



Country fiche: LITHUANIA

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 ensure that children attend school, the social workers of the Social Security Centre of Vilnius City visit Roma settlement and accompany children with special rented transport to the educational institutions. • Several schools employ social pedagogues or school mediators who supervise and support academically the Roma children (i.e. assist and mediate in school between the teachers, parents and the children). • According to the latest budget of the Roma Integration Strategy, 40,000 EUR annually are allocated to educational activities. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The big gap between Roma and non-Roma children preschool attendance is mainly due to the lack of places available in (good quality, free of charge) preschool institutions. • Discrimination/antigypsyism in education is a persisting problem, especially at the teacher-student interaction level or by fellow classmates and/or their parents. • Lack of pre-school preparation and difficulty to understand Lithuanian are among the main causes of higher drop-out rates among Roma. |
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EMPLOYMENT

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| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There are new ESF-funded dedicated programmes tailored to the Roma needs and implemented by Roma organisations, in partnership with public employment services. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There is no systematic data on employer discrimination or the enforcement of legal provisions against it. |
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HEALTHCARE

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| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There is no gap between Roma and non-Roma regarding health insurance coverage. • The 2015-2020 Action Plan for Integration of Roma into Lithuanian Society pays special attention to health care and provides for increasing the availability of health services for Roma. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Access to fee-based dental care seems to be a concern in low-income households, including many Roma. |
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HOUSING

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| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A set of measures implemented by both the government through the NRIS and the Vilnius city municipality to address the largest Roma settlement's issues (e.g. facilitating the relocation of families to integrated areas with social housing or rent allowance) was launched. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Roma community still faces problems with renting (due to discrimination) and receiving municipal housing (which is very limited). • There is a disconnect between state authorities working on dismantling of the Roma settlement and the social inclusion of the residents. |
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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"> • Due to a small number of Roma in Lithuania, educational segregation is not a problem, Roma students attend mainstream schools and classes (although in the past there have been cases of separate classes formed exclusively of Roma pupils). | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Parts of the Roma community in Lithuania face residential segregation. • Forced evictions are often applied, which are not in line with the international norms. • Discriminatory policing against Roma and ethnic profiling are reported to be commonplace, and civil society organisations were not aware of any disciplinary measures taken against police officers for misconduct. |
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FIGHTING ANTIGYPSYISM

- When a complaint concerning ethnic discrimination or antigypsyism is filed by an individual, the description of the problem provides clear information on the ethnicity of the applicant.
- The annual report of the Ombudsman concerning complaints on ethnic discrimination or antigypsyism provides disaggregated data.
- The Department of National Minorities supports the dialogue between the public service and the Roma community through employing mediators in five municipalities.
- The Ombudsman's complaint mechanism is not used by Roma, neither is the work of the Ombudsman targeting Roma minority specifically.
- Measures on fighting antigypsyism are not mentioned in the Plan of Anti-discrimination Promotion Activities, although these measures would be welcomed and could potentially improve the general situation.
- In the current NRIS, there was no mention of any programs targeting specifically the public authorities.

ADDRESSING SPECIFIC NEEDS OF MOST VULNERABLE GROUPS AMONG ROMA

- Special attention is paid to pre-school education and extra-curricular activities for pupils, to bridge the gap between the Roma and non-Roma children in the field of education.
- The NRIS seeks to improve Roma women's opportunities to participate in public life, and the Action Plan provides for sources to fund initiatives aimed at women's empowerment, including training and business projects.
- The Action Plan aims to promote gender balance through all the initiatives.
- In the field of health, seminars and awareness-raising sessions are being implemented, with a focus on preventive health care, sexual and reproductive health and childcare, targeting especially Roma women and youth.
- In order to further increase the participation rate of Roma children in preschool education, a two-sided approach should be applied: Roma families' access to preschool services should be improved, while the awareness of Roma parents on the benefits of preschool education should be also promoted.
- 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

- Department of National Minorities under the Government of the Republic of Lithuania is the National Roma Contact Point (NRCP). It coordinates the 2015-2020 Action Plan for Integration of Roma into the Lithuanian Society (NRIS).
- There have been a number of Roma-specific programmes of comparatively large budget in the fields of employment and education. For example, the latest budget of the Roma Integration Strategy allocates 40,000 EUR annually to educational activities, 60,000 EUR annually to the mediation activities.
- During the process of drafting the first version of the Action Plan for the years 2012-2014 the civil society organisations expressed their dissatisfaction with the lack of initial consultations and the lack of comprehensive measures in the plan.
- This feedback was taken into consideration by the NRCP, who ensured the involvement of these organisations in the preparation and the implementation of the current action plan (2015-2020).

CIVIL PARTICIPATION AND EMPOWERMENT

- There are signs of a positive trend in Roma civic organisation, as educated and ambitious Roma community leaders and active citizens are emerging.
- The NRCP regularly organises consultations on relevant thematic issues with the stakeholders involved.
- An additional step taken by the NRCP to ensure the voice of Roma community in the process of the implementation of the NRIS is the current European Commission supported National Roma Platform project. Through the project five Roma mediators are employed in different municipalities and
- Roma civil organisation and self-empowerment have been weak due to a small size of the Roma population, their inactivity and low interest of public authorities or political parties in reaching Roma.
- There are currently no Roma employed in any relevant governance structures on a long-term basis.
- Roma are not represented in elected authorities.



meet monthly with the authorities to raise their concerns and ideas.

MAINSTREAMING OF ROMA INCLUSION AT THE LOCAL LEVEL

- Municipalities are the key players in solving the issues specifically in housing and education.
- A lack of cooperation between the central governmental institutions and municipalities seems to be the main weakness of Roma inclusion policy implementation.

DATA COLLECTION

- Some information is available on the living situation of Roma, that enable some assessment of trends.
- According to the population and housing census of 2011, the country was inhabited by 2,115 Roma people, most of them living in urban areas.
- Since 1989 the number of Roma in the country has been gradually decreasing.
- n/a

FUNDING FOR CIVIL SOCIETY

- n/a
- The initiatives coming from the ground are few and are less likely to receive any financial or political support than the ones coming either from the government itself or from established leaders and organisations.
- The lack of education or formal qualifications (which is often the case of Roma in Lithuania) is often the obstacle to participate in programmes due to the rigid requirements in long-running employment projects.

EXAMPLE OF PROMISING PRACTICE

As one of the key problems is unemployment, a very promising practice is the currently running project “Let’s Work Together with Roma – New Job Opportunities and Challenges”. The project is financed by the ESF. The positive aspect of the project is the inclusion of both Roma and non-Roma in the team, as well as using innovative measures to counter discrimination and ways to integrate the unemployed Roma to the labour market. The project also has very broad criteria, therefore not limiting the options and allowing the team to use their knowledge and experience in order to achieve more efficient results.

MOST IMPORTANT PRIORITIES TO BE ADDRESSED

- Stop forced evictions and demolition of houses. In case of forced evictions, human rights must be observed and substitute accommodation provided.
- Pay more attention to the early dropouts, quality of education as well as professional education.
- Recognise the Roma history and especially the Roma Holocaust (Samudaripen).