



EURODIACONIA AND CCME ASSESSMENT OF THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE NRIS

December 2014

Introduction

In 2014 Eurodiaconia¹ and CCME² together carried out a joint assessment of the implementation of National Roma Integration Strategies (NRIS) based on feedback from members who are actively working with Roma communities across Europe. Our members' work includes projects and services with the aim to improve the living conditions, education, employment and health of Roma as well as other activities and advocacy to promote and foster the social inclusion of Roma.

We have based this year's research on the structure of the 2013 Commission consultation, focusing on the areas of *education, health, housing, employment, anti-discrimination and funding*. We also asked members about their cooperation with national and local authorities. Although we were not able to get responses from every Member State, we have received contributions from countries where our members are most actively working with Roma communities. We have presented answers according to country rather than theme so that our answers can be comparable to official reporting on these Member States. We have also included some feedback from non-EU countries where our members are active. As important civil society stakeholders in this field, we hope that our input will be taken into account in the European Commission's official report to be published in 2015.

Past work:

In 2012 and 2013 Eurodiaconia carried out assessments of the preconditions as well as the first evaluations of the implementation of the NRIS among our membership.

- [2012 - EURODIACONIA ASSESSEMENT OF THE NATIONAL ROMA INTEGRATION STRATEGIES](#)
- [2013 - PROGRESS IN SETTING THE NECESSARY PRECONDITIONS FOR A SUCCESSFUL IMPLEMENTATION OF THE NATIONAL ROMA INTEGRATION STRATEGIES](#)
- [2013 - EURODIACONIA ASSESSMENT OF THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE NATIONAL ROMA INTEGRATION STRATEGIES](#)

¹ Eurodiaconia is a network of organisations, institutions and churches providing social and health services and education on a Christian value base in over 30 European countries.

² CCME- the Churches' Commission for Migrants in Europe is the ecumenical agency on migration and integration, asylum and refugees, and against racism and discrimination in Europe. Members are Anglican, Orthodox and Protestant Churches and Councils of Churches as well as church-related agencies in presently 18 European countries. CCME cooperates with the Conference of European Churches and the World Council of Churches



Quick links

- [Czech Republic](#)
- [Finland](#)
- [Georgia](#)
- [Hungary](#)
- [Italy](#)
- [Norway](#)
- [Romania](#)
- [Scotland \(UK\)](#)

Executive Summary

Overall, the progress made in implementing the NRIS is mixed across the responding countries. In most countries there are some positive examples of initiatives and programmes targeting specifically Roma communities. However, the tendency for these initiatives is to be locally or regionally implemented rather than mainstreamed nationally. Successful local or regional initiatives must therefore be up-scaled nationally where appropriate. We see the most concrete progress in the field of education, however our members stress that education is clearly impacted by other areas such as housing and health and in the same way positive employment related initiatives are impacted by discrimination or funding. In some policy areas, there is clearly a lack of progress or visible results. The answers confirm the need for integrated approaches when designing and implementing inclusion policies. In general our members consider that the direct participation of Roma families and individuals in policies and programmes a precondition for any project to be successful, and this is not yet properly implemented.

In the Nordic countries, the main issue is lack of political will to take action. Our members say that governments are not acknowledging the needs of Roma who have migrated from other EU countries on a short term basis and subsequently do not grant them access to social or health services. Our members have the impression that by not taking action, governments hope the Roma will stop coming.

An area that has seen most visible benefits is pre-school or school **education**. However more focus on the education of Roma women and girls is needed. Positive examples of educational initiatives were given from Hungary, Romania (regional level) and the Czech Republic. The latter has started to address school segregation (although much more still needs to be done). In many countries the level and quality of schooling Roma children receive is often closely linked to their living and housing conditions.

Again some local initiatives have been positive in terms of **health** (see Helsinki), however there is still a lack of prevention services (Czech Republic). Widespread discrimination against Roma (Italy and Romania), excludes them from medical and social services, disregard for their dignity and difficulties to clarify the legal status (leading to statelessness in the Netherlands) is still having a detrimental impact on access to healthcare for Roma. Bureaucracy is still a barrier to access health care and our members point to a need for more innovative ways to make services accessible. Members also highlight that more training, both value-based and practical amongst statutory agencies who work with the Roma communities is needed.

In terms of **housing** one issue that was cited by a couple of members is regarding the development of private shelters or hostels owned by private landlords who exploit Roma and other socially excluded groups. Our members stress that Roma need to be more actively involved in the decisions regarding their housing/accommodation situation. In Italy, whilst our members see some good regional or local housing initiatives it remains deplorable that a quarter of the entire Roma population in Italy live in “camps”. The lack of different housing solutions remains a critical issue, and our members stress that the “eviction” option is used far too often.

Employment initiatives seem to have been overall less successful. This is due to a lack of skills or training gained by Roma in preparation for the labour market, as well as continual high levels of discrimination by employers. Our members suggest that to overcome discrimination in the labour market local, regional and national authorities should hire more Roma in their staff (administration, police etc.) as an example of good practice. In Hungary this is already happening where labour market services and trainings are part of a

programme for public employment, although financial support during periods of training must be foreseen to prevent drop-out.

In terms of [anti-discrimination](#) initiatives, a number of members stress the need to change negative images of Roma in the media and for more public awareness about some of the issues Roma face, and more positive stories about Roma. Negative press is often followed by punitive approaches to access to rights for Roma as in the Netherlands where our members note a lack of targeted programmes or visible actions in favour of the Roma.

Overall in terms of [funding](#), our members say there should be more transparency in the use of national and EU funds, as well as more effective monitoring of use of funds including a thorough analysis of results versus costs. Sometimes, funding (or lack of) prevents positive initiatives/ policies from being implemented. For example in Romania, despite a national law to provide afterschool programmes, the Ministry of Education has no budget to support the initiative and the local authorities cannot afford its implementation. As a result, rural areas, where the need for afterschool programmes is high, do not benefit from the national policy.

Our members' experience of [cooperation with government bodies](#) is mixed. Whilst some have contact and good cooperation, including through receiving financial support, it tends to be with local authorities rather than at national level. Others have less or no contact and do not know where their National Roma Contact Point is to be found. This issue requires efforts both on the part of our members but also of national, regional and local authorities (coordinated by the National Roma Contact Points) to ensure a wide participation of civil society actors working with Roma.

Conclusions

Whilst some progress has been made in the implementation of the NRIS, clearly more integrated policies coordinated at national level is needed. Continued political pressure from the EU institutions on the Member States to measure the impact of their policies and the implementation of the NRIS will be required. If further responses substantiate our finding that particularly employment efforts remain weak, an emphasis on employment strategies should be envisaged, e.g. as in Italy with tax incentives.

Eurodiaconia and CCME will continue to monitor the situation of Roma across Europe with the input from members within the framework of the European Framework for National Roma Integration Strategies and Europe 2020.

Czech Republic, (*Slezska Diakonie*)

Education

Progress made: In terms of positive progress there has been support for education for Roma children on a higher quality level – with teaching assistants in the classroom. There has also been support of social services that help Roma children to prepare for schools (social intervention services) as well as financial support for Roma students at universities

The paradigm of sending Roma children to "special school" for Roma is gradually being reduced and they are more often being integrated into the classical schools, although there is still lack of progress in this area and more needs to be done. The Department of Employment and the Ministry of Education are supporting the establishment of small groups such as Kindergartens directly aimed at Roma. Roma children also have more opportunities to attend pre-school education. In some cities transport is free for Roma children to ensure their access to school and they are given money for school meals. A good practice noted is the use of Roma mediators that cooperate with the schools, the family and other specialists.

Recommendations:

- Motivate Roma families to support their children in their school attendance (motivation to attend pre-school education already)
- Motivation system needed for Roma to continue to secondary school education

Health

Progress made: according to our members progress has been made in the field of social services that support Roma people in socially excluded areas – such as prevention services. Compulsory vaccination of children exists in the Czech Republic. Control activities are done by doctors, social unions and non-profit organizations. Activities of hygiene stations in the Czech Republic are the most important form of prevention.

However problems of health care are found mainly in socially excluded areas, otherwise it is not such a big issue. Many Roma women do not usually visit medical practitioners so prevention is missing here. Families do not talk with teenagers about puberty and safe sex. In some cases lack of medical care for Roma children such as lack of paediatricians (they do not want to take care of Roma children from socially excluded areas). Roma families often lack balanced and healthy diets.

Recommendations

- Roma children need to attend kindergartens where they learn to get on with other children and develop healthy habits

Housing

Progress made: A new law is being prepared about social living for groups at the fringes of Czech society. This law can be helpful for Roma.

However, there has been a development of more private shelters or hostels owned by "businessmen" who misuse a system of financial support for socially excluded people from governments or municipality. They provide terrible (expensive) living conditions and there is no prevention against debt. It has become a good business paid by state (through social benefits for Roma people). A big problem is that money intended for families with children ends in hands of owners of accommodation

Recommendations:

- Rather than support the private shelters, support social service providers who are able to provide social housing with social support

Employment

Progress made: There is a new project of job offices and National Agency for social inclusion on employment of people living in socially excluded areas, this is a positive step.

However our members say they cannot see much progress in the field of employment. They say that the system of social benefit is too generous so Roma people are not motivated to work. They only have a basic level of education which means that they are able to find only low paid jobs. So the income from social benefits is much higher than the income from employment and they stay on social benefits.

Roma often leave school early and start families early. Most Roma are without work because they lack education, training and skills.

Anti-discrimination

Progress: Counselling services for Roma people that help them to solve their problems is a positive step as well as social services that work against discrimination. Social institutions work with people who are in complicated situations and difficult life conditions, with people who have various social problems, with people in need and with people on the fringe of society. Social workers must be able to make their clients co-operate actively, and change their social situation.

Recommendations:

- Information campaign for employers
- Promote positive stories concerning Roma through the radio, television and newspapers which are the main media of communication.

Funding

EU funding - The funds were used mainly in the field of education and employment and the results for the latter are not so visible. However thanks to the support from European funds our members could support social services for Roma for example in street work.

National funding: The Agency for Social Inclusion is supported from national funding. The Government Council for Roma Community Affairs announces annual grant titles aimed at promoting activities for the integration of the Roma minority into mainstream society.

Recommendations:

- More targeted use of funding with an impact on concrete persons/ families

Cooperation with government bodies (and National Roma Contact Points)

Progress made: Our members say they have good cooperation at local level where their opinions are taken on board. On national level they do not have concrete cooperation, except with the Agency for Social Inclusion. They know representatives from the Agency for Social Inclusion and they have quite active and positive contact with them.

Recommendations

- To improve cooperation in this field more financial support is needed for prevention social services and better accessibility of this type of service in different regions and towns.
- Local authorities should stop supporting private owners of high capacity shelters and the national government should start to support social housing system more effectively.
- Continue community planning at local level which also consists of planning of activities for Roma inclusion.

Finland, (Helsinki Deaconess Institute)

Education

Progress made: Our members in Finland focus on developments in regards to the EU Roma migrants in Finland. The Parliamentary Ombudsman for Human Rights gave a statement (19.12.2013) in regards to the right to primary education for all children. The comment affirmed that 'municipalities shall arrange primary education for all children in the municipality'; even when the children do not live permanently in a municipality or the municipality is not officially their municipality of residence. This development supports the access to primary education for Roma migrant children who continue to not belong officially to the municipalities where they reside.

Health

Progress made: The city of Helsinki has made a decision that all children and pregnant women have the right to access all health services in the municipality, at the same price as the registered inhabitants of the city. However, the decision was made just at the level of Helsinki municipality, there is no state decision regarding enlarged health services for the undocumented or EU citizens who do not possess the EU Health Insurance Card. Most of the EU migrant Roma in Finland do not possess an EU Health Insurance Card.

Cooperation with government bodies (and National Roma Contact Points)

Progress made: Our members are mostly cooperating with the local level that provides funding for their services. The cooperation has been quite successful. On the other hand the government do not take any stand with regard to the EU migrant Roma.

Recommendations:

- The issue of Roma EU migrants must be taken more seriously. When many Eastern European Roma engage in mobility, they fall in between the National Strategies in the home countries and the ones in the destination countries. Their everyday circumstances are shaped by new factors such as their legal status.

Georgia, (International Humanitarian Charity Association, member of the Free Church Diaconia Federation)

Education

Progress made: 1.500 Roma live in Georgia. With the help of NGO's Roma children have been going to school since 2013. Nowadays however very few Roma children go to school. Unfortunately according to the information that is at our member's disposal no Roma study at University. The information and training which Roma have about education is scarce. Most of them do not have identity Cards. Parents prefer that their children go out into the streets and earn money by begging in order to provide the family financially.

Recommendations:

- The government should support publicity about education and arrange trainings on the subject within Roma settlements.

Health

Progress made: The Roma that have got identity cards can use the general insurance program like any citizen of Georgia. With the support and trainings arranged by some women's NGOs Roma women have been giving birth to their children in hospitals (maternity homes) since 2013. They used to give birth to their children at home. In hospitals the Roma women are not looked after properly. They are not usually informed to whom to go for support in a given situation.

Recommendations:

- Roma should be treated equally and as others. It would be good to develop state programs that will support health care among Roma. In addition, they should have allowances for instance for medicines.

Housing

Progress made: Nothing has been done in this field yet. Only 700 Roma have got a house of their own. The rest either rent flats or live in villages where they themselves have built the so called "huts". There are several Roma villages where there is neither electricity nor gas.

Recommendations:

- The government should take care of housing challenges.

Employment

Progress made: Nothing has been done at all in the field of employment for Roma. No Roma work in public services. Most of Roma earn their living by begging. A small part of them bring goods from Baku and sell them in streets. There is no program or attempt to employ Roma in the country.

Recommendations:

- The state should organise trainings which will help Roma get professional education, and employ them within public services.

Anti-discrimination

Progress made: The Ethnic Minority Centre that works with the ombudsman arranged an exhibition describing Roma life and tried to make society aware of their issues.

Recommendations:

- Roma life and their issues should be highlighted by the mass media like the ones that are organised in cases of other ethnic groups.

Cooperation with government bodies (and National Roma Contact Points)

Progress made: Our members do not have any co-operation with the government concerning Roma.

Recommendations:

- Active co-operation with the Roma centre and getting more information about their issues on the ground

Hungary, (the Reformed Church in Hungary)

Education

Progress made: A programme with the aim to create a safety net for Roma and the disadvantaged children has been established. The programmes are separated by age groups and the Roma children can be supported in education from the age of 0 until university.

In Hungary kindergarten will be compulsory from the age of 3 which can improve the Roma education. In 2012 the Sure Start child houses (age of 0-3) were developed with the help of EU funds. In the first half of 2013 6300 children and their parents have visited these houses. Between 2010 and 2015, in the 23 most disadvantaged areas, the integrated children' program are offering help for 32 000 children.

Also in 2014 a program for creating opportunities for vulnerable Roma girls has been planned.

In the scholarship program for disadvantaged student (from elementary school to university) has reached 14,000 students (minimum 50% of them are Roma). In the program they receive financial and mentoring support.

The afterschool programs and the second chance programs are offering help to more than 3100 students. In the second chance program students who have reached the compulsory school age and dropped out of high-school are helped to finish high-school and to get a job or start university.

From 2011 The Reformed Church in Hungary takes part in the Christian Roma College Network, where together with the government they opened a reformed student hall for Roma students in Debrecen. From 2012 European funds are also involved in their development. Together with other four denominations in the year of 2012/2013 100 students were involved and from last year their number has reached 170.

Recommendations:

- There are a lot of governmental projects to improve the education of Roma children, youth and adults: afterschool, 'Second Chance', 'Child's Chance', IPR {Pedagogical System for Inclusion}, scholarships, Christian Roma Colleges Network, adult education programs. Churches should be encouraged to take part in the education of Roma - to start sure start houses and after schools clubs.

Housing

Progress made: After the '8 model programme' in 2011, in 2012-2013 the programme has started in 59 other settlements. As the funds were increased the work started in other 17 settlements. 4000 people are involved and 2400 are involved in the training. The strategy was created to deal with slum-like housing as a help to view all operative programs, also funded by the EU between 2014 and 2020.

Negative: There are good projects (for education and employment) from the government which are successful in the short-term but people exiting these programs fail to enter the labour market long term. The effect is that the housing maintenance costs too much on a long term basis.

Recommendations

- With the involvement of churches, national training bodies and the active participation of Roma a self-help movement could be created. In the house upgrading projects the Roma people would be actively involved in the actual work of their own house/flat (they would do the work). And after a family has finished their own house they could move on helping their neighbours too. The training for the work and the materials could be offered by the government and the church. The upgrading should improve energy efficiency so the family could maintain the house in the long term. This program could be implemented in the system of "value-creating public employment programs" which is created for the long-term unemployed.

Employment

Progress made: Labour market services and trainings are part of a programme for public employment where churches can also be involved. In this programme, next to a fixed salary people can get training and (sometimes) work experience. The salary comes directly from the government. In 2011-2013 204 882 Roma people were involved in the programme. The aim is to have these people move on to other jobs with this experience and to find long-term employment.

Recommendations

- According to our members a bigger focus is needed when it comes to Roma women. In Hungary there is a practice-orientated innovation where the employment of the Roma women are inserted into training. At the moment 1028 Roma women are taking part in this supported training and funded employment is realized in the social and child welfare system. Our members see this example as a way to improve employability in the public institutions and also to ensure employment. This is a good practice which could be recommended to other partners too.

- The initiatives for education and training for Roma adults is a good way to improve their employment. Our members stress that during these training the biggest problem is income. To prevent drop-outs from the training the government offers a living allowance for the participants.

Anti-discrimination

Progress made: Firstly the focus on the values of Roma culture and history are included in our national curriculum. This involves the historical fact of the “Roma Holocaust”. Our members view this step as a good improvement in overcoming discrimination.

From 2012 proposals supported programmes for the presentation of Roma culture. Until today 231 Roma cultural programs were supported. At the moment proposals for Ethnic Multifunctional Centre and Network are under evaluation. This centre will fulfil educational and training tasks. In the National Theatre a musical tale will be performed about racial prejudice and discrimination.

In the area of raising-awareness the government started a cooperation with the National University of Public Service where courses will be launched to raise awareness. Also in 2014 for the first time ethnic minorities have direct representatives in the Parliament, so there is a Roma representative mandate from now on.

Funding

EU funding: Our members say that EU funds have been used effectively.

National funding:

- Support of Roma culture 60 million Forints
- Programs and colleges for the improvement of social, economic and regional situations 510 million forints
- Coordination of NRIS 96 million forints
- Roma scholarship programs 2067 million forint
- Social integration measures 1050 million forints
- In the last four years the NRIS was supported with 14 374,2 million forint from the national funds.

Cooperation with government bodies (and National Roma Contact Points)

Progress made: Some of the Reformed Church congregations who are involved in the Roma ministry have partnerships and mutual agreements with the local governments. From 2011 the church takes part in the Christian Roma College Network, where together with the government they have opened a reformed student hall for Roma students in Debrecen. From 2012 European funds are also involved in their development. Together with other four denominations in the year of 2012/2013 100 students were involved and from last year their number has reached 170. With this cooperation these projects are supported by the government and by the churches and as a result the cooperation between the two have been improved.

Italy, (Federation of Protestant Churches in Italy/Refugees and Migrants Service)

Education

Progress made: In Italy, to meet the schooling objective under the NRIS, the National Table of Education has activated two experimental programmes for the period 2013–2014 in order to delineate replicable and transferable models:

1. “**Project for the inclusion and integration of Roma, Sinti and Caminanti (RSC) children**” – under the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs, in collaboration with the Ministry of Education (MIUR) and the *Istituto degli Innocenti* of Florence. This project aims to promote processes of inclusion, to disseminate best practices and to build a network among the 14 participating cities;

2. **“Grow with cohesion” Project** - launched in 2012 by the MIUR to combat early school dropouts in problematic situations (areas most at risk of marginalisation, delinquency, and illegality) through the creation of platforms between schools and social private organisations.

According to our members, education opportunities for Roma people remains one of the biggest issues in this area. The level of schooling Roma children receive is often closely linked to their living and housing conditions. Usually, Roma children experience marginalisation in schools, especially if they are residing in “camps”.

Recommendations:

- Abandoning the use of the term “nomadi” in the official documents of Ministry of Education and in textbooks and materials
- Removing the chapter on Roma students in the annual report of MIUR on pupils with non-Italian citizenship, including Roma students with other Italian or foreign students
- Promote training programs for teachers on innovative teaching methods and on culture and history of the Roma
- Facilitate the access of young Roma to opportunities offered by the Youth Guarantee Programme.
- Mediating between schools and Roma families and involving Roma families in the children’s educational growth
- More implementation of education programmes and actions that directly support Roma women and girls

Health

Progress made: On 20 December 2012, the *Conference for Relations between the State, Regions and Autonomous Provinces of Trento and Bolzano* approved the *Recommendations for the correct application of the national legislation on health care for foreign citizens agreement*. Thanks to this *Agreement*, our members can now support Roma children making sure they have access to healthcare even if their parents reside in Italy illegally.

However according to our members, there is a lack of data about Roma people’s access to health services. They say that a Roma person’s access to healthcare depends on their legal status in the country. If a person is “in-between” statuses, waiting to be processed by Italian authorities or residing illegally in Italy, that person will have limited access to health care because of widespread discrimination against Roma people.

Housing

Progress made: In 2013, the Region of Tuscany and the Municipality of San Giuliano Terme carried out an initiative that provided housing to 21 Romanian Roma families.

The Roma families were all previously evicted from the town of Pisa and now live in a refurbished farmhouse. These families now have much better access to proper toilet facilities, drinking water, social relations with the outside world, health care, relationships within the Roma community, privacy, and space where children can play. These improvements drastically increased the families’ quality of life and has led to better school grades and overall school attendance by the children of these families.

According to our members, Italy remains the country of “camps”: around 40.000 Roma people, a quarter of the entire Roma population in Italy live in “camps”. The lack of different housing solutions remains a critical issue, and our members stress that the “eviction” option is used far too often, furthering perpetuating the social exclusion of this group.

Recommendations:

- The “camp system” housing many Roma people in Italy should be abolished and replaced with a better housing solution.
- Regions with specific laws on Roma and Sinti should adapt their legislation to the directives of the NRIS, particularly on housing policies.

- Adopt and distribute guidelines in all the local institutions dealing with the Roma emergency housing, so that housing policies targeted towards them are not discriminatory
- Foster a culture of participation among local authorities, considering that the direct participation of families in policies and programmes is a precondition for any project to be successful. Local authorities and Roma communities should work together and have positive interactions that promote social inclusion of Roma people.

Employment

Progress made: According to our members, measures aimed to promote the inclusion of Roma people in the labour market have not been carried out by authorities. However, the Ministry of Labour, despite not having carried out specific projects which would help Roma people and their access to the labour market, is launching a series of projects open to Roma groups of foreign origin that seek to promote the social and labour market inclusion of vulnerable groups of migrants.

As of April 2014 the National Table on Employment had proposed some measures to be launched within this project. Under the *National Operative Programme (NOP) Governance and System Actions*, 1,620,000 EUR has been allocated for an experimental programme to promote the integration of disadvantaged and discriminated subjects (including Roma) into the labour market through traineeships.

Recommendations:

- Regulate the informal work that many Roma citizens partake in to protect them from being taken advantage of
- Verify that interventions for job placements are not confined to the achievement of internships and/or employment grants
- Apply the European Regional Development Fund to projects that provide job placements and professional qualification training to Roma citizens

Anti-discrimination

Progress made: According to our members, the lack of documents of many Roma is a major issue which concerns **all de facto stateless Roma**, whose status of statelessness has not been recognized by the Italian state. The issue of legal recognition of such parts of the Roma community represents a priority of the work to be carried out by NRIS. An *ad hoc* working group was formed by representatives of UNHCR, UNAR and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, headed by the Ministry of the Interior. The working group evaluated that the only road to legal recognition of RSC would be through legislation.

The measures taken to combat racism against RSC have mainly focused on raising awareness about the *Porrajmos* of Roma during World War II and on the dissemination of informational pamphlets about the Roma community.

No measures have been taken or have been forecasted regarding the strengthening of awareness of their own rights within the Roma community. Similarly, measures raising awareness of the benefits granted by including Roma in society are absent. The only project concretely achieved by NRIS to combat institutional discrimination is 'Com.In.Rom', contracted by the Ministry of the Interior, which trained 512 people "*To Improve Professionals' Skills on the Roma Phenomenon*".

Recommendations:

- Recognition of the Roma as a national minority to be included in the Law 482 of 1999 on recognition of minorities
- Raising public awareness on issues concerning Roma, and particularly, the promotion of events in memory of the genocide of the Roma and Sinti.
- Quantifying with data the phenomenon of statelessness and risks associated with statelessness
- Launching an investigation on the phenomenon of over-representation of minors removed from their families and given up for adoption to non-Roma families

Funding

Recommendations:

- More transparency
- More effective monitoring of use of funds
- Analysis of results/costs

Cooperation with government bodies (and National Roma Contact Points)

Progress made: According to our member, their office knows the National Roma Contact Point (it is the UNAR – National Office against racial discrimination), and have had contact with them on the Roma issue.

Recommendations:

- In order to improve contact with government bodies and the National Roma Contact Points on this issue, our member suggests that their own office would need more staff members that would focus on raising awareness of Roma issues within the church and advocate for major changes at different government levels.

Netherlands, (*Kerk in Actie*)

Education

Progress made: According to our members no particular progress has been made. They say that there is a policy of restriction in the Netherlands, if children do not come to school, parents will get a fine.

After a long time of activation programmes there is now a restrictive policy with punishments.

Recommendations:

- There should be more interaction with Roma

Health

Progress made: In the same way as education, policies are becoming more restrictive and punitive

Housing

Progress made: There are some negative examples of Roma who do not pay the rent or making trouble in their living areas, this appears in the media and gives bad images about the entire Roma population.

Employment

Progress made: In the Netherlands they no longer have a system of target groups, so there is no special care for Roma population or any other group.

Anti-discrimination

Progress made: No steps have been taken and there is even more negative information about Roma in the media. From the authorities there is no special attention for minority groups. At the moment the focus is on the refugees coming from countries in conflict, Islamophobia and young people who want to leave to fight in Syria or for IS.

Funding

EU funding: according to our members no EU funds have been used for Roma integration

National funding: our members are not aware how national funds have been used for Roma integration

Recommendations:

- Money should be available for small NGOs who work together with Roma, and Roma participation in the NGOs should be a rule.

Norway, (Oslo City Mission)

Education

Progress made: The situation in Norway is particular as they are not an EU member and Roma our members are in contact with are not permanent immigrants to Norway; they travel from Romania to work/beg for a few months before they return home – and maybe again travel to Norway. These travellers do not bring their children when they visit Norway for a short period. They are aware that the Norwegian social authorities could take their children if they bring them, because the Norwegian legislation says a child should have a safe home, education system etc.

Health

Progress made: The health rights of this group are not taken care of. As EU citizens they have rights to health care, but are often rejected for bureaucratic reasons. The Roma often lack the health card they should bring with them and are therefore told that they will not be given health care.

Recommendations:

- The authorities should guide their hospitals, doctors etc. to give Roma access to health care, whether they have health card or not.

Housing

Progress made: The authorities on national, regional as well as local level are all unwilling to implement projects or policies to improve the situation for this group. The main argument seems to be that by doing nothing for this group, the Roma will stop travelling to Norway. In spite of this, the Norwegian government – as a humanitarian effort - contribute with NOK 10 mill a year for NGOs organizing emergency shelters for travelling immigrants. At this moment, we don't know if the government will support the shelters in 2015. And the capacity in the shelters is not good enough because different groups of labour-seeking immigrants use the shelters.

Recommendations:

- The authorities should establish different housing projects fitting the different needs for the different immigrants groups.

Employment

Progress made: The Roma travellers are not qualified to find ordinary jobs in the Norwegian labour market due to lack of language skills and formal education certificates.

Recommendations:

- Some NGOs are organizing small jobs for Roma. There is a possibility within the tax rules to do occasional jobs for a smaller salary without paying taxes. The authorities should establish central locations for such activities, where workers and employers can meet.

Anti-discrimination

Progress made: Our members say that public opinion has changed for the better towards the visiting Roma. They think the strict political arguments have driven opinions to the opposite position. Several reports made by for example the Norwegian Centre against Discrimination has strengthened this development.

Recommendations:

- The best way to fight discrimination is to create arenas where people can meet and learn to know each other. Such arenas can be meetings where Roma talk about their background and situation and share their cultural tradition in music, dance, food etc. |

Romania, (*Christian Foundation Diakonia of the Transylvanian Reformed Church District*)

Education

Progress made: On regional level, there are two new projects that focus on school and preschool education for socially disadvantaged children at risk of school drop-out, especially Roma children. In Cluj County, OvidiuRo organisation is running a supporting program for children of preschool age (3-6 year) in order to stimulate kindergarten attendance. They offer meal tickets and money for clothes for each family who brings their children to kindergarten. The support is on condition of the child participation in the kindergarten's daily programme. If he misses one day the programme, the family doesn't receive the support for that day. The project is developed together with the County Council of Cluj. The project will be extended to other counties.

In Cluj and Bihor County, our member organisation is running summer kindergarten programs for 350 children a year and afterschool programmes for other 450 children a year. The children are supported to learn and do their homework, to improve their social behaviour and communication, to sharpen different life skills etc. The project covers 13 locations in the two counties. Similar programmes are implemented in Mures County, by their consortium partner. All the programmes are developing with the financial support of the local municipalities/ authorities and schools.

However our members point out that there is a lack of progress in what concerns the law of education no.1/2011, which includes the methodology for organising afterschool programs. In Romania, there is a law and its application methodology but the state hasn't allocated a budget for putting it into practice. Therefore, all the social afterschool programmes are organised by different NGOs with external funding. The main concern is the rural areas, where the need for such social programs is high, but the local authorities cannot afford such costs. The Ministry of Education has no budget to support these initiatives.

Recommendations:

- The state should initiate a national subsidy funding programmes for social afterschool or day centre programmes.

Health

Progress made: According to our members, no positive progress has been made so far in this field. There are still Roma communities that do not have access to proper medical services. A positive policy was the inclusion of Roma health mediators into the public health system. Milk and bread is available daily to all children in preschool and primary school.

Although Roma have the right to health care and emergency services they are often not treated with dignity and care and face discrimination and prejudice even when requiring emergency treatment.

Recommendations:

- Recommendations include an emphasis on prevention of illness and healthy lifestyle. Hygiene, family planning, prevention of illness, recognition of illness and symptoms are all important for the health education of Roma. Adequate housing with running water is necessary to improve health.

Housing

Progress made: Locally Roma live in makeshift housing. The local government does not provide mains water or sewage. Waste disposal is available for a fee, resulting in few Roma who use this service.

Recommendations:

- This situation will improve with the growth of employment opportunities for Roma, which requires a strong emphasis on education.

Employment

Progress made: according to our members not much progress has been made. Roma continue to receive training however many employers avoid as much as possible to hire them.

Recommendations:

- Local, regional and national authorities should include Roma in their staff (administrative, police, security guards) as an example of good practice. Also, they should stimulate entrepreneurs to hire Roma by offering tax reductions.
- the European Funds are designated only for training of Roma. They don't create jobs for Roma and real opportunities on labour market.

Anti-discrimination

Progress made: Integrated education is encouraged which assists in the fight against discrimination.

Funding

EU funding: Since 2013, the European Funds are designated only for training of Roma. They don't create jobs for Roma and real opportunities on labour market. There were also cases when the projects for Roma didn't want to deal with Roma. The activities were done only on paper and the Roma target group was paid to sign all the needed documents. There are cases of Roma persons with 3-4 diplomas on the same qualification/profession because he would receive a financial reward for participating in training.

National funding: According to our member, national funds were not available for implementing the NRIS.

Cooperation with government bodies (and National Roma Contact Points)

Progress made: Our members had cooperation with the local government, and say it was satisfactory.

Scotland, UK, (CrossReach, the Church of Scotland)

Education

Progress made: High school enrolment seems to be a complicated and difficult thing to accomplish and the time involved in completing all relevant forms and then waiting to hear back about whether the child has been accepted into the school/is allowed to attend is far too long. Adult learning ESOL classes are oversubscribed.

Recommendations:

- Many of the Roma children and families our members work with have had no prior education before coming to the UK and they believe there needs to be work done in order to assist the children in their basic literacy (within their own languages) before it is possible to teach them in English.
- More resources are needed for local primary and secondary schools trying to address the specific needs of the Roma community.
- Reintroduction of special language units within secondary schools in Govanhill, Glasgow, to support those with English as an additional language.
- Extra support with homework outside of school hours.

Health

Progress made: In Govanhill, Glasgow, the EU health team do their best to deal with all issues arising from the Roma from other EU Member States. Glasgow's Health improvement teams have met with local

agencies and are actively trying to listen to the opinion of the Roma community in terms of engaging with health services. Feedback days are being held.

However our members say that there is not sufficient support for families wishing to enrol at the GP practices and newly arrived families do not always know where their first port of call should actually be. There are also too many 'self-referral' services which are done by telephone, with no interpretation services – i.e. a pregnant woman must make a phone call of self-referral to the midwives, but if she is unable to speak English this is basically impossible – and there is also the issue of multiple letters being sent out for appointments and, as the many of the Roma within this community are illiterate in their own languages, never mind English, they are unable to read these and then many important appointments are missed.

Recommendations:

- In our community, more bilingual staff could be key to ensuring that people are aware of, and do not miss appointments. Also there has to be an option for self-referral. 'Sure-start' maternity grants are no longer available for mothers who have a child under the age of 16 in her household.
- More innovative ways to engage and make services accessible. E.g. recorded message/live reminder phone calls made to patients in their own language, with details of appointments. Or more open surgeries/drop in services.

Housing

Progress made: General regeneration of housing in Govanhill over the past few years has been welcome however there continues to be massive problems with slum landlords and exploitation. Other problems are overcrowding, slum landlords, bug infestations, lack of state housing big enough to accommodate big families. Furthermore overcrowding legislation often prevents social housing uptake. i.e. housing associations are not allowed to house over a certain amount of children per bedroom etc. and houses with enough rooms to provide for those in the Roma community with many children are just not available.

Recommendations:

- Policing and legal support for those being exploited by rogue / slum landlords in the private housing market.

Employment

Progress made: *Jobs and business Glasgow* are upskilling Roma people to be able to apply for jobs. They are looking to employ Roma within their project and recognise that this would gain the best results in terms of engaging in services and upskilling.

However there is still stigma attached to the Roma community from employers. Recent welfare reforms and the expectation that all job applications at the 'Job Centre' are to be done online are penalising this community who are often not literate let alone computer literate.

Recommendations:

- More ESOL support is needed across the board. Cultural awareness and anti-discrimination training could be provided for Department of Work and Pensions staff.

Anti-discrimination

Progress made: There are local initiatives and the social work / police and housing association within Govanhill, Glasgow have been very proactive and equality driven in addressing the specific issues around the Roma community. At a National level however there is not much public awareness of the Roma community and ignorance is still very widespread. A lot of the media surrounding the politicisation of immigration has not helped in recent years.

Recommendations

- A public campaign which does not focus on the Roma community and thus segregate / point them out as different, but which focuses on the multicultural aspect of our society and how 'people are people' all the same all equal would be welcome.
- More training, both value-based and practical amongst statutory agencies would be welcome.

Cooperation with government bodies (and National Roma Contact Points)

Progress made: Within Glasgow City Council, contact has been positive and they take on board opinions from CrossReach although the department appears slightly under resourced.

Recommendations:

- More resources available from a higher level. Glasgow City Council is only a local contact and they do not have a national contact and are unaware of who they are.