

LATVIA

Country Fiche

Assessment of the progress in the NRSF implementation
between 1 June 2023 and 30 March 2025

APPROACH OF THE NATIONAL ROMA STRATEGIC FRAMEWORK (NRSF)	<p>Since 2022, the Roma policy in Latvia has been implemented within the framework of the National Roma Strategy – “Plan for the Implementation of the Roma Strategic Framework”, ensuring the continuity of this strategy until 2027. The Plan for the Implementation of the Roma Strategic Framework for 2022-2023 (hereinafter – the NRSF 2022-2023) was implemented and in 2024 the continuation of the NRSF was approved - the Plan for the Implementation of Measures within the Roma Strategic Framework for 2024-2027 (hereinafter - the NRSF 2024-2027).¹</p> <p>The main goal of the NRSF 2024-2027 is to promote Roma participation in various aspects of social life, including education, employment, health, housing, civil society, and culture.</p>
ESTIMATED ROMA POPULATION	<p>According to statistical data provided by the Central Statistical Bureau of Latvia, at the beginning of 2024, 4,630 Roma were living in Latvia, making up approximately 0.3% of the total population.² Meanwhile, data from the Office of Citizenship and Migration Affairs indicates that 6,441 people of Roma ethnicity were registered in Latvia in 2024.³</p> <p>Representatives of Roma NGOs argue that the actual number of Roma in Latvia is likely higher, as many Roma do not indicate their ethnicity in passports or other documents. Additionally, those who emigrate abroad for work or family reunification often do not officially notify the authorities of their departure.</p>
National Roma Contact Point (NRCP)	<p>The Ministry of Culture, Cohesive Society Policy Department</p>

HORIZONTAL OBJECTIVES

1. FIGHT AND PREVENT ANTIGYPSYISM AND DISCRIMINATION

PROGRESS MADE <ul style="list-style-type: none"> In the reporting period measures were taken to reduce prejudice and stereotype-based attitudes toward Roma in the framework of the implementation of NRSF 2022-2023 and the NRSF 2024-2027. However, these efforts have been insufficient to bring about 	AREAS FOR IMPROVEMENT <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The NRSF 2024-2027 includes plans for a public awareness campaign to improve understanding of Roma culture, history, daily life, and other related issues, as well as to combat antigypsyism. However, no other measures to address antigypsyism or
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¹ <https://likumi.lv/ta/id/354561>

² <https://www.pmlp.gov.lv/lv/fizisko-personu-registra-statistika-2024gada>

³ <https://www.pmlp.gov.lv/lv/media/11043/download?attachment>

<p>a significant change in societal attitudes towards Roma. No actions were implemented to analyse hate crimes and hate speech (both online and offline) against Roma or to reduce such incidents.</p>	<p>discrimination are included in the NRSF 2024-2027. There is no assurance that the measures outlined in the NRSF 2024-2027 will effectively change negative public attitudes toward Roma, particularly in employment and education. Additional targeted measures should be implemented to address antigypsyism and discrimination, as well as surveys or studies conducted to analyse situation in this area, including hate crimes and hate speech against Roma.</p>
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2. REDUCE POVERTY AND SOCIAL EXCLUSION

PROGRESS MADE	AREAS FOR IMPROVEMENT
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> No significant achievements have been made in reducing poverty and social exclusion. Furthermore, no specific measures targeting the Roma community have been implemented. Roma families have better access to social protection services in municipalities where Roma mediators are active and where there is cooperation between social services, Roma community activists, and NGO representatives. In the reporting period within the EU co-funded project ‘Latvian Roma Platform’ implemented by The Ministry of Culture, seven Roma mediators in cooperation with municipalities’ social services provided a support to the disadvantaged Roma families and in the result Roma access to social services and better social protection is improved.⁴ In 2023, within the framework of the project ‘Professional Social Work Development in Municipalities’ a methodological guide titled ‘Methodological Material for Social Work in a Diverse Society’ was developed, providing recommendations for working with the Roma community.⁵ 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Targeted measures to improve Roma access to social services and social protection, enhance the skills of social service professionals in working with the Roma target group, or strengthen cooperation between social workers and Roma mediators should be included in the framework of the NRSF. The 2023 study found that Roma children with weak Latvian language skills face difficulties integrating into the education process and socialising. To support gradual integration into education, it is essential to provide Roma teacher assistants, who can also help maintain communication between the school, the child, and the parents.⁶ It is crucial for municipal institutions, including social service employees, to develop strong communication skills when working with Roma families, as well as a willingness to assist these families and build relationships based on trust.

⁴ Balvi County Municipality, Jurmala City Municipality, Ventspils City Municipality, Jelgava City Municipality, Daugavpils City Municipality, Riga City Municipality, etc.

⁵ Labklājības ministrija. (2023). *Metodiskais materiāls sociālajam darbam daudzveidīgā sabiedrībā (Methodological Material for Social Work in a Diverse Society)*. Rīga., <https://www.lm.gov.lv/lv/metodiskie-materiali-0>; <https://www.lm.gov.lv/lv/media/22683/download?attachment>

⁶ SIA Civitta Latvija. (2023). *Pētījums par romu situāciju Latvijā (Study on the Situation of Roma in Latvia)*. Rīga, p. 36.

3. PROMOTE PARTICIPATION THROUGH EMPOWERMENT, COOPERATION AND TRUST

CONTEXT

- The Advisory Council for Promoting Roma Participation (hereinafter - The Roma Council) officially includes three Roma NGO representatives.⁷ The aim of the Roma Council is to monitor and develop the implementation of Roma participation measures in accordance with the Guidelines for the Development of a Cohesion and Civic Active Society for 2021-2027 and the recommendations of the Council of Europe Recommendation approved by the European Union on 12 March 2021.
- The Roma Council has not been effectively used to strengthen Roma involvement in national policy development and implementation.⁸ Proposals from Roma Council members have not been reviewed or discussed in relevant parliamentary ('Saeima') committees. It remains unclear whether the issues discussed at Roma Council meetings have any impact on the implementation of the NRSF.

PROGRESS MADE

- The drafting of the NRSF 2024-2027 involved a broader range of civil society representatives, including Roma NGOs⁹ and non-Roma NGOs that provide support to the Roma community.¹⁰
- In the reporting period within implementation of the NRSF several measures proposed by the Roma civil society organisations were implemented, however representatives of Roma NGOs

AREAS FOR IMPROVEMENT

- Roma NGOs have lack interest in applying for funding through project competitions and other support programmes, and that they do not have the necessary capacity to attract funding.¹² Establish a support mechanism for Roma NGOs and provide stable, long-funding for their activities, enabling these organisations to operate sustainably, both in preserving cultural heritage and in advocating for community interests and participating in decision-making.
- Roma initiatives should be properly discussed and approved within the framework of the NRSF, which would significantly increase the motivation of Roma stakeholders to actively engage in its implementation.
- Roma NGO representatives point out that many support programmes are practically inaccessible to Roma NGOs due to a lack of capacity and experience, or because the available funding is too limited to effectively implement initiatives.¹³

⁷ <https://www.km.gov.lv/lv/konsultativa-padome-0>

⁸ https://www.km.gov.lv/lv/konsultativa-padome-0?utm_source=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.google.com%2F

⁹ Representatives of NGO Roma Culture Centre ('Romu Kultūras Centrs'), the Society Integration Association 'ALTERNATIVAS' (Sabiedrības integrācijas biedrība 'ALTERNATIVAS'), NGO 'Sāre Khetene', the Jelgava City and District Roma NGO 'Čačune Roma' (Jelgavas pilsētas un novada romu biedrība 'Čačune Roma'), Latvian Gypsy Members' Association and Supreme Gypsy Council ('Latvijas Čigānu biedru apvienība un augstākā čigānu padome'), Kraslava Roma Association ('Krāslavas romu biedrība'), Latvian Gypsy Health Centre MĀNUŠS ('Latvijas čigānu veselības centrs MĀNUŠS'), Jēkabpils Roma Association 'ŠĀTRA' (Jēkabpils romu biedrības 'ŠĀTRA'), and the international organisation 'International Roma Union' (ārvalstu organizācija 'Starptautiskā Romu Apvienība').

¹⁰ Latvian Women's NGOs Cooperation Network (biedrība 'Latvijas Sieviešu nevalstisko organizāciju sadarbības tīkls'), Latvian Human Rights Centre ('Latvijas Cilvēktiesību centrs'), Association of Youth Organisations 'IMKA Latvija' ('Jaunatnes organizāciju apvienība 'IMKA Latvija'), Creative Association for Youth 'TREPES' (Radošā apvienība jauniešiem 'TREPES').

¹² SIA Civitta Latvija. (2023). *Pētījums par romu situāciju Latvijā (Study on the Situation of Roma in Latvia)*. Riga: pp. 34.

¹³ Interview with representatives of the Roma NGO 'The Society Integration Association 'ALTERNATIVAS' (11 October 2024)

<p>have highlighted that many planned measures under the NRSF were not carried out due to a lack of funding, insufficient interinstitutional cooperation, and inadequate coordination.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In the reporting period within the NRSF support activities for Roma NGOs were provided to improve their capacity and professional skills. However only one Roma NGO's project application was approved under the NGO support programme. • According to the information set in the 'Report of the Impact Assessment of the NRSF 2022-2023', in-depth interviews were conducted with representatives of four Roma NGOs.¹¹ Roma mediators were also involved in the preparation of the 2023 study on the Roma situation. 	
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SECTORAL OBJECTIVES	
4. INCREASE EFFECTIVE EQUAL ACCESS TO QUALITY INCLUSIVE MAINSTREAM EDUCATION	
<p>PROGRESS MADE</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The overall educational situation of Roma has improved, however the outcome indicators set out in the NRSF 2022-2023 were not fully achieved. • In the reporting period within implementation of the NRSF Roma mediators and Roma teacher assistant have fostered better collaboration with students' parents and enhanced parental education to reduce early school dropout rates among Roma students. Individual support was provided to students when needed. • A reform of pedagogical-medical commissions has been initiated, a survey of municipal pedagogical-medical commissions' members to assess their work, with particular attention to how evaluations 	<p>AREAS FOR IMPROVEMENT</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In the implementation of the general reform of pedagogical-medical commissions, special attention should be given to Roma children, who are disproportionately placed in special education institutions compared to other children. • The planned provision of Roma teacher assistants in schools attended by Roma children was not fully implemented.¹⁴ This is the reason to ensure the employment of Roma teacher assistants for Roma students in schools by developing an appropriate model for recruiting and training potential Roma teacher assistants, and allocate the necessary resources, as well as by preparing and distributing accessible informative

¹¹ Romu kultūras centrs, Latvijas romu sieviešu biedrība 'Sāre khetene', Jelgavas pilsētas un novada romu biedrība 'Romanu Drom' ('Way of Roma'), Jēkabpils romu biedrība 'ŠĀTRA' Baltic Institute of Social Sciences. (2024). *Plāna romu stratēģiskā ietvara pasākumu īstenošanai 2022.-2023.gadam ietekmes izvērtējums (Impact assessment of the Plan for the Implementation of the Roma Strategic Framework 2022–2023)*. Riga, p. 47.

¹⁴ In the framework of the NRSF 2022-2023 it was planned to increase the number of Roma mediators and teacher assistants working in Latvian municipalities to 12 people by 2024.

<p>of Roma children, are conducted. However, in the reporting period within implementation of the NRSF the planned testing methods have not been implemented, and awareness-raising activities have not been organised.</p>	<p>materials outlining the role and responsibilities of Roma teacher assistants.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The monitoring of Roma education should include not only statistical data but also information on the quality of support measures, accessibility of education and the guarantee of Roma children's right to education.
5. INCREASE EFFECTIVE EQUAL ACCESS TO QUALITY AND SUSTAINABLE EMPLOYMENT	
<p>PROGRESS MADE</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The number of long-term unemployed Roma has decreased, however it did not meet the target set in the NRSF 2022-2023, which aimed for 35% of all unemployed Roma by 2024. The State Employment Agency (hereinafter – SEA) regularly provides registered Roma job seekers with individual support in job searching, including consultations with employment agents, personalised career guidance on the labour market situation, and information on available job opportunities.¹⁵ However, a detailed evaluation of the SEA services for unemployed Roma has not been conducted. In the reporting period within the NRSF Roma mediators in municipalities (Balvi, Jūrmala, Ventspils, and Jelgava) actively promoted Roma participation in the labour market and worked to address employment issues, including collaborating with the SEA to support unemployed Roma.¹⁶ 	<p>AREAS FOR IMPROVEMENT</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> It is necessary to review and expand the NRSF 2024-2027 with new and appropriate measures to promote Roma employment and healthcare, taking into account the results of the 2023 study and the recommendations of the EU Council Recommendation. Access to lifelong learning and skills development should be improved or simplified, and additional measures need to be implemented to combat discrimination against Roma in the labour market. The family assistant service targeted at Roma should be implemented in the framework of the NRSF. Such support should be provided by the social services in municipalities with large Roma population. Support targeted measures for the long-term unemployed Roma should be implemented within the framework of the NRSF to provide them with effective support for better access to the labour market.
6. IMPROVE ROMA HEALTH AND EFFECTIVE EQUAL ACCESS TO QUALITY HEALTHCARE AND SOCIAL SERVICES	
<p>PROGRESS MADE</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> It is not possible to determine progress to improve Roma access to social services and social work development which is reached in the reporting period within the NRSF, 	<p>AREAS FOR IMPROVEMENT</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Survey data has shown that it is necessary to provide informative and educational activities on the importance of contraceptive

¹⁵ In 2022, 189 individual career consultations were provided to registered Roma unemployed people. Latvijas Republikas Kultūras ministrija. (2023). *Pārskats par romu līdzdalības veicināšanas pasākumiem 2021. un 2022.gadā (Report on Measures to Promote Roma Participation in 2021 and 2022)*. Riga, p. 40.

¹⁶ Latvijas Republikas Kultūras ministrija. (2023). *Pārskats par romu līdzdalības veicināšanas pasākumiem 2021. un 2022.gadā (Report on Measures to Promote Roma Participation in 2021 and 2022)*. Riga, p. 16.

<p>because there are no measures targeted on Roma specifically.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Only in Ventspils municipality does a Roma mediator regularly provide support in health promotion and disease prevention. 	<p>methods for health protection.¹⁷ These activities should be reflect to the needs of Roma communities, because there is a lack of interest and motivation among Roma to participate in health-related activities.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Measures to enhance Roma community's knowledge of sexual and reproductive health should be implemented within the NRSF. The study on the effectiveness of social services provided to Roma, including their access to social services, social protection, and child protection should be carried out the framework of the NRSF. Targeted measures to enhance skills of social work specialists who work with Roma should be implemented within the NRSF, especially to provide Roma available information on the procedures for better accessing social services.¹⁸
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PARTNERSHIPS AND INSTITUTIONAL CAPACITY

The NRSF 2024-2027 working group included representatives from key policy sectors (culture, education, employment and welfare, health), Office of the Ombudsman and key stakeholders (Roma and non-Roma NGOs). Ministries of these policy areas are co-responsible for implementing the NRSF. However the Roma Council has not been effectively used to strengthen Roma involvement in development and implementation of the NRSF.

The NRCP has not actively promoted the involvement of Roma and pro-Roma NGOs in EU-funded projects related to Roma issues in key areas, because it complies with the Law on Prevention of Conflict of Interest, follows EU funding guidelines for open project calls, and adheres to principles of transparent governance.

Data collection on the situation of Roma in Latvia remains fragmented and primarily based on a qualitative approach in policy key areas. The findings and data from the 2023 study on Roma situation were not included in the outcome indicators of the NRSF 2024-2027, making it difficult to measure the direct impact of Roma policy planning.

PROMISING PRACTICES

Within the framework of the NRSF 2022-2023, various measures were implemented in education, fostering Roma participation and raising public awareness regarding Roma art, culture, and history. Most of these activities were carried out under the EU co-funded project 'Latvian Roma Platform', including:

¹⁷ SIA Civitta Latvija. (2023). *Pētījums par romu situāciju Latvijā (Study on the Situation of Roma in Latvia)*. Latvijas Republikas Kultūras ministrija, p. 88.

¹⁸ *Pētījums par romu situāciju Latvijā*, Rīga: SIA "Civitta Latvija", 2023., 74., 75.lpp.

- support for Roma mediators working in Latvian municipalities (7 Roma mediators worked in municipalities to collaborate with social services, aiming to improve Roma access to social services and strengthen social protection¹⁹),
- capacity-building activities for Roma women and youth (supported local Roma youth initiatives through the Latvian Roma Youth Practical Workshop '*SĀRE KHETENE*'),
- events aimed at strengthening Roma civil society (training and workshops);
- culture and raise awareness activities to combat antigypsyism.

These initiatives involved Roma NGO representatives, regional NGO support resource centres and non-Roma NGOs advocating for various social groups.²⁰

¹⁹ Balvi County Municipality, Jurmala City Municipality, Ventspils City Municipality, Jelgava City Municipality, Daugavpils City Municipality, Riga City Municipality, etc.

²⁰ No detailed information about the project's implemented activities starting from 2023 onwards is available on the MoC's website:
<https://www.km.gov.lv/lv/latvijas-romu-platforma-vii-0>