



Progress made by EU Member States in Roma integration

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Věra Jourová

Commissioner for Justice,
Consumers and Gender Equality



Directorate-General for
Justice and Consumers



The 2016 Report on the implementation of the EU Framework for National Roma Integration Strategies and the Council Recommendations on effective Roma integration measures in the Member States.

In 2011, the European Commission adopted an **EU Framework for National Roma Integration Strategies**⁽¹⁾. It sets out a comprehensive approach in all key areas (education, employment, health-care and housing), which interlinks the fight against discrimination and social and economic inclusion.

All EU Member States⁽²⁾ have adopted National Roma Integration Strategies or integrated sets of policy measures based on this Framework and the Commission annually assesses the progress. In addition, the Council adopted in 2013 a Council Recommendation on effective Roma integration measures in the Member States, the first ever legal instrument explicitly on Roma. The Recommendation provides guidance to Member States to make more effective their measures to achieve Roma integration and to strengthen the implementation of their National Roma Integration Strategies.

The role of the European Commission in EU Roma integration

Apart of monitoring the enforcement of legislation, the European Commission gives guidance to Member States under both the EU Framework and the Europe 2020 strategy through Country Specific Recommendations in the European Semester. It provides funding linked to policy priorities, facilitates the dialogue and exchange of experience and best practice through the network of the **National Roma Contact Points**⁽³⁾, and holds bilateral meetings with Member States, civil society organisations and other stakeholders. It closely monitors the progress made in advancing Roma integration by Member States.

(1) http://ec.europa.eu/justice/discrimination/roma/eu-framework/index_en.htm

(2) Except for Malta which does not have Roma on its territory.

(3) http://ec.europa.eu/justice/discrimination/files/roma_nationalcontactpoints_en.pdf

1. Fight against discrimination

In 2016, discrimination continues to be widespread across the EU (see **Eurobarometer on Discrimination in the EU**⁽⁴⁾). Anti-Gypsyism, hate speech and hate crime have been on the rise across Europe.

Member States focus on promoting intercultural dialogue, diversity, information on Roma history and culture, including the Roma holocaust. Some also run campaigns against hate crime. All these measures are essential in order to promote equality. However, a more systematic approach, including practical enforcement of antidiscrimination legislation, is needed to see tangible change on the ground.

Promising practices

Fighting anti-Roma rhetoric and protests (Bulgaria)

The 2015 'Together we are better' campaign was initiated by the Amalipe Center and includes several schools, community centres and youth groups as a peaceful response to the growing anti-Roma rhetoric and protests in Bulgaria. It aimed to involve both Roma and non-Roma people in joint activities to support local schools and prevent ethnic tensions, strengthen dialogue, and encourage tolerance and solidarity to avoid future conflicts.

Increasing awareness of equality in schools (Ireland)

The Irish Human Rights and Equality Commission launched a campaign to increase awareness of equality issues in schools. The main tool is a training manual designed to provide teachers with equality-based teaching resources to use across the curriculum. This encourages pupils to take action on equality, human rights and social justice issues in the classroom, at school or within their wider community.

Promoting public participation of Roma youth (Finland)

The 'Au Mensa' project on Roma youth participation used participatory methods to collect young Roma aspirations and develop ways of participating in society. Young Roma collected information using various methods including social media, interviews and questionnaires. Based on the results, a young Roma club was founded providing leisure activities and support in education and employment. A Roma Youth Council aiming to get their voices heard in public decision-making processes was launched. The aim was also to transfer the model of the Roma Youth Council to other cities.

2. Access to education

Education continues to receive the most attention by Member States in their integration measures.

The majority of Member States reported measures relevant to early childhood education and care, early school leaving, inclusive education and individualised support. Many Member States have adopted early school leaving strategies, but these do not explicitly target Roma, who continue to be over-represented among early school leavers.

Some Member States took pro-inclusive legal measures. However those need to be accompanied by effective implementation measures.

(4) <http://ec.europa.eu/COMMFrontOffice/PublicOpinion/index.cfm/Survey/getSurveyDetail/instruments/SPECIAL/surveyKy/2077>

Promising practice

Support for integration of Roma children and youth (Latvia)

The project is implemented by the NGO 'Center for Education Initiatives' in cooperation with municipalities of Daugavpils City, Jelgava city, Valmiera city, Valdermarpils city and Ventspils city. The main activities of these projects are: training of Roma mediators and supporting their work in schools and educational centres; establishing resource centres for Roma children; organising intercultural events; providing informative materials; training teachers on diversity management and non-discrimination in education.

3. Access to employment

Roma participation in the labour market remains very weak. Member States adopted measures targeted at the unemployed, supported training, and subsidised jobs for the long-term unemployed. Most Member States reported measures supporting a first work experience, vocational or on-the-job training, lifelong learning and skills development. Several Member States have taken initiatives on self-employment or entrepreneurship.

Promising practices

Civil-corporate cooperation to promote Roma employment in the private sector (Hungary)

The INTEGROM project coordinated by the Boston Consulting Group and Autonómia Foundation mobilised a voluntary coalition of diverse stakeholders (companies, civil and professional organisations). The aim of the programme was to help educated young Roma find employment in the private sector, at major companies. The partners are various large firms open to hiring more Roma employees. Roma participants are supported with training and personal coaching to be successful in the recruitment process, while the partner companies pay special attention to recruitment and provide on-the-job mentoring.

'Fit to job' approach (Germany)

Various Länder (Land of Rheinland-Pfalz, Berlin, Hamburg, North Rhine-Westphalia, Bavaria, Baden-Württemberg etc.) implement projects aimed at improving employment prospects for Roma, and in particular Roma youth. The 'Fit to job' approach is carried out through intensive one-to-one work with the applicant, starting already at school, through school career guidance, vocational training, language support, work with families, and employment services.

Improving Roma employment through services and fighting stereotypes (Lithuania)

The project financed by the European Social Fund and implemented by five Roma organisations will run until 2020. The project aims at developing a positive attitude towards Roma and eradicating stereotypes, and changing employer/employee relations in recruiting Roma. Plans exist to finance activities such as: development of social and professional skills, vocational guidance, development of general skills (e.g. digital literacy, languages, and entrepreneurship), vocational training, mediation and other assistance for jobseekers.

4. Access to healthcare

Access to healthcare, in particular in the most deprived areas, remains a challenge for Roma. Most Member States reported measures that facilitate access to healthcare and focus on preventive, protective measures, in particular vaccination of children, family planning and raising health awareness. They also work with civil societies. However, for some Roma, access to health is limited because of a lack of registration and health insurance coverage.

Promising practice

Healthy communities' programme (Slovak Republic)

This national project, co-run by the Ministry of Health and the programme's original creators (an NGO platform of stakeholders and various interested professions), is funded by the 2014-2020 European Structural and Investment Funds. The project was based on past experience that proved positive. While in 2003 it was implemented in 11 Roma settlements, in 2015 it was already implemented in 254. It aims at promoting access to healthcare through participatory, community-based health mediation.

5. Access to housing

Fighting segregation and preventing forced evictions are issues still insufficiently addressed. Several Member States reported measures promoting non-discriminatory access to social housing, while others reported fighting segregation.

Promising practice

'Romcivic' (France)

Romcivic is a project for the inclusion and citizenship of people living in slums and shanty towns, partly financed by the National Roma Contact Point. This project is run with the help of a team of 24 young volunteers, including 18 from Eastern Europe and living in settlements.

6. Cooperation and coordination

Public authorities at national level implement the majority of reported measures, especially in education and health, while local authorities are responsible for implementing measures in housing and employment. Civil organisations are most active in health, followed by education. Positive steps have been taken in enforcing the work and institutional capacity of the National Roma Contact Points, although their mandate and resources still vary considerably.

Promising practices

Integrated local action plan for the inclusion of marginalised residents (United Kingdom, Scotland)

EU funding allowed Glasgow to develop an integrated local action plan covering all key areas (education, employment, health and housing) to support the integration of marginalised residents, including Roma, in the Govanhill neighbourhood. Thanks to the dedicated efforts of Glasgow city council and its partners, the lives of Roma have been steadily improved.

Empowerment and cooperation through Local Action Groups (Bulgaria)

The municipality of Tundzha (in South-Eastern Bulgaria) sets a positive example of the benefits of empowerment through Local Action Groups (LAG) for the design of the municipality's integration policies. The LAG identified and prioritised the necessary actions to address the problems of the vulnerable groups in the fields of education, employment, health and housing. As a result, Tundzha municipality and the LAG jointly developed a Municipal Plan for Roma Integration (2015-2020). This is part of a long-term investment programme that contains previously implemented measures (e.g. cancellation fees in kindergartens, new kindergartens/facilities for children, vocational training, improved street network and infrastructure) and future projects (e.g. social housing, equal access to quality health services).

Mapping of Roma communities (in several Member States)

Several Member States have developed mapping of Roma communities by introducing ethnic or socio-economic indicators (i.e. deprived/segregated neighbourhoods, people most in need, poverty maps, etc.) in order to improve targeting and allocation of ESIF for Roma integration. It will also allow for monitoring the impact of the measures.

Promising practices

- Mapping Roma communities facilitates comprehensive and targeted support provided through 'Takeaway packages' to 150 of the most deprived Roma communities. **(Slovak Republic)**
- Mapping Roma settlements in municipalities with over 15 000 inhabitants is useful to have a more accurate picture of the scale of existing problems. **(Italy)**
- The Romanian institute for research on national minorities is implementing a project on mapping of Roma communities for community-level monitoring. Participation by the communities was an important element. Based on data collected, a set of indicators for monitoring progress of Roma inclusion at the local level will be developed and applied to results-based monitoring. **(Romania)**

The way forward

To achieve tangible and sustainable results, the Commission encourages Member States to:

- Set up national Roma platforms which should play a crucial role in ensuring the transparent involvement of all stakeholders in implementation, monitoring and reporting activities;
- Make full use of the new tools and European Structural and Investment Funds;
- Fight against discrimination and segregation; Monitor and fight hate speech and anti-Gypsyism; also through enforcing anti-discrimination and anti-racism and xenophobia legislation at national and local levels;
- Further develop data collection, monitoring and reporting to be able to measure the impact of the mainstream and targeted measures on Roma and the use of ESIF funds;
- Scale up successful and proven practices and support capacity building of local authorities and civil society;
- Support the achievement of Roma integration goals through inclusive mainstream policy reform and sustainable national funding.