strategy outlines that Roma representatives should be consulted through structured mechanisms at both national and municipal levels, with particular emphasis on securing their influence in sectors such as education, employment, housing, and healthcare. However, the NRIS does not define formal procedures for representation, election, or mandate of Roma participants, nor does it specify how participation should be monitored or evaluated.<sup>31</sup>

Roma participation in Sweden occurs through two main formats: National consultation groups, convened by the Government Offices or national authorities (e.g., the Swedish Public Employment Service or CABS). These are typically issue-specific and composed of invited Roma civil society representatives, experts, and community members. Municipal consultation structures, often formed through local dialogue groups or project-based advisory councils. These vary widely in format and frequency, depending on local political will and administrative resources. The selection process for Roma representatives is generally informal. There are no standardized election procedures, and invitations are typically extended to known individuals or organizations. Consequently, questions of legitimacy, representativeness, and transparency have been raised by Roma actors.

Meetings are usually held on an ad hoc or irregular basis, often tied to specific projects or policy cycles. The proceedings, minutes or outcomes are rarely disseminated widely. There is no established feedback loop to ensure that Roma input leads to tangible policy changes or is reflected in budgetary priorities.<sup>32</sup>

#### 1.3.2. Roma actors' perspectives and critique

Many Roma representatives report that consultation structures only exist “on paper” and do not function as meaningful vehicles of participation. Consultations are frequently described as one-sided information meetings where decisions have already been made. As one Roma activist stated: “They ask for our presence, not our opinion. The agenda is set, and we are there to legitimize the outcome.” This perception is widespread. There is a consensus that Roma voices are not involved early enough in the policy process—particularly in defining problems or setting agendas. Instead, participation often takes the form of retroactive adjustments to pre-designed policies. In addition, authorities are often seen to unilaterally set the topics, timelines, and formats for consultation, reducing Roma participation to a box-ticking exercise. Several Roma organizations report that they are asked to “join” existing initiatives rather than being included in the planning or co-design of actions from the outset.<sup>33</sup>

A limited but positive development is the increasing recognition by some public authorities that structured consultation with Roma stakeholders is necessary for achieving strategic goals. However, the fact that this realization has taken over a decade since the strategy's launch in 2012 indicates the depth of institutional inertia. Some municipalities, such as Stockholm, Malmö and Gothenburg, have piloted more sustained cooperation with Roma bridge-builders and mediators, particularly in education and social care. These actors

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<sup>30</sup> European Commission. (2024). (COM(2024) 422 final). [EUR-Lex - 52024DC0422 - EN - EUR-Lex](#)

<sup>31</sup> Government Offices, Roma inclusion, available at: <https://www.regeringen.se/artiklar/2023/03/romsk-inkludering/>

<sup>32</sup> Interview with Roma NGOs, 2024-10-01

<sup>33</sup> Ibid

help facilitate dialogue and ensure that Roma perspectives are translated into service provision. Nonetheless, such efforts remain localized, short-term, and highly dependent on individual officials' engagement.

At present, no systematic follow-up mechanism exists to evaluate Roma participation. Neither CABS nor other national authorities monitor the effectiveness of Roma consultations in a structured or comparative way. This absence of oversight contributes to the perception that there is little to no consequence when Roma participation is absent or superficial.

Sweden's NRIS outlines a commitment to Roma participation, but this goal is not supported by concrete structures, procedures, or accountability mechanisms. While some progress has been made at the local level, participation remains fragmented, unstructured, and largely symbolic. To fulfil the EU Roma Strategic Framework's objectives, Sweden must establish clear participation protocols, ensure representativeness and transparency, and embed Roma voices into policy planning from the earliest stages.

CABS view is that several authorities and municipalities working with the NRIS strive to employ people with Roma language and cultural competence. However, it varies how well you succeed with this. Most municipalities that CABS knows of that work with Roma inclusion collaborate with Roma organizations in their work.<sup>34</sup>

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<sup>34</sup> Interview CABS, 2024-10-30

## 2. REVIEW BY THEMATIC AREA

### 2.1. Fighting antigypsyism and discrimination

Despite Sweden's legal commitment to non-discrimination and recognition of Roma as a national minority, antigypsyism remains a deeply rooted and systemic issue. Roma individuals continue to face social exclusion, reduced access to public services, and widespread discrimination in key areas such as employment and housing. Many refrain from disclosing their Roma identity due to fear of stigma or repercussions, which further limits their participation in society.

Discrimination and antigypsyism are rarely reported, leading to invisibility in official statistics. The Equality Ombudsman (DO) continues to lack the institutional capacity to investigate and follow up on the full scope of reported incidents. Meanwhile, hate crimes targeting Roma are underreported and often not prosecuted, eroding community trust in the justice system.<sup>35</sup>

Roma children also face barriers within the education system. Schools frequently lack knowledge and tailored support to address Roma-specific needs. As a result, many Roma students do not receive the encouragement or tools needed to complete their education. There is insufficient monitoring and oversight by national authorities to ensure compliance with minority protection in education.

Although some policy documents acknowledge the presence of antigypsyism, this recognition has not translated into consistent or effective action. One of the main causes behind the persistence of antigypsyism is the lack of systemic enforcement and long-term commitment from state actors. Measures such as bridge-building programs have been initiated but are inconsistently implemented and inadequately followed up. Authorities often fail to include Roma representatives in the design and execution of policies targeting discrimination. Instead, initiatives are developed without Roma participation and later presented as inclusive, reinforcing patterns of exclusion.<sup>36</sup>

Consultation with Roma communities is often superficial, and participation mechanisms are fragmented and under-resourced. This exclusion from policy design leads to measures that are misaligned with actual needs and do not address the root causes of discrimination. Moreover, Roma civil society organizations, despite being active in documenting antigypsyism and advocating for change, struggle to access sustained funding and recognition from authorities. Their findings and proposals are often ignored, while state agencies are slow to act on the evidence provided.<sup>37</sup>

While the DO plays a central role in discrimination monitoring, it lacks both financial and operational capacity to address antigypsyism in a systemic way. Training for public servants and accountability for public institutions remain weak, especially at the local level. To address antigypsyism effectively, Sweden must move from symbolic recognition to structural enforcement. This requires:

- Establishing long-term, funded frameworks for Roma participation in the design, implementation, and evaluation of anti-discrimination measures.
- Enhancing the capacity of the Equality Ombudsman (DO) to investigate antigypsyism more proactively and systematically, including disaggregated reporting mechanisms and dedicated staff.
- Ensuring the presence of Roma professionals in the public sector, particularly as bridge-builders in education, housing, healthcare, and the justice system.
- Introducing mandatory training on antigypsyism for civil servants, educators, and frontline service staff.

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<sup>35</sup> CABS *Annual report on Roma Inclusion 2023* (2024). Available at <https://www.lansstyrelsen.se/download/18.1b1d393819324610c3748491/1732515561869/Romsk%20inkluderings%20%C3%A5rsrapport%202023.pdf>

<sup>36</sup> Interview with Roma representatives to the government reference group, 2024-10-12

<sup>37</sup> Ibid

- Improving oversight and accountability in schools, with stronger state supervision to ensure that minority protections are respected and implemented.
- Funding Roma-led initiatives and research, to ensure that policy responses reflect the lived experiences of Roma communities.
- Developing a national strategy for reporting, responding to, and prosecuting hate crimes against Roma, in partnership with Roma civil society.

In sum, while antigypsyism has been increasingly recognized in policy, concrete implementation is lacking. Without structural changes, sustained funding, and meaningful inclusion of Roma in all stages of the process, Sweden will not be able to overcome the entrenched inequalities facing its Roma population.

Note: This section presents a general overview. Further analysis on antigypsyism will follow in Chapter 3

## 2.2. Education

This thematic area is also examined in greater depth in Chapter 3. The following section provides a brief overview of the key developments and ongoing challenges in the area of education affecting Roma children and youth in Sweden.

One of the most persistent challenges remains the high dropout rate among young Roma and the limited participation in higher education. As outlined in previous Roma Civil Monitor reports, these trends are closely linked to broader structural issues such as long-term social exclusion and socioeconomic disadvantage. Many Roma families live in marginalized areas with limited access to educational support and social capital, which severely affects children's ability to complete school and pursue further studies.<sup>38</sup>

Available reports suggest that although a large proportion of Roma children aged 6–15 are enrolled in school, approximately one third of Roma youth leave school early, with only primary education as their highest attained level. Moreover, it is estimated that around 30 percent do not participate in any form of continued education or training — three times higher than the rate in the general Swedish population.<sup>39</sup>

Roma students also report feeling unsafe or unsupported in school environments. Many choose not to disclose their Roma identity for fear of discrimination. Roma civil society organizations consistently highlight that a large number of children and youth are exposed to bullying, harassment, and ethnic discrimination within the school system. This contributes to a diminished sense of belonging, lower motivation, and ultimately, school disengagement.<sup>40,41</sup>

Another major issue is the lack of official data and monitoring of Roma educational attainment. As of April 2023, the Swedish National Agency for Education confirmed that it is not possible to follow up on Roma pupils' results due to legal limitations on ethnic data collection.<sup>42</sup> As a result, there are no publicly available statistics on how many Roma children complete compulsory education, transition to secondary or higher education, or what their learning outcomes are. This lack of data makes it impossible to evaluate the effectiveness of the educational measures set out in the NRIS or to assess whether structural barriers are being addressed.

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<sup>38</sup> Roma Civil Monitor (2022) *Civil society monitoring report on the quality of the national strategic framework for Roma equality, inclusion and participation in Sweden, 2022*

<sup>39</sup> FRA. (2021). *Roma and Travellers in six countries: Roma and Travellers survey : technical report*. European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights. <https://data.europa.eu/doi/10.2811/106484>

<sup>40</sup> County Administrative Board of Stockholm, *Proud but often insecure, a survey of young Roma's experiences of safety and access to their rights*, Facts, 2021:12. <https://catalog.lansstyrelsen.se/store/39/resource/10>

<sup>41</sup> The Swedish Agency for Youth and Civil Society (MUCF), *Young Roma are discriminated against and harassed - MUCF proposes measures in a new interim report*, 2023 -03-23. <https://press.newsmachine.com/pressrelease/view/unqa-romer-diskrimineras-och-trakasseras-mucf-foreslar-insatser-i-ny-delrapport-38673>

<sup>42</sup> Sofia, Boo and Mia, Pettersson, Roma children's school would be prioritized – no one knows how it will go, *Göteborgs-Posten*. 2023-03-23. <https://www.gp.se/nyheter/gp-granskar/romska-barns-skola-skulle-prioriteras-ingen-vet-hur-det-gar-ea3daca-1374-43dd-a988-acb716c2029f>



Despite the current strategy acknowledging the importance of education for Roma inclusion, no systemic follow-up or monitoring mechanisms have been implemented. Nor are there any evaluations of whether the specific objectives of the strategy in this area — such as improved school completion rates and equal treatment — are being met.

In conclusion, Roma children in Sweden continue to face disproportionate educational disadvantage. The absence of data, combined with systemic antigypsyism and weak institutional accountability, leaves both progress and failure invisible. As mentioned above, chapter 3 of this report will analyze these issues in more detail, including recommendations for improving access, participation, and outcomes for Roma learners.

### 2.3. Employment

Roma in Sweden continue to face serious and systemic barriers to entering and advancing in the labour market. The most pressing problems are rooted in structural and direct discrimination, where Roma applicants are routinely met with prejudice and stereotypes. Many Roma report feeling the need to conceal their ethnic identity in order to avoid being excluded during recruitment processes. This deepens marginalisation and limits equal access to employment, income security, and participation in society.<sup>43</sup>

There is currently no national strategy or coordinated policy in place to combat antigypsyism in the labour market. Despite the formal goals of the Swedish NRIS, there has been no measurable national progress in this area since at least 2014. The issue remains fragmented and unmonitored, and Roma continue to be excluded from mainstream labour market policy development. The lack of political commitment to systemic change results in persistent disadvantage.

Within this context, the Swedish Public Employment Service (AF) was assigned a limited Roma inclusion mandate by the government for the period 2020–2023. A key element has been the development and dissemination of awareness-raising tools and training, notably the digital course “Equality for Roma in the Labour Market”. AF has also worked to build internal competence, offering staff training on non-discrimination, cultural understanding and Roma history. Language access has been improved through services in Romani Chib and other national minority languages. Efforts to include Roma women have been initiated, partly through collaboration with other government actors targeting foreign-born women, but without specific gender-disaggregated monitoring. Despite the good intentions, there is no independent monitoring or evidence-based evaluation of the effect of these measures. AF acknowledges that it cannot follow up on Roma clients in its systems due to limitations in ethnic data collection. As a result, the actual reach, uptake, and impact of the initiatives remain unknown. AF has conducted five consultations with Roma representatives during the assignment period. While these were appreciated as opportunities for dialogue, they lacked systematic follow-up, and Roma stakeholders stress that funding and continuity are needed to translate input into sustainable outcomes.<sup>44</sup>

Ultimately, the broader responsibility lies with the Swedish government, which has not provided a coherent policy response to address antigypsyism and exclusion in the labour market. There is no inter-ministerial coordination, and the NRIS lacks enforceable targets, resource frameworks, and accountability structures. These limitations are in sharp contrast with the EU Roma Strategic Framework (2020–2030), which urges Member States to embed equality, inclusion and participation across mainstream labour market policies, and to monitor antigypsyism through disaggregated indicators.<sup>45</sup>

While AF’s measures represent a step forward, they are not matched by an overarching political and institutional strategy. Without national leadership, structural reform, and sustained Roma involvement, the underlying barriers will remain. Roma inclusion in employment must be integrated into Sweden’s mainstream labour and equality agenda, underpinned by clear mandates, legal mechanisms, and sustained funding.

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<sup>43</sup> Interview Roma NGOs, 2024-10-01

<sup>44</sup> Swedish Public Employment Service (AF) (2024). *Report on Roma inclusion 2020-2023*. [Återrapport: romsk inkludering 2020-2023](#)

<sup>45</sup> Roma Civil Monitor (2022) *Civil society monitoring report on the quality of the national strategic framework for Roma equality, inclusion and participation in Sweden, 2022*



## 2.4. Healthcare

According to the Swedish NRIS, the goal of national healthcare policy is to ensure equal conditions for good health for the entire population. While Sweden's general health outcomes are among the best in Europe, disparities persist—and in some cases deepen—for groups with low social status, including the Roma. Health inequalities between Roma and the majority population remain significant, and progress is slow.

Roma health is profoundly affected by structural exclusion, discrimination, and limited access to culturally appropriate healthcare services. Many Roma individuals — particularly women and elderly persons — lack both trust in the healthcare system and the means to access reliable information. Language remains a major barrier; few healthcare materials are available in Romani Chib, and digital health services are largely inaccessible for Roma who are digitally excluded or have low literacy.<sup>46</sup>

Although some targeted health promotion initiatives for Roma have been launched over the past decade, these have largely been short-term projects dependent on external funding, and have not been sustained. Once project periods end, the initiatives are often not integrated into regular healthcare operations or budgets. This contributes to a cycle of discontinuity and unmet needs.

Discrimination within healthcare settings also remains a serious barrier. Roma individuals report receiving dismissive or culturally insensitive treatment, which leads to avoidance of healthcare services altogether. The lack of cultural competence among healthcare providers, as well as poor understanding of the structural determinants of Roma health (e.g., poverty, housing insecurity, intergenerational trauma), reinforces existing health inequalities.

In response to some of these challenges, a targeted health promotion grant was introduced to support Roma civil society in carrying out awareness-raising, educational outreach, and participatory health activities. A stated objective of this grant was to reduce health inequalities and improve access to information, with a particular focus on Roma women and girls. However, these funds were limited in scope and duration, and there has been no indication that they will be extended or institutionalised.<sup>47</sup>

As of 2024, the latest official report on Roma health and healthcare in Sweden dates back to 2018, issued by the National Board of Health and Welfare.<sup>48</sup> Despite the critical findings of that report—including poor health status, mental health risks, and low access to preventive care—very few of its recommendations have been implemented at scale. There has been no structured follow-up by the Swedish government or regional health authorities.

Addressing Roma health inequalities requires long-term, structural interventions. These must include:

Hiring and training Roma health mediators and bridge-builders to facilitate trust and access; Investing in culturally adapted health information, including materials in Romani Chib and non-digital formats;<sup>49</sup> Implementing mandatory training in minority rights and cultural competence for all healthcare professionals; Establishing monitoring mechanisms for discrimination and exclusion in healthcare access and quality; Strengthening collaboration with Roma civil society, with adequate funding and joint ownership of initiatives; Including Roma health in national and regional public health strategies, with clear targets, responsibilities, and resources.

In summary, health inequalities between Roma and the majority population in Sweden are not new — but they remain unaddressed at a structural level. Without permanent measures and state-level responsibility, progress will continue to be fragmented, project-based, and insufficient. Equal access to healthcare is a right, not a discretionary project. It must be treated accordingly.

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<sup>46</sup> Ibid

<sup>47</sup> Swedish Agency for Youth and Civil Society (2023). *Health promotion measures aimed at Roma*. [Health promotion for Roma | MUCF](#)

<sup>48</sup> Public Health Agency of Sweden, Current situation description 2018 of the area of health in the strategy for Roma inclusion, 2018. [2018 State of play of the area of health in the Roma inclusion strategy](#).

<sup>49</sup> Council of Europe. (2021) *Recommendation (CM/Rec(2021)1) on health care and cultural competence*.

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

According to the NRIS, discrimination in the housing market should be addressed as a long-term priority. In line with this, the Swedish National Board of Housing, Building and Planning (NBHP) was tasked with developing educational materials for housing providers between 2017 and 2020. This resulted in a web-based training aimed at increasing awareness of Roma housing exclusion and counteracting discrimination. The training reached only sixteen participants during the initial period, and when the assignment ended, the NBHP ceased monitoring participation. While the material remains online, there is no institutional mechanism for enforcing its use or measuring its effectiveness.<sup>50</sup>

Discrimination continues to be a significant barrier. Roma individuals report that disclosing their identity reduces their chances of obtaining housing, forcing many to hide their ethnicity. The problem is compounded by structural discrimination linked to debt, unemployment, and a lack of guarantors, which are disproportionately experienced by Roma applicants. Public officials and landlords may express goodwill, but there is often resistance to acknowledging the specific needs of ethnic groups due to the prevailing policy preference for universal, colour-blind approaches. This hinders effective, targeted action against discrimination.

Roma are frequently forced to seek housing near others in their community due to exclusion from the mainstream market, resulting in informal clustering and the emergence of parallel structures. This reinforces both visibility and vulnerability, contributing to cyclical marginalisation.<sup>51</sup>

The single greatest barrier remains a lack of awareness and recognition of the issue. There is currently no national coordination, no binding targets, and no follow-up on the NRIS housing goals. As of 2024, Sweden has not introduced new structural measures in this field since the last monitoring cycle.

## 2.6. Social protection

Sweden's social protection system is robust in design, offering residents a comprehensive safety net. However, the NRIS does not account for the long-term risks of exclusion and dependency specific to Roma communities. The strategy lacks a clear framework for helping Roma transition from reliance on social benefits to economic independence.

One major obstacle is the burden of over-indebtedness, which often begins early in life and persists across generations. Roma interviewees describe entering adulthood with multiple debts, defaults, or entries in Sweden's national credit registry, which severely limits their ability to secure housing, loans, or employment. These exclusionary dynamics are not addressed in the current NRIS, nor in any policy documents published since 2012. Despite the fact that over-indebtedness affects Roma disproportionately, no targeted measures have been proposed to alleviate its impact, nor to prevent financial exclusion. There is also a lack of investment in enabling mechanisms, such as budgeting support, legal debt advice, or access to fair credit. Without such tools, the social protection system functions as a holding mechanism, rather than a platform for long-term empowerment.<sup>52</sup>

Given that the NRIS extends until 2032, it is concerning that no revisions have been made, nor new strategies adopted to address these persistent gaps. Social protection remains disconnected from broader inclusion goals, and Roma-specific barriers continue to be ignored in official frameworks.

## 2.7. Social services

Roma individuals continue to face significant challenges in their encounters with the Swedish social services. According to the Swedish Commission against Antigypsyism, progress in addressing antigypsyism in this sector

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<sup>50</sup> Roma Civil Monitor (2022) *Civil society monitoring report on the quality of the national strategic framework for Roma equality, inclusion and participation in Sweden, 2022*

<sup>51</sup> Interview with Roma NGOs, 2024-10-01

<sup>52</sup> Ibid

has been unsatisfactory, and there is no evidence of a systemic increase in knowledge or cultural competence among social workers.

In response to this, the Swedish National Board of Health and Welfare (NBHW) has developed several measures. These include two rounds of training programs for Roma bridge-builders, specifically aimed at those working in or with social services. The goal is to provide these individuals — who often hold both institutional and cultural knowledge — with tools in relevant legislation, case handling procedures, and communication methods. The training also addresses the dual identity of bridge-builders: as civil servants and members of the Roma community. The NBHW offers these trainings free of charge to municipalities that employ or plan to employ bridge-builders. The Swedish National Agency for Education also offers salary compensation for participants. As of 2024, eight individuals have completed the training, with three more registered for the following term.<sup>53</sup>

Additional initiatives include a state-funded Roma inclusion project within Stockholm's social services, which started in April 2023 and ran until December 2024. The project aimed at strengthening trust between Roma individuals and the social services and includes a tailored training package titled *"In the Face of Treatment, the Future Takes Shape."* This package consists of films, facilitator guides, and workshops co-developed with Roma civil society. A launch conference was held to introduce the material.<sup>54</sup>

During 2022–2024, the NBHW has also been tasked with broader competence-raising on the rights and languages of national minorities, targeting decision-makers and professionals in social services, healthcare, and eldercare. One outcome is a short informational film about Roma inclusion, which has been distributed via the agency's digital platforms. However, data shows limited reach—143 views over six months by 107 users—suggesting the need for more proactive dissemination strategies.<sup>55</sup>

A new bridge-builder training program began in October 2023 at Södertörn University, specifically targeting Roma individuals working with municipalities. The curriculum covers Roma rights, Sweden's inclusion strategy, and relevant laws such as the Social Services Act and the Minority Act. It is designed to build both skills and institutional knowledge, enabling participants to become local catalysts for more inclusive practice.

While these efforts represent important steps forward, they remain isolated, small-scale, and often project-based. There is still no binding national framework to ensure that Roma rights are systematically respected in the delivery of social services. Nor is there sufficient accountability when failures occur.

In conclusion, the measures taken by NBHW and other actors are welcome and important—but they are not enough. Without stronger national leadership, legal enforcement, and long-term structural change, trust will remain low, and rights will remain unrealised. The social services sector must go beyond competence-building and adopt a proactive, rights-based approach to inclusion — one that recognises the specific needs, histories, and contributions of Roma communities in Sweden.

## 2.8. Child protection

The exceptional measure of placing children into compulsory care under the Swedish Care of Young People Act (LVU) remains a highly sensitive and contested issue—particularly for the Roma minority. Roma organisations and community representatives have long raised concerns that Roma children are at greater risk than majority children of not having their rights and needs met during LVU processes. These concerns are compounded by a persistent lack of understanding within the social services of the specific social, cultural and historical conditions affecting Roma families.

Although Sweden's legal framework, including *the Act on National Minorities and Minority Languages* (SFS 2009:724), requires authorities to respect and promote minority identity, these obligations are rarely operationalised in the context of child protection. Social workers often fail to apply minority-sensitive perspectives, and assessments are made without contextual knowledge. As a result, Roma children and families

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<sup>53</sup> Government Offices 2022. Ku2022/00786 [Uppdrag att ta fram och tillgängliggöra en utbildning för brobyggare med romsk språk- och kulturkompetens](https://www.regeringen.se/pressmeddelanden/2022/06/uppdrag-att-ta-fram-och-tillgangliggore-en-utbildning-for-brobyggare-med-romsk-sprak-och-kulturkompetens) - Regeringen.se

<sup>54</sup> Stockholm Municipality. <https://start.stockholm/om-stockholms-stad/stockholmarnas-fokus/nationella-minoriteter-i-stockholms-stad/nationella-minoriteter-i-vara-verksamheter/omsesidiga-broar/>

<sup>55</sup> CABS *Annual report on Roma Inclusion 2023* (2024). Available at [Romsk inkludering årsrapport 2023.pdf](https://www.cabs.se/romsk-inkludering-arsrapport-2023.pdf)

risk being subject to decisions that violate their right to cultural continuity, family unity, and informed participation.<sup>56</sup>

Roma bridge-builders and cultural mediators — whether employed by municipalities or engaged through civil society — report that they are often excluded or even actively resisted by social services. Despite volunteering to accompany families to meetings and provide cultural insight, their role is frequently questioned or dismissed. Some report being told that their presence is unnecessary or inappropriate, even in cases where communication and trust between social workers and Roma families is strained.<sup>57</sup>

Although Swedish law requires authorities to give special consideration to Roma children when placed in compulsory care — especially regarding the right to culture, language, and family ties — these legal guarantees are often not upheld in practice. A prominent case reported to the Equality Ombudsman (DO) involved a municipal social service that failed to safeguard the cultural and linguistic rights of four Roma children placed in foster care. The Parliamentary Ombudsman (JO) found that the children's right to maintain contact with their parents was violated. During their time in care, the children lost both their language and connection to their Roma identity.<sup>58</sup>

This example highlights a serious structural failure: Roma are not being treated equally in critical public services, despite explicit legal provisions. Trust in the social services is low among many Roma families, often due to prior experiences of stereotyping, miscommunication, or perceived overreach. However, the example also highlights that the Swedish judicial system in its higher instances functions according to rule-of-law, as the municipality was judged to be at fault in relation to the Roma family.

This rejection of Roma expertise is a missed opportunity. Bridge-builders are well-placed to contextualise family situations, reduce conflict, and support social workers in designing interventions that are both effective and respectful. Their absence contributes to a cycle of mistrust, trauma, and alienation.

Despite its importance, the issue of child protection is not explicitly addressed in Sweden's NRIS. The document includes general references to the relationship between Roma families and social services, but does not mention LVU, nor does it contain any objectives or actions aimed at improving the treatment of Roma children within child protection systems. For a strategy intended to secure equal rights and participation by 2032, this is a critical omission. The placement of Roma children in state care without adequate cultural safeguards constitutes a serious human rights concern. Without systemic efforts to build competence, ensure Roma participation, and operationalise minority rights in social service practice, this issue will remain a source of justified grievance and fear among Roma communities. It is essential that the NRIS be revised to include child protection as a priority, with clear guidelines, mandatory training, and embedded Roma participation throughout decision-making processes.

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

The Swedish government has an expressed ambition to include Roma culture as an integral part of the national cultural heritage. However, this has not been accompanied by a coherent or adequately funded strategy. Initiatives promoting Roma culture and history tend to be short-term, project-based, and largely directed at Roma communities themselves. The impact on majority society remains limited, and sustained efforts to build broad public awareness are lacking.

While public cultural projects such as *Rom San – We Are Roma* have had broad and positive reach, the minority policy at the municipal and regional level has failed to ensure access and recognition of Roma rights in practice. Many local governments lack both the knowledge and resources to meaningfully support Roma arts, language, or cultural expression. Public programmes are underfunded, and there is no obligation for municipalities to implement cultural policy measures for national minorities.<sup>59</sup>

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<sup>56</sup> Roma Civil Monitor (2022) *Civil society monitoring report on the quality of the national strategic framework for Roma equality, inclusion and participation in Sweden, 2022*

<sup>57</sup> Interview with Roma NGOs, 2024-10-01

<sup>58</sup> JO. *Yearly Report*. <https://www.jo.se/Global/Ämbetsberättelser/JOs%20ämbetsberättelse%202017-18.pdf>

<sup>59</sup> Interview with CABS, 2024-10-30

Public service media plays a crucial role in cultural visibility, but broadcasting in Romani Chib remains inconsistent across channels and platforms. Meanwhile, education on Roma history—which is widely recognised as a key tool to combat antigypsyism—is insufficiently integrated into the school curriculum, and teacher training in this area remains limited.

One of the few structured data sources available comes from the Swedish Higher Education Authority (UHR), which annually publishes statistics on courses related to national minorities and minority languages. In 2023, courses in Romani Chib or Roma culture accounted for approximately 5 percent of the total national minority education offering. These included foundational courses in Romani Chib, a revitalisation course in the Kale dialect, and modules on Roma history and current affairs. While this marks a modest increase compared to previous years, the overall supply and demand remain low. In 2023, only nine courses were offered, with 48 individuals admitted across the country.<sup>60</sup>

In May 2022, the Living History Forum (*Forum för levande historia*) was commissioned by the government to map the level of knowledge about antigypsyism in primary and secondary schools, and to propose concrete measures. The agency conducted interviews with teachers and school health professionals, aiming to understand the challenges of teaching about Roma and counteracting antigypsyism in the school environment. The results were concerning; most teachers lacked basic knowledge of Roma history, language, and culture. Furthermore, antigypsyism was often not recognised or reported in schools. The Forum's conclusion was that current efforts are insufficient, both in terms of pedagogical tools and institutional awareness.<sup>61</sup>

While certain institutions — such as UHR and the Living History Forum — have been commissioned to take steps to strengthen awareness of Roma culture and history, Sweden lacks a cohesive, sustained national strategy. Roma arts and culture remain marginalised in the public sphere, and schools are unprepared to counteract antigypsyism through education. To meaningfully promote Roma culture as part of the national heritage, targeted investments, binding obligations, and majority-focused initiatives are urgently needed.

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<sup>60</sup>Swedish Higher Education Authority (2024). *Report on Minority Language & Culture Education*. [utbildningar-i-de-nationella-minoritetspraken-och-kulturerna-2024.pdf](#)

<sup>61</sup> Living History Forum (2024). *Report on the assignment to map the knowledge of antigypsyism in primary and secondary school, ref. no. 2022/98*. Available at [Redovisning av uppdrag att kartlägga kunskapen om antiziganism i grundskolan och gymnasiet](#)

### 3. FOCUS ON KEY PROBLEMS AFFECTING ROMA

This chapter focuses on a major challenge affecting Roma inclusion: antigypsyism in general, and antigypsyism in the school system. The antigypsyism remains a deeply rooted structural form of racism that continues to shape Roma experiences across institutions and public life. It undermines trust, reinforces exclusion, and impedes equal access to rights and services—despite legal protections and policy commitments. It has particularly serious impacts in schools, where contributes to educational disadvantage and the concealment of Roma identity.

Additionally, this chapter critically analyses the Roma mediator (so-called “bridge-builders”) programme frequently cited as a flagship intervention in Sweden, but raising important questions about sustainability, accountability, and Roma participation.

#### 3.1. Antigypsyism

Antigypsyism continues to be one of the most profound and persistent structural obstacles to Roma equality, inclusion and participation in Sweden. It is a specific form of racism, deeply rooted in historical processes of exclusion, persecution, and cultural stigmatisation. During the reporting period 2022–2024, antigypsyism has manifested across multiple domains: in media narratives, law enforcement practices, public administration, education, and in the societal climate more broadly.

Roma civil society, research institutions, and minority policy bodies all report that Roma face both overt and subtle forms of discrimination. These include everyday racism, denial of services, hate speech, invisibility in public institutions, and culturally ignorant or exclusionary policies. Particularly concerning is the climate of mistrust that hinders Roma individuals from reporting incidents, seeking support from authorities, or participating fully in public life.<sup>62</sup>

A surge of public antigypsyist rhetoric in 2022 exemplified this situation. A high-profile criminal case involving a Roma individual led to a media and political backlash that openly framed Roma culture as inherently deviant. Reputable media outlets emphasized the suspect’s ethnicity — something they would typically avoid for other groups — and framed the event in terms of “Roma culture.” The Roma community was collectively stigmatized in a way not seen in Swedish media discourse for decades. Politicians from mainstream parties echoed antigypsyist talking points. The government’s response was delayed, and Roma voices were initially excluded from the public debate. This episode triggered fear and retraumatization in Roma communities and damaged trust between Roma and authorities.<sup>63</sup>

Despite the existence of anti-discrimination legislation and the criminalization of hate speech and hate crimes, Roma remain under-protected. Statistics from the Swedish National Council for Crime Prevention (BRÅ) show that only about 1% of hate crimes reported in 2022 had an antigypsyist motive. These figures are likely to be misleadingly low, due to significant underreporting. Community representatives consistently report that Roma individuals often avoid reporting hate crimes, either due to mistrust of the police, fear of not being believed, or lack of support from institutions.<sup>64</sup>

The Equality Ombudsman (DO), which is mandated to combat ethnic discrimination, does not collect statistics disaggregated by ethnicity, and thus cannot monitor Roma-related complaints. This absence of data renders antigypsyism statistically invisible in institutional systems, making it difficult to inform policy or demonstrate

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<sup>62</sup> Advisory Committee on the Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities (2024). *Fifth Opinion on Sweden* Available at <https://rm.coe.int/5th-op-sweden-en/1680ae851a>

<sup>63</sup> DIKKO (2023). *Inget om oss utan oss*. Available at [Öppet brev till myndigheter i Sverige: Inget om oss utan oss! - Magasin DIKKO](https://www.dikko.se/rapporter/inget-om-oss-utan-oss)

<sup>64</sup> BRÅ (2023). Hate crimes reported to the police in 2022. A summary of the cases that have been flagged as hate crimes by the police. Available at [Hatbrottsstatistik | Brå - Brottsförebyggande rådet](https://www.brå.se/rapporter/hatbrottsstatistik)



need. Nonetheless, civil society monitoring, qualitative studies and participatory projects continue to document systematic antigypsyism in education, health care, the labor market, and beyond.<sup>65</sup>

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

The NRIS 2012–2032 recognizes antigypsyism as a cross-cutting barrier. However, during the 2022–2024 period, its impact in addressing this challenge has been limited. While the strategy outlines goals related to equality, participation, and non-discrimination, its implementation lacks robust indicators, systematic monitoring, or concrete measures targeted explicitly at antigypsyism.

The NRIS does not contain clear definitions or benchmarks to measure progress in combating antigypsyism. There is no regular reporting mechanism to track antigypsyist incidents or Roma experiences of discrimination. Although municipalities and state agencies report some activities within the framework of the NRIS, they are typically fragmented, short-term, and insufficiently evaluated. The strategy also lacks binding obligations for municipalities, leaving Roma inclusion policies highly dependent on local political will and capacity.

Still, certain agencies have been tasked with and executed valuable initiatives. MUCF's 2022–2024 youth-focused program to prevent antigypsyism included the empowerment of Roma youth ambassadors, awareness-raising among municipal staff, and cooperation with Roma NGOs. The Living History Forum's assignment to produce educational resources on Roma history and antigypsyism marks another positive step, even if its long-term integration in curricula remains uncertain.

The Equality Ombudsman and the National Police Authority have taken some general measures to address hate crimes, but these efforts are rarely tailored to the needs of Roma. The lack of disaggregated data means it is difficult to evaluate whether Roma are actually reached or benefit from these interventions.<sup>66</sup>

### 3.1.2. Synergy with other actions

Efforts to combat antigypsyism have been included in broader anti-racism policies and projects, yet synergy remains limited and inconsistent. In 2023, the Swedish government launched a new National Plan against Racism and Hate Crimes. While antigypsyism is mentioned in this plan, it lacks specific indicators, funding allocations, or Roma-targeted actions. The risk is that antigypsyism becomes subsumed under general categories of "racism" or "xenophobia," thereby obscuring its distinct features and the specific responses required to address it.<sup>67</sup>

At the municipal level, certain cities have developed effective local models. For example, Malmö City and Malmö University jointly implemented a project that included interviews with Roma residents and civil servants to understand antigypsyism on a structural and individual level. The Roma Information and Knowledge Centre (RIKC) in Malmö worked to reduce school absenteeism through direct engagement with Roma families. Helsingborg and Gothenburg also report local actions involving bridge-builders and public education on Roma rights and history.<sup>68</sup>

Despite these positive examples, many local efforts are funded on a year-to-year basis, which limits long-term planning. Moreover, coordination between national and municipal levels is insufficient. There is no national mechanism to monitor whether Roma-targeted anti-discrimination work is being carried out or having an effect. As a result, implementation varies widely, with some municipalities taking innovative steps and others doing almost nothing.

<sup>65</sup> DO, 2022/2805. Response to the County Administrative Board of Stockholm County and the Sámi Parliament's request for documentation regarding discrimination against national minorities – 2024.

<sup>66</sup> The Swedish Police. *On Hate Crimes*. <https://polisen.se/utsatt-for-brott/polisanmalan/hat-hot-och-vald/hatbrott2/>

<sup>67</sup> Government Offices (2024) *Action plan against racism and hate crimes*. [Handlingsplan mot rasism och hatbrott](#)

<sup>68</sup> City of Malmö, Malmö University (2024). *Study on antigypsyism and conditions for Roma life in Malmö*. [Lycklig är den som har en öppen väg framför sig – En rapport om förutsättningar och hinder för romskt liv i Malmö](#)

Efforts are further undermined by a lack of intersectional understanding. Roma women, Roma LGBTQ+ individuals, and Roma with disabilities often experience compounded discrimination, yet this is rarely addressed in programming or policy.

### 3.1.3. Roma participation

The principle of “nothing about us without us” is at the heart of the NRIS. Nonetheless, Roma participation in combating antigypsyism remains fragmented. At the national level, the Roma Reference Group and biannual consultations organized by CABS provide formal platforms. However, participants frequently highlight that these forums are not inclusive or sufficiently influential. Some sub-groups of Roma are underrepresented due to scheduling, lack of compensation, and hierarchical structures.

Some Roma are employed as coordinators or bridge-builders in municipalities. Where such roles exist, they have improved trust and communication between Roma and authorities. However, these positions are often precarious and poorly defined. In many cases, the coordinators lack decision-making power or support to effect systemic change.<sup>69</sup>

Project-based participation remains more dynamic. MUCF's youth ambassador programme is a standout example: young Roma designed campaigns, participated in public events, and met directly with municipal leaders. Their engagement led to tangible shifts in awareness among both Roma participants and public servants<sup>70</sup>. Similarly, Roma scholars and activists contributed to the Living History Forum's antigypsyism education initiative.

Grassroots advocacy has also played a crucial role. In 2023, a group of Roma women activists published the open letter “Nothing about us without us!” (*Inget om oss utan oss!*) in response to the exclusion of Roma perspectives during the 2022 media scandal. The letter criticized the government for consulting non-Roma “experts” and highlighted the need to respect and include Roma expertise in all matters affecting Roma communities. Following its publication, the authors were invited to meet government ministers and contribute to the ongoing dialogue on Roma rights.<sup>71</sup>

Despite these efforts, there is no formal structure for Roma involvement in monitoring hate crime responses or shaping national policies. To strengthen participation, Roma organisations call for:

- Permanent consultation mechanisms with binding influence on policymaking.
- Dedicated funding for Roma civil society.
- Capacity-building for Roma representatives.
- Inclusion of diverse Roma voices, including women and youth.

Antigypsyism remains a persistent and deeply rooted form of racism in Sweden. The NRIS acknowledges this but has not delivered sufficiently strong or coherent measures to counter it. Synergies with other strategies exist but are poorly coordinated. Roma participation has increased in some domains, particularly through project-based activities and advocacy, but systemic inclusion is still lacking. A stronger, rights-based, and Roma-led approach is essential if Sweden is to live up to its national and international commitments on Roma inclusion and equality.

## 3.2. Antigypsyism in schools

Roma children in Sweden continue to be exposed to antigypsyism within the school system. This was officially recognised in 2020 when the County Administrative Board of Stockholm (CABS) was tasked with investigating and increasing knowledge about how Roma children and youth experience discrimination in educational

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<sup>69</sup> Interview with Roma representatives to the government reference group, 2024-10-12

<sup>70</sup> Agency for Youth and Civil Society (2024). *To Prevent and Combat Antigypsyism*. Available at: <https://www.mucf.se/sites/default/files/2024/03/delrapport-att-forebygga-och-motverka-antiziganism-mucf-2024.pdf>

<sup>71</sup> DIKKO (2023). *Inget om oss utan oss*. Available at: <https://dikko.nu/oppet-brev-till-myndigheter-i-sverige-inget-om-oss-utan-oss/>



settings. The resulting study, *Proud but Often Insecure (Stolta men ofta otrygga)*, gathered testimonies from 85 young Roma regarding their experiences of safety, inclusion, and access to rights in school.<sup>72</sup>

The findings were alarming: it is not uncommon for young Roma to be exposed to harassment, exclusion, and subtle or overt forms of discrimination based on their ethnic identity. The study also concluded that the Swedish school system has failed in its mission to prevent and counter antigypsyism, and to provide education about the rights, history, culture, and language of the Roma as a national minority.

This failure is twofold: on the one hand, schools have not succeeded in creating a safe and inclusive environment for Roma pupils; on the other, they have not fulfilled their responsibility to equip the majority society with the knowledge needed to challenge prejudice. A significant proportion of young Roma report feeling invisible or excluded, which undermines their educational development and long-term opportunities.

Although the NRIS refers to the importance of education and intercultural understanding, it does not include specific mechanisms for implementation, evaluation, or accountability at the school level. National action plans (e.g., the 2022 anti-racism plan) mention teacher training and inclusive pedagogy in general terms, but these have been weakly institutionalised and not specifically monitored in relation to Roma students.<sup>73</sup>

At the municipal level, implementation depends entirely on local political will and administrative capacity resulting in highly unequal conditions across the country. There is no binding national framework for ensuring that schools include Roma-related content in curricula or professional development, nor are there sanctions when this is neglected. Moreover, there is no system in place to monitor whether inclusion measures are actually implemented, nor is there clarity on who is responsible for evaluating outcomes. Roma organisations and experts are seldom included in the development or assessment of educational strategies. This lack of structured consultation and monitoring has contributed to the continuation of antigypsyism in everyday school life, often unnoticed or unaddressed by school authorities.<sup>74</sup>

The repeated failure of the education system to implement meaningful inclusion policies demonstrates that existing frameworks are insufficient. Without clear goals, designated responsibility, consistent funding, and measurable indicators, inclusion remains a rhetorical ambition rather than a practical reality.

In conclusion, a more targeted, structured, and accountable approach is urgently needed. This includes:

- Clear mandates within national strategies for combating antigypsyism in schools.
- Systematic inclusion of Roma history, culture, and rights in the national curriculum.
- Mandatory training for teachers and school staff on antigypsyism and minority rights.
- Mechanisms for monitoring, evaluation, and corrective action at municipal and national levels.
- Institutionalised consultation with Roma civil society and youth in developing solutions.

Until these elements are embedded in the school system, Roma students will continue to face unequal treatment and systemic exclusion—contrary to both Swedish law and European commitments on minority rights and education.

### 3.2.1. Effectiveness of the NRIS in addressing the problem

In order to assess whether the NRIS is effective in tackling critical and significant challenges in the area of education, the following subsections will provide a more detailed analysis. The overall conclusion to this question will follow at the end of the section.

The NRIS includes education-related goals such as increasing school attendance among Roma children, ensuring that more Roma pupils complete compulsory education with full grades, and encouraging further enrolment in upper secondary education. These goals clearly remain relevant, as Sweden continues to face the same systemic challenges, even if progress has been made in some areas, with more Roma youth completing

<sup>72</sup> County Administrative Board Stockholm (2021). *Proud but often insecure, A survey of young Roma's experiences of security and access to their rights*. Available at <https://www.minoritet.se/7162>

<sup>73</sup> Government Offices (2024) *Action plan against racism and hate crimes*. [Handlingsplan mot rasism och hatbrott](#)

<sup>74</sup> City of Malmö, Malmö University (2024). *Study on antigypsyism and conditions for Roma life in Malmö. Lycklig är den som har en öppen väg framför sig – En rapport om förutsättningar och hinder för romskt liv i Malmö*

education compared to previous decades. However, when it comes to the specific issue of antigypsyism in schools, the NRIS contains no targeted objectives. The strategy instead refers to general laws and existing measures that apply to all students, including Roma. It therefore concludes that separate or tailored efforts are not necessary. This approach is deeply problematic in light of the challenges presented in Section 3.1. The relevant question is not whether the overall goals remain relevant — which they do — but whether any of the goals directly address the situation of Roma students. From that perspective, the answer must be no.

The government's assumption that existing frameworks are sufficient fails to recognise that the situation of Roma children is often significantly different from that of majority students, particularly in terms of exposure to discrimination and exclusion. A general framework is not enough to address the structural dimensions of antigypsyism that uniquely affect Roma students. That said, in recent years — especially between 2022 and 2025 — there has been increased recognition from authorities and municipalities that antigypsyism in schools must be actively addressed. Roma civil society has consistently raised this as a priority issue, and public actors have begun to take notice. For instance, the 2023 report from the Living History Forum confirms that there remains a clear need to prevent and combat antigypsyism in schools. The report highlights the importance of raising awareness, improving teaching content, and equipping educators with the tools to detect and respond to antigypsyism. Moreover, it stresses that building knowledge about Roma history, culture, and living conditions is essential—an insight echoed by other actors such as the Swedish Agency for Youth and Civil Society (MUCF) in its interim reporting on minority inclusion.<sup>75 76</sup>

In summary, the overall goals of the NRIS in the field of education remain relevant to the needs of Roma children and youth, given the ongoing challenges around school completion and transition to higher education. However, the strategy contains no specific objective to address antigypsyism in schools, despite overwhelming evidence that this is one of the most critical barriers to Roma students' educational success. While various actors have begun working on this issue, a formal goal within the NRIS is lacking, a gap that must be addressed in future revisions.

Statistics from the Swedish National Agency for Education (SNAE) regarding mother tongue instruction in compulsory school indicate that among all national minorities, Roma students have the lowest participation rate, despite being eligible for instruction in Romani Chib.

In the 2022/2023 academic year, 2,373 pupils were entitled to Romani Chib instruction, yet only 590 students — just under 25 per cent — actually participated. Moreover, the number of students receiving Romani Chib instruction has steadily declined over the years. Between 2015/16 and 2022/23, participation dropped by 143 students. From 2021/22 to 2022/23 alone, the number decreased from 651 to 590 students. This trend is particularly concerning given that the right to mother tongue instruction for national minorities was strengthened in 2015, enabling even children with limited or no prior knowledge of the language to receive instruction as part of revitalisation efforts. Despite this legal enhancement, the actual uptake among Roma students remains critically low.<sup>77</sup> Several factors contribute to this situation:

- Shortage of qualified teachers in Romani Chib remains a key barrier, limiting municipalities' ability to provide instruction even when requested.
- Lack of awareness among Roma families about their legal right to mother tongue education may also play a role.
- Fear of discrimination or the desire to conceal one's Roma identity can discourage families from enrolling their children in Romani Chib classes.

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<sup>75</sup> Living History Forum (2024). *Report on the assignment to map the knowledge of antigypsyism in primary and secondary school, ref. no. 2022/98*. Available at [Redovisning av uppdrag att kartlägga kunskapen om antiziganism i grundskolan och gymnasiet](#)

<sup>76</sup> Agency for Youth and Civil Society (2024). *To Prevent and Combat Antigypsyism*. Available at [Att förebygga och motverka antiziganism MUCF 2024](#)

<sup>77</sup> CABS *Annual report on Roma Inclusion 2023* (2024). Available at [Romsk inkludering årsrapport 2023.pdf](#)

This last factor may also result in a significant number of eligible students not being reported, meaning the actual pool of Roma children entitled to instruction could be even larger.<sup>78</sup>

While measures have formally been planned, such as curriculum development and legal reinforcement of minority language rights, implementation appears insufficient and inconsistent. According to the Living History Forum's recent findings, existing initiatives have not had the desired impact, and there is a lack of follow-up and monitoring mechanisms to evaluate their effectiveness.

The statistics on Romani Chib participation reinforce this conclusion: only a small fraction of eligible pupils access their linguistic rights. Without sustained investment in teacher recruitment, awareness-raising, and trust-building within Roma communities, even legally mandated measures risk remaining symbolic. While measures have been formally introduced, they have not been effectively implemented. The decline in participation in mother tongue instruction in Romani Chib is a clear indicator of this failure. The gap between legal rights and actual access remains wide, pointing to systemic weaknesses in Sweden's efforts to uphold Roma children's educational and linguistic rights.

A number of persistent and interrelated barriers continue to hinder meaningful progress in addressing antigypsyism in schools and ensuring the educational rights of Roma pupils. These include:

**Lack of political will to distinguish antigypsyism from other forms of marginalisation:** One of the most fundamental obstacles is the reluctance among policymakers and education authorities to recognise antigypsyism as a distinct and structural form of racism that requires specific responses. When antigypsyism is treated as a general issue of discrimination, or simply subsumed under broader inclusion policies, it becomes nearly impossible to develop targeted measures. For instance, Roma students who are subjected to discrimination have legal rights under the Education Act, but these rights are only activated if individual teachers or school staff take action.<sup>79</sup> The responsibility to combat antigypsyism thus rests on individual interpretation and initiative, rather than systemic safeguards. No concrete action plans exist at the national level for preventing harassment and discrimination specifically targeting Roma pupils. As a result, the unique challenges faced by Roma students often go unrecognised and unaddressed. A dedicated and tailored strategy would be necessary to ensure that Roma children's rights and needs are genuinely fulfilled.<sup>80</sup>

**Low awareness among school staff about Roma history and contemporary discrimination:** A second barrier is the widespread lack of knowledge among teachers and school personnel about the history of Roma in Sweden and how antigypsyism manifests in everyday school life. The 2023 survey by the Living History Forum confirmed this knowledge gap and highlighted the need for conscious, proactive efforts to counteract antigypsyism. This includes expanding training for teachers, developing inclusive teaching materials, and equipping school staff with tools to recognise, respond to, and document antigypsyism when it occurs.

**Concealment of Roma identity due to fear of discrimination:** Many Roma families choose not to disclose their Roma identity because of previous experiences of discrimination, including in educational contexts. This leads to under-enrolment in mother tongue instruction, among other consequences. The result is a self-protective invisibility that can further undermine access to rights and resources. Although the root cause is external discrimination, the outcome is often interpreted as lack of demand or interest — masking the structural exclusion that Roma students face.<sup>81</sup>

**Lack of systematic follow-up and monitoring:** A fourth barrier is the absence of structured mechanisms to evaluate and adjust measures aimed at promoting Roma inclusion and combating antigypsyism in schools. Without regular oversight, impact assessments, or public reporting, it is difficult to know whether any of the existing measures are working, and impossible to adjust strategies accordingly. This weakens accountability and allows ineffective practices to persist unchecked.

The obstacles to resolving antigypsyism in education are not due to lack of legislation or general policy ambitions. Rather, they are rooted in structural denial, institutional inertia, and the absence of mechanisms for

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<sup>78</sup> Interview with Roma NGOs, 2024-10-01

<sup>79</sup> The Swedish National Agency for Education (2023), *The education Act Chapter 6*

<sup>80</sup> Interview with the Roma Municipal Unit in Malmö (RIKC), 2024-10-10

<sup>81</sup> Interview Roma NGOs, 2024-10-01

accountability and adaptation. Without political will to name and address antigypsyism specifically — and without targeted, monitored and resourced strategies — Roma students will continue to face unequal treatment in Swedish schools. While the overarching goals of the NRIS in the field of education — such as increasing school attendance and improving completion rates — remain relevant, the strategy fails to adequately address the specific and systemic problem of antigypsyism in schools.

Measures that have been introduced are either too general, too weakly implemented, or not followed up. Despite strengthened legal rights for national minorities, Roma students still face unequal treatment, invisibility, and everyday discrimination. The limited reach of mother tongue instruction in Romani Chib, and the lack of binding national frameworks for Roma inclusion in education, underscore the gap between policy intention and lived reality.

The key barriers — lack of political will to acknowledge antigypsyism as a specific issue, poor institutional knowledge, fear - driven identity concealment, and the absence of systematic monitoring — must be addressed through targeted reforms. In conclusion, the NRIS in its current form is not effective in addressing the critical problems Roma face in the education system. A strategic revision is needed — one that explicitly names antigypsyism, assigns responsibility, includes Roma voices, and sets measurable goals with clear evaluation mechanisms.

### 3.2.2. Synergy with other actions

This section examines whether measures within the field of education related to Roma inclusion are coordinated with other national strategies, general policy frameworks, and EU-level initiatives.

Several public actors have recognised the need for targeted work against antigypsyism in schools. The Living History Forum reports that there is a pressing need for conscious and structured efforts to prevent and counter antigypsyism. Their 2023 study highlights the importance of raising awareness, developing inclusive teaching materials, and improving teachers' ability to identify and respond to antigypsyism in the classroom. The report also notes, however, that the implementation of existing measures has not been effective, and there is no system of follow-up, oversight or performance indicators that would allow for any firm conclusions about progress.<sup>82</sup> This lack of evaluation and data makes it difficult to assess whether national policy is aligned with the objectives set by the EU Roma Strategic Framework for equality, inclusion and participation (2020–2030). Similarly, the Swedish Agency for Youth and Civil Society (MUCF), in its interim reporting on government-assigned tasks, confirms the continued need to raise awareness among both school staff and pupils regarding Roma culture, living conditions, rights, and how antigypsyism manifests in everyday situations.<sup>83</sup>

While these efforts reflect awareness of EU recommendations — especially regarding structural antigypsyism and educational inclusion — they lack clear integration into the NRIS or a broader inter-agency framework. Policy documents do not clearly link these initiatives to the Roma Strategy, nor do they reflect structured cooperation between national agencies, regional authorities, and EU-level funding instruments.

In its 2023 recommendations, CABS proposed that the Swedish Government:

- Explore adding language as a protected ground for discrimination in the Discrimination Act;
- Mandate relevant expert authorities to investigate the low number of reported discrimination and hate crime cases affecting Roma;
- Ensure long-term mandates and sufficient resources for agencies involved in implementing the Roma Strategy, to move from project-based efforts to sustained, institutional action.

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<sup>82</sup> Living History Forum (2024). *Report on the assignment to map the knowledge of antigypsyism in primary and secondary school, ref. no. 2022/98*. Available at [Redovisning av uppdrag att kartlägga kunskapen om antiziganism i grundskolan och gymnasiet](#)

<sup>83</sup> Agency for Youth and Civil Society (2024). *To Prevent and Combat Antigypsyism*. Available at [Att förebygga och motverka antiziganism MUCF 2024](#)

These proposals aim to increase coherence, accountability, and long-term impact — aligned with both national minority policy and the EU's call for cross-sectoral strategies to tackle antigypsyism.<sup>84</sup>

While some synergies exist between Roma inclusion efforts in education and broader anti-discrimination initiatives at both the national and EU levels, they are currently fragmented and poorly integrated. Without clear coordination mechanisms, cross-sector mandates, and robust evaluation structures, existing measures risk being isolated and ineffective. Strengthening institutional alignment and mainstreaming antigypsyism prevention into national education policy will be essential for meaningful progress.

An important example of local synergy in the area of education and antigypsyism is a study conducted by the City of Malmö and Malmö University, published in 2023 and financed by CABS in 2022. The study focuses on antigypsyism and the living conditions of Roma in Malmö, based on interviews with 28 Roma residents and 10 municipal employees who work with Roma-related issues. The study documents extensive experiences of antigypsyism in the school system, including both overt and subtle forms. Roma students report exposure to open hostility such as bullying and verbal abuse, as well as indirect forms of exclusion — such as silence from bystanders, lack of adult intervention, or being ignored. Moreover, the findings indicate that teachers and other school staff often hold implicit biases, including low expectations regarding Roma pupils' academic potential, future aspirations, and interest in education. The study also highlights a widespread absence of Roma representation in the curriculum, noting that Roma history and culture are rarely addressed or made visible in educational content. This contributes to the marginalisation of Roma identity and undermines efforts to foster inclusive school environments. In response to these findings, the City of Malmö and Malmö University formulated a set of local policy recommendations, which were recognised and shared by the County Administrative Board. These recommendations are considered relevant not only for Malmö, but potentially transferable to other municipalities.

Key proposals include:

- Improving knowledge of antigypsyism and Roma discrimination among managers and HR personnel in municipal departments, to ensure Roma employees are treated equally and feel safe being open about their identity.
- Recognising Roma language skills as a merit in recruitment processes within preschools, schools, elderly care and other relevant sectors.
- Identifying and addressing antigypsyism in municipal recruitment practices, particularly in public-facing services.
- Conducting a quantitative survey among principals, teachers and school staff at all primary schools in Malmö to assess their knowledge of antigypsyism. Based on the results, targeted education and professional development programmes should be designed and implemented, including clear follow-up and evaluation procedures.

These local findings are also corroborated by European-level data. The EU Agency for Fundamental Rights (FRA) has documented persistent discrimination against Roma in schools. According to FRA, one in five Roma students in the EU reports being bullied or harassed at school due to their ethnicity. Furthermore, 11 percent of Roma families state that both students and parents experience discrimination in their contact with school authorities. A Swedish study from 2019 found that one in two Roma parents reported that their children had been subjected to derogatory or threatening comments due to their background.<sup>85</sup>

These findings — across local, national, and EU levels — reinforce the urgent need for coordinated, systematic interventions to combat antigypsyism in education. Strengthening Roma inclusion policies, developing inclusive school cultures, and securing equal educational opportunities for Roma students must become a shared responsibility at all levels of governance.

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<sup>84</sup> CABS *Annual report on Roma Inclusion 2023* (2024). Available at <https://www.lansstyrelsen.se/download/18.1b1d393819324610c3748491/1732515561869/Romsk%20inkluderings%20%C3%A5rsrapport%202023.pdf>

<sup>85</sup> FRA (2020) *Fundamental Rights Report*. [https://fra.europa.eu/sites/default/files/fra\\_uploads/fra-2020-fundamental-rights-report-2020-opinions\\_en.pdf](https://fra.europa.eu/sites/default/files/fra_uploads/fra-2020-fundamental-rights-report-2020-opinions_en.pdf)

### 3.2.3. Roma participation

Throughout the reports and studies presented in this chapter, a recurring theme is the limited role of Roma voices in shaping educational measures, especially when it comes to antigypsyism and the teaching of Roma history and culture. This lack of participation leads to a mismatch between policy design and the real needs of Roma communities. Although the state has introduced measures to address discrimination and inclusion in education, Roma civil society actors consistently report that these measures are not perceived as relevant, particularly because they do not address antigypsyism explicitly. Implementing a measure is only the first step — if the intended effect is not achieved, it loses its purpose in the eyes of those it is supposed to serve.

When it comes to antigypsyism, many Roma report feeling proud of their identity but reluctant to express it openly. Prejudice remains widespread, and support from schools and society is often perceived as inadequate. While some Roma youth have been supported by individual teachers, the school environment is still frequently described as a place of exclusion. This lack of trust contributes to hesitation among some parents to send their children to school and has reinforced the need for Roma bridge-builders who can mediate between families and the educational system.

Roma civil society representatives express concern about the increasing prevalence of antigypsyism in society at large. One organisation points out that different Roma groups may face distinct challenges, such as linguistic barriers or differences in educational background, which affect how they experience discrimination. This underscores the importance of recognising Roma as a diverse group, not a monolithic community. Furthermore, it is emphasised that Roma visibility in education should not be limited to problem framing. Instead, positive contributions of Roma to Swedish society — especially to the Swedish language and cultural life — should be highlighted. This approach could help normalise Roma identity, improve the public discourse, and support Roma individuals in feeling safe and empowered to live openly.<sup>86</sup>

A major concern remains the low rate of school completion among Roma youth, which contributes to long-term exclusion and severely limits individual life opportunities. If Roma children are not supported to finish their education, the entire minority risks stagnation. Yet, schools located in socio-economically vulnerable areas — where many Roma children live — are often overwhelmed by other structural challenges. As a result, the specific needs of Roma pupils are often deprioritised or overlooked within general inclusion efforts. There is also a lack of institutional competence across the education sector, social services, and related authorities. Bridge-builders, who are employed to strengthen communication between Roma communities and public services, are often assigned unrelated tasks, depending on the discretion of local school principals. This undermines the intended function of the bridge-builder role and reflects a lack of respect for the strategic purpose of Roma inclusion measures.<sup>87</sup>

Roma participation in shaping and implementing education-related measures remains limited. When Roma voices are excluded or marginalised, policies risk missing their target, and trust in institutions continues to erode. A more participatory approach — one that includes diverse Roma experiences and ensures the integrity of Roma-specific roles such as bridge-builders — is necessary to build both legitimacy and impact in efforts to combat antigypsyism in schools.

### 3.3. Bridge-builders/mediators

The concept of bridge-builders (or Roma mediators) has been a recognised practice in Sweden since 2012, primarily within the field of education. It remains a key component of Sweden's Roma inclusion strategy, aimed at strengthening trust and communication between Roma families and public institutions.

Historically, the idea of Roma mediators in education is not new. Similar proposals were put forward as early as the 1930s, when many Roma in Sweden were still denied access to formal education. At that time, however, the Swedish state showed no interest in implementing such measures. Today, the role of the bridge-builder is considered essential for achieving progress towards Roma inclusion, particularly in education. The position of Roma mediator/bridge-builder is typically offered by municipalities to Roma individuals and would formally be connected to a relevant title within that field of work, such as teacher, teacher assistant, social worker or job

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<sup>86</sup> Interview with Roma NGOs, 2024-10-01

<sup>87</sup> Interview with the Roma Municipal Unit in Malmö (RIKC), 2024-10-10



coach depending on the person's own education and work experience. As of 2025 there are approximately 25-30 positions spread out over an estimation of eight to ten municipalities around Sweden.

According to the CABS report from 2023, participation in formal training for bridge-builders remains relatively low, despite the strategic relevance of the role.<sup>88</sup>

The primary role of a bridge-builder is to act as a resource person, supporting communication and trust between schools, Roma children and their families. This includes:

- Providing information about rights and responsibilities, including the right to mother tongue education.
- Supporting parental engagement with schools.
- Organising motivational meetings to promote attendance and school completion.
- Educating teachers and school staff about Roma history, culture, and the realities of antigypsyism.

The NRIS clearly states that education is one of the most important long-term tools for improving the living conditions of Roma in Sweden. Bridge-builders are seen as one means to support that goal — both by increasing school attendance and outcomes among Roma students, and by improving cultural understanding among public sector professionals.

Although the role has been implemented primarily in education, bridge-builders are also involved in other sectors, including healthcare, social services, and employment. However, this broader use is not systematised, and there is no coherent national framework guiding the deployment of bridge-builders across policy areas.

As for participation targets and outcomes, the NRIS does not include a specific, measurable goal for the bridge-builder programme. While the strategy highlights the function of bridge-builders, it lacks baseline indicators or follow-up mechanisms to evaluate whether the presence of bridge-builders improves educational outcomes or reduces antigypsyism.

At present, no national evaluation has been conducted to assess the long-term impact of the bridge-builder programme. Anecdotal evidence and qualitative interviews (including in reports by CABS and MUCF) suggest that the role is highly appreciated by Roma families, and that bridge-builders can contribute to improving trust and increasing attendance. However, there is no quantitative data available on whether the programme has improved grades, reduced dropout rates, or measurably increased Roma participation in education. This absence of evaluation is a major gap. The European Commission's meta-evaluation of Roma inclusion interventions notes that many programmes involving mediators lack formal impact assessment frameworks, making it difficult to justify their continuation or scale-up despite their potential benefits.<sup>89</sup>

The bridge-builder model remains a highly relevant and potentially powerful tool for promoting Roma inclusion in education. However, its effectiveness cannot be demonstrated without clear goals, structured follow-up, and independent evaluation. A national review of the programme — focusing on outcomes, scalability, and sectoral expansion — should be prioritised as part of Sweden's broader Roma inclusion strategy.

### 3.3.1. Effectiveness of the NRIS in addressing the problem

The bridge-builder programme is one of the most visible and frequently referenced measures within Sweden's Roma inclusion strategy. It is promoted as a key component in efforts to counter antigypsyism and strengthen Roma participation in education. However, it is crucial to assess whether this measure is truly aligned with the needs of the Roma community and whether it is effective in addressing the structural racism and exclusion that Roma students continue to face.

Two national bridge-builder training programmes were planned and launched between 2022 and 2024, organised by the National Board of Health and Welfare (NBHW) in collaboration with Södertörn University, and supported by the Swedish National Agency for Education (SNAE). The trainings targeted Roma individuals with

<sup>88</sup> CABS *Annual report on Roma Inclusion 2023* (2024). Available at [Romska inkludering årsrapport 2023.pdf](#)

<sup>89</sup> Fresno, J. et al. (2019), *Meta-evaluation of interventions for Roma inclusion: Final Report - Penultimate version*, European Commission, Brussels.

language and cultural competence and were intended for municipalities that had employed, or were planning to employ, Roma bridge-builders. Salary compensation was made available through SNAE.<sup>90</sup>

Although the measure is promoted and mentioned in several policy documents, it is important to note that bridge-builders are not anchored in the national strategy with a clear budget allocation or implementation framework. They are referenced as a “supportive” method, but there is no formal mandate for municipalities to apply the model, nor any legal or financial obligation to maintain the function long-term. While training has expanded to a small number of municipalities, the number of participants remains low, which has been confirmed by CABS and civil society stakeholders. This raises concerns about the sustainability and scalability of the intervention.

Several additional challenges have emerged:

- Many municipalities are under severe financial pressure and face high administrative workloads. This has led to staff reductions in schools, and limited interest in allocating resources to Roma inclusion specifically.
- In some cases, school principals have refused to integrate bridge-builders into school activities, even when salary compensation is offered. The organisational autonomy of principals — while important — creates a disconnect between national strategic goals and local implementation.
- As it stands, the success of the measure depends entirely on the goodwill of individual school leaders, rather than being guided by binding objectives or institutional mandates. This lack of structural accountability undermines the potential impact of the strategy.

Ultimately, this design flaw points to a systemic weakness in the NRIS: while national-level actors promote the bridge-builder model as a flagship initiative, there is no effective mechanism to ensure implementation, and no evaluation framework to assess whether the measure is contributing to its intended outcomes.

In summary, the bridge-builder model has potential, and it is symbolically important within the NRIS. But in practice, the measure is currently not effective, due to low uptake, weak institutional support, and lack of mandatory implementation at the local level. Without a clear mandate, secure funding, and systematic monitoring, it is unlikely that this measure alone will significantly reduce antigypsyism in schools or improve Roma educational outcomes. A formal evaluation of the programme, including impact data, success criteria, and feedback from Roma communities, should be prioritised going forward.

### 3.3.2. Synergy with other actions

In several municipalities that have employed Roma bridge-builders, the concept has been described as one of the most successful elements in their work with Roma inclusion. Some municipal representatives even refer to it as their “greatest gain” in efforts to build long-term trust with Roma communities. As highlighted previously, one of the central challenges is the deep-rooted distrust many Roma families feel toward the school system. The bridge-builder model has therefore been adopted as a tool to build mutual confidence and increase knowledge and engagement among Roma families—both through individualised support and group-based outreach.

A concrete example comes from the cities of Gothenburg and Helsingborg, where local bridge-builder efforts have focused on:

- Mapping the needs and expectations of Roma children in specific geographic areas.
- Implementing knowledge-raising activities for families about their rights within the school system.
- Offering school-preparatory programmes in literacy and mathematics to ensure that children are equipped when they begin school.

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<sup>90</sup> National Agency for Education, National Board of Health and Welfare (2024). Assignment to develop and make available a training course for bridge builders with Roma language and cultural competence, interim report. Dnr Swedish National Agency for Education: 2023:1755, dnr National Board of Health and Welfare: 3.5– 16721/2022–1



These locally grounded approaches demonstrate the importance of tailoring Roma inclusion strategies to specific community contexts—while still remaining connected to national goals. The presence of bridge-builders enables early intervention and helps to overcome administrative barriers, miscommunication, and exclusion.<sup>91</sup>

Another strong example of coordination can be found in Malmö, where the Roma Information and Knowledge Centre (RIKC), in partnership with the city's school departments, launched a project focusing on Roma pupils with high absenteeism. The project involved home visits, informational meetings, and dialogues with families, covering not only the logistics of schooling but also the importance of Roma representation in the curriculum — especially through the teaching of Roma history and culture. This direct engagement between schools and Roma homes contributed to a significant reduction in absenteeism. The case illustrates that building relationships and mutual understanding is essential to improving attendance, retention and long-term academic outcomes.<sup>92</sup>

However, these examples also reveal a critical issue: the success of the bridge-builder model depends heavily on local initiative and goodwill. To truly harness the potential of these methods, they must be scaled up, structurally embedded, and resourced within a broader national implementation framework. Local examples from Gothenburg, Helsingborg, and Malmö demonstrate that synergy between municipal departments, schools, and Roma communities is possible — and effective. But to move beyond isolated success stories, Sweden must invest in scaling and institutionalising such approaches across the country.

### 3.3.3. Roma participation

The involvement of Roma in the design, implementation, and evaluation of bridge-builder initiatives remains limited and inconsistently documented. While several municipalities report having employed individuals with Roma language and cultural competence as bridge-builders, there is no systematic data available to track the extent of these efforts or their outcomes. This lack of transparency and evaluation is part of a recurring issue in the Roma inclusion strategy: reliance on anecdotal evidence or assumptions, rather than structured follow-up and measurable indicators. As a result, it is difficult to assess the effectiveness of Roma participation in shaping or guiding these initiatives.

The national strategy does refer to the importance of consultation and collaboration with the local Roma minority, both in the planning of inclusion measures and in the development of trust-based relationships. However, it remains unclear how and when such consultations occur, and to what extent Roma perspectives influence actual decision-making. There is no formalised mechanism for incorporating feedback from Roma civil society into the ongoing development of the bridge-builder model.

Several Roma organisations have pointed to the lack of long-term planning and sustainability in current bridge-building efforts. For example, in Malmö, a year-long pilot programme placed ten bridge-builders in schools, funded through interdepartmental collaboration. However, by the end of the project, only one position remained. This illustrates both the short-term nature of many inclusion efforts and an over-reliance on individual roles without systemic support.<sup>93</sup>

Bridge-builders are undoubtedly a valuable resource — serving as cultural mediators, role models, and institutional connectors. Yet, as currently implemented, the model is overburdened and under-supported. In several municipalities, bridge-builders report being tasked with work beyond their original mandate, such as leading full classes or substituting for regular staff. This dilutes their specific purpose and risks undermining their intended impact.

In terms of fostering Roma participation more broadly, stakeholders have stressed the importance of:

- Strengthening Roma representation in school governance and education policy development.
- Promoting Roma role models in public education campaigns and classroom materials.
- Ensuring that bridge-builders are part of a multi-level strategy, not a substitute for structural reform.

<sup>91</sup> Interview with CABS, 2024-10-30

<sup>92</sup> Interview with the Roma Municipal Unit in Malmö (RIKC), 2024-10-10

<sup>93</sup> Interview with Roma NGOs, 2024-10-01

Roma participation in the bridge-builder programme is largely informal and ad hoc. While the intention to include Roma perspectives exists in policy, it has not been systematically implemented. For the model to succeed, participation must go beyond employment and extend to co-ownership of strategy, long-term planning, and continuous dialogue. The government and municipalities should establish formal consultation mechanisms with local Roma communities to ensure that future efforts are both effective and legitimate.

## CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The Swedish NRIS, adopted in 2012 and set to run until 2032, was a political milestone in acknowledging the need for long-term, cross-sectoral efforts to combat the structural exclusion and discrimination of Roma in Sweden. However, this report shows that the implementation of the strategy over the past twelve years has been characterized by stagnation, a lack of political responsiveness to new developments, and a continued disconnect between national commitments and local action.

Although the overarching goal — that a Roma child born in 2012 should have the same life opportunities as a non-Roma child by 2032 — remains powerful in its vision, it has not been operationalized in a way that enables real, sustainable change. Many of the challenges identified in earlier reports persist, such as limited access to quality education, persistent antigypsyism, low trust in public institutions, and insufficient Roma participation in decision-making.

Despite some promising efforts—particularly from certain municipalities and agencies—Sweden has not revised the NRIS to align with the renewed EU Roma Strategic Framework (2020–2030). This reluctance to update the strategy, despite clear guidance and new indicators from the EU, undermines the strategy's credibility and relevance. Furthermore, the fragmentation in implementation, coupled with short-term project funding, has hindered progress. Many municipalities still treat Roma inclusion as a peripheral project rather than an integrated policy obligation, which limits sustainability and long-term results.

Education remains a critical area of concern. Antigypsyism in schools, limited access to mother tongue education in Romani chib, and the failure to provide inclusive and equitable learning environments demonstrate a systemic shortcoming in addressing the needs of Roma children. While the concept of bridge-builders has shown potential in fostering trust between Roma communities and schools, its implementation has been inconsistent, underfunded, and lacking systematic evaluation.

In the area of combating antigypsyism, data from both BRÅ and the Equality Ombudsman highlight a decline in reported hate crimes and discrimination cases with antigypsy motives. However, this cannot be interpreted as a sign of improvement. Rather, it suggests a potential loss of trust in institutions, as well as flaws in how data is collected and analysed. The lack of disaggregated data on Roma experiences of discrimination prevents evidence-based policymaking and weakens accountability mechanisms.

Positive examples do exist. Some local and regional actors, such as the County Administrative Board of Stockholm and municipalities like Malmö and Helsingborg, have developed more participatory approaches that involve Roma experts and civil society in consultations and programme design. These efforts are important, but too few and too dependent on individual initiatives. The strategy's national coherence suffers from a lack of binding requirements and sustainable funding mechanisms.

Roma participation in the development, implementation, and evaluation of policies has improved in certain contexts, but continues to be limited overall. Roma organisations have frequently raised concerns about being consulted too late, or not at all, in decisions that affect their communities. There is also a growing frustration about the symbolic nature of participation, where input is solicited but not meaningfully used.

Finally, the recent political climate in Sweden poses serious risks to the long-term success of Roma inclusion efforts. The normalisation of xenophobic and discriminatory rhetoric, including in parliamentary discourse and public media, signals a worrying regression. Without strong political leadership and institutional commitment to uphold minority rights, the existing strategy risks becoming obsolete.

In summary, Sweden's Roma inclusion strategy, while ambitious in its formulation, has not kept pace with contemporary challenges, nor has it delivered sufficient results in key areas. A revised, rights-based and participatory approach — anchored in the renewed EU framework — is urgently needed to reinvigorate the national strategy and restore trust among Roma communities.

### *Recommendations to national authorities*

1. Revise and update the NRIS: The Swedish Government should revise the National Roma Inclusion Strategy in line with the EU's new strategic framework (2020–2030) and the Council Recommendation (2021), ensuring alignment with updated indicators, targets, and rights-based language. The revised

strategy should include a comprehensive implementation plan with clear timelines, responsible actors, and measurable outcomes.

2. Ensure long-term and sustainable funding: Move beyond short-term pilot projects by establishing permanent, earmarked funding mechanisms—comparable to those available within national minority administrative areas—for municipalities and agencies working on Roma inclusion.
3. Strengthen Roma participation and representation: Guarantee meaningful and structured participation of Roma civil society in the development, implementation, monitoring, and evaluation of national and local Roma inclusion policies. This includes early consultation, joint decision-making, and funding for capacity building within Roma organisations.
4. Improve coordination between national and local levels: Create mechanisms to ensure that national commitments are matched by local implementation. Introduce accountability measures for municipalities and regions that fail to act on the strategy's commitments.
5. Enhance data collection and monitoring: Develop systems for collecting disaggregated data on Roma experiences of discrimination, inclusion, and service access, in compliance with ethical standards and the principle of self-identification. Use this data to inform evidence-based policy.
6. Combat antigypsyism through legislation, education, and enforcement: Introduce specific measures to address antigypsyism, including educational reforms, teacher training, and legal amendments—such as recognising language as a discrimination ground. Strengthen the capacity of DO and BRÅ to identify and monitor antigypsyism.
7. Expand and evaluate the bridge-builder programme: Scale up the bridge-builder model and ensure it is embedded in school systems with clearly defined roles, objectives, and training. Conduct regular evaluations and assess its impact on education outcomes for Roma students.

### **Recommendations to European institutions**

8. Monitor Sweden's alignment with the EU Roma Strategic Framework: Encourage Sweden to align its national strategy with the new EU Roma Framework and to adopt the monitoring indicators and targets promoted by the European Commission and FRA.
9. Support member states with guidance and funding: Provide continued technical support and long-term funding streams through EU programmes (e.g., ESF+, CERV, and AMIF) to support Roma inclusion efforts at national and local levels. Prioritise actions combatting antigypsyism, especially in education and justice sectors.
10. Facilitate peer-learning between member states: Promote exchange of best practices among countries that have successfully implemented inclusive, participatory models for Roma policy development and delivery, especially in the area of education and local engagement.
11. Strengthen EU monitoring tools: Ensure transparency and accountability in national implementation by reinforcing reporting obligations and providing civil society with tools and platforms to submit shadow reports and counter-narratives.

### **Recommendations to the civil society**

12. Continue building Roma capacity and voice: Invest in leadership and organisational development within Roma communities to strengthen their ability to advocate, consult, and partner with institutions on equal terms.
13. Develop data and evidence for advocacy: Systematically document and publish data on Roma experiences in areas like education, discrimination, and housing to fill knowledge gaps and counter policy denial.
14. Strengthen national networks and alliances: Collaborate across Roma and non-Roma civil society to increase advocacy impact, promote solidarity, and build joint strategies to counter antigypsyism and exclusion.
15. Hold institutions accountable: Use strategic litigation, media advocacy, and community organising to push for implementation of existing rights and expose failures in public administration.

### ***Recommendations to other stakeholders***

16. Local governments: Municipalities should take ownership of the Roma inclusion strategy by integrating its objectives into long-term planning. Bridge-building initiatives and local Roma consultative bodies should be institutionalised and funded accordingly.
17. Educational institutions: Schools and teacher training colleges must strengthen knowledge about national minorities, especially Roma history and antigypsyism. Antidiscrimination training for educators and inclusive curriculum reforms are essential.
18. Ombudsman institutions and BRÅ: Improve registration systems to disaggregate complaints and hate crime data by minority affiliation, including Roma identity, while respecting ethical standards and the right to self-identification.
19. Media and journalists: Commit to ethical reporting on Roma issues. Counter disinformation and antigypsyist narratives by collaborating with Roma experts and promoting balanced, informed coverage of Roma communities.
20. Researchers and academic institutions: Prioritise participatory research methods, involve Roma researchers, and investigate systemic antigypsyism. Share findings widely and ensure they inform policy.

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### List of interviews

- Four Roma NGOs – focus group and individual interviews (hybrid format, in person and video), 2024-10-01
- Four officials of the Municipal unit for Roma inclusion in Malmö (RIKC) (video group meeting), 2024-10-10
- Three Roma experts from the government Roma reference group (video group meeting), 2024-10-12
- Two officials of the County Administrative Board responsible for the national coordination and monitoring of Roma Inclusion and National Minority Politics (video call and written correspondence), 2024-10-30
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## ANNEXE: LIST OF PROBLEMS AND CONDITIONS

### *Fighting antigypsyism and discrimination*

<b>Problems and conditions:</b>	<b>Significance:</b>	<b>Identified by strategy:</b>	<b>Measures to address:</b>	<b>Targets defined:</b>	<b>Details of NRIS implementation relevant to the problem:</b>
Prejudice against Roma	significant problem	understood with limitations	present but insufficient	absent	<p>Adopted measures: Roma bridge-builder programmes, education campaigns by the Living History Forum, and youth initiatives via MUCF. Measures' effectiveness: Limited. Measures are fragmented and project-based, lacking national coordination or monitoring.</p> <p>Measures' outreach: Reaches a small number of Roma individuals and educators; no systemic inclusion.</p> <p>Data collection: No routine data collection on attitudes or prejudice at national level. Evaluations rely on isolated studies or civil society reports.</p>
Hate speech towards and against Roma (online and offline)	significant problem	mentioned but not analysed sufficiently	present but insufficient	some targets but not relevant	<p>Adopted measures: Inclusion of antigypsyism in the National Plan against Racism and Hate Crimes; youth engagement via MUCF; awareness materials by the Living History Forum.</p> <p>Measures' effectiveness: Weak. Roma rarely included as a target group in general hate crime work; no specific indicators.</p> <p>Measures' outreach: Limited reach due to lack of Roma-specific interventions and low trust in reporting mechanisms.</p> <p>Data collection: Hate crime statistics do not disaggregate antigypsyism; gross underreporting persists.</p>
Weak effectiveness of protection from	significant problem	understood with limitations	adequate but with room for improvement	adequate but with room for improvement	<p>Adopted measures: General anti-discrimination laws; Equality Ombudsman mandates; limited municipal inclusion efforts.</p> <p>Measures' effectiveness: Moderate. Framework exists</p>



discrimination					but lacks Roma-specific application and enforcement. Measures' outreach: Patchy. Depends heavily on local will and Roma knowledge of rights. Data collection: The DO does not disaggregate complaints by ethnicity, obscuring antigypsyism in statistics.
Misconduct and discriminatory behaviour by police (under-policing/under-policing)	Significant problem	irrelevant	absent	absent	Adopted measures: General guidelines on non-discrimination in police work; some anti-bias training. Measures' effectiveness: Ineffective. No specific focus on antigypsyism; Roma community distrust remains high. Measures' outreach: Very limited. No targeted interventions or reconciliation measures with Roma communities. Data collection: No ethnicity-based complaint tracking or accountability mechanisms specific to Roma.
Roma are forced to hide their ethnic identity in order to access the labour and housing markets and other parts of society, which often leads to psychological issues, especially for young Roma.	Critical problem	mentioned but not analysed sufficiently	present but insufficient	absent	Adopted measures: Cultural competence training for public servants (e.g., NBHW); bridge-builder roles; minority rights awareness materials. Measures' effectiveness: Low. Efforts are small-scale and non-binding; do not challenge systemic incentives to conceal identity. Measures' outreach: Narrow. Most Roma report still feeling unsafe being open about identity. Data collection: No national data on identity concealment or service access gaps for Roma.

Education

Problems and conditions:	Significance:	Identified by strategy:	Measures to address:	Targets defined:	Details of NRIS implementation relevant to the problem:
High drop-out rate before completion of primary education	critical problem	understood with limitations	present but insufficient	adequate but with room for improvement	<p>Adopted measures: The NRIS sets broad goals for improved educational outcomes but does not include Roma-specific actions to prevent early dropout from primary education. The use of Roma bridge-builders in some municipalities aims to strengthen school-home communication and encourage school attendance. Some local initiatives have provided homework support and preparatory programs for Roma children, often through partnerships with Roma civil society.</p> <p>Effectiveness: Isolated efforts have shown positive effects at the local level—especially where bridge-builders have been integrated into schools and worked directly with families. However, these interventions are not standardised or monitored nationally, and dropout before completion of primary education remains a critical issue for many Roma children.</p> <p>Outreach: Efforts are geographically limited and depend heavily on local political will and available resources. Many Roma children in vulnerable areas are still not reached, and no national outreach strategy exists to systematically address early school leaving among Roma.</p> <p>Data collection: Sweden does not collect disaggregated data on early school dropout by ethnicity. This makes it impossible to measure the scale of the problem nationally or to assess the impact of existing interventions specifically on Roma pupils.</p>

Early leaving from secondary education	critical problem	understood with limitations	present but insufficient	some targets but not relevant	<p>Adopted measures: The NRIS promotes general objectives such as improving Roma pupils' transition to and completion of upper secondary education. However, no specific actions or funding mechanisms are in place to support Roma students at this educational stage. Some bridge-builder interventions and youth support projects, such as those supported by MUCF and local authorities, aim to increase motivation and retention, but these are limited in scope and not systematically connected to the NRIS.</p> <p>Effectiveness: The lack of targeted measures and sustained structural support means that effectiveness is low at the national level. While some local projects have succeeded in reducing absenteeism and building trust, drop-out rates remain disproportionately high among Roma students due to persistent antigypsyism, lack of representation, and inadequate individual support.</p> <p>Outreach: Outreach efforts are limited and fragmented. Bridge-builders have occasionally worked with upper secondary schools, but most focus remains on primary education. Roma youth continue to report feeling unsupported, misunderstood, or stereotyped in upper secondary environments.</p> <p>Data collection: There is no systematic data collection on drop-out rates among Roma youth in secondary education. The absence of ethnicity-based data collection hampers targeted intervention design and evaluation.</p>
Current school system based on selection by parents and its associated financing structure, in combination with segregated cities and schools with	critical problem	irrelevant	present but insufficient	absent	<p>Adopted measures: The NRIS does not include specific measures to address the effects of school choice and segregation on Roma pupils. The strategy assumes that universal education policy will suffice and does not explicitly address structural disparities linked to school segregation, socio-economic vulnerability, or the compounding disadvantages experienced by Roma children. Some municipalities have attempted local projects involving bridge-builders or outreach initiatives, but these are</p>

<p>a high concentration of pupils from socio-economically vulnerable families and parents who are not native speakers of Swedish, lead to most Roma children attending schools with extensive challenges in being able to assist its pupils in reaching adequate education goals.</p> <p>This has escalated during the last decade, since the NRIS was developed.</p>					<p>disconnected from structural education reform.</p> <p>Effectiveness: Due to the lack of targeted policy at the national level, the measures taken have not been effective in reducing educational inequality for Roma. The market-based school model and municipal financing structures remain unchanged, continuing to reproduce segregation and deepen inequality. Schools in vulnerable areas lack the capacity and resources to support pupils with complex needs, including many Roma children.</p> <p>Outreach: Efforts to support Roma pupils in segregated or under-resourced schools are highly uneven and depend on local political will. There is no national programme or directive to ensure equitable distribution of resources to the schools that serve the largest share of Roma students.</p> <p>Data collection: No disaggregated data is collected on Roma students' school environments or the compounded effects of school segregation. This severely limits the ability to design or evaluate policies targeting systemic educational disparities that affect Roma children.</p>
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### Employment

<b>Problems and conditions:</b>	<b>Significance:</b>	<b>Identified by strategy:</b>	<b>Measures to address:</b>	<b>Targets defined:</b>	<b>Details of NRIS implementation relevant to the problem:</b>
Poor access to or low effectiveness of public employment	significant problems	understood with limitations	present but insufficient	some targets but not relevant	Adopted measures: The NRIS refers generally to the importance of Roma inclusion in the labour market but lacks targeted, actionable measures within the public employment services (PES). Previous efforts, such as the time-limited "Special assignment to the Public Employment Service regarding Roma

services					<p>inclusion" (2016–2018), were not extended or institutionalised. Since then, no nationwide initiative has replaced it. Occasional local collaborations have taken place, often project-based or in partnership with Roma civil society, but these remain exceptions.</p> <p>Effectiveness: The discontinuation of targeted measures has weakened institutional knowledge and reduced visibility of Roma-related challenges within the PES. Without structured inclusion strategies or dedicated Roma coordinators, many Roma job seekers encounter generic support that fails to address specific barriers such as discrimination, lack of formal credentials, or linguistic and cultural exclusion. Overall effectiveness remains low.</p> <p>Outreach: There is no systematic outreach from the PES specifically designed to build trust with Roma communities or to ensure access to tailored support. The reliance on mainstream services with no Roma-specific adaptations means that many individuals fall through the cracks, especially those with limited digital skills or previous negative experiences with state institutions.</p> <p>Data collection: The PES does not collect disaggregated data on Roma clients or track outcomes by ethnicity, making it impossible to monitor progress, evaluate impact, or identify disparities in access or results. This absence of data hinders evidence-based improvements and accountability.</p>
Youth not in employment, education or training (NEET)	critical problems	understood with limitations	present but insufficient	adequate but with room for improvement	<p>Adopted measures: The NRIS highlights the need to support Roma youth through education and employment, but it does not contain specific, targeted measures to reduce NEET rates among Roma. Some municipalities have attempted smaller interventions, such as outreach via bridge-builders or local youth projects supported by the Swedish Agency for Youth and Civil Society (MUCF), but these are not coordinated or embedded in national frameworks. The MUCF has run antigypsyism-</p>

					<p>prevention programmes with Roma youth ambassadors, indirectly addressing NEET status by encouraging civic engagement, but not systematically linked to labour market or education transitions.</p> <p>Effectiveness: Measures targeting Roma NEET youth are scattered and lack follow-up. Without structured support systems—such as career guidance adapted to minority youth, flexible education re-entry options, or culturally competent case handling—the effectiveness remains low. Roma youth face compounded barriers, including discrimination, intergenerational poverty, and mistrust of public systems, which are not sufficiently acknowledged or addressed in current programming.</p> <p>Outreach: Outreach to Roma NEET youth is not systematically conducted by employment services, schools, or municipalities. Existing outreach depends heavily on local bridge-builders or Roma NGOs, whose efforts are often underfunded and temporary. As a result, only a small segment of Roma youth is reached, typically those already connected to community networks or social services.</p> <p>Data collection: There is no ethnicity-disaggregated data collection regarding NEET rates. The lack of visibility in national youth statistics makes it impossible to track Roma-specific NEET trends or evaluate targeted needs. Roma organisations frequently report that youth NEET status is a growing concern, but there is no official mechanism to monitor or address it at scale.</p>
Discrimination on the labour market by employers	Significant problems	understood with limitations	present but insufficient	some targets but not relevant	<p>Adopted measures: The NRIS identifies discrimination as a cross-cutting obstacle to Roma inclusion but does not specify any concrete or binding measures to counter employer discrimination against Roma. General anti-discrimination legislation applies, and the Equality Ombudsman (DO) is mandated to investigate complaints, but there are no Roma-targeted labour market interventions</p>

					<p>addressing employer bias. Public agencies have conducted general awareness-raising campaigns about discrimination in working life, but these have rarely focused on antigypsyism or included Roma experiences.</p> <p>Effectiveness: In practice, Roma applicants report that revealing their ethnic identity reduces their chances of being called to interviews or being hired. Since no targeted programmes address structural employer discrimination, effectiveness is very low. The lack of employer-focused education on antigypsyism, combined with weak accountability mechanisms, has resulted in minimal impact on workplace inclusion of Roma individuals.</p> <p>Outreach: Outreach efforts are limited. While bridge-builders and some Roma NGOs support individuals in navigating job applications or provide guidance, there are no national campaigns or employer training schemes that specifically target antigypsyism. There is also reluctance among Roma jobseekers to report discrimination due to mistrust in enforcement bodies and fear of reprisal, which further hampers outreach.</p> <p>Data collection: No disaggregated data on employment discrimination cases by ethnicity is available. The Equality Ombudsman does not track antigypsyism cases specifically. Roma-related discrimination on the labour market is therefore statistically invisible. Evidence comes mainly from civil society monitoring, surveys, and testimonies. This data gap makes it difficult to design, evaluate, or fund effective anti-discrimination measures.</p>
Barriers and disincentives to employment (such as indebtedness, low income from work compared	critical	mentioned but not analysed sufficiently	absent	absent	<p>Adopted measures: The current NRIS (2012–2032) does not contain any specific measures to address over-indebtedness or economic disincentives to employment among Roma. No targeted financial counselling, debt relief, or labour market reintegration schemes have been designed with Roma communities in mind. The issue of chronic over-indebtedness, often starting in adolescence and</p>

to social income)					<p>compounded by structural exclusion, remains unaddressed in all Roma-related policy frameworks.</p> <p>Effectiveness: Since no direct measures have been taken, effectiveness is negligible. Roma individuals affected by debt traps continue to face major obstacles in securing housing, loans, and jobs. This leads to dependency on social benefits and contributes to a cycle of exclusion, which the general social protection system fails to break.</p> <p>Outreach: Some Roma organisations and municipalities have initiated small-scale bridge-building or trust-building projects to support access to public services, but these are not focused on employment or financial recovery. Outreach from employment services or social insurance bodies rarely addresses these specific Roma-related challenges.</p> <p>Data collection: There is no data systematically collected on indebtedness among Roma or how it affects employment. Nor are Roma communities disaggregated in existing public datasets related to social income versus work income, or structural labour market barriers. Civil society testimonies and qualitative interviews remain the only available sources highlighting this as a critical but invisible structural issue.</p>
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### Healthcare

<b>Problems and conditions:</b>	<b>Significance:</b>	<b>Identified by strategy:</b>	<b>Measures to address:</b>	<b>Targets defined:</b>	<b>Details of NRIS implementation relevant to the problem:</b>
Limited access to health-related information	significant problem	understood with limitations	adequate but with room for improvement	adequate but with room for improvement	Adopted measures: The National Board of Health and Welfare (NBHW) has implemented general awareness-raising activities targeting national minorities, including Roma, during the 2022–2024



					<p>period. These include the production of a short informational film on Roma rights and inclusion in health and social services, disseminated via digital platforms. In addition, training for Roma bridge-builders has included elements on public health rights and communication with healthcare systems.</p> <p>Effectiveness: The impact of these measures has been limited due to small scale, low visibility, and lack of follow-up. For example, the NBHW's educational film on Roma inclusion had only 143 views over a six-month period, indicating limited reach and minimal behavioural impact. No structured national campaign on Roma health rights or culturally tailored health information has been launched.</p> <p>Outreach: Outreach efforts have been ad hoc and largely project-based. While some municipalities have involved Roma bridge-builders in spreading information about healthcare access, this depends on local initiative and has not been institutionalised. Many Roma communities remain poorly informed about their health-related rights or available services, particularly in areas with no Roma-focused initiatives.</p> <p>Data collection: There is no systematic data collected on Roma access to health-related information or health literacy. Public health surveys do not disaggregate by ethnicity, and the needs of Roma communities in this area are not monitored in national health policy implementation. Existing insights rely primarily on qualitative reporting from civil society and individual municipalities.</p>
Poor access to preventive care (vaccination, check-ups, screenings, awareness-raising about	significant problem	understood with limitations	present but insufficient	some targets but not relevant	<p>Adopted measures: The NRIS contains no specific goals or actions related to improving Roma access to preventive healthcare. However, during 2022–2024, the National Board of Health and Welfare (NBHW) conducted general outreach and minority rights education efforts aimed at professionals in healthcare, social services, and eldercare. These</p>

healthy lifestyles)					<p>included a short film and limited training content, which indirectly touched on access issues.</p> <p>Effectiveness: The effectiveness of these indirect measures has been minimal. The outreach activities have not targeted preventive care specifically, nor have they been designed to address Roma-specific barriers such as mistrust of healthcare providers or lack of culturally adapted communication. There is no evidence that vaccination rates or preventive screening participation among Roma has improved.</p> <p>Outreach: The measures reached a very limited audience. For example, NBHW's informational film reached only 107 users over six months, suggesting weak dissemination and minimal engagement. No large-scale health promotion efforts tailored to Roma communities have been launched at the national level.</p> <p>Data collection: Sweden does not collect ethnically disaggregated health data, including on vaccination or screening participation. As a result, there is no way to systematically assess whether Roma are underserved in preventive care. Civil society and local actors have reported gaps in access, but these are not officially monitored or addressed in policy.</p>
Specific barriers to better healthcare of vulnerable groups such as elderly Roma people, Roma with disabilities, LGBTI and others	significant problem	mentioned but not analysed sufficiently	present but insufficient	some targets but not relevant	<p>Adopted measures: The NRIS does not contain any specific measures targeting the intersectional barriers faced by subgroups within the Roma community, such as the elderly, people with disabilities, or LGBTI individuals. While some general competence-raising efforts have been initiated by the National Board of Health and Welfare (NBHW), including training on minority rights and the production of informational content, these have not addressed intersectionality or healthcare barriers for these subgroups.</p> <p>Effectiveness: The lack of tailored approaches significantly limits the impact of the existing</p>

					<p>measures. Structural discrimination and lack of trust persist among vulnerable Roma subgroups, and no targeted health equity initiatives have been recorded during the reporting period. The existing inclusion efforts do not provide tools or frameworks to address the compounded challenges of these groups.</p> <p>Outreach: Outreach has been limited, general in scope, and not designed to include or specifically support elderly Roma, LGBTI Roma, or Roma with disabilities. Most initiatives are implemented without prior consultation with representatives from these subgroups or Roma civil society at large.</p> <p>Data collection: There is no national or local collection of disaggregated data that would allow analysis of healthcare access for Roma individuals with overlapping vulnerabilities. The invisibility of these groups in health policy and monitoring frameworks remains a critical gap. As a result, needs go unrecognised, and no targeted health interventions are planned or implemented.</p>
Inequalities in measures for combating and preventing potential outbreaks of diseases in marginalised or remote localities	significant problem	irrelevant	present but insufficient	present but insufficient	<p>Adopted measures: The NRIS does not include explicit provisions for crisis preparedness or pandemic response tailored to Roma communities. During the COVID-19 pandemic, some municipalities and civil society actors initiated temporary outreach, including health information dissemination and support for vaccinations, but these actions were ad hoc and not embedded in the national strategy.</p> <p>Effectiveness: While some Roma organisations contributed to local pandemic response, there is no evidence of national-level measures ensuring equitable access to outbreak prevention or healthcare resources for Roma in segregated or remote areas. The lack of proactive and permanent structures results in inconsistent responses and leaves communities vulnerable in health crises.</p> <p>Outreach: Outreach to Roma communities in health</p>

					<p>crises has relied heavily on local initiative, goodwill, or civil society engagement. In many localities, no Roma-specific outreach occurred, and language or trust barriers further hindered effectiveness. Vulnerable families often lacked access to updated public health information or protective measures.</p> <p>Data collection: There is no systematic data collected on how Roma communities are affected during disease outbreaks, nor any mechanism to track access to healthcare in marginalised localities. The absence of disaggregated or territorial health data renders health inequalities invisible, preventing evidence-based planning and undermining accountability.</p>
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*Housing, essential services, and environmental justice*

<b>Problems and conditions:</b>	<b>Significance:</b>	<b>Identified by strategy:</b>	<b>Measures to address:</b>	<b>Targets defined:</b>	<b>Details of NRIS implementation relevant to the problem:</b>
Lack of security of tenure (legal titles are not clear and secure)	significant problem	understood with limitations	present but insufficient	adequate but with room for improvement	<p>Adopted measures: The NRIS does not explicitly address legal tenure or property rights as a focus area. No targeted national measures have been adopted to clarify or secure legal housing titles for Roma. The issue is treated as a general housing or administrative matter rather than as a structural barrier to Roma inclusion.</p> <p>Effectiveness: In the absence of targeted national policy, effectiveness is limited. Roma households living in informal or insecure housing situations—such as temporary contracts, unregulated subletting, or overcrowded conditions—remain particularly vulnerable. This affects stability, eligibility for services, and long-term planning.</p> <p>Outreach: Municipalities differ widely in their approach. Some local housing authorities engage</p>

					<p>Roma mediators or offer temporary support, but these are often short-term or case-based. There is no national framework ensuring outreach or legal support to Roma in precarious housing situations.</p> <p>Data collection: No disaggregated data is collected on Roma tenure security. The invisibility of this issue in national statistics and housing registries limits both policy insight and the capacity to monitor change. The lack of mapping contributes to neglect of Roma housing vulnerabilities in broader urban and regional planning.</p>
Overcrowding (available space/room for families)	significant problem	mentioned but not analysed sufficiently	adequate but with room for improvement	some targets but not relevant	<p>Adopted measures: The National Roma Inclusion Strategy (NRIS) acknowledges housing exclusion as a barrier but does not include specific, measurable actions to address overcrowding. While some efforts have been made through the National Board of Housing, Building and Planning (NBHP), such as producing guidance for housing providers on Roma discrimination, these do not directly tackle the issue of inadequate housing space.</p> <p>Effectiveness: Measures indirectly related to overcrowding—such as anti-discrimination materials and local inclusion projects—have limited impact on the structural housing shortage faced by many Roma families. No national policy reforms or targeted housing programs have been introduced to increase access to larger or adequate dwellings for Roma households, many of which are multigenerational.</p> <p>Outreach: Some municipalities have implemented awareness training for housing officials or worked with Roma mediators to reduce discrimination, but outreach rarely includes concrete assistance in securing more appropriate housing in terms of size or quality. Roma families often remain in overcrowded conditions due to compounded barriers: poverty, debt, discrimination, and housing shortages.</p> <p>Data collection: National housing statistics do not</p>

					include disaggregated data by ethnicity, and therefore do not track overcrowding among Roma households specifically. This makes the issue difficult to monitor or address strategically at national level, despite recurring evidence from civil society and qualitative studies.
Housing-related indebtedness at levels which may cause eviction	significant problem	mentioned but not analysed sufficiently	present but insufficient	some targets but not relevant	<p>Adopted measures: The NRIS does not contain targeted or systemic measures to prevent or mitigate housing-related indebtedness within Roma communities. Although Sweden's general welfare system offers some tools for debt restructuring and eviction prevention (e.g. through municipal budget and debt advisory services), these have not been adapted or strengthened to meet the specific needs of Roma, who are disproportionately affected by early-life indebtedness and long-term financial exclusion.</p> <p>Effectiveness: The general availability of debt counseling is undermined by low trust in authorities, lack of targeted outreach, and limited awareness among Roma of their rights or the availability of such services. As a result, Roma families at risk of eviction often do not access the support they are entitled to. Effectiveness is further limited by the absence of coordination between debt services and Roma inclusion initiatives.</p> <p>Outreach: Very limited. While some Roma mediators have attempted to address debt-related exclusion through informal guidance or advocacy, there is no structured approach or dedicated funding to extend outreach to over-indebted Roma households at risk of losing their homes. Those most affected—such as young adults with inherited debt—remain largely invisible to formal systems.</p> <p>Data collection: There is no ethnic-disaggregated data on housing-related debt or evictions. The lack of visibility in national registries, coupled with Roma individuals' reluctance to self-identify due to fear of discrimination, makes data collection particularly</p>

					challenging. Existing data from the Swedish Enforcement Authority and local municipalities does not capture minority-specific vulnerabilities.
Wide-spread indebtedness from an early age with the record of payment default limiting life prospects of housing tenures etc	critical problem	irrelevant	absent	absent	<p>Adopted measures: The NRIS does not contain specific or targeted measures addressing the structural problem of early-life indebtedness among Roma. General debt prevention and support structures exist within the Swedish welfare system (e.g. municipal budget and debt advice), but no tailored initiatives have been introduced to prevent intergenerational debt accumulation or its impact on Roma youth. Measures to promote financial literacy or mitigate the exclusionary consequences of payment default records have not been directed specifically at Roma communities.</p> <p>Effectiveness: Existing general measures have shown limited effectiveness for Roma due to structural barriers, including mistrust of public services, digital exclusion, and the lack of culturally adapted outreach. The absence of targeted interventions means early indebtedness continues to block Roma youth from accessing housing, education financing, or employment opportunities.</p> <p>Outreach: Outreach is fragmented and informal. Some Roma bridge-builders and civil society actors attempt to support individuals in navigating debt systems, but these efforts are under-resourced and unsystematic. Public authorities have not made significant efforts to adapt communication or support mechanisms to Roma communities affected by long-term financial marginalisation.</p> <p>Data collection: There is no ethnicity-based data collection on indebtedness or the long-term consequences of payment defaults. Consequently, neither the scale of the problem nor the effects on Roma inclusion can be systematically assessed. This invisibility perpetuates policy inaction and reinforces</p>

					a cycle of economic exclusion.
<p>Roma families mainly living in city suburbs with lower socio-economic status, high occurrence of social deprivation, high crime rates and high percentage of relatively newly arrived immigrants/refugees with weak connection to Swedish society, leading to further marginalisation, alienation and personal security issues.</p> <p>This has escalated during the last decade, since the NRIS was developed.</p>	critical problem	irrelevant	absent	absent	<p>Adopted measures: The NRIS acknowledges the need for improved living conditions and greater equality, but it does not include specific measures targeting the geographic concentration of Roma in segregated and socio-economically marginalised suburban areas. No structural initiatives have been launched within the NRIS framework to counteract territorial stigmatisation or to integrate housing, employment, education, and security policies in areas where Roma are disproportionately affected.</p> <p>Effectiveness: General urban development or anti-segregation programmes (e.g. "Handslag för bostadsbyggande", local safety plans) may benefit Roma indirectly, but without ethnic-specific targeting or inclusion measures, their effectiveness for Roma communities remains unverified and likely limited. Place-based initiatives often fail to recognise the specific historical and social context of Roma marginalisation.</p> <p>Outreach: There is no evidence that national or municipal urban planning strategies systematically involve Roma perspectives or focus on improving personal security, trust in authorities, or access to rights in segregated neighbourhoods. Efforts that do reach Roma tend to be short-term and reliant on civil society or bridge-builders working without strategic support.</p> <p>Data collection: No disaggregated data is collected on the residential concentration of Roma or the compounded social risks they face in vulnerable suburbs. As a result, there is no basis for evidence-based policy adjustments or targeted support. Roma families remain largely invisible in urban social planning and neighbourhood security assessments.</p>



*Social protection*

<b>Problems and conditions:</b>	<b>Significance:</b>	<b>Identified by strategy:</b>	<b>Measures to address:</b>	<b>Targets defined:</b>	<b>Details of NRIS implementation relevant to the problem:</b>
High at-risk-of social deprivation	critical problem	mentioned but not analysed sufficiently	present but insufficient	adequate but with room for improvement	<p>Adopted measures: The NRIS sets long-term goals for equal participation and access to rights but lacks concrete, cross-sectoral measures targeting social deprivation specifically among Roma. Most interventions relevant to deprivation—such as municipal support programmes, child/family social work, or integration initiatives—are not designed with a Roma focus and are often implemented without minority-sensitive frameworks.</p> <p>Effectiveness: The absence of targeted, binding measures means that interventions often fail to address the root causes of deprivation affecting Roma, such as multi-generational poverty, low institutional trust, antigypsyism, and structural exclusion. Civil society has highlighted that although some bridge-building or empowerment projects exist, they have limited systemic impact and rely on external funding rather than institutional commitment.</p> <p>Outreach: Efforts to reduce deprivation, including social services, housing support, and educational outreach, often do not reach Roma communities effectively due to barriers such as mistrust, stigma, and lack of cultural competence. Roma who do engage may find the services insufficiently adapted to their needs, and participation varies widely by municipality.</p> <p>Data collection: There is no systematic national data collection that maps social deprivation disaggregated by ethnicity, including Roma. This lack of visibility in official statistics hampers efforts to identify needs, allocate resources, and evaluate whether existing measures are reducing deprivation in Roma communities. The ongoing invisibility of Roma in</p>

					poverty and welfare statistics perpetuates the cycle of marginalisation.
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	mentioned but not analysed sufficiently	present but insufficient	some targets but not relevant	<p>Adopted measures: The NRIS acknowledges barriers to employment and social inclusion but does not explicitly address the issue of eligibility rules or conditionality in welfare and employment support systems. There are no specific NRIS-linked reforms aiming to improve means-testing criteria or adjust job-search requirements to better suit marginalised groups such as Roma.</p> <p>Effectiveness: In practice, eligibility and conditionality rules continue to present barriers for Roma, particularly for individuals with irregular work histories, limited formal education, or ongoing experiences of discrimination. Strict job-search conditions and opaque application procedures can disqualify Roma from support or discourage them from applying.</p> <p>Outreach: Mainstream services such as the Swedish Public Employment Service and municipal social welfare offices apply universal eligibility criteria, with limited adjustments for minority-specific barriers. Bridge-builders and Roma civil society organisations have reported that Roma clients often fall through the cracks, either due to incomplete applications or administrative complexity.</p> <p>Data collection: There is no Roma-disaggregated data available regarding how eligibility rules or conditionality affect Roma access to benefits or employment support. Nor are there regular impact assessments to evaluate whether these systems operate equitably across ethnic or socio-economic groups. As a result, structural exclusion remains difficult to track or correct through policy.</p>

*Social services*

<b>Problems and conditions:</b>	<b>Significance:</b>	<b>Identified by strategy:</b>	<b>Measures to address:</b>	<b>Targets defined:</b>	<b>Details of NRIS implementation relevant to the problem:</b>
Lack of adequacy of programmes for addressing indebtedness (providing counselling and financial support)	critical problem	irrelevant	absent	absent	<p>Adopted measures: The NRIS does not contain any explicit objectives or measures targeting over-indebtedness among Roma. National strategies for financial literacy and debt counselling are designed for the general population and rarely adapted to the specific socio-economic vulnerabilities or structural exclusion experienced by Roma.</p> <p>Effectiveness: Roma individuals often face multiple and intersecting disadvantages—such as early onset of debt, exclusion from formal employment, and lack of trust in public institutions—that are not addressed in mainstream financial counselling services. Therefore, even when such programmes exist, their reach and effectiveness among Roma remain limited.</p> <p>Outreach: While some municipalities offer budget and debt counselling services (budget- och skuldrådgivning), few actively tailor these to national minority groups or offer culturally adapted outreach. Roma civil society reports low participation due to barriers like digital exclusion, bureaucratic language, and lack of cultural awareness among service providers.</p> <p>Data collection: There is no systematic data collection or reporting on Roma participation in debt counselling services. Nor is there ethnic-disaggregated data on levels of indebtedness or outcomes from support measures. This makes it difficult to evaluate whether existing services are equitable or effective in preventing long-term financial exclusion for Roma communities.</p>

*Child protection*

<b>Problems and conditions:</b>	<b>Significance:</b>	<b>Identified by strategy:</b>	<b>Measures to address:</b>	<b>Targets defined:</b>	<b>Details of NRIS implementation relevant to the problem:</b>
Segregated or discriminatory child-protection services provided to Roma	significant problem	understood with limitations	adequate but with room for improvement	adequate but with room for improvement	<p>Adopted measures: The NRIS lacks explicit goals or targeted actions addressing child protection for Roma families. While the overall strategy references the importance of equal treatment within social services, it does not include specific commitments related to the application of the Care of Young Persons Act (LVU) or minority-sensitive practices in child protection cases. No national guidelines or directives exist to ensure Roma rights are upheld in LVU procedures.</p> <p>Effectiveness: Roma families continue to report discriminatory treatment by social services, especially in cases involving child removal. There is a documented failure to operationalise minority rights in assessments and placement decisions. Promising practices involving Roma bridge-builders or mediators are not systematically supported or mandated, which limits their impact on improving trust and fairness in the system.</p> <p>Outreach: A few initiatives—such as Roma inclusion projects in Stockholm’s social services and targeted bridge-builder training—have addressed cultural competence in family-related interventions. However, these remain isolated, project-based, and not anchored in binding policy or national frameworks. Roma civil society actors often express concern that their expertise is ignored or resisted by authorities.</p> <p>Data collection: There is no disaggregated data on the number of Roma children placed in care, nor on whether their cultural and linguistic rights are respected in line with the Minority Act. Although the Parliamentary Ombudsman (JO) has handled cases of Roma rights violations in child protection, there is no routine monitoring of ethnic disparities or systematic</p>

					review of decisions affecting Roma children.
Early marriages	significant problem	understood with limitations	adequate but with room for improvement	adequate but with room for improvement	<p>Adopted measures: The NRIS does not contain any specific objectives, actions, or indicators related to the prevention of early marriages within the Roma minority. There is also no national strategy that combines children's rights, minority rights, and gender perspectives to address child marriage in the context of national minorities. Instead, the issue is typically addressed under general legislation prohibiting child marriage, without accounting for the cultural, social, or historical dimensions specific to Roma communities.</p> <p>Effectiveness: The absence of targeted measures and a lack of understanding of how early marriage manifests in different Roma groups have resulted in low effectiveness. Roma civil society organisations report that public authorities often lack tools to prevent situations where children are pressured into marriage-like arrangements or to support young individuals who seek to break away from such structures.</p> <p>Outreach: Isolated initiatives—mostly led by Roma women's organisations—have raised the issue through dialogue with youth, parents, and school staff. However, these efforts are typically project-based and lack long-term institutional or financial support. Public institutions generally lack systems to identify risks or to engage in culturally informed prevention within Roma communities.</p> <p>Data collection: There is no public data on the prevalence of early marriages within the Roma population in Sweden. This makes it difficult to measure the scale of the issue or assess the impact of any interventions. The absence of disaggregated ethnicity data, combined with fears around disclosing sensitive family matters, contributes to the continued invisibility of the problem.</p>

<p>Roma families mainly living in city suburbs with lower socio-economic status, high occurrence of social deprivation, high crime rates and high percentage of relatively newly arrived immigrants/refugees with weak connection to Swedish society, leading to further marginalisation, alienation and personal security issues.</p> <p>Children living in these areas today run a higher risk of being exposed to robbery, drugs and recruitment to violent gangs.</p> <p>This has escalated during the last decade, since the NRIS was developed.</p>	significant problem	irrelevant	absent	absent	<p>Adopted measures: The NRIS does not include explicit measures addressing the geographic and structural segregation that disproportionately affects Roma families in socio-economically deprived suburbs. While the strategy emphasizes general goals of equal opportunities and participation, it lacks targeted actions to address the compounded risks faced by Roma living in marginalised urban areas. Some municipalities have implemented local Roma inclusion strategies, but these are isolated efforts and not guided by a national mandate.</p> <p>Effectiveness: Given the absence of systemic and location-sensitive policies, effectiveness has been limited. Roma families continue to report feeling unsafe and underserved by both social services and law enforcement. Children in these areas face elevated risks of exposure to criminality and gang recruitment, but there are few coordinated or culturally informed prevention strategies aimed specifically at Roma youth.</p> <p>Outreach: Most outreach efforts in these communities are designed as general social inclusion or crime prevention initiatives, not tailored to the needs or realities of Roma families. Roma civil society has called for more targeted interventions, but few have been adopted or institutionalised.</p> <p>Data collection: No disaggregated data is collected to assess how Roma families are affected by urban segregation, social deprivation, or exposure to violence. Consequently, the problem remains statistically invisible in public planning and policy evaluation. Some qualitative studies (e.g., in Malmö) provide partial insight, but no comprehensive national data exists.</p>
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*Promoting (awareness of) Roma arts, culture, and history*

<b>Problems and conditions:</b>	<b>Significance:</b>	<b>Identified by strategy:</b>	<b>Measures to address:</b>	<b>Targets defined:</b>	<b>Details of NRIS implementation relevant to the problem:</b>
Poor or lacking awareness of the general population of the contribution of Roma art and culture to national and European heritage	significant problem	understood with limitations	adequate but with room for improvement	adequate but with room for improvement	<p>Adopted measures: The NRIS acknowledges the importance of Roma cultural expression and its recognition as part of the national cultural heritage. However, implementation has primarily focused on small-scale, project-based initiatives. Notable examples include support for cultural events and exhibitions, as well as cooperation with Roma civil society in producing educational materials. Public agencies such as the Living History Forum have been tasked with promoting awareness of Roma history and antigypsyism, but Roma arts and culture have received less structured attention.</p> <p>Effectiveness: Measures taken so far have not reached the broader population in a sustained or visible way. While certain public projects (e.g., <i>Rom San – We Are Roma</i>) have had meaningful reach, they remain isolated exceptions. Most activities are not repeated, scaled, or integrated into national cultural policy, limiting their impact.</p> <p>Outreach: Outreach efforts have primarily targeted Roma communities or specific stakeholder groups rather than majority society. There are no binding national obligations for municipalities or cultural institutions to promote Roma arts or cultural heritage as part of their regular programming.</p> <p>Data collection: There is no systematic monitoring of the public's awareness or attitudes regarding Roma cultural contributions. The lack of audience research or performance indicators makes it difficult to evaluate the long-term impact of cultural promotion initiatives.</p>
Exclusion of	significant	understood with	adequate but	adequate but with	Adopted measures: The National Roma Strategic



Roma communities from national cultural narratives	problem	limitations	with room for improvement	room for improvement	<p>Framework (NRIS) includes overarching goals to promote Roma cultural heritage, yet it lacks a binding or systemic approach to integrating Roma narratives into the national cultural canon. Some national agencies, such as the Living History Forum and the Swedish Arts Council, have initiated limited projects or commissions involving Roma representatives. However, there is no dedicated national plan or curriculum directive that ensures Roma history and culture are consistently included in public education, media, or cultural programming.</p> <p>Effectiveness: The measures adopted have had minimal impact on altering dominant cultural narratives. Roma culture remains underrepresented in national museums, media, school curricula, and public cultural institutions. The limited visibility reinforces the marginalisation of Roma identity in broader Swedish society.</p> <p>Outreach: Most initiatives target Roma audiences or operate within Roma civil society networks. Very few efforts are designed for the general public or systematically implemented across national platforms (e.g., public broadcasting, national exhibitions, or cultural campaigns). There is a lack of institutional commitment to ensure that Roma contributions are celebrated and embedded in the mainstream cultural narrative.</p> <p>Data collection: There is no consistent or structured data collection regarding the inclusion of Roma in national cultural content. Without tracking representation or impact, there is limited basis for policy improvement or accountability. Civil society monitoring occasionally addresses these gaps, but such efforts remain fragmented and underfunded.</p>
Romani history and culture not included in school curricula and textbooks	significant problem	understood with	adequate but with room for	adequate but with room for	<p>While Romani history and culture have historically been underrepresented in Swedish education, the national curriculum (Lgr22) now includes a clear requirement to teach about the culture, language, religion, and history of all five recognized national</p>

for both Roma and non-Roma students		limitations	improvement	improvement	<p>minorities, including Roma. This requirement is embedded across several subjects such as social studies, religion, and Swedish. Despite this, implementation remains inconsistent.</p> <p>Adopted measures: The revised curriculum (Lgr22) mandates education on national minorities, including Roma. The Living History Forum has also developed materials on Roma history and antigypsyism for schools.</p> <p>Measures' effectiveness: Formal inclusion in the curriculum is a step forward, but effectiveness is hindered by a lack of teacher training, low institutional awareness, and weak integration of Roma-related content into textbooks and lesson plans.</p> <p>Measures' outreach: The measure is national in scope, but practical implementation varies significantly by municipality and school. Roma perspectives remain marginalised in many classrooms.</p> <p>Data collection: There is no systematic monitoring to assess whether Roma history and culture are actually taught. Neither the Swedish National Agency for Education nor the Equality Ombudsman collect relevant disaggregated data on curriculum implementation or educational outcomes related to Roma inclusion.</p>
Lack of inclusion of Romani language in schools, and development of necessary educational materials and resources for Romani	significant problem	understood with limitations	adequate but with room for improvement	adequate but with room for improvement	<p>Adopted measures: Since the 2015 legal amendment strengthening the right to mother tongue instruction for national minorities, Roma children are entitled to Romani Chib education even without prior knowledge. The National Agency for Education has developed curricula and materials in various Romani dialects. Some higher education institutions offer training and revitalisation courses, and a small number of municipalities provide instruction in</p>

language preservation and teaching					<p>Romani Chib.</p> <p>Effectiveness: Despite legal rights and some supportive initiatives, uptake remains low. In the 2022/2023 school year, only 590 out of 2,373 eligible Roma pupils (approximately 25%) received mother tongue instruction. This indicates limited effectiveness in promoting language preservation or cultural belonging. Availability of teachers and awareness of the right remain critical barriers.</p> <p>Outreach: Outreach is limited. Instruction is concentrated in a few municipalities, often dependent on individual Roma bridge-builders or educators. The overall system lacks structure, with many schools unaware or unprepared to support Romani language learning.</p> <p>Data collection: The National Agency for Education collects annual statistics on mother tongue instruction, disaggregated by minority group. However, there is no broader data on language proficiency, the availability and quality of Romani language resources, or the longer-term impact on revitalisation. Civil society has called for more proactive monitoring and investment.</p>
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