

Country fiche: HUNGARY

Position of civil society involved in the Roma Civil Monitor

SUBSTANTIVE POLICY AREAS

STRENGTHS/KEY ELEMENTS OF THE MS APPROACH

WEAKNESSES/GAPS/RECOMMENDATIONS

EDUCATION

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| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Preschool education is obligatory from the age of 3. Additionally, governmental programmes aim at increasing the number of kindergarten teachers and their training in social inclusion and integration. • Two programmes aimed at reducing early school leaving have been implemented, including remedial schools, second chance educational models, and tutoring. Further, one program aims to reach youth that have already dropped out. • The state supports a portion of the salaries of staff in “Sure Start Children’s Houses”, offering early childhood programmes for disadvantaged children. The children’s houses have been proven to improve social skills, vocabulary, and motor coordination. • Higher education scholarship programmes funded from “Human Resources Development Operational Programme are targeted for Roma students (yet, only traditional church schools and universities are eligible for funding). | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The curriculum of the social inclusion and integration training needs to be reviewed, as it is possible that the curriculum may support nationalist and populist ideologies and narratives. • The scope of existing early childhood programmes is limited, it does not address the real needs of families, and there is inadequate support from the government. • Career guidance services in schools fail to assist Roma students or their families in becoming familiar with available professional or further education options. • The policy of “freedom in the choice of school” and the growing number of church-maintained schools has led to increasing educational segregation through increasing the phenomenon of “white flight” often to church-maintained schools and churches establishing ghetto schools to serve disadvantaged groups and communities. • Dual education was initiated together with the lowering of mandatory schooling to 16, leading to higher rates of early school leaving and reduced career opportunities. |
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EMPLOYMENT

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| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mainstream public employment services and EU funded ALMP targeted at the long term unemployed are accessible to Roma jobseekers. • Basic skills training is available in temporary measures, but not as a standard employment measure. • There are some notable public initiatives of internships in public organisations and some NGO activities to address employer discrimination. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Public employment services and measures are not tailored to the specific needs of the Roma, outreach efforts are limited. • Employment and training programmes are seldom linked to social services which is likely to reduce their impact. • Roma are overrepresented in public works schemes that do not effectively help reemployment in the primary labour market. • Legal prohibition and monitoring of employer discrimination exist but are rarely enforced. Public employment services does not explicitly address employer discrimination. |
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HEALTHCARE

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| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Specialist outpatient care in poor rural regions was improved with EU funds. • In Hungarian healthcare (both ambulatory and in-patient), out-of-pocket informal or "gratuity" payments are widespread, even the norm. This is likely to put the poor, many of whom are Roma, at a disadvantage in terms of access, and care quality. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • High and growing number of unfilled general practitioner and health visitor positions disproportionately affect impoverished regions with more than average Roma, rendering access to healthcare hard. • The scope of the targeted programmes is inadequate to fill the gaps in universal access to primary care, whose underfinancing affects rural regions where most Roma |
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live. Financing and salaries should be adjusted, to ensure that all missing positions are filled.

- A reform of healthcare financing, making informal payments less pivotal is overdue.
- Discrimination in healthcare remains a problem; cases remain latent and hardly addressed by existing institutions; complaint mechanisms should be closer to the community.
- Drug abuse (especially designer drugs) is rampant among marginalised groups, also affecting many Roma. The government's policy response is under resourced.

HOUSING

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| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The social urban rehabilitation schemes funded under TOP target the increasing of the social housing portfolio, as one of the tools of desegregation. • Mainstream housing programmes target rather the middle class. • In municipalities with committed local governments, ESIF-financed local projects do accomplish minor and major results. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Coverage of housing affordability programs which would address extreme forms of housing poverty and prevention of evictions is low. • The portfolio of municipal social housing is minimal at the national level as well but is almost completely missing in disadvantaged (small) settlements. The poorest, including the Roma, are increasingly pushed out of social housing. • Vast majority of Roma living in low-status residential zones, segregated areas and substandard dwellings mostly are left out of major development and ESIF-funded initiatives; successful exceptions represent minimal progress at the macro-level. • Housing benefits are allocated by municipalities and prove to be insufficient to veritably alleviate affordability-related difficulties and to establish housing security. Moreover, the poorest, including the Roma, are forced out of family housing allowance scheme, as they are unable to meet eligibility criteria. |
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HORIZONTAL MEASURES

STRENGTHS/KEY ELEMENTS OF THE MS APPROACH

WEAKNESSES/GAPS/RECOMMENDATIONS

ANTI-DISCRIMINATION

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| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A wide range of anti-discrimination principles is defined in the Hungarian legislative system. The legislative framework meets the key EU anti-discrimination directives and the laws guaranteeing the requirement of equal treatment. The Equal Treatment Authority has a quasi-judicial scope of action, with capacities to apply decisions and sanctions of public administration and it is entitled to sue. • The law which exempted religious run schools from the legal requirement of equal treatment and allowed churches to run segregated schools was amended in July 2017, with a stipulation that schools organised on such principles may not lead to unlawful segregation. It is too soon to assess impact of this modification. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Challenges remain due to ambiguities in the legislation. Legal awareness of issues concerning equal treatment is especially low among the Roma. • In 2015, the government adopted a policy decision and set out details of its plan for the 2014-2020 period for “a significant breakthrough in the elimination of segregated housing in Hungary”. However, the programmes only reach a small fraction of people living in such segregation. • Roma are subjected to both ‘over-policing’ and ‘under policing’ and police operate ethnic profiling. • Evictions of the poorest tenants with arrears or unsettled legal title disproportionately affect Roma. To prevent Roma from moving in, some local authorities buy up available real estate or pressurize people who intend to sell to a Roma buyer. |
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- Some local authorities refuse to register Roma moving in the village; consequent lack of documentation makes access to benefits and services difficult.

FIGHTING ANTIGYPSYISM

- The strategy does mention some measures to reduce antigypsyism, including training of professionals in public services and the role of media in deconstructing prejudices.
- A Working Group Against Hate Crimes prepared a list of indicators to make it easier for law enforcement agencies to recognize and assess bias-motivated crimes during criminal proceedings. The representatives of National Police Headquarters agreed to integrate the list into the police's system of training on hate crimes.
- Even though the problem of 'incitement' as a concept has already been articulated at the level of international courts, the police and the prosecutor's office hardly ever use this classification in practice.
- Amendment to the Criminal Procedures Act related to the definition of hate crimes and vulnerable groups should be made compliant with Directive 2012/29/EU.
- There is a need for training intercultural competence for civil servants, judges, police officers, prosecutors, journalists etc. which is currently missing.
- Data collection (including survey, research etc.), monitoring and reporting on manifestations of antigypsyism is missing. Underreporting of racially motivated crimes against Roma remains an unaddressed problem.

ADDRESSING SPECIFIC NEEDS OF MOST VULNERABLE GROUPS AMONG ROMA

- The NRIS names three national programmes that aim to improve the labour market situation of Roma women; a series of national programmes aimed at preventing the early school drop-out of Roma girls have been implemented.
- The NRIS conceptualises both young people and the Roma as disadvantaged on the labour market.
- The health visitor (district midwife) is an exemplary and complex service, which plays a pivotal role in providing care for expectant mothers and supporting children from infancy until they reach the age of compulsory education.
- More publicly available information would be needed on the exact results, efficiency and spending of the programmes targeting Roma women and girls.
- The Youth Guarantee Programme uses active labour market tools to facilitate the employment of young people below the age of 25; however, the ambition of reaching and including young Roma is not expressed as a priority.
- The professional control of the child protection system and the cooperation between social and child protection services should be improved in order to prevent children from being removed from their (non-abusive) families struggling with poverty and housing insecurity - which is one of the most crucial children's rights issue in the country, affecting disproportionately Roma children and families.
- No measures have been adopted to address (explicitly) Roma LGBT issues.

STRUCTURAL MEASURES

STRENGTHS/KEY ELEMENTS OF THE MS APPROACH

WEAKNESSES/GAPS/RECOMMENDATIONS

STAKEHOLDER INVOLVEMENT AT THE CENTRAL LEVEL

- The ministerial commissioner supervising funds for Roma affairs, assigned by the Minister of Justice, was the former Chairman of the National Roma Self-Government, a representative of the governing party.
- Roma Coordination Council is "responsible for providing a forum of dialogue and cooperation for promoting the effective inclusion of the Roma population." The council counts 29 members "mostly delegated by Roma organisations, but also includes representatives of the Academy of Sciences, churches, employers, trade unions and civil groups among others.
- Trust is scarce in the overlapping leadership of National Roma Self-government and state commissioner's role. Poor advocacy performance, and active investigations against the super-powered Roma leader regarding misuse of ESIF.
- Mostly due to the lack of necessary staffing, the Equal Treatment Authority carries out very few ex officio procedures, whereas vulnerable groups have low familiarity and capacities to file complaints.

CIVIL PARTICIPATION AND EMPOWERMENT

- In 2013 the Anti-Segregation Round Table began running, mostly with civil society and educator members. However, the representatives of the civil society have left the table to protest against its ineffectiveness.
- Most Roma organisations undertake tasks related to education, social services, culture and sports; some NGOs with significant capacity has engaged in legal protection to outstandingly high standards.
- Recent regulations labelling some civic organisations and NGOs as “foreign agents” has had stigmatizing and discouraging effects.

MAINSTREAMING OF ROMA INCLUSION AT THE LOCAL LEVEL

- Few municipalities with committed political leadership become champions of desegregation, sometimes in cooperation with local Roma minority self-government.
- Since 2017, regional Roma platforms have been established in several counties, aimed at seeking for solutions for local problems. Impact of these platforms has not been assessed.
- The development of an Equal Opportunity Plan is compulsory above certain settlement size but is rarely guiding genuine planning activity of local governments.
- Although the local elections regulations allow to run as representative of national minorities with 'preferential' voting, the scheme is poorly exploited at municipalities with higher proportion of Roma.
- Local governments often act as active agents of hard and subtle forms of social exclusion.
- ESIF-supported local developments are the main vehicle of local inclusive development which, however, rarely lead to transformative mainstreaming effects in needs assessment, decision making, planning, and implementation of developments.

DATA COLLECTION

- The collection and management of nationality and ethnic data is governed by the Data Protection Act.
- The number of Roma people in Hungary as estimated by the national census usually differs from the number identified in research, primarily due to methodological reasons. The method of the 2011 census allowing double self-identification resulted in increasing number of Roma, closer to the professional and scholarly estimates.
- Some problems to access to ethnic data (e.g. Central Statistical Office provides primary data on Roma against a fee) can be experienced but data collection is not the primary obstacle to more robust Roma inclusion in Hungary.

FUNDING FOR CIVIL SOCIETY

- ESIF are the most relevant funding sources for Roma. EEA/Norway Grants and the Swiss Contribution support "civil funds" for the implementation of small-scale local projects.
- Non-state donor support from large corporations as part of their CSR strategy is increasing, as are private foundations, some of which also compete with civil society as applicants for funding.
- The Government officially complained about the civic consortia's decision-making mechanism for managing the EEA/Norway grants and the future continuation of this grant is unclear.
- Some of the main pro-Roma Roma human rights NGOs had to close their activities due to lack of financial resources. In sum, Roma empowerment through independent and bottom up civic mobilization has not advanced in recent years, it has rather stepped back.

EXAMPLE OF PROMISING PRACTICE

Scholarship programmes have shown to be effective in supporting education of disadvantaged students, including Roma. A noteworthy programme is *Bari Shej*, aiming to prevent Roma girls' early school leaving. The programme is run in partnership with various local stakeholders and institutions all over in the country. It is funded from ESIF (EFOP 1.4.4-17, project title “*Bari Shej – Nagylány – FataMáré*”) with 8.4 million EUR (2.66 billion HUF) to be used within a period of 24 months to help 1,780 young girls facing disadvantages through 89 selected operators.

There are other scholarship programmes with significant outreach to disadvantaged Roma, such as “*Útravaló*” scholarship that in the 2016/2017 school year supported 4,028 beneficiaries; or *Arany János* programme that supported 1,088 children in the 2015/2016 school year.

The largest programme is the *Szabóky Adolf* vocational training scholarship programme that provided scholarships to as much as 35,990 children between 2016 and 2018 and funded more than 270 after school study clubs supporting disadvantaged students; the programme was funded from ESIF with 23.23 million EUR (7.35 billion HUF). This programme is however criticised as it pulls Roma students to vocational training, where students receive higher support under more favourable conditions than

in general secondary education. This has negative impact on Roma's future educational and professional career; nevertheless, it demonstrates effectiveness of targeted support to Roma students.

MOST IMPORTANT PRIORITIES TO BE ADDRESSED

- To address consequences of lowering the age limit of compulsory education (this lowering to 16 years has significantly contributed to the rise in the number of early school-leaving cases).
- To support Roma students in transitions from primary to secondary education and from school to work.
- To actively address growing segregation of Roma in education.
- To bring Roma closer to the labour market through coordinating actions with possible employers or promoting good practices in the field.
- To specifically target low-status residential urban zones and segregated rural areas with substandard dwellings by major long-term integrated programmes for renewal, upgrading and moving people out from urban and rural ghettos.
- To increase coverage of housing affordability programmes which would address extreme forms of housing poverty and prevention of evictions.
- To promote rental programmes through increase of the supply of social housing and affordable private rentals to promote moving to areas with labour demand and enhance regional mobility.