

Country fiche: ESTONIA

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"> • Within the inclusive education principle all schools must provide individual support to students who need it, the way it is organised is up to the specific school. • Placement of any children into special schools has largely decreased since inclusive education became the leading principle of the Estonian education system. • In Estonia, compulsory education lasts until the age of 17 or until finishing basic school; this measure prevents drop-outs without basic school completion. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • It is not possible to determine how many children of Roma origin are currently in the education system, as the Estonian Education Information System only reflects on the students whose parents register them as children with Romani background. • Pre-school education is not compulsory in Estonia. The kindergarten fee varies by municipality and is normally tied to the minimum wage. • Secondary education is not compulsory. There are no dedicated actions to support or encourage Roma students to reach secondary or higher education. |
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EMPLOYMENT

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| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mainstream public employment services designed upon individual jobseekers' needs are available to Roma. • Legal provisions and institutions against discrimination in employment exist. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Roma often have low trust in public employment services, including trainings, and their effectiveness in finding jobs. • There are no official reports of incidents of work-related discrimination. Within a research from 2014, a majority of young Roma reported that they had experienced discrimination in accessing jobs. • There are no specific measures to fight racial discrimination in employment. |
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HEALTHCARE

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| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Public insurance is guaranteed for children up to 19 years, students, adults whose social taxes are paid by their employers, pregnant women, unemployed persons, dependent spouses, and pensioners. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lack of health insurance (e.g. because of not being registered as unemployed) could be an issue for some in the Roma community. |
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HOUSING

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| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Roma live mostly in integrated neighbourhoods, and there are no reports that they are affected by homelessness. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There is very sporadic empirical evidence about the housing issues of the Roma community. • The average Roma housing conditions are reported to be poorer compared with the general population, and there are no special provisions to make sure that municipalities respond to these needs with the help of their own social housing stock. |
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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"> • The practice of placing Roma children to special schools has stopped and educational segregation is not a problem anymore. • Roma population is too small and scattered to ascertain if there are any distinct patterns of discrimination. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The equality body (Office of the Gender Equality and Equal Treatment Commissioner) remains critically underfunded, and unable to fulfill its role. In consequence, for example, the office was not able to participate in a procurement in 2018 to start a planned |
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- The survey carried out in 2018 indicated that institutions such as the police or the judicial system enjoy trust among Roma.

project aimed at reducing the school dropout rate of Roma children.

FIGHTING ANTIGYPSYISM

- Steps have been taken recently to collect data on hate crimes, however it is not expected that these will be disaggregated by ethnicity of victims.

- There has been very limited research performed on existence and extent of antigypsyism.
- Limited transposition of hate speech and hate crime provisions.
- There are no reliable statistics regarding hate speech against the Roma. No media monitoring is being carried out.
- There is a need for clearer rules on hate speech or at least a clear legal definition at national level of what constitutes hate speech should be created. Until then it is not possible to monitor the real situation regarding hate speech.

ADDRESSING SPECIFIC NEEDS OF MOST VULNERABLE GROUPS AMONG ROMA

- In 2017-2018, the Ministry of Culture implemented a project “Supporting the development of a network supporting the empowerment of Estonian Roma youth and women”, including training for so-called cultural translators, aimed at improving relations between schools, local governments and Roma families/communities.

- The enrolment rate of Roma children in kindergartens could be increased by addressing the cultural issues, which are assumed to play a key role in Roma families’ decisions regarding pre-school education.
- The Unemployment Insurance Fund has a special scheme, aimed at improving the labour market integration of young people (aged 16-29), including training opportunities and subsidies for the employers, however, these services rarely reach Roma communities.
- 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

- Instead of a special strategy on Roma inclusion, Estonia has an integrated sets of policy measures, which are linked to the national development plan “Integrating Estonia 2020”.
- The Roma integration policy is the responsibility of the Ministry of Culture, where the National Roma Contact Point is placed.
- In 2015, the Ministry of Culture established the Roma Integration Council for dealing with the issues of Roma integration and coordinating information.

- The plan “Integrating Estonia 2020” is not very specific, and Roma are only mentioned in one paragraph.
- The Roma Integration Council generally meets twice a year, but unfortunately, attendance is not high, especially when it comes to the representatives of local governments.

CIVIL PARTICIPATION AND EMPOWERMENT

- There are three registered (pro-)Roma NGOs in Estonia (one of them is not led by Roma people anymore).

- No local government has an integration strategy aimed at the Roma community.
- Roma are not active in civic organising. In consequence existing (pro-)Roma NGOs only weakly represent Roma interests as they have no or just a few active members.

MAINSTREAMING OF ROMA INCLUSION AT THE LOCAL LEVEL

- The Ministry of Culture plans activities (supported by the European Commission) in municipalities with Roma

- No local government has an integration strategy aimed at the Roma community. Local governments do not

population to support trust-building, including training of local Roma mediators.

implement any measures to support the Roma community specifically.

- Valga, the local government with the largest Roma community, pointed out that their development plan and budgetary strategy for 2019-2023 states that multiculturalism is the strength of Valga. Yet, it includes nothing specific concerning Roma and there is no action plan aimed specifically at them.

DATA COLLECTION

- Roma community is relatively small – according to the National Population Register, there are 649 people living in Estonia who self-identify as Roma. 40 per cent of the Roma in Estonia hold Estonian citizenship, 38 per cent hold Latvian citizenship, 14 per cent hold Russian citizenship and 7 per cent who are stateless.
- Several specific studies on Roma in Estonia have been produced. The most recent in 2018, focused on Roma’s participation in the society.

- The conducted studies on Roma have been small and non-representative, thus the findings cannot be generalised to the whole Roma population in the country.
- There is a lack of data on general living conditions of the Roma.

FUNDING FOR CIVIL SOCIETY

- In 2017, the Ministry of Culture started a project “Supporting the development of a network supporting the empowerment of Estonian Roma youth and women”, which is financed by the European Commission.

- Available funding for civil society is not accessible for Roma NGOs because of their low capacities to apply and successfully administer grants.

EXAMPLE OF PROMISING PRACTICE

In 2015, the Minister of Culture as the National Roma Contact Point, established an Advisory Council for Roma Integration, where Roma issues have been taken up which has led to somewhat broader discussion of those issues among stakeholders. In 2017, the Ministry of Culture started a project “Supporting the development of a network supporting the empowerment of Estonian Roma youth and women”, which is financed by the European Commission. That is the first time when government has been more proactive in supporting the Roma community.

MOST IMPORTANT PRIORITIES TO BE ADDRESSED

- Dedicated national Roma integration and development plan should be created. The Government should develop specific measures for the inclusion of Roma in economic and social life, especially in terms of employment and in the school system.
- Local governments should strategically support the Roma communities on the local level. At present, local governments do not implement any measures to support the Roma community specifically. Also, local governments with larger Roma communities should employ Roma mediators.
- More research needs to be conducted into Roma community's socio-economic problems and wellbeing. At the moment, there is a serious lack of research that would give an overview of the living conditions of Roma, the quality and accessibility of medical care, participation in the working environment and educational problems.