

## Country fiche: FRANCE

### 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"> <li>• Pre-school education will be compulsory, from the school year 2019/2020, for all children above the age of 3 years.</li> <li>• Children with academic difficulties, without good command of French or in precarious social conditions are educated in special teaching units at their own pace with a more individualised pedagogy aimed at acquiring skills necessary for mainstream education.</li> <li>• Children from homeless families and ‘gens du voyage’ are educated in mobile schools to be better prepared for the standard schooling.</li> <li>• The state provides financial assistance to pupils of the primary education (until the age of 11) to offset the cost of supplies (school bags, pencils, clothes, etc.).</li> <li>• Roma civil society offers reception centres to provide homework help for children.</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• There is a lack of data on how many Roma children from families living in precarious conditions do not go to school, however, existing studies indicate that this number can be significant.</li> <li>• Access to pre-primary and primary education is conditioned upon administrative procedures that create barriers for Roma, specifically those not speaking French.</li> <li>• Requests for early schooling very often face refusals from mayors mainly based on the lack of residence documents.</li> <li>• Education in special teaching units often stigmatises students and contributes to their segregation from the mainstream.</li> <li>• Efficiency of mobile schools as transition to standard schooling is very variable and no data exist as to evaluate it on the whole territory. Moreover, the existing mobile schools are private and there is very little monitoring by the educational state authorities.</li> <li>• School dropout has been a national priority once with the 2014 national plan, but young people living in precarious housing are not a target of the plan (moreover, repetitive evictions from housing increase dropouts).</li> <li>• There is no financial assistance for supplies in middle-schools (starting from age of 11), nor for the children registered after September, which is often the case for precarious families.</li> <li>• Available mainstream policies are little known among the “gens du voyage” and of EU-mobile Roma living in France, e.g. the use of validation by experience acquisition (VAE).</li> </ul> |
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#### EMPLOYMENT

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| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The approach taken is that mainstream public employment services and youth guarantee programme are available nationwide.</li> <li>• There are small-scale regional projects (mainly ESF-funded) targeted at slums and other poverty-stricken neighbourhoods.</li> <li>• Cases of discrimination in access to employment or public employment services are regularly monitored by public authorities (Defender of Rights), and reports are fed back to the legislature.</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Mainstream programmes are not tailored to Roma and access is limited by lack of language skills or stable housing, foreign citizenship, or lack of a bank account.</li> <li>• Employment and training measures should be coordinated with social and housing measures.</li> <li>• Public employment services’ outreach measures barely exist and should be strengthened.</li> <li>• Discrimination against Roma in access to employment by public and private institutions remains very often unreported and thus, an unaddressed issue.</li> </ul> |
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#### HEALTHCARE



- Health insurance is general and the most indigent are offered also supplementary health insurance and can access all the health services for free. Moreover, there is a special regime for foreigners who live in France with no permit residence or right to stay.
- National Centre of Health Insurance created a special centre for EU inactive citizens residing in France.
- The health of the many Roma living in self-managed areas or slums is adversely affected by their environment. Mechanisms range from pathogens to lack of easy access to drinking water and should be addressed.
- Establishment of the special centre for EU inactive citizens made clients' applications so far more cumbersome and slower; the regulations and administrative practices should be reviewed.

### HOUSING

- There is a refined state programme to eliminate all slums within 5 years. The state policy contains orientations on housing, health, employment and education. The policy should be implemented within local partnerships, under the authority of the prefects.
- There is no consistent policy to eliminate segregation in housing.
- Essential public services are not at all or not adequately accessible, in both managed (for gens-du-voyage) and self-managed (informal sites inhabited by Roma from Bulgaria and Romania) areas. Municipalities tend not to serve the areas, afraid that this would legitimate them.
- The state program to eliminate all slums is encouraging, but as it depends on the good will of municipalities, its implementation is very unequal, and departments in which it is the most needed have failed to start building local partnerships to achieve the goals.
- Social housing is scarce and many times inadequate for gens-du-voyage, whereas housing benefits and social housing for migrant Roma are not accessible due to legal constraints and language/information barriers.

## HORIZONTAL MEASURES

### STRENGTHS/KEY ELEMENTS OF THE MS APPROACH

### WEAKNESSES/GAPS/RECOMMENDATIONS

#### ANTI-DISCRIMINATION

- The Defender of Rights has investigative powers and has often presented observations in court cases in matters of Roma rights.
- Few complaints received due to language and social barriers, mistrust and low rights awareness among Roma. Legal aid and advice for marginalised Roma should be available and provided by public authorities.
- Forced evictions are frequently carried out without providing alternative accommodation or addressing the needs of ill and disabled people, infants or pregnant mothers. The policy of forced evictions should end, and instead humane integration that provides for access to services and safe and stable accommodation should be promoted.
- Basic facilities are lacking in most shanties and slums. Many mayors maintain that if they offer such facilities then they cannot proceed with evictions. The NRIS should be revised to ensure that everyone has access to clean water and sanitation.
- Police violence and discriminatory behaviour towards Roma and gens du voyage remains a problem that needs to be addressed by state authorities, with greater protection and legal assistance provided for victims.

#### FIGHTING ANTIGYPSYISM

- The approach taken is that mainstream legislation is sufficient to cover antigypsyism, and the Ombudsperson is expressing public support for the cause.
- School textbooks mention Roma (though exclusively) as victims of genocide during WWII.
- Antigypsyist acts are seldom brought to courts because they affect the most vulnerable and excluded part of the Roma population.
- Government should assign to a public entity the responsibility to set up a monitoring and reporting system of all the manifestations of antigypsyism.
- Anti-Roma hate speech by representatives of the government and politicians is judged by a special tribunal. Civil society raises concerns about the impartiality of this tribunal.
- The education curricula do not address the problem of anti-Roma stereotypes or antigypsyism.

### ADDRESSING SPECIFIC NEEDS OF MOST VULNERABLE GROUPS AMONG ROMA

- In the context of fighting against child poverty (affecting Roma children as well), pre-school education will be compulsory.
- The Strategy for the Prevention and Combating Poverty, published in 2018, includes several measures aimed at supporting the autonomy and employment of young people; these measures should benefit socially excluded young Roma people as well.
- Decent housing should be provided for families, including pregnant women and children, who live among unhealthy living conditions, e.g. in polluted areas.
- All the actual initiatives addressing the needs of vulnerable young people, among them Roma (or migrants) are run by civil society associations.

## STRUCTURAL MEASURES

### STRENGTHS/KEY ELEMENTS OF THE MS APPROACH

### WEAKNESSES/GAPS/RECOMMENDATIONS

#### STAKEHOLDER INVOLVEMENT AT THE CENTRAL LEVEL

- The Inter-ministerial delegation for emergency housing and access to housing (DIHAL) constitutes the National Roma Contact Point which has the responsibility of coordinating the development of the National Roma Integration Strategy (NRIS).
- The only specific budget managed by DIHAL (4 million Euros/year) is not sufficient to efficiently encourage mayors to implement projects of inclusion/slums clearance.
- Most of the authorities' actions towards Roma in France are carried out by the Ministry of the Interior without any communication with civil society and in a strictly repressive direction (forced eviction, deportations, police cooperation, imprisonment of juveniles...).

#### CIVIL PARTICIPATION AND EMPOWERMENT

- Roma's participation or empowerment is not supported.
- The legal recognition of diversity, through the adoption of measures aimed at favouring any minority's specific representation, is constitutionally forbidden.
- The French State does not implement any policy aimed at strengthening the capacity for action and participation of minorities.
- The representation and participation of beneficiaries of integration projects is either lacking or ineffective (as the beneficiaries are in position of dependency on the project implementers).

#### MAINSTREAMING OF ROMA INCLUSION AT THE LOCAL LEVEL

- Inclusion policies are developed and implemented by few local governments with committed political leadership.
- The French Roma integration strategy published in 2011 has had very little impact local level.
- No regular support by the central government (The implementation of inclusion policies at local level is



subject to the political will of local governments and local contexts).

#### DATA COLLECTION

- No data on Roma is collected in France, as minorities are not recognised.
- Lack of data disable any monitoring or assessment of public policies on Roma.

#### FUNDING FOR CIVIL SOCIETY

- Most of funding for civil society is provided through outsourcing of social services in slums by public authorities.
- There are no specific funds or budget for civil society allocated to Roma or Roma NGOs.
- Roma organizations have weak structures and financial capacity. Therefore, they are not able to tender for the provision of social services (only these are reimbursed).
- ESIF management passed from the prefectures (representing the state) to the regional councils, in consequence, the ESIF became dependent on the political orientation of each region.
- Almost no funds are available for inclusion policies/actions for Roma people. The annual budget of the DIHAL undergoes a decline of one third to the level of 3 to 4 million EUR annually (compared to 30 to 40 million EUR per year for evictions of slums).

#### EXAMPLE OF PROMISING PRACTICE

On 25 January 2018, the current government adopted an inter-ministerial circular giving a new impetus to the policy of slums' clearing. This new policy sets the objective of clearing the slums until 2025. This new circular completes another one of 2012 and gives concrete advice and guidance to the prefects on how to use the regulatory and financial means and tools to achieve sustainable results.

#### MOST IMPORTANT PRIORITIES TO BE ADDRESSED

- To provide financial and other incentives to the mayors to initiate necessary projects for progressive and sustainable clearance of slums. To encourage prefects to substitute mayors who fail in their role of taking such initiatives.
- To strengthen the participation of the beneficiaries in development of projects aimed at their inclusion; such participation will help to better adjust planned activities to their needs and thus to more efficient and sustainable results.
- To adopt specific measures to ensure access of Roma children living in precarious conditions to education, including fighting abusive request from authorities during the enrolment process and not evicting families with children, at least during the school period.