

Country fiche: ITALY

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"> • In some municipalities, a slight positive trend in enrolment of Roma children in education has been recorded, which is in line with an NRIS objective. • Services to support education of Roma children (such as busing or afterschool help homework) are initiated and run by few municipalities. • An ESF-funded national project focused on inclusive education and combating school drop-out in last years of primary and first year of secondary education has been launched in 15 cities (about 10% of the participants are Roma); the programme includes training of teachers and support for students' families. • Representation of Roma history, culture, and genocide (<i>Porrajmos</i>) has been included in the school curricula in some municipalities. • Roma cultural mediators have been introduced in some schools on a project basis. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Precarious living conditions in ghetto-like camps and frequent forced evictions have negative impact on the education of Roma children. Specific support for children and families is rare, if exists, depends on commitment of individual teachers. • Pre-school education policies do not specifically target Roma to increase their enrolment. • With exception of the cities targeted by the national project, the national educational policies do not include measures to translate the NRIS's objectives into practice. • There are no measures supporting Roma students in higher education or their transition from education to labour market. • Lack of data on Roma participation in education prevents measuring progress. |
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EMPLOYMENT

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| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Two large (multi-regional) pilot programmes to support Roma employment have been implemented (with several tens of thousands of Roma participants). • Small-scale projects aimed at improving Roma employment exist at municipal and regional level. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Apart from two pilots, there are no national or at least supra-regional measures to support Roma employment. Roma access to Public Employment Services is very limited. • There are no significant efforts to incentivise employers in employing Roma and to reduce wide-spread discrimination. Awareness raising about the need for such measures can help engage municipalities. |
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HEALTHCARE

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| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In 2015 a detailed Action Plan was put in place by Ministry of Health. • National Institute for Health, Migration and Poverty (INMP) in cooperation with regional and local authorities successfully piloted measures targeting Roma living in camps. • Most healthcare services targeting Roma have been carried out by NGOs depending on volunteers and project funding; these included operation of specialised clinics for camp inhabitants, vaccination or medicine provision. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Action Plan lacks dedicated funding, in consequence some of its measures are not fully implemented (e.g. health mediators). • While access to healthcare is in principle, universal, non-Italian Roma (EU-mobile or third country nationals) without regular permit of stay, job or European Illness Insurance Card (issued based on coverage in the country of citizenship), face difficulties in accessing non-emergency care, as it depends on local authorities. • Roma living in informal settlements and camps face the worst health conditions. Lack of ID documents is a particular barrier to healthcare. |
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HOUSING

- Notable efforts from the region of Emilia Romagna and few isolated municipalities to help Roma families to leave encampments by providing them with social housing.
- In the last decades a few ad-hoc housing projects have been carried out specifically designed for Roma, mostly to tackle emergencies.
- Despite NRIS's commitment to eliminate encampments, most local authorities continue to create and fund segregated camps for Roma.
- In both formal and informal settlements Roma lack physical security, and evictions are carried out very often; a consequence is homelessness or dependency on housing in other ethnically segregated camps and temporary shelters.
- Social housing in desegregated environment is inaccessible for most Roma due to a lack of affordable accommodation and criteria for access to social housing that directly or indirectly discriminate against Roma.
- Discrimination based on ethnic origin in the private housing sector is widespread.

HORIZONTAL MEASURES

STRENGTHS/KEY ELEMENTS OF THE MS APPROACH

WEAKNESSES/GAPS/RECOMMENDATIONS

ANTI-DISCRIMINATION

- The NRIS committed to combat discrimination against Roma, end segregation in education and housing and pledged to 'overcome the system of camps' and the legacy of the 'Nomad Emergency'.
- The national equality body has a weak mandate (not entitled to bring legal proceedings in discrimination cases) and lacks independence.
- Educational segregation remains pervasive and is aggravated by residential segregation. Support to maintaining segregation is sometimes presented as part of Roma inclusion measures.
- Despite NRIS commitments and court rulings, authorities continue to build and manage 'authorised' segregated camps for Roma rather than provide integrated and sustainable social housing solutions.
- Mass evictions are carried out without formal eviction orders or formal notice, thus excluding recourse to legal remedy. The particular circumstances of vulnerable families are rarely taken into consideration.

FIGHTING ANTIGYPSYISM

- NRIS and few other documents recognise antigypsyism, although actions to address it are very limited. For example, the Ministry of Education defined a "national model" for the reception and integration of children having different cultural backgrounds, including Roma.
- The analysis of antigypsyism and the development of long-term strategies to combat it are entrusted to the UNAR (NRCP and national equality body). In the past, UNAR carried out some ad hoc activities aimed at combatting antigypsyism.
- UNAR established a Contact Centre for collecting complaints concerning hate crime and providing immediate and psychological support and legal help to its victims and a Media & Internet Observatory to monitor hate speech and act to remove such content (or report the most serious cases to law enforcement). UNAR has also trained Roma and non-Roma youth to fight antigypsyism and hate speech online.
- Roma are not recognised as a minority.
- There is no reference to the Roma Holocaust in the institutional law on International Holocaust Remembrance Day. The cultural awareness of the genocide of Roma is almost non-existent in the national collective consciousness.
- Hate speech is not rare in the public space and in particular on-line.
- Due to problems in UNAR's operation, its activities in monitoring and combatting discrimination and antigypsyism have slowed down. Data concerning monitored cases of antigypsyism are not publicly available.
- Lack of implementation of the NRIS at regional level leads to the general lack of local initiatives aimed at combatting antigypsyism.

ADDRESSING SPECIFIC NEEDS OF MOST VULNERABLE GROUPS AMONG ROMA

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| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The NRIS explicitly refers to the particular vulnerability of Roma women, the need to support youth entrepreneurship among Roma and importance of including Roma children in pre-school education. • The Council of Europe is piloting the JUSTROM2 project, focusing on women’s empowerment, and two legal clinics are operating as a result. • The number of Roma children participating in pre-school education is increasing; this may be seen as a sign that kindergartens are perceived by Roma families as inclusive, welcoming institutions. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No specific measures have been adopted at the national level to address the difficulties faced by Roma women or promote entrepreneurship among young Roma. • No measures have been adopted to address (explicitly) Roma LGBTI issues. |
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STRUCTURAL MEASURES

STRENGTHS/KEY ELEMENTS OF THE MS APPROACH

WEAKNESSES/GAPS/RECOMMENDATIONS

STAKEHOLDER INVOLVEMENT AT THE CENTRAL LEVEL

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| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • UNAR as the National Roma Contact Point is placed under the presidency of the council of ministers and has at least a formal mandate to coordinate institutions and NGOs in Roma inclusion policies. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The implementation of NRIS has been slow and fragmented; multiple factors contributed to this, including UNAR’s weak mandate and discontinuity of leadership, difficult communication between different institutional levels, as well as unclear budget allocation and lack of unambiguous process and result indicators. |
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CIVIL PARTICIPATION AND EMPOWERMENT

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| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • UNAR drafted the NRIS in collaboration with civil society organisations and Roma representatives and NRIS explicitly recommends adopting measures to empower vulnerable Roma. • UNAR established a National Platform, that connects all the NGOs concerned on the issue, and created a Forum of Roma associations, that meets periodically. • Regional Working Groups include NGOs active in (pro) Roma advocacy. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Roma civil society involvement in implementing the NRIS has been a formality. Several associations report that prominent public figures and vested interests were involved in nominating and electing candidates to the Platform whom they believe are not qualified to participate. • Most Roma do not play an active role in the decision-making processes concerning the NRIS, and only rarely highly-educated, professional Roma are involved in empowerment of their communities. |
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MAINSTREAMING OF ROMA INCLUSION AT THE LOCAL LEVEL

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| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 11 out of 20 regions have established Working Groups to raise awareness of the municipal and provincial authorities about the NRIS goals and commitments and to monitor the implementation of NRIS at the local level. • One region, Emilia Romagna, has approved a regional law aimed at closing the Roma municipal camps, and actions aimed at supporting Roma inclusion | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There are significant differences in terms of the implementation of NRIS and policies concerning Roma at the regional and local levels – some regions or municipalities do not implement the NRIS at all or undertake measures that are in contradiction with the NRIS. • Even though 11 regions organise meetings with local stakeholders to identify possible projects and actions to be implemented, funding and timing commitments have not been agreed. |
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DATA COLLECTION

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| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • One working group was established under UNAR to overcome the lack of data and statistics on the presence and living conditions of Roma communities in Italy. The group involves national authorities such as the National Statistical Institute (ISTAT), the National Association of Italian Municipalities (ANCI) and two representatives of Roma associations. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Italy does not collect have ethnically disaggregated data on Roma. |
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FUNDING FOR CIVIL SOCIETY

- ESF funding has seen improved effectiveness after the evaluation of Roma projects was accelerated.
- ERDF makes it possible to fund communities in extreme marginalization. The OP Metropolitan Cities 2014-2020 programme includes specific funds for Roma social inclusion.
- Ensuring an effective use of ESIF funding to support overcoming encampments and segregation remains a challenge.

EXAMPLE OF PROMISING PRACTICE

The region of Emilia Romagna can be considered as a promising practice in operationalising the implementation of the national strategy at the regional level. This region decided and managed to implement the NRIS in practice with direct involvement of all relevant stakeholders – regional authorities, municipalities and Roma communities. Region Emilia Romagna (and few isolated municipalities in Tuscany) has been the only one region that has addressed Roma inclusion in housing by providing families from camps with regular social housing. This practice should be adopted by other regions (especially those with higher Roma population and Roma encampments – such as Lazio with 22% of Roma and Lombardy with 11%), which continue to build new mono-ethnic camps – going against the adopted national strategy.

MOST IMPORTANT PRIORITIES TO BE ADDRESSED

- The mandate and independence of UNAR, as equality body and national Roma contact point, should be strengthened.
- Regional authorities should commit to a clear schedule for the implementation of the NRIS in force, allocate necessary funding and establish cooperation with local stakeholders. An effective monitoring and evaluation mechanism for NRIS implementation should be established by the central government to measure achieved progress.
- The system of “nomad camps” should be overcome by offering their inhabitants a long-term alternative. Without substitute social housing, Roma families should not be evicted from authorised encampments.
- Local authorities must ensure that inhabitants of both authorised and informal camps are provided with essential public services such as access to drinking water or waste collection.