

Country fiche: SWEDEN

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"> • The right to education (guaranteed also to refugees and immigrant children) encompasses promoting the interests of children with different forms of disadvantages and guarantees the right to mother tongue education. • ‘Roma bridge builders’, knowing the Roma’s language and culture, work as mediators between the schools, the children and the Roma parents in some municipalities. • Södertörn University is in charge of teachers’ education in Romani language, and is commissioned to build a training program for Roma bridge builders for municipal schools and social services. • There are folk high schools (independent adult education colleges) that offer education for Romani language speakers. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Given the fact that there is a shortage of teachers in the Romani language, some municipalities do not guarantee this mother tongue education. • One major issue is the lack of education on the Roma minority both in teachers’ education and school curriculum which leads to ongoing prejudices and children’s progress in school. |
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EMPLOYMENT

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| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mainstream public employment services are accessible to Roma; a dedicated pilot for outreach Roma jobseekers via Roma mediators has been launched. • Public employment services’ staff and municipal officers receive a diversity training to better meet Roma’s needs. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There is a lack of systematic information on discrimination against Roma by employers or specific activities of the public employment services in this field. |
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HEALTHCARE

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| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Strengthening equality in healthcare and reducing health gaps is a national goal adopted by the Parliament. • A number of local projects aimed at improving health of young Roma (e.g. in reducing obesity) or training medical staff has been developed. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In some regions, healthcare providers have limited awareness about Roma’s specific needs or rights to specific measures to make services accessible. • Roma’s awareness on healthcare is sometimes limited (e.g. in dental health). • Efforts to build mutual trust and develop collaboration between Roma and healthcare can be strengthened. |
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HOUSING

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| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Five municipalities have actively responded to state initiatives to review the state of the art and develop local strategies to improve the situation (including accessing housing rights) of Roma in the local context by 2032. • A guidance material aimed at property owners and landlords was produced to increase knowledge about the situation of the Roma in the housing market, counteract discrimination and prejudice against Roma. A training component supplementing it was launched. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Roma have to hide their identity to avoid discrimination in the housing market, thus, there is presumably great underreporting of discriminatory actions. • There is a need for increased awareness that the automated computer based queuing systems used by the housing companies for the allocation of housing may have a discriminatory effect in itself as not all housing seekers are literate (among them many Roma, especially elderly ones) and not all of them have computer skills. |
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HORIZONTAL MEASURES

STRENGTHS/KEY ELEMENTS OF THE MS APPROACH

WEAKNESSES/GAPS/RECOMMENDATIONS

ANTI-DISCRIMINATION

- Several official bodies on national (Swedish Equality Ombudsman), regional and local levels focus on countering discrimination and promoting equal opportunities on national, regional and communal level.
- Part of Roma still do not benefit from the elaborate and generous social welfare system and the well-developed safety net.
- The government should allocate means to antidiscrimination bureaus to strengthen their capacity to aid the Roma minority.

FIGHTING ANTIGYPSYISM

- The Commission Against Antigypsyism that ended in 2016 resulted in several state initiatives to acknowledge historic and current abuse of the Roma people. A result is also a Government Official Inquiry about founding a national institute for Roma issues.
- The Swedish National Council on Crime prevention records and publishes an annual report on hate crimes in Sweden, where disaggregated data can be found.
- Since 2016 the Swedish police created special units in the three major regions for combating hate crimes. These units are building expertise in the field and reaching out and forming councils with minority groups, including the Roma.
- The Equality Body and the police need to be more proactive in making sure that hate crime and discrimination are reported by Roma.
- It is crucial to ensure that the Swedish judicial system operates in a way that consciously and actively strives for zero tolerance for antigypsyism within law enforcement.
- It is crucial to ensure that all school children are educated on history as well as on the lives of Roma people today. Teacher education should include knowledge on the Roma minority too.
- Reports of ethnic profiling persist; in 2013, the police authority in Southern Sweden had an illegal and active register of 4,000-5,000 Roma who were registered through family and social ties.

ADDRESSING SPECIFIC NEEDS OF MOST VULNERABLE GROUPS AMONG ROMA

- The NRIS identifies women as a priority target group; special measures are planned to improve Roma women's health and labour market opportunities.
- 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 County Administrative Board in Stockholm County (CABS) is assigned to coordinate the NRIS implementation and to provide support to other involved authorities.
- Ministry of Culture established a national Roma Council and aims at including Roma representatives from as diverse backgrounds as possible; with different professional backgrounds and expertise, from all range of ages, genders and competences.
- Some Roma representatives question the selection process of the national Roma Council from the point of view of transparency.

CIVIL PARTICIPATION AND EMPOWERMENT

- Today there are around eleven national Roma associations in Sweden that cooperate on diverse issues.
- Roma civil society perceives weaknesses in access to and distribution of information relevant for Roma.
- Evaluations of governmental programmes aimed at Roma inclusion are often done internally without Roma consultation, Roma participation or any feedback provided.

MAINSTREAMING OF ROMA INCLUSION AT THE LOCAL LEVEL

- NRIS requires that in order to achieve its expected results, all authorities and municipalities should actively take responsibility to pay attention to and ensure Roma's access to their rights in their standard operations.
- Annual report from CABS does not seek feedback from the Roma Civil Society or other Roma representatives to a sufficient extent.

- CABS provide local governments with assistance in design and implementation of Roma inclusion measures.
- Local governments and other government agencies provide the CABS with inputs to the annual reports and NRIS evaluation.
- Roma inclusion measures are piloted in several municipalities in cooperation with central authorities. The CABS disseminates findings and experience from the pilot projects.
- An important success factor in some of the previous pilot municipalities' work on Roma inclusion has been a human rights-based approach.

FUNDING FOR CIVIL SOCIETY

- Roma civil society can apply for public funding for their activities from a competitive grant scheme.
- The grants are provided on an annual basis and Roma NGOs consider the allocation as relatively small and difficult to access for less experienced organisations. Rejections come back without clear explication as to why the application was rejected.

EXAMPLE OF PROMISING PRACTICE

The Swedish Government commissioned the Swedish National Agency for Education (*Skolverket*) and the National Board of Health and Welfare (*Socialstyrelsen*) to put into effect a targeted education for Roma who will work as Roma bridge builders in pre-school, school, social services and health care. In addition, the government offers a grant to municipalities to pay for 50 % of the salary for the bridge builders during the two-year program. A Roma bridge builder is a person employed in the public sector to work as a link between the Roma individual or community and the public service provider. The first commission was given for 2012-2015 and the second for 2016-2019.

MOST IMPORTANT PRIORITIES TO BE ADDRESSED

- To identify and address barriers that prevent that all Roma children complete primary education; and to significantly increase the share of Roma children who move on to and complete secondary education.
- To provide targeted support for young adult Roma to participate in vocational training, including fully subsidized internships and "new start" jobs to introduce young Roma to the labour market and encourage employers to hire them.
- To designate concrete sub-targets, budgets and process guidance as well as a regulatory agency responsible for monitoring the follow-up of different authorities on state, regional and municipal level obliged to implement Roma inclusion and who have a responsibility that the rights of the Roma minority are fulfilled.
- To tackle prejudice and antigypsyism affecting everyday life of Roma that force many to hide their Roma identity. There is a need for national campaigns that focus on raising awareness of history and current situation of the Roma minority in Sweden, including support to cultural institutions.
- To guarantee the implementation of the official school curriculum regarding minorities, The Swedish National Agency for Education, (*Skolverket*) and the Swedish Higher Education Authority (UKÄ) should see to it that teacher education includes knowledge on the Roma minority. The Ministry of Education and Research (*Utbildningsdepartementet*) should ensure that current teachers as well receive this competence.