



Estonia

Promoting Social Inclusion of Roma

A Study of National Policies

Mare Viies

Tallinn University of Technology

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Summary

Roma community in Estonia is very small; the official number of Roma in Estonia is 584 with the average estimate of 1,250 and the share of Roma in the total population is 0.1%. Roma in Estonia are not travellers; Roma population are frequently concentrated into relatively small communities in settlements or towns all over Estonia with the exception of 2 counties out of 15.

The poverty and social exclusion situation of Roma have not been investigated separately, therefore there are no statistics on the basis of what to characterise the poverty and social exclusion situation of Roma in relation to the population in general. Based on some few research results it can be said that unemployment, which is quite wide-spread among the Roma, influences the life of all community. Since income is often earned with odd jobs, state support is very important for many families because it is one of few permanent sources of income. Only 18 children were studying at Estonian general education schools in 2011 who had declared Romany as their mother or home tongue (in total 90 minors) and the share of early school leaving is high. From them 8 were studying at school for students with special needs (although very high in percentages of total it cannot be seen in the negative light only, but in some cases due to the individual approach definitely as an opportunity of developing certain talents) and 10 at so-called ordinary schools. Roma mostly have a family doctor based on state health insurance and they have no major problems with health insurance accessibility. Many Roma families are living in moderate conditions today.

In general there are few complaints registered by the official bodies mandated to deal with discrimination cases in Estonia. Some facts of discrimination have been mentioned in the reports of the ERCI and ENAR, mainly concerning stereotypes; unawareness of the majority of population in Estonia about the culture, history and life of Roma, the exclusion of Roma in the labour market; high share of Roma children in schools for students with special needs. The main gaps in relation to Roma in Estonia can be considered as missing systematic involvement of Roma and relevant national policies at the state level; low level of education and lack of vocational education do not enable the Roma to successfully compete in the labour market; inadequate fulfilment of compulsory school attendance by Roma children; measures are missing in pre-school education, which would ensure that healthy Roma children do not go to schools for students with special needs; there is no consistently working system to base training of the teachers teaching Roma children on; media shows mostly negative cases, amplifying thus the Roma related prejudices and stereotypes.

All policy documents in Estonia are sector based rather than nationality based, and Estonian legislation regards the indigenous population and all minorities as equal and no special policies have been worked out or enforced for the Roma. In the framework of different policy and governance arrangements on the basis of the Equal Treatment Act the integration of ethnic minorities, including Roma, takes place (Integration and Migration Foundation Our People manages different programmes (e.g., of the Estonian Integration Strategy 2008-2013) concerned with ethnic minorities); an inter-ministerial working group has been established to advance the involvement of Roma people, which is coordinated by the Ministry of Culture). There are no targets set for reducing poverty and social exclusion of Roma. Estonia's National Reform Programme does not pay attention to the minorities including Roma; and it has not set an objective of tackling the poverty and social exclusion experienced by Roma. The key challenges for Estonia are: ensure that all Roma children obtained at least basic education; improve

economic coping of working-age Roma population by increasing employment of Roma; improve the access to health care for Roma and promote healthy lifestyle; improve housing and environmental conditions of Roma population in cooperation between local governments and Roma community; improve the case management to ensure coverage of Roma people with minimum income schemes and social services.

1. Description of national situation

1.1. Description of Roma population

The oldest data on Roma people on the Estonian territory date back to the year 1533.¹ However, it is believed that Roma were in Estonia already before and their migration to Finland in 1515 was through Estonia. But data are still lacking on whether the Roma population in Estonia in the 16th century was permanent or they used Tallinn as a stop on their trading route. The Swedish era in the 17th century was significant for the Roma because it is assumed that Scandinavian Roma started to move to the Baltic countries then. A reason was, at least partly, the expatriation policy meaning that Sweden expatriated the Roma into the eastern part of the country, to the present day Finnish territory, which had a direct connection to the Baltic countries by land via Karelian Peninsula and Ingeri. It is not easy to determine the date of the first contacts because northern Estonia and first of all Tallinn had already before the period under Swedish power had close trade connections with Finland and Scandinavia. The Russian period in the 19 century was of decisive importance for the development of Estonian Roma (Estonia was ceded to Russia in 1721 as a result of the Great Northern War, and in 1809 also Finland was incorporated) because the route to east was more open than before.

The splitting of Estonian Roma into three different groups happened in the 19th century. The order of the Russian Tsar of 1839, according to which Russian Roma had to settle in places set for that purpose by the end of 1841, entered into force in Estonia in 1844 and the Roma people in the region were concentrated into the parish of Laiuse where they were registered. The Roma people at Laiuse (nowadays in the County of Jõgeva) spoke in addition to Romany also Estonian and by the start of the 20th century were strongly estonianised, among other things by intermarriages. After the settling order, new groups of Roma arrived Estonian territory, who gradually developed into Russian and Latvian Roma. Some of the Russian Roma came to Estonia only after the county of Petseri was joined to Estonia in 1920. Russian Roma were living most in the area of Petseri and the Lake Peipsi, in eastern part of Estonia. They spoke in addition to Romany also Russian and therefore stayed in Russian-speaking areas. The groups of Roma who came from Latvia were first living in southern and south-western parts of Estonia, toward the Latvian border. While Russian and Latvian groups of Roma were in addition to everything else (travelled together, intermarried etc.) close relatives also on the basis of dialects, then the differences in dialect between them and the group of Laiuse is even so large that it is difficult for them to understand each other.

The status of Estonian Roma population has been influenced most by the racial policy of Nazi Germany and later minority assimilation attempts by the Soviet Union. Descendants of historical Estonian Roma families are extremely few; most of the Roma living in Estonia today have moved

¹ This report contains a short overview of the development of Roma community in Estonia mainly based on: Tali, M., Kollom, K., Velberg, M.-L. *Naised Eesti mustlaskogukondades (Women in Estonian Roma Communities)*, and Blomster, R. *Eesti mustlased enne Teist Maailmasõda (Estonian Roma before the second World War)*.

here during the Soviet period from Latvia or Russia. The growth and decrease of Roma population is described in the table below (Table 1).

Table 1. Changes in Roma population in Estonia

Years	1897	1934	1959	1970	1979	1989	2000
Number of Roma	154	766	366	438	529	665	542

Source: Lutt, R., Vaba, L., Viikberg, J. 1999. Mustlased. Eesti rahvaste raamat: rahvusvähemused, -rühmad ja –killud (Roma. Estonian Peoples Book: National Minorities and Ethnic Groups). Compiled by J. Viikberg. Tallinn: Entsüklopeediakirjastus; Tali, M., Kollom, K., Velberg, M.-L. 2007. Naised Eesti mustlaskogukondades (Women in Estonian Roma Communities). Uurimuse aruanne (Research report). Tallinna Ülikooli Eesti Humanitaarinstituut, Kodanikeühiskonna Uurimis- ja Arenduskeskus.

According to the Roma and Travellers Division of the Council of Europe², the official number of Roma in Estonia is 584 (updated as of 3 August 2009) with the average estimate of 1,250 (the maximum estimate of 1,500 and minimum estimate 1,000)³ and the share of Roma in the total population is 0.1% (average total population 1,340,271 in July 2009). In the 2000 population census⁴, 542 persons, including 263 Estonian citizens (68 citizens of Russian Federation, 95 have other citizenships and the citizenship of 9 persons is not known), declared themselves as the Roma. The share of women of total Roma was 54% (295 women and 247 men).

According to the Population Register⁵ as of 5 May 2011, 633 citizens have pronounced themselves of Roma nation, including 582 have registered their place of residence in Estonia,⁶ 17 live in Estonia without registration and 25 of the Estonian Roma live abroad (491 adult and 91 juvenile Roma live in Estonia).

Majority of Roma use the national language as their mother tongue; the second most wide-spread languages are Russian and Estonian (Table 2).

² Roma and Travellers Division of the Council of Europe. http://www.coe.int/t/dg3/romatravellers/default_en.asp.

³ The number of Roma population in Estonia is characterised by different figures: 1,000-1,500 people (Liegeois, J.-P. 1994. Gypsies, Romas, Travellers. Strasbourg, Council of Europe Press); 800-1,000 people (Hernesniemi, P., Hannikainen, L. 2000. Roma Minorities in the Nordic and Baltic Countries – are their rights realised? Northern Institute for Environmental and Minority Law, Juridica Lapponia, No 24, Laplands University Press, Rovaniemi); 1,000 people (Gil-Robles, A. 2003. Report by Mr. Alvaro Gil-Robles, Commissioner for Human Rights on his visit to Estonia 27th – 30th October 2003); 1,100-1,500 people (Third report on Estonia. 2006. CRI (2006)1. Council of Europe, European Commission against Racism and Intolerance).

⁴ 2011 population and dwellings census will identify only by summer 2012 the actual number of Estonian population, among these Roma and demographic trends over the past decade.

⁵ Population Register. <http://www.andmevara.ee/pr>.

⁶ People of 140 different nationalities live in Estonia according to estimations. As of 5 May 2011, based on their self-definition, there live in addition to 835,993 Estonians, e.g., 328,259 Russians; 26,453 Ukrainians; 15,491 Byelorussians; 582 Roma.

Table 2. The number of Roma by mother tongue, census 2000

Mother tongue	Total		In towns	In countryside
	Number	Share of total, %		
Total	542	100.0	433	109
National language	426	78.6	341	85
Russian	59	10.9	53	6
Estonian	42	8.3	29	16
Latvian	9	1.6
Ukrainian	1	0.2
Not known	2	0.4

Source: Calculations on the basis of: Valdmaa, S. 2004. Roma in public education in Estonia. EUMC – Raxen 5. Jaan Tõnisson Institute, UNESCO. http://www.jti.ee/sisu/67_60.pdf.

In the opinion of one of the leaders of Estonian Roma (Mr Roman Lutt), the language is the most important determinant for the Roma.⁷ Those people of Roma origin who are using Russian or Estonian as the home language have practically assimilated. By Mr Lutt, the assimilation is not only linguistic but also cultural and has developed in such an extent that those people cannot be recognised anymore as true members of Roma community. It is because through the Roma language all the values, habits and customs are carried on what make from a human being a Roma. If the language has been lost, the rest of Roma identity is disappearing also. The assimilation of Roma has been taken place in Estonia through the generations.

According to the census of 2000, nearly half of 371 Roma people (aged 18 years and older, without persons of unknown age) lacked even basic education; approximately one third had basic education and 15.6% secondary education (Table 3); Estonian population 19.2%; 19.2%; 29.2%, respectively.⁸

Table 3. The number of Roma by educational level (18 years and older, excluding people of unknown age)

Education	Number	Share of total, %
Total	371	100.0
Higher education	1	0.3
Secondary specialised after secondary education	5	1.3
Secondary specialised after basic education	4	1.1
Secondary education	58	15.6
Basic education	121	32.6
Without basic education	172	46.4
Education unknown	10	2.7

Source: Tali, M., Kollom, K., Velberg, M.-L. 2007. Naisted Eesti mustlaskogukondades (Women in Estonian Roma Communities). Uurimuse aruanne (Research report). Tallinna Ülikooli Eesti Humanitaarinstituut, Kodanikeühiskonna Uurimis- ja Arenduskeskus.

⁷ Valdmaa, S. 2004. Roma in public education in Estonia. EUMC – Raxen 5. Jaan Tõnisson Institute, UNESCO. http://www.jti.ee/sisu/67_60.pdf.

⁸ Since more recent statistics is not available it is not possible to compare the educational level of Roma population and total population in greater detail.

1.2 Description of geographic distribution of Roma

Roma in Estonia are not travellers; Roma population are frequently concentrated into relatively small communities in settlements or towns all over Estonia with the exceptions of Hiiu and Saare Counties⁹ (see in the Annex the map of Estonia by counties illustrating also the share of Estonians in the total population of counties). The majority (79.9%) of Roma live in towns but in smaller ones rather than in the capital city Tallinn (Table 4).

Table 4. Location of Roma in Estonia, census 2000

	Total	In towns		Among towns in Tallinn		In countryside	
		Number	Share of total, %	Number	Share of total, %	Number	Share of total, %
Men	247	194	78.5	22	8.9	53	21.5
Women	295	239	81.0	52	17.6	56	19.0
Total	542	433	79.9	74	13.6	109	20.1

Source: Calculations on the basis of: Valdmaa, S. 2004. Roma in public education in Estonia. EUMC – Raxen 5. Jaan Tõnisson Institute, UNESCO. http://www.jti.ee/sisu/67_60.pdf.

According to the census of 2000, Roma population living in Tallinn accounted for only 13.6% of total Roma population while of all Estonian population about 1/3 live in the capital city. The largest Roma communities were in Harju County (including Tallinn), Valga County Tartu County (including Tartu), Ida-Viru County, Pärnu County and Rapla County (Table 5).

Table 5. Roma by location (aged 18 years and older, without persons of unknown age), census 2000

Town or settlement	Number	Share of total, %
Total	371	100.0
Tallinn	61	16.4
Valga town	46	12.4
Tartu town	44	11.9
Kohila township	29	7.8
Narva town	25	6.7
Pärnu town	24	6.5
Kallaste town	16	4.3
Paide town	13	3.5
Türi town	9	2.4
Kohtla-Järve town	9	2.4
Võru town	9	2.4
Tapa town	8	2.2
Narva-Jõesuu town	7	1.9
Viljandi town	6	1.6

Source: Calculations on the basis of: Tali, M., Kollom, K., Velberg, M.-L. 2007. Naised Eesti mustlaskogukondades (Women in Estonian Roma Communities). Uurimuse aruanne (Research Report). Tallinna Ülikooli Eesti Humanitaarinstituut, Kodanikeühiskonna Uurimis- ja Arenduskeskus.

According to the Population Register as of 5 May 2011, the location of Roma has changed since 2000. The biggest Roma community is in Valga County where live 113 Roma people, including 19 children (the most numerous community is close to the Latvian border, in Valga town with 90

⁹ There are 15 counties and 229 rural municipalities in Estonia.

adults and 19 children); 92 Roma people are registered in Ida-Viru County, including 11 children, and 72 in Tartu County, including 12 children. Roma communities in other counties are from slightly smaller than 70 people in Pärnu and Harju County to fewer than 10 people.

1.3. Description of poverty and social exclusion situation of Roma in relation to the population in general

Since the Roma population in Estonia is quite small, it is not very likely that Roma people get into a sample of Estonian Social Survey (EU-SILC). And it is not possible to make generalisations when a few Roma people happen to be in the sample. And the poverty and social exclusion situation of Roma have not been investigated separately either. Therefore there are no statistics on the basis of what to characterise the poverty and social exclusion situation of Roma in relation to the population in general.

- **Relative income poverty and deprivation**

Economic coping of the Roma population can be characterised on the basis of the Roma women research.¹⁰ Unemployment, which is quite wide-spread among the Roma, influences the life of all community. Research has identified that economic difficulties are a problem for most of the families where both parents are ethnic Roma. In mixed families where one parent is Estonian or Russian had less coping problems. Since income is often earned with odd jobs, state support is very important for many families since it is one of few permanent sources of income. Very widely spread is incapacity pension, both for the young and older Roma women. Many women also received allowances for raising children of close relatives. The research also pointed out that awareness of aid grants is extremely variable – there were those who were very well aware of their rights and possibilities whereas in some events people lacked awareness of how to find a dwelling or get support from the social sphere specialist because they did not know where to go with these problems. Since information on aid is often received from other members of the community, it is complicated to use state support for solving uncommon problems and easier to find support inside the community.

- **Education**

According to the Estonian education information system (EHIS), 18 children were studying at Estonian general education schools in 2011 (15 in 2010) who had declared Romany as their mother or home tongue.¹¹ From them 8 (7 in 2010) were studying at Valga Jaanikese school, which is a school for students with special needs¹² and 10 (5 in 2010) at so-called

¹⁰ Tali, M., Kollom, K., Velberg, M.-L. 2007. Naised Eesti mustlaskogukondades (Women in Estonian Roma Communities). Uurimuse aruanne (Research Report). Tallinna Ülikooli Eesti Humanitaarinstituut, Kodanikeühiskonna Uurimis- ja Arenduskeskus.
http://www.sm.ee/fileadmin/meedia/Dokumendid/Sotsiaalvaldkond/kogumik/Naised_20Eesti_20mustlaskogukondades_uuringuraport_1_.pdf.

¹¹ According to the Ministry of Education and Research, a statement from the Population Register showed that there are 90 under 17 year old children living in Estonia.

¹² Mother tongue is defined by the student her/himself, it is her/his and the parents' right; when only 18 people pronounced themselves Roma, it is the wish of the students and their parents. In order to 'see behind the figures' the Ministry of Education and Research supports the research conducted with the purpose to identify in which schools Roma children are studying, what is their academic progress, how much the school support Roma children. The Ministry has concluded a contract with the North-Estonian Roma Society. Under the contract

ordinary schools. Children can go to schools for students with special needs only with the decision of a counselling committee. The counselling committee comprises competent specialists in the relevant area and therefore it is not possible without facts to doubt their decisions. Parents must give their consent to go to the counselling committee. And also recommendations given by the counselling committee come into force only if the parent approves.¹³

The Roma women research¹⁴ pointed out that the women interviewed in the counties of Tartu and Valga had encountered cases where normal children were sent to a school for students with special needs only because they did not speak Estonian and were of Roma nation. According to the Ministry of Education, the reasons in some cases may be also related to the parents' decisions who prefer their children studying at a boarding school for students with special needs, where the children are provided with lodging and food. Meaning that the decisions may have economic reasons – unemployed parents have limited resources for providing education for their children. Parents may also mean well for their children because the demands made in these schools are easier and it is easier for the children to obtain education than in an ordinary school.

Several reasons for Estonian Roma early school leaving can be identified on the basis of the Roma women research:

- insufficient integration of Roma into the school system. Children who have lived in a safe family community and communicated in Romany at home find themselves in a new environment where they have to adapt to new conditions, often with foreign language. They are mostly unprepared for school because they have been neither in kindergarten nor pre-school. These children often come from families where parents are not able to assist with lessons. It is obvious that such children at school find themselves in unequal situation compared to other children who have been prepared for school, have been taught to read and write;
- both women interviewed and their children had experienced school bullying and disparaging attitude on national grounds. Interviews did not identify that any significant changes had happened in that respect over the past ten years – school bullying and early school leaving happened both during the Soviet period and in recent past. Although bullying can occur in larger as well as smaller towns and in different regions in Estonia, the research showed that in smaller village or community schools, where communication between people is closer, the Roma children are bullied less;

proposals will be worked out to support education of the Roma people based on the description of problems and good practices. The deadline for the final report was 17 December 2010, although the Ministry has postponed the deadline until March 2011, the contractor has not yet submitted such an important work for the community development.

¹³ High share of Roma children in schools of special needs should not be seen in the negative light always (in every case) since these local schools are able with individual approach develop in children their specific talents and enable further activity in the area they are interested in (e.g. Valga Jaanikese school is the state basic school for children with specific needs where classes have been formed on the basis of simplified national curriculum and national coping curriculum).

¹⁴ Tali, M., Kollom, K., Velberg, M.-L. 2007. Naised Eesti mustlaskogukondades (Women in Estonian Roma communities). Uurimuse aruanne (Research Report). Tallinna Ülikooli Eesti Humanitaarinstituut, Kodanikeühiskonna Uurimis- ja Arenduskeskus.
http://www.sm.ee/fileadmin/meedia/Dokumendid/Sotsiaalvaldkond/kogumik/Naised_20Eesti_20mustlaskogukondades_uuringuraport_1_.pdf.

- a frequent reason for girls early school leaving is early marriage or looking after younger sisters-brothers and doing housework;
 - an additional reason for young men is their early employment, which is due to, for example, helping their parents in their undertakings;
 - education is often discontinued because of the rebuffing attitudes experienced at school or difficult economic situation; other problems include also transport;
 - early school leaving is more likely in those families where the educational level of parents is lower or where they lack any school experience.
- **Employment (e.g. employment rate, unemployment levels, quality of employment, in-work poverty, black economy)**

According to the census of 2000, 54.4% of Roma (aged 18 and older, excluding persons of unknown age) were inactive, 30.2% were unemployed and only 15.1% of the Roma population were employed. The high rate of unemployment and inactivity among the Roma for one thing may be due to their residence in the periphery or in regions with high rate of unemployment (e.g. Valga and Ida-Viru counties).

The employment of the Roma can be described in greater detail on the basis of the Roma women research:

- women are mostly blue-collar workers, e.g. sell goods on the market-place, do simple cleaning or kitchen works, tell fortune. Fortune telling is used for earning living by women with children who often under the general unemployment situation have no other possibility to maintain their family. Interviews showed that people are not willing to trust Roma women with responsible jobs or cash handling jobs;
- sources of income for spouses of Roma women are often collecting of scrap metal, ancillary farm work and ancillary work in workshops.

Although women in research mostly justified job-finding difficulties with their nation, there may be also more objective reasons, for example, lack of education required for the particular job. Most of the women had personally experienced or heard about problems encountered by other community members in relation to unequal treatment of Roma in the labour market and their exclusion from jobs. Employment and stable income is in most cases appreciated among the Roma, but repeated refusals in the labour market may cause hopelessness and negligence in women. A kind of inferiority in social situations intensified by constant social aversion and hostility may lead to adopting the respective opinions. Living on incidental income or subsistence benefits is confirmed also by the high share of economically inactive people among the Roma. Many Roma women in Estonia have been working with their families abroad for some time, mainly in Finland, Sweden and UK. It's a common view that although the flexibility of Roma creates preconditions for rapid adaptation in a new environment, all Roma women who had gone to live abroad said that they were longing for their parents and community in Estonia.

- **Health**

It can be concluded from the research of Roma women that Roma mostly have a family doctor based on state health insurance and they have no major problems with health insurance accessibility. Some women had received the health insurance card while being on parental leave, pension or disability. The research identified that although Roma have very many various health problems, they do not often go to a doctor. For the prevention of health problems they go to a doctor quite rarely. Although they were mostly satisfied with the work and complaisance of doctors, they are often short of money for buying medicines. At the same time, also direct discrimination was mentioned in health care, e.g. a case where ambulance refused to come after hearing that it is a Roma patient.

- **Housing and environment**

Similarly with many other families, Roma families have found themselves in an economically unfavourable situation because of many reforms undertaken in Estonia during 1990s. Competition in the labour market, changes in the settlement system, privatisation and contemporary system of social benefits do not support the collective values of the Roma. Therefore many Roma families are living in moderate conditions today. The research of Roma women demonstrated that small dwelling space is a very acute problem (especially for large families); in some cases they have also very poor living conditions.

- **Sport, recreation, culture**

Information regarding the access of Roma to sport and recreation is neither officially collected nor the situation specially monitored. At the same time, it must be underlined the equal treatment in any sphere of life for different nations in Estonia.

1.4. Description of extent and nature of discrimination experienced by Roma

In general there are few complaints registered by the official bodies mandated to deal with discrimination cases (the Chancellor of Justice and the Gender Equality and Equal Treatment Commissioner)¹⁵ in Estonia. A reason for that may be the low public awareness of the issue. There is also shortage of research, statistics and case data regarding the situation of Roma in Estonia, which limits description of the extent of discrimination of Roma. The most recent source to describe the extent and nature of discrimination experienced by Roma in Estonia is the ERCI report on Estonia,¹⁶ which is based on the analysis of information from a wide variety of sources (mainly still on a research conducted in 2007 in Estonia into the situation of Roma women¹⁷ and on the opinion of one Roma community representative).

¹⁵ Õiguskantsleri seadus (Chancellor of Justice Act). 1999. [https://www.riigiteataja.ee/akt/%C3%95KS;Võrdse kohtlemise seadus \(Equal Treatment Act\)](https://www.riigiteataja.ee/akt/%C3%95KS;Võrdse%20kohtlemise%20seadus). 2008. <https://www.riigiteataja.ee/akt/13096445>.

¹⁶ ERCI report on Estonia (fourth monitoring cycle). 2009. CRI (2010)3. Council of Europe, European Commission against Racism and Intolerance. <http://www.coe.int/t/dghl/monitoring/ecri/Country-by-country/Estonia/EST-CbC-IV-2010-003-ENG.pdf>.

¹⁷ Tali, M., Kollom, K., Velberg, M.-L. 2007. Naised Eesti mustlaskogukondades (Women in Estonian Roma Communities). Uurimuse aruanne (A Research Report). Tallinna Ülikooli Eesti Humanitaarinstituut, Kodanikeühiskonna Uurimis- ja Arenduskeskus. http://www.sm.ee/fileadmin/meedia/Dokumendid/Sotsiaalvaldkond/kogumik/Naised_20Eesti_20mustlaskogukondades_uuringuraport_1_.pdf.

- Roma face many stereotypes, whereas they regard the media as a vehicle of stereotypes against Roma community;
- the majority of population in Estonia know almost nothing about the culture, history and life of Roma, about their tragic fate during the Second World War;
- Roma sense the exclusion in the labour market;
- high share of Roma children in schools for students with special needs.

Some facts of discrimination have been mentioned also in the reports of the European Network against Racism (ENAR):¹⁸

- Roma community has reported that those of them residing in the South of the country do have problems with regards to lack of available quality housing (Kovalenko, 2007);
- Roma community has reported that Roma children are very often sent to schools for children with mental difficulties (Kovalenko, 2007);
- multiple discrimination of Roma women – they experience unequal treatment both because of their gender and minority background (Kovalenko, 2008);
- Estonian labour market continues to be ethnically divided – when they find out during a job interview that the interviewee is a Roma, they politely refuse to offer the job saying that the vacancy is already filled (Kovalenko, 2008);
- Roma community has reported cases of unequal treatment in the area of health services but these cases are not wide-spread (Kovalenko, 2008);
- Roma community has reported intolerant behaviour with regard to access to goods and services; in most cases this applies to the behaviour of shop assistants and security personnel because of the stereotypes that all Roma people are thieves and criminals (Kovalenko, 2008);
- Roma community has mentioned that the media can be considered as a source of stereotypes towards their community, it often labels them with various crimes, supports their exclusion, etc. One of the main mistakes of the local media is that it completely fails to present the views of the Roma community and to inform the public about their lives, traditions and problems (Kovalenko, 2008, 2009).

The special rapporteur on contemporary forms of racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and related intolerance¹⁹ pointed out that Roma community in Estonia as in most European countries suffers from stigmatisation and structural discrimination that manifests specially in realms of education, employment and cultural stereotypes. During the meeting with the special rapporteur Roma representatives pointed out the education as one of the key obstacles for the integration of

¹⁸ Kovalenko, J. 2007. ENAR Shadow Report 2006: Racism in Estonia; Kovalenko, J. 2008. ENAR Shadow Report 2007: Racism in Estonia; Kovalenko, J. 2009. ENAR shadow report 2008: Racism in Estonia.

¹⁹ Report of the Special Rapporteur on contemporary forms of racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and related intolerance, Doudou Diène. 2008. Racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and related forms of intolerance, follow-up to and implementation of the DURBAN DECLARATION and programme of action. Addendum. Mission to Estonia. Human Rights Council, Seventh session, Agenda item 9. A/HRC/7/19/Add.2. 17 March 2008. <http://daccess-dds-ny.un.org/doc/UNDOC/GEN/G08/117/59/PDF/G0811759.pdf?OpenElement>.

Roma in the Estonian society. Roma children suffer from much higher dropout and drastically lower educational achievement rates, which directly affect their ability to enter the labour market. It is also pointed out that the lack of acceptance of Roma traditions and history by the society at large is one of the key obstacles that prevent the Roma from fully integrating into society.

The research on the tolerance of Estonian people with regard to different peculiar needs, minorities, nationalities and deviations of generally accepted norms in society²⁰ indicated that the attitude toward the Roma is biased (48.4% of the respondents said they avoid them; 19.2% had a positive attitude). Slightly different than the EU average attitude towards Roma was identified by the Eurobarometer survey on discrimination in the EU;²¹ 28% of respondents in Estonia (24% on the EU average level) would feel uncomfortable having a Roma neighbour, but the same share of respondents (36%) in Estonia and on the EU average level would feel comfortable having a Roma neighbour.

1.5. The main gaps in relation to Roma

The main gaps in relation to Roma in Estonia are:

- currently the comprehensive overview and knowledge about problems and needs are missing;
- national policies to involve Roma are missing; only a few steps have been made in cooperation with the Roma community. It must be considered here that there is no homogeneous Roma community in Estonia, but single, relatively small groups of Roma people, whereas community opinion leaders are missing, those with whom to negotiate and cooperate;
- low level of education and lack of vocational education do not enable the Roma to successfully compete in the labour market;
- inadequate fulfilment of compulsory school attendance by Roma children – high level of the late entry into the education system, high drop out rate;
- measures are missing in pre-school education, which would ensure that healthy Roma children do not go to a school for students with special needs;
- there is no consistently working system to base training of the teachers teaching Roma children on, to supply schools teaching Roma children with relevant teaching and information materials, tighten contacts between parents of Roma children and the school, so-called educate parents;
- media shows mostly negative cases, amplifying thus the Roma related prejudices and stereotypes.

²⁰ Sats, M. 2004. *Tolerantsusest Eestis* (About tolerance in Estonia). Master's thesis. Tallinn Pedagogical University.

²¹ Discrimination in the European Union: perceptions, experiences and attitudes. 2008. Special Eurobarometer 296, July 2008.

2. Assessment of the existing policy and governance framework

2.1. Description and assessment of the current overall policy framework and governance arrangements

The overall policy framework and governance arrangements:

- all policy documents in Estonia are sector based rather than nationality based, and Estonian legislation regards the indigenous population and all minorities as equal and no special policies have been worked out or enforced for the Roma. The legislation forms a positive ground for the national minorities living in Estonia in the case of existing interests for taking steps by them to preserve their ethnic origin. In addition to the legal acts, the state has set up several structures for supporting teaching of the minority languages and culture, the general behaviour towards minorities living in Estonia is integrative, i.e. inclusive, but not assimilative²²;
- in 1997, the government established a minister without portfolio for ethnic affairs, which, however, was liquidated in 2009 and the tasks of this minister were divided between other ministries (Ministry of Social Affairs, Ministry of Education and Research, Ministry of Culture, Ministry of Interior);
- in 1998, the government established the Integration Foundation,²³ since 1 January 2010 Integration and Migration Foundation Our People (MISA), to manage programmes concerned with ethnic minorities;
- on 1 January 2009, the Equal Treatment Act²⁴ entered into force, which prohibits discrimination based on, among other grounds, ethnic origin, race, colour and religion. This act prohibits discrimination in employment, education, social protection (social security, health care and social advantages), as well as access to and supply of goods and services available to the public (incl. housing). The Employment Contracts Act (entered into force on 1 July 2009)²⁵ provides principles of equal treatment placing an obligation on an employer to ensure the protection of employees against discrimination and follows the principle of equal treatment and promotes equality in accordance with the Equal Treatment Act and Gender Equality Act²⁶. The Social Welfare Act²⁷ states that the right to receive social services, social benefits and other assistance is granted to permanent residents of Estonia, aliens residing in Estonia on the basis of residence permits or right of residence; persons enjoying international protection staying in Estonia and every person staying in Estonia has the right to receive emergency social assistance;
- the Gender Equality and Equal Treatment Commissioner and the Legal Chancellor are the bodies entrusted with monitoring compliance with the Acts and resolving the discrimination disputes through conciliation proceedings;

²² Valdmaa, S. 2004. Roma in public education in Estonia. EUMC – Raxen 5. Jaan Tõnisson Institute, UNESCO. http://www.jti.ee/sisu/67_60.pdf.

²³ Integration and Migration Foundation Our People (MISA). <http://www.meis.ee/about-the-foundation>.

²⁴ Equal Treatment Act. 2008. <http://www.legaltext.ee/et/andmebaas/ava.asp?m=022>.

²⁵ Employment Contracts Act. 2009. <http://www.legaltext.ee/et/andmebaas/ava.asp?m=022>.

²⁶ Gender Equality Act. 2009. <http://www.legaltext.ee/et/andmebaas/ava.asp?m=022>.

²⁷ Social Welfare Act. 1995. <http://www.legaltext.ee/et/andmebaas/ava.asp?m=022>.

- the Estonian Integration Strategy 2008-2013²⁸ is a follow-up to the integration programme Integration in Estonia 2000-2007 and aims to ensure the integration of ethnic minorities at educational and cultural, social and economic, legal and political levels. The Estonian Integration Strategy 2008-2013 contains a number of wide-ranging goals to address issues of concern of ethnic minorities, including providing Estonian language lessons, combating inequalities in the labour market, as well as preserving the culture and identity of ethnic minorities. The mid-term review of the implementation of this strategy was carried out in 2010.²⁹ The monitoring of attaining of Estonian Integration Strategy stated that contacts between people of different nationality in Estonia have increased; the Estonian speaking proficiency of non-Estonians has grown better; closer communication is not seen as a danger to their cultural uniqueness, while the Russian speaking respondents experience the socio-economic inequality more than the Estonian speaking respondents;

- in the sphere of education, direct activities with Roma children have been observed:
 - in 2004, the Roma Education Committee was established at Ministry of Education and Research to improve the educational situation of Roma;
 - in 2008, the number of Roma children at school was estimated (Ministry of Education and Research; Ministry of Culture, etc.), including in schools for children with special needs;
 - in 2009, in connection with that the biggest problem is incomplete data on the number of Roma and their situation, which makes complicated, e.g. to monitor the education of their children³⁰, in cooperation with Roma community regions were mapped where Roma children go to school; problems of Roma children and their parents were identified; reasons for children studying at a school for students with special needs (unfortunately the research has not been completed by Roma community representatives as contractors);
 - in 2011, a seminar was held under the ESF project to discuss better organisation of education and support for Roma children. In addition to the Ministry of Education and Research, the Ministry of Culture, teachers teaching Roma children, study advice centres and juvenile committees (handle violations of law committed by juveniles and take sanctions or apply from the court of law permission to use them, coordinate crime prevention among the juveniles), the Estonian Institute of Human Rights³¹ were represented. It was found that the attitudes toward the Roma students should be flexible rather than sanctioning; of great significance for obtaining education are the community and home; for obtaining at least basic education individual teaching, pre-vocational education and home teaching should be developed;

- according to the Ministry of Culture, a work group comprising representatives of various ministries (Ministry of Culture, Ministry of Social Affairs, Ministry of Education and Research,

²⁸ Estonian Integration Strategy. 2008. Integration and Migration Foundation Our People. http://www.meis.ee/uudised?news_id=86.

²⁹ Monitoring of Attaining of Estonian Integration Strategy 2010. 2010. Integration and Migration Foundation Our People. <http://www.meis.ee/uuringud>.

³⁰ In 2009, kontrollkäigu järel Valga Jaanikese Kooli pöördus õiguskantsler Ministry of Education and Research poole järelpärimisega Roma õpilaste hariduse omandamise toetamise võimaluste kohta (Kontrollkäik Valga Jaanikese Kooli 9.novembril 2009 (A verification visit to Valga Jaanikese school on 9 November 2009). 2009. http://www.oiguskantsler.ee/public/resources/editor/File/OMBUDSMANI_MENETLUSED/Kontrollkaigud/Kontrollk_ik_Valga_Jaanikese_Kooli.pdf).

³¹ Estonian Institute of Human Rights. <http://www.eihr.ee/>.

Ministry of the Interior, Government Office) was established in 2011 to advance the involvement of Roma people, which is coordinated by the Ministry of Culture. In the spheres of responsibility of different ministries all people are regarded as equal while tackling their social, educational, cultural etc. problems. I.e. they treat all target groups equally, including minorities, and deal with prevention rather.³² The organisation of all spheres and measures, e.g. labour market services and benefits³³ etc. are applicable to Roma also. Roma problems have not been raised in any of the spheres at the moment. Since the Roma issue is not very topical in Estonia it was decided that it is not rational to include this topic separately in development plans, strategies and action plans. When a problem should arise they are ready to react immediately. To get a better picture of employment, housing and children's education of the Roma it was decided to involve local governments in data gathering.

Although the number of Roma in Estonia is small, their problems have not arisen sharply and maybe it is not fair for other ethnic minorities to spotlight Roma problems, the inter-ministerial work group for the promotion of Roma involvement in Estonia seems very appropriate. Primarily because data on this ethnic minority are incomplete and it is necessary to get a whole picture of the situation of Roma people on the basis of different spheres, so as to work out then appropriate measures that would support the target group in the best possible way. A strong push to the promotion of Roma involvement would be given if opinion leaders of Roma communities could be found and involved as partners in this work group.

2.2. Identification and critique of any existing targets set for reducing poverty and social exclusion of Roma

There are no targets set for reducing poverty and social exclusion of Roma. Due to the small size and splintered Roma communities it is not possible on the basis of the Estonian Social Survey not even to identify the at-risk-of-poverty rate for Roma population, and other investigations have not enabled that either. Within the framework of the integration strategy of non-Estonians including minorities such as Roma,³⁴ the government has through different policy domains paid more attention than before to socio-economic integration, while previously the main focus was on general education and language tuition. The target for 2013 is that all differences in employment and incomes between employees of different nationality will be reduced. The operational programme 2011-2013 of the Estonian Integration Strategy 2008-2013 is focused among other things e.g. on work with young people, and under special attention is career counselling and encouraging mutual contacts.³⁵ Since a complete picture of the living standard of Roma population is not available today, it would be extremely necessary to conduct a relevant research on the basis of what to set objectives, work out measures and establish a monitoring system for social and economic integration of the Estonian Roma.

³² Such an approach has been criticised by R. Toivanen (2009) – the Estonian authorities have ignored the existence of Roma as best they could, but here the main aim of international pressure has become apparent.

³³ Labour market services and benefits. Ministry of Social Affairs. <http://www.sm.ee/eng/activity/working-and-managing/labour-market-services-and-benefits.html>.

³⁴ Estonian Integration Strategy. 2008. http://www.meis.ee/uudised?news_id=86.

³⁵ Lõimumiskava juhtkomitee seadis sihid järgneva kolmeks aastaks (The steering committee of the Integration Plan set targets for the next three years). 2011. http://www.meis.ee/uudised?news_id=529.

2.3. The strengths and weaknesses of Estonia's National Reform Programme from the perspective of tackling the poverty and social exclusion experienced by Roma

Estonia's National Reform Programme does not pay attention to the minorities including Roma; and therefore it has not set an objective of tackling the poverty and social exclusion experienced by Roma.

2.4. Assessment of the main strengths and weaknesses of existing policies and programmes from the perspective of promoting Roma integration

▪ Income (tax and welfare policies)

Income tax rate in Estonia was lowered from 24% in 2004 to 21% starting from 2009. As of 16 June 2011, the Parliament passed the law amendment according to what the income tax rate will fall to 20% from 2015.³⁶ The government coalition³⁷ has justified this with the average employee's gains (who will have more money on hand and more options to use it) and the stimulating impact on economic growth, which in turn will be accompanied by additional tax receipts, which enable to increase social expenditure. Unfortunately the fall of the income tax rate will not concern people with low incomes (approximately 65% of the salaried workers receive average or lower wages) or without any income – the most vulnerable, including also Roma. They may on the contrary lose from this because unreceived income in the state budget (according to estimates 70 million euros) must be compensated by something, i.e. by increasing indirect taxes or fee-charging services, etc. so as to improve accessibility and quality of education, social welfare and health care services. Higher VAT rates and fee-charging services will deteriorate above all the living standard of low income earning people, including Roma.

During the period of crisis, all political will in Estonia was focused on the restoration of economic growth and adoption of the euro on 1 January 2011 rather than mitigation of negative social impacts of the financial and economic crisis. Estonian government's objective to adopt the euro via budget cuts concerned mainly social expenditure (most of them were made in 2009 already). It is positive that the budget cuts made during the period of crisis have helped Estonia avoid large debt burden, repayment of which would gulp down part of the budget and hence also potential finances for social expenditure. But the Estonian government has not worked out any crisis package like other EU member states, which would contain separate measures solely for households who have difficulties in coping. The only initiative to alleviate poverty of these households who are in a very difficult situation might be that starting from 1 January 2011 the subsistence benefit was raised by 12.79 euro per month for a person living alone or the first member of a family (had been since 2008 at the level of 63.91 euro).³⁸

³⁶ Tulumaksu muutmise seadus (Amendment to the Income Tax Act). 2010. XII Riigikogu stenogramm (Shorthand report of XII Riigikogu), I istungjärg (Session I), June 1.

³⁷ Consists of two political parties – Estonian Reform Party and Union of Pro Patria and Res Publica.

³⁸ The State Budget Act for 2011 sets the subsistence level at 76.70 euro per month for a person living alone or the first member of a family and 61.36 euro for the second and each subsequent member of the family. The subsistence benefit is a form of state assistance for those in difficulty, which is paid by the local government. In order to alleviate a person's situation the local government employs both social services and other forms of social assistance, depending on the situation in question. The benefit is paid if all other measures for the alleviation of poverty and difficulty have proven ineffectual.

According to the Social Welfare Act, all Estonian residents have the equal right to welfare assistance, the provision of which is based on the principle of subsidiarity – public duties are as a rule fulfilled preferably by authorities the closest to the citizen. Hence the main providers of welfare services and assistance are local governments.³⁹ The state has organised those welfare services which due to their complexity are not reasonable to provide at the local level.⁴⁰ Because the Roma population is splintered between different local government units it seems that such an organisation of welfare services is rational since the need for assistance and opportunities to satisfy this need are in principle quite close by. Accessibility of assistance actually depends on the awareness of Roma themselves of the services and the skills of local social workers to reach those who need help.

A problem that might be associated with Roma is the possibility of using sanctions in designating subsistence benefit. The Social Welfare Act establishes the right of local governments not to designate subsistence benefits to people of working age or capable of working who are not studying or working and who have repeatedly and for no good reason refused to accept suitable positions. There is no information available on whether local governments have used that right for Roma because Roma may have problems with complying with these rules.

▪ Education

An objective of education is to provide an opportunity for all children living in Estonia irrespective of their social, ethnic etc descent. Estonia's educational system ensures fulfilment of compulsory school attendance of Roma children, and schools are supported by social welfare system, with the help of which children are 'located' if necessary, those who for some reason have stayed away from school or have not come there when attaining compulsory school attendance age. The selection of school, however, depends primarily on parents' decision. Roma children have equal opportunities with other children, of whatever nationality they are, in the Estonian education system.

A positive example about the involvement of Roma in the sphere of education is the individual approach to every Roma child at school. Nevertheless, only a few Roma children finish basic school and even fewer secondary school. The main reason is the learning problems (they miss a lot, difficulties with learning, parents are not able to help), which leads to the lack of motivation to learn; communication and behavioural problems (earlier physical maturity, different temperament and interests), which cause conflicts at school and with school and then non-fulfilment of school obligation.⁴¹ The schools teaching Roma children provide counselling service (adaptation of the curriculum to Roma expectations, individual curricula) and enable study assistance (teaching studying skills after lessons in the form of group and individual work). Unfortunately starting from a certain age children are not interested in advice and study assistance lessons any more. School is prepared for supported teaching if only students were interested (teachers even go to search for children,

³⁹ Welfare services provided by local governments are, for example, personal assistant, support person, transportation for the disabled, adjustment of the place of residence, shelter, asylum, social housing, foster care, social advice and nursing services.

⁴⁰ State welfare services are: community living services for people with heavy and long-term mental special needs; technical aid service distributed at a discount; rehabilitation service for disabled people and substitute home service for children. The state also supports provision of child care services to children with severe and profound disability.

⁴¹ Kontor, A. 2006. Mustlaste õpetamine – ootused ja tegelikkus (Teaching Roma – expectations and reality). 'Eesti mustlased ja haridus' (Estonian Roma and education). <http://www.estblul.ee/EST/Tegevus/Konverentsid/Mustlas06/>.

but the child has moved and so-called gone into hiding). A seminar discussing improvement and support to education of Roma children (June 2011) an idea stayed in the air that it is essential to invite educated Roma people (leaders) to help prepare curricula for Roma children; to individualise teaching to a greater extent (example of Kohila Secondary School)⁴²; teach based on national peculiarities. The most important in the development of the attitude of a Roma child toward education is the role of community opinion leader.

The following activities have been planned to support coping of Roma children for obtaining education:

- training courses on cultural peculiarities, mother tongue tuition, support measures for the advisory board members who are of responsible for making proposals to send children to a school for students with special needs, and for teachers at schools where more Roma children are studying;
- prepared an overview of good practices of those schools where Roma children have obtained basic or secondary education and present them to other teachers and school masters.

▪ Employment

The provision of labour market services and payment of employment subsidies in Estonia is regulated by the Labour Market Services and Benefits Act.⁴³ This law seeks through the provision of labour market services and payment of labour market benefits, to achieve maximum possible employment rates among the working population, and to prevent their long-term unemployment and exclusion from the labour market. It is the principle that the labour market services which are suitable for a client are selected in accordance with their individual needs. The provision of national labour market services and the payment of labour market benefits in Estonia is organised by the Estonian Unemployment Insurance Fund⁴⁴ through its regional departments, which are located in every county.

Like all permanent residents of Estonia, the Roma have the right to receive labour market services (information about the situation on the labour market and about labour market services and benefits; job mediation; labour market training; career counselling; work practice; public work; wage subsidy; business start-up subsidy; adaptation of work premises and equipment; the 'special aids equipment' service; communication support at interviews; the 'working with a support person' service) and benefits (unemployment benefit; grant to take part in work experience, work practice or labour market training; transport and accommodation benefits to take part in labour market training or work experience). There are also additional services and benefits to those regulated by the Labour Market Services and Benefits Act above through the European Social Fund programme 'Increasing the Supply of a Qualified Labour Force 2007–2013'. Regardless of the large number of services it seems that working-age Roma people have mostly been away from the labour market so long that they need additional measures and services to reach the labour market measures. It is necessary to develop special measures and activities for bringing people who have been

⁴² Experiences of Kohila Secondary School show that cooperation between home, school (incl. individual approach, assistance in teaching, advice, etc.), child protection workers is of great importance, but attitude toward education still begins mainly from community opinion leader. If this is supportive, children take school attendance more seriously and don't drop out of school so easily.

⁴³ Labour market services and benefits act. 2006. <https://www.riigiteataja.ee/akt/13337559?leiaKehtiv>.

⁴⁴ Estonian Unemployment Insurance Fund. <http://www.tootukassa.ee/?lang=en>.

away from the labour market for a long time or who have never been there, to labour market services and benefits; to improve the case management in delivering labour market services which also should ensure that the Roma themselves wish to participate in the labour market as employees and really want to work.

- **Health**

Estonia does not have an overview about the health situation and health behaviour of Roma. Social problems and living conditions described in this report have a strong impact on health and may cause poorer health. As one of the main health determinants is education, we could only assume that the health situation of Roma might be poorer than the Estonian average. Considering the above, it is needful to carry out a special survey on the health situation and behaviour of Roma.

According to the Health Care Services Organisation Act, all people staying on the territory of the Republic of Estonia have the right to emergency care.⁴⁵ Emergency care provided to persons insured by compulsory health insurance and persons equal thereto shall be paid for from the funds designated for health insurance in the state budget. Emergency care provided to a person not covered by health insurance shall be paid for out of the funds prescribed for such purpose in the state budget.

According to the Ministry of Social Affairs,⁴⁶ the number of insured persons by the state increased from 40,477 to 85,609 over 2009. Nevertheless, the number of persons not covered by health insurance increased from 56,811, or 4.23% of the population at the end of 2008 to 63,655, or 4.75% by the end of 2009; according to estimates, 75% of them are non-working and for various reasons not registered as unemployed. Health insurance was provided in addition to other population groups also for registered unemployed in order to alleviate negative impacts of unemployment on health and to create preconditions for their return to employment. Health services were also guaranteed for all people with HIV or tuberculosis infection. To increase health awareness of the public and ability to prevent health problems the network of health promotion specialists in counties was preserved with the support of state finance. The latter was also supported additionally with health promotion training courses in all counties in order to increase respective capability of counties and local governments.

Statistics on the health and health insurance of the Roma population are not available; therefore we don't know whether and how many of them are not covered with health insurance. Cooperation of the inter-ministerial Roma integration work group with local governments should identify health problems faced by Roma communities and ways of solving them.

⁴⁵ Tervishoiuteenuste korraldamise seadus (Health Care Services Organisation Act). 2001. <https://www.riigiteataja.ee/akt/12991957>.

⁴⁶ Summary of actions in 2009 under the Implementation plan 2009-2013 for the National Health Plan 2009-2020. 2009. http://www.sm.ee/fileadmin/meedia/Dokumendid/ASO/_Tervis_/RTA_2009_tegevusaruande_kokkuvote.pdf.

▪ Housing and environment

The state is required to create such conditions in the housing market (legislation, institutional arrangement and support measures) which enable the residents to solve their housing problems independently and the associations operating in the housing sector to develop the sphere. The main objectives, directions of activity and implementation measures of the national housing policy are stipulated in the housing sector development plan.⁴⁷ The target groups supported within the housing development plan are: young specialists and young families, children without parental care and young people without parental care, disabled people, elderly people, families with many children, people released from prison and probationers, homeless, owners of returned dwellings, students, apartment and housing associations, associations of apartment owners, and housing environment planning and development specialists. These target groups may also contain Roma population to whom measures stipulated in the development plan are applied.

Implementation of the housing policy is based on that it is supported by employment, welfare and regional policy measures. Based on the Constitution and the Local Government Organisation Act⁴⁸, local governments are responsible for organising housing and utilities in their administrative territory. Local governments have to establish the order of recording the persons who have no dwelling or right of using a dwelling, or persons who need help for improving their housing conditions; the order of holding, using and commanding dwellings in municipal ownership, including establishing of maintenance and repair regulations and deciding of other issues which by law are in the power of local government council. Local authorities are therefore obliged to guarantee that target groups are supplied with suitable housing and to reduce homelessness by increasing the proportion of social housing units and housing belonging to the fund of social or municipal rental properties. The decision of the inter-ministerial work group for Roma involvement to start cooperating with local governments in the housing sphere should provide a detailed picture of the housing problems of Roma communities and enable to work out and implement measures to solve them.

▪ Sport, recreation, culture

According to the Sport Act,⁴⁹ sport is organised and promoted by the state, local governments and sports organisations for the purposes of the physical and mental shape and sporty lifestyle of the whole nation and the self-realisation of the youth in sport. Counties create conditions for the implementing of general development trends of sports and make proposals for the elaboration of state financing and investment programmes in the field of sports. Rural municipalities and cities are required to:

- determine the area necessary for sport within their administrative territories;
- support the work of sports organisations located within their administrative territories;
- ensure conditions for conducting physical education lessons in municipal schools and promote practising sport in schools, sports schools and youth camps.

⁴⁷ Eesti eluasemevaldkonna arengukava 2008-2013 (Estonian Housing Sector Development Plan 2008-2013). 2008. Majandus- ja Kommunikatsiooniministeerium (Ministry of Economic Affairs and Communications). <http://www.mkm.ee/index.php?id=1733>.

⁴⁸ Local Government Organisation Act. 1993. <http://www.legaltext.ee/en/andmebaas/>.

⁴⁹ Spordiseadus (Sport Act). 2005. <https://www.riigiteataja.ee/akt/1013701>.

The first Roma cultural organisation in Estonia, the Estonian Roma Culture Society, which united Roma people all over Estonia, operated in the years 1991–1999. It was later replaced by regional associations. Today there are 2 umbrella organisations (Minorities Advisory Board at the Ministry of Culture and the Estonian Bureau of Regional and Lesser-used Languages) and 9 Roma organisations operating in Estonia:

- North-Estonian Roma Society;
- Central Estonia Roma Society;
- West-Estonia Roma Society;
- NGO South-Estonia Roma Society;
- Society Roma Music Night Festival;
- Cultural Centre for Roma in Tallinn;
- Cultural Centre for Estonia Roma Youth;
- Narva Roma Culture Society Ame Roma;
- NGO Aisha Roma Dancers.

The membership of the actively operating North-Estonian Roma Society is not stable; Roma people all over Estonia participate on the basis of projects. The main activities are cross-border cultural-educational cooperation, adult education, lobbying in the interests of language community, project consultations and counselling, development of Roma family centres, etc.:

- In 1992, a conference was held in Tallinn where kinsfolk from Sweden, Poland, Yugoslavia, Romania and Finland attended;
- In 1991-1997, in parallel with development of foreign contacts, they participated in the activity of the United Nations Association of Estonia;
- In 1995, a workshop in Tallinn in cooperation with the Finnish Roma Council where the Estonian Roma unemployment, education and health care accessibility issues, and acknowledging of minorities related problems were discussed;
- In 1996, a meeting with the Estonia Society was held, the history of Estonian Roma, works by the major research of Roma culture, Prof. Paul Ariste (1905–1990) were discussed;
- In 1997, cooperation started with the International Union of National Cultures Associations 'Lüüra', attending training for young Roma at the Bible school at Suurupi;
- 1998 workshop – cooperation issues with Finnish partners were discussed;
- In 2001-2004, project 'Drom Edu Eesti' activities, the Estonia Romany education committee was established at the Ministry of Education and Research (unfortunately it has ceased to work);
- In 2006, an international seminar 'Estonian Roma and education' was held;
- In 2007, in cooperation with Finnish partners a memorial to Nazi-victims of Roma nation was erected at Kalevi-Liiva; children's song and dance ensemble at North-Estonian Roma Society was founded.

Activities of North-Estonian Roma Society have been supported by the Cultural Endowment, Estonia Society, Ministry of Education and Research, Ministry of Social Affairs, Ministry of Culture and MISA.

The Cultural Centre for Roma in Tallinn unites Roma people who live or who have lived in Estonia, as well as those Estonian people who are related to or have cultural ties with Roma. The activity of the Centre has been supported by the Ministry of Culture.

- **Anti-discrimination**

According to the Constitution of the Republic of Estonia (section 12), everyone is equal before the law. No one shall be discriminated against on the basis of nationality, race, colour, sex, language, origin, religion, political or other opinion, property or social status, or on other grounds. The incitement of national, racial, religious or political hatred, violence or discrimination shall, by law, be prohibited and punishable. The incitement of hatred, violence or discrimination between social strata shall, by law, also be prohibited and punishable. The Equal Treatment Act provides the bases for monitoring the abidance by these principles and for implementing the provisions in combat against discrimination. Increasing public awareness of this law and its implementation in the full would help avoid events of discrimination in everyday life, including those concerning Roma population.

3. Structural Funds

In Estonia, the Structural Funds are currently not being used to tackle poverty and social exclusion experienced by Roma. The Integration and Migration Foundation Our People (MISA)⁵⁰ supports the operating expenses of minorities' cultural societies from the state budget resources. Activity support is allocated to minorities' umbrella organisations which have qualified on the basis of the respective evaluation. Basic finance can be applied for only by the umbrella organisations which have qualified on the basis of the evaluation and their members, e.g. in 2011 the North-Estonian Roma Society and Cultural Centre for Roma in Tallinn.⁵¹

4. Role of civil society organisations and international organisations

The role played by civil society organisations cannot be underestimated in increasing the awareness of the public about Roma community in Estonia and their problems, as well as solving problems of Roma population. The Estonian Bureau for Lesser-Used Languages in cooperation with the Ministry of Education and Research within the European Council's Pestalozzi programme an international seminar on Roma education in 2006 organised 'Estonian Roma and Education'⁵² where they discussed the identity of Roma children, expectations and reality of teaching Roma, Roma problems, needs and possibilities, objectives and activity of Estonian Roma organisations, exchanged experiences how to improve the social situation of Roma via education and discussed activities targeted at preserving Romany language and culture. They learned about the

⁵⁰ Integration and Migration Foundation Our People (MISA). <http://www.meis.ee/>.

⁵¹ <http://www.kul.ee/index.php?path=0x2x1424x1804>.

⁵² Estonian Bureau for Lesser-Used Languages. <http://www.estblul.ee/EST/Tegevus/Konverentsid/Mustlas06/>

experiences of other countries (Finland, Latvia, Austria, Hungary, Cyprus, Italy) with Roma inclusion.

Many International organisations such as the European Commission against Racism and Intolerance (ECRI), European Network against Racism (ENAR), Human Rights Council and various EU organisations have paid attention to the Roma problems in Estonia and pressured Estonian government to tackle social and economic, especially educational problems of Roma population.

5. Recommendations

5.1. Key challenges and national goals and policies

- **Access to education**

Ensure that all children obtain at least basic education. To achieve this the school attendance of Roma children should be decisively improved with the help of improving the case management, education policy measures and activities (e.g. individual teaching, development of home teaching in pre-vocational education);

- **Employment**

Improve economic coping of Roma population by increasing employment of working-age Roma. As the aim of Estonian labour market policy is to integrate all ethnic groups under general measures and improve the access to labour market services, it is crucial to raise the awareness about rights and possibilities of Roma, and also of society as a whole. It is necessary to develop special measures and activities for bringing people who have been away from the labour market for a long time or who have never been there, to labour market services and benefits, i.e. work out so-called pre-labour market services to incite interest in and encourage participation in the labour market. Improvement of the case management in delivering labour market services should ensure that the Roma themselves wish to participate in the labour market as employees and really want to work;

- **Health**

Improve health of Roma population. Get a picture of the health condition of Roma population and access to health care, work out measures to improve it, including improve their own health behaviour;

- **Housing and environment**

Improve housing and environmental conditions of Roma population. With the help of local governments get a picture of the conditions, in cooperation with Roma community work out measures and activities for the improvement of these;

- **Income support**

Reduce poverty among Roma population. Identify the incidence and intensity of poverty among Roma population; with the help of the improved case management in delivering social services ensure their coverage with minimum income schemes and social services;

- **Awareness raising**

Raising awareness of society about the Roma situation and also raising awareness of Roma community about their rights and possibilities.

5.2. Monitoring methods and review mechanism

Within the framework of local government structures and in cooperation with Roma community collect data on Roma population (education, employment, healthcare, housing and environment) and submit them annually to the Ministry of Culture for survey.

5.3. Cooperation and continuous dialogue with Roma civil society

The main obstacle to strengthening cooperation and continuous dialogue with Roma community has been the absence of opinion leaders representing them. Finding of authoritative leaders would help get a better picture of problems and find ways to solve them, improve cooperation at the state and local level.

5.4. EU Structural Funds

By utilisation of EU Structural Funds for raising awareness and development of existing measures it is possible to improve the access to the education (e.g. to educate teachers teaching Roma children, train parents of Roma children) and to the labour market services, which in turn would help to support the integration of Roma.

5.5. Reflection of Roma integration in the Estonian Europe 2020 national targets and National Reform Programme

The reflection of the integration of the very small Roma community in the Estonian Europe 2020 national targets and National Reform Programme is not reasonable and obviously excessively detailed approach, since in these documents minorities have not been approached, not even in most general sense.

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Appendix: Counties in Estonia by share of Estonians in total population



Share of Estonians in population, 1 January 2008

