

Country fiche: AUSTRIA

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"> • To reduce the number of early school leavers, education became compulsory until the age of 18. • The Roma school mediation or extra-curricular tuition provided by Roma NGOs in public schools is highly appreciated by beneficiaries and school principals. • Several measures have been adopted to support vulnerable children's transition to higher levels of education. For example, job-coaching supports students in the last year of compulsory education and in 2018, an ESF call for proposal was launched to support transition from secondary education to higher education or professional education. • In Viennese public schools, classes in Romani language are offered to a small extent. Currently, four teachers for Romani language were employed by the school authority. • The Federal Ministry of Education supported the development of teaching resources on Roma and Sinti during the Holocaust and on Roma history and culture aimed for 5th grade children. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Despite clear evidence on the low educational level and the high demand from civil society for Roma targeted educational programmes, the implementation of the NRIS did not bring much progress and did not set ambitious objectives in this area. Recent reforms of the educational system jeopardise achievement of NRIS's targets (e.g. cutting the available budget for the extension of pre-school education). • Austrian education system is highly selective. Pupils with education problems risk to finish in special schools for disabled children or in integration classes. • Children, whose parents are unemployed, have lower chances to access public kindergartens or all-day primary schools because children of parents who work have priority. This often applies to Roma children. Moreover, fees for these represent an additional barrier for poor. • Some public and school authorities deny school access to immigrant Roma children due to their families' non-permanent legal status. • Further targeted measures to increase the share of Roma youngsters completing vocational training, upper secondary school and higher education should be adopted. |
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EMPLOYMENT

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| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mainstream public employment services are accessible to Roma. • There is an increase in range and number of ESF-funded Roma-specific programmes aimed at employment offered by NGOs since 2015. • Legal support and provisions against discrimination exist. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Recent immigrants often face language barriers in using the public employment services and employment. • There is no systematic monitoring of discriminatory practices, except by NGOs. • Enforcement of legal provisions against discrimination is not actively promoted. |
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HEALTHCARE

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| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Access to healthcare beyond emergency care for people without health insurance (many of them migrant Roma) is there but concentrated in Vienna and Graz. • In 2018, a national health research institution together NGOs applied for a research project to identify specific barriers faced by Roma in early childhood interventions and to develop training for health care professionals. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Despite various barriers that Roma face in access (discrimination, language barrier, fees, low literacy and trust), NRIS does not consider healthcare a priority and Roma-targeted programmes are not in place. • In cooperation with Roma civil society, health literacy among Roma should be fostered and prevention measures should be promoted in the communities. • For health care professionals, awareness raising as regards the situation and the concerns of the Roma should be put on the agenda. |
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HOUSING



- The vast majority of Roma have access to secure and affordable housing, whereby municipal housing, social benefits and housing allowances play an important role.
- There are no indications that Roma are discriminated in the access to municipal housing, nor that there is a concentration of Roma in a certain area or housing complex.

- The NRIS does not address housing.
- Roma migrants find themselves in a disadvantaged position in the area of housing compared with non-Roma migrants or the non-migrants (including being homeless or living in informal dwellings and facing discrimination).
- Access to municipal housing is only possible if certain criteria, among them local connections are fulfilled, which puts migrant Roma in disadvantaged position.
- For people living in informal dwellings, access to basic amenities is not secured.

HORIZONTAL MEASURES

STRENGTHS/KEY ELEMENTS OF THE MS APPROACH

WEAKNESSES/GAPS/RECOMMENDATIONS

ANTI-DISCRIMINATION

- Racial Equality Directive is implemented through comprehensive federal law on equal treatment.

- Low penalties provided for in the Equal Treatment Act do not fulfil the Directive's requirement to be "effective, proportionate and dissuasive".
- Several cases of ethnic profiling and discriminatory behaviour by police and judiciary have been reported, and police are very rarely sanctioned for such behaviour.
- Occasionally, repression is used against migrant Roma with the aim to make them move back to their country of origin.
- Awareness raising and training on combating anti-Roma prejudice and discrimination should be provided for law enforcement agencies.

FIGHTING ANTIGYPSYISM

- State recognises antigypsyism, there is a chapter on combatting antigypsyism in the NRIS, specific objectives and activities.
- Relevant legislative framework is in place.
- State financially supports Roma NGO to publish a report on acts of antigypsyism every second year.
- Ombudsperson for equal treatment is active and supports the civil society report on antigypsyism by providing equality data – data on cases motivated by antigypsyism.
- Roma genocide is becoming more visible and recognised.

- There have been no efforts to counter antigypsyism on the local level.
- A public system for monitoring of antigypsyism is not in place. Some cases are brought to court because of the civil society monitoring report, however, not all of them are being investigated and sanctioned properly.
- There is a need for funding to fight racism in general. The National Action Plan on Integration should include a clear provision on combatting racism.

ADDRESSING SPECIFIC NEEDS OF MOST VULNERABLE GROUPS AMONG ROMA

- The NRIS provides for counselling services for Roma women.
- Despite the ESF Roma programme in the field of employment does not include specific reference to youth, in practice it improved the outreach to Roma youth.
- Roma youth were invited to join the No Hate Speech Committee and to participate in an informal setting for exchange on youth topics between the administration and representatives of youth organisations.

- While the NRIS includes a higher enrolment rate of Roma children in pre-school education as an objective, there are no measures planned in this field.
- During the revision process of the NRIS, in 2016, Roma NGOs claimed that there would be need for Roma-specific youth work; however, this point was eventually left out from the strategy.
- The NRIS does not include health as a priority area, while Roma women's and girls' health issues should be addressed in a sensitive and targeted way.



- 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

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| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • NRIS implementation is coordinated and monitored the National Roma Contact Point (NCCP) under the Federal Chancellery. • In 2016, NRCP organized an online consultation on the NRIS in order to enhance engagement with the Roma civil society, yet it triggered a low response rate. • ESF-funded programme for Roma empowerment in the labour market brought a significant extension to Roma-targeted projects. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The areas of health and housing were removed from the NRIS in 2016 without justification, while in education there is a commitment to the existing projects. • Mainstreaming and coordination of Roma inclusion across relevant ministries is rather weak. The NRCP's capacity is limited (one person). |
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CIVIL PARTICIPATION AND EMPOWERMENT

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| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Empowerment and strengthening Roma civil society are explicit agendas in the NRIS. NRCP organises activities to achieve this objective and funding for NGOs' development is planned. • Autochthonous Roma are represented through an Ethnic Group Advisory Board, which can consult the federal government and ministers in issues regarding Roma and make suggestions to improve their situation. • The NRCP increases contacts between the civil society and the central level, through the <i>Dialogplatform</i> meetings, which was established in 2012. • There are various Roma NGOs with different activities and representing different groups of Roma. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ethnic Group Advisory Board for Roma was not involved in NRCP development. • Most of the Roma living in Austria originally come from another country. Due to the growing restrictions to acquire Austrian citizenship, many Roma are not allowed to vote or be represented in the Ethnic Group Advisory Board for Roma. |
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MAINSTREAMING OF ROMA INCLUSION AT THE LOCAL LEVEL

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| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • On a small scale, there is funding for some Roma-related projects that is given out of the budgets of the state governments. • Occasionally, the representatives of the state administrations and cities attend the dialogue platform organised by the NRCP. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • At the local level there is little awareness about the NRIS and little awareness about the responsibility for local level implementation. |
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DATA COLLECTION

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| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Data on ethnic minorities is not collected in Austria in the overall census due to historical reasons. • In the field of employment and education there is some data available about migrated/migrant Roma in Vienna. • In education, there was a participatory study on the educational situation of Roma in Austria led by NGOs. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There are very few available data on the situation of the Roma in Austria. • The policy on Roma integration is mostly not evidence-based and it is hardly possible to measure progress if there is no data. |
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FUNDING FOR CIVIL SOCIETY

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| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There are two funding programmes that explicitly target Roma: the funding for Ethnic Groups (Federal Chancellery) and the ESF-funding for Roma-Empowerment in the labour market (Federal Ministry of Labour, Social Affairs and Consumer Protection). | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Funding for anti-racist activities is hardly available in Austria and many Roma NGOs had or still have a strong focus on promoting Roma culture. • The target group of the funding instrument for ethnic groups is the Ethnic Group of Roma, which means that only the so-called autochthonous Roma and Sinti could |
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- Grants are awarded according to the principle of result-based funding.
- Recognised ethnic groups, including autochthonous Roma, receive funding to uphold their organisational structures and to implement projects. In 2014 and 2015, Roma received around 11 per cent of the total budget for all the six ethnic groups. The total budget for all the ethnic groups is around 3.8 million EUR every year since 2009.

benefit. Therefore, the majority of Roma living in Austria, who migrated from former Yugoslavia and other European countries since the 1960s are not directly targeted.

- Other relevant programmes such as the *Nationale Integrationsförderung* (National Funds for Integration) do not contain a reference to Roma or the NRIS and there is only one Roma-specific project funded out of this important programme.

EXAMPLE OF PROMISING PRACTICE

Within the field of employment some promising practices have been developed by civil society within the ESF-funding on “Roma-Empowerment in the Labour market”. For example, it allowed to extend the Roma School Mediation Program in Vienna (employment of 3 Roma school mediators) which was well received by school directors and teachers and Roma pupils and their families. Furthermore, the work of a Roma social worker at local level could be extended to one full employment position which also brought useful insights into the obstacles faced by Roma women and men in the labour market. However, sustainability of these initiatives will be dependent on transfer of these initiatives into relevant institutions and political and financial support from the respective institutions (e.g. Regional School administration and support from Ministry of Education and Ministry of Employment and Social Affairs). Furthermore, along the lines of the EU Framework and National Roma Inclusion Strategy, the initiatives should strongly interlink with other policy areas, in particular in fields like health care and education.

MOST IMPORTANT PRIORITIES TO BE ADDRESSED

- Youth-work and youth empowerment for Roma should become a priority, in order to ensure the support to further education and training for Roma youngsters.
- To ensure sustainability of ESF-funded promising practices, in particular with regard to Roma school mediation program, social work provided by local level Roma organisations, seminars for administration on antigypsyism and other resourceful initiatives.
- To invest in building up data on the situation of Roma for improved planning of the post 2020 Roma strategy and engage beyond EU funded project work dedicating national funds for Roma civil society initiatives promoting Roma inclusion.
- Projects promoting education and interlinking with other areas, e.g. employment, health should be prioritised with a strong antigypsyism and gender/diversity approach.
- Roma history and culture as well as antigypsyism should be further introduced into school curricula and should be dealt with in connection with other topics like diversity, social exclusion, minorities or equality.
- State institutions should foster research on the history of the persecution and annihilation of Roma, Sinti, Yenish and other people stigmatised as “Gypsies” before and during the Nazi regime and research on antigypsyism in post-war era.
- The Federal government and the city of Vienna should decide on building a memorial at a central location in Vienna that enables commemoration and that gives visitors information.