



Civil society monitoring report on implementation of the national Roma integration strategies in Cyprus

Focusing on structural and horizontal preconditions
for successful implementation of the strategy

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May 2018



Justice
and Consumers

EUROPEAN COMMISSION

Directorate-General for Justice and Consumers
Directorate D — Equality and Union Citizenship
Unit D1 Non Discrimination and Roma Coordination

*European Commission
B-1049 Brussels*

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Luxembourg: Publications Office of the European Union, 2018

Print	ISBN 978-92-79-90573-5	doi:10.2838/748	Catalogue number DS-04-18-671-EN-C
PDF	ISBN 978-92-79-90574-2	doi:10.2838/209345	Catalogue number DS-04-18-671-EN-N

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The report has been prepared by individual experts Ms. Chryso Pelekani and Mr. Loizos Symeou.

The report has been prepared as part of the Roma Civil Monitor pilot project, 'Capacity-building for Roma civil society and strengthening its involvement in the monitoring of National Roma Integration Strategies'. The pilot project is carried out for the European Commission, DG Justice and Consumers. It is coordinated by the Center for Policy Studies of Central European University (CEU CPS), in partnership with the European Roma Grassroots Organisations Network (ERGO Network), the European Roma Rights Centre (ERRC), the Fundación Secretariado Gitano (FSG) and the Roma Education Fund (REF) and implemented with around 90 NGOs and experts from up to 27 member states.

Although the Roma Civil Monitor pilot project, as part of which the report was prepared, is coordinated by CEU, the report represents the findings of the authors and it does not necessarily reflect the views of CEU. CEU cannot be held responsible for any use which may be made of the information contained therein.

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

CVV	Community Council for Volunteerism
DR.A.S.E	Actions for social and school inclusion
ECRI	European Commission against Racism and Intolerance
ERDF	European Regional Development Fund
ESF	European Social Fund
EU	European Union
FRANET	European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights
GMI	Guaranteed Minimum Income
INSETRom	In-Service Training for Roma Inclusion
MoEC	Ministry of Education and Culture
NGO	Non-Governmental Organization
NRIS	National Roma Integration Strategies
PEER	Participation, Experiences, and Empowerment for Roma youth
RoC	Republic of Cyprus
SEAS4ALL	Successful Educational Actions for All
SEDRIN	School Education for Roma Integration
SWS	Social Welfare Services
UNCRC	UN Convention on the Rights of the Child
ZEP	Zones of Educational Priority

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The population of Roma in Cyprus is small,¹ representing about 0.1 per cent of the total population of Cyprus. The overall government policy approach to promote the social inclusion of the Cypriot Roma is through horizontal policy measures targeting all vulnerable groups within existing broader social inclusion policies and structures (e.g. general social inclusion policies and the National Reform Programme). Since Cyprus promotes the inclusion of Roma through integrated policy measures within the existing structures, separate monitoring mechanisms have not been set up.²

Cyprus's actions for the inclusion of Roma seem not to have been effective enough. Cypriot Roma still face major difficulties, especially in housing and employment. Some of them live in the old Turkish-Cypriot houses, while others in prefabricated houses in specially designated settlements in rural and segregated areas.³ Additionally, Cypriot Roma continue to face widespread prejudice and discrimination in all areas of life.⁴

The lack of any policy or measures intended to address specifically the social inclusion of Roma in Cyprus is attributed by the authorities to the fact that Roma, who officially belong to the Turkish-Cypriot community, may benefit from all the measures put in place to assist and support the Turkish-Cypriot community. In addition, the authorities have stated that the frequent movement of the Roma back and forth the demarcation line which divides the country since the Turkish invasion in 1974 makes any concrete action difficult to organise and sustain.

Governance and overall policy framework

Cypriot Roma are not represented in the House of Representatives by an elected representative due to the fact that Cypriot Roma are not considered as an ethnic or religious group. In addition, Cyprus has not introduced any legislation regarding antigypsyism. Cypriot Roma participated in 2016-2017 in the National Platform for Roma Inclusion and had an open dialogue with the authorities' representatives. The involvement of Roma in this platform for forming policies regarding themselves was a focal issue of the action. In addition, some actions led by Roma and other Cypriots, aim at fighting against stereotypes, discrimination and antigypsyism. In 2017, the first non-governmental organization (NGO) of Roma in Cyprus was established, called CYPROM, with the aim to empower Cypriot Roma.

Anti-discrimination

Regarding housing, Roma live either in properties belonging originally to Turkish-Cypriots who were forcibly moved at the north areas of Cyprus (controlled by Turkey since the Turkish invasion in 1974) and which are now administered by the government, or in prefabricated houses in specially designated areas (in Paphos and in Limassol). The last two decades when a large number of Roma living in the north areas of the country

¹ *Policy Measures of Cyprus for the Social Inclusion of Roma*. Available at: https://ec.europa.eu/info/sites/info/files/roma_cyprus_strategy_en.pdf (Accessed 7 April 2018).

² *Framework convention for the protection of national minorities fourth periodic report of the Republic of Cyprus*. Available at: [http://www.olc.gov.cy/olc/olc.nsf/all/8FC3E98081EF9950C2257CD2002AC247/\\$file/Framework_Convention_for_the_Protection_of_National_Minorities_-_4th_Periodic_Report_of_the_Republic_of_Cyprus.docx?openelement](http://www.olc.gov.cy/olc/olc.nsf/all/8FC3E98081EF9950C2257CD2002AC247/$file/Framework_Convention_for_the_Protection_of_National_Minorities_-_4th_Periodic_Report_of_the_Republic_of_Cyprus.docx?openelement) (Accessed 21 May 2018).

³ *FRANET National Focal Point Social Thematic Study The situation of Roma 2012*. Available at: <http://fra.europa.eu/sites/default/files/situation-of-roma-2012-cy.pdf> (Accessed 28 June 2018)

⁴ *ECRI Report on Cyprus 2011*. Available at: <https://www.coe.int/t/dqhl/monitoring/ecri/Country-by-country/Cyprus/CYP-CbC-IV-2011-020-ENG.pdf> (Accessed 28 June 2018)

returned to their initial local neighbourhoods they were not positively accepted by the local majority⁵ and, according to the Cyprus European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights (FRANET), they were treated with hostility by the local community, which did not wish to live close to Roma.⁶ To satisfy the local inhabitants, authorities relocated Roma to remote areas.⁷ This is one of the examples regarding racism and discrimination against Cypriot Roma.

Addressing antigypsyism

Cyprus has not managed yet to establish a concrete strategy for Roma inclusion and has not developed any strategy or introduced any legislation regarding antigypsyism.

⁵ Trimikliniotis, Nicos and Demetriou Corina. 2009. "The Cypriot Roma/Gypsies and the Failure of Education" in: Varnava, Andrekos – Coureas, Nicholas – Elia, Marina (eds.) *The Minorities of Cyprus: Development Patterns and the Identity of the Internal-Exclusion*. Cambridge Scholars Publishing.

⁶ FRANET 2012 (Accessed 21 May 2018)

⁷ *Ibid.*

INTRODUCTION

In Cyprus,⁸ Roma represent a very small indigenous cultural group with the same formal citizenship rights as the majority group but with distinct cultural and religious traditions. Cypriot Roma are considered, according to the 1960 Constitution (article 2.3), members of the Turkish-Cypriot community – possibly due to their common religion (Islam) and their (assumed) common language. Estimates indicate that today there are around 650 to 700 Roma living in areas where the Republic of Cyprus (RoC) exercises effective control. They are better known as *Cigani* or *Tsingani*, and appear to have arrived on the island in the 14th century. Most Cypriot Roma are referred to themselves as *Gurbetties* and their language is *Gurbetcha*. The Greek Orthodox Roma, called *Mandi*, have always been fewer in numbers, and seem that today they have assimilated to the Greek-Cypriot majority of the island.

In the last decade, the social inclusion of Roma in Cyprus received more attention. However, Cyprus has been criticized in 2009 by the Advisory Committee on the Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities for its reluctance to recognise Roma as a distinct minority group. Cyprus responded in its third periodic report submitted to the Framework Convention by referring to the measures taken to address the problems faced by Cypriot Roma in various sectors, and identified ways to secure the implementation of the principle of free self-identification in their respect.

Being a member state of the EU, Cyprus is required to implement a national strategy for the social inclusion of Roma. In implementing the strategy and coordinating the relevant policies, the Social Welfare Services (SWS) of the Ministry of Labour and Social Insurance has been designated as the National Roma Contact Point.

For the purposes of this report, reliable and relevant evidence, and information regarding the Cypriot Roma as well as various methodological tools (such as relevant studies, journals, newspapers, previous reports, case studies, etc.) were utilised. Collecting evidence from various resources was very essential to provide a clearer and comprehensive evidence about the areas of concern of this report. In doing so the prolonged experience of Cypriot Roma and in the study of their social and education inclusion of the authors of this report was utilised to add credibility to the information and reflections presented in the report.

⁸ For the purposes of this report, any reference to “Cyprus”, applies to the Republic of Cyprus, the officially recognized state in Cyprus by the UN and EU. Thus, all information and data included in the report refers to the Republic of Cyprus.

GOVERNANCE AND OVERALL POLICY FRAMEWORK

Representing the interests of Roma in the parliament

Due to the fact that Cypriot Roma are considered members of the Turkish-Cypriot community and they are not recognized as a 'religious group' like the other minorities in Cyprus (Latins, Armenians and Maronites of Cyprus), they do not have a separate constitutional parliament representation. Given that in 1963, after the first intercommunal conflict between the Greek-Cypriots and the Turkish-Cypriots the Turkish-Cypriot parliament members withdrew from the Cypriot parliament and since the division of the island, similarly to Turkish-Cypriots, Cypriot Roma are not represented in the parliament.

Mainstreaming Roma inclusion across ministries and other national level public authorities

In January 2012, Cyprus submitted to the EC in lieu of the National Roma Integration Strategies (NRIS) a document "*Policy measures for the social inclusion of Roma*",⁹ describing the approach taken on the matter of Roma inclusion, the overarching principles and the policies promoted in the four relevant policy areas (education, employment, healthcare – including social support, housing, and essential services). As described in the document, the overall governmental policy approach is to promote integration of the Cypriot Roma through horizontal policy measures targeting vulnerable groups within the existing mainstream social inclusion policies and structures (e.g. general social inclusion policies and the National Reform Programme).

The Policy Measures of Cyprus for the Social Inclusion of Roma do not consider necessary the implementation of separate monitoring mechanisms. Access to education, employment, healthcare, housing, and essential services, are the areas outlined for social inclusion of Roma.¹⁰

Following adoption of the EU Framework for NRIS, on 2 January 2011, the SWS of the Ministry of Labour and Social Insurance have been designated by the Council of Ministers as the national contact point for the coordination of these policies to be implemented by governmental bodies for the Roma population.¹¹

During 2016-2017, SWS coordinated the Cypriot National Platform for Roma. The aim of the Platform's establishment was to create a framework for strengthening dialogue on Cypriot Roma issues through the involvement of governmental, independent, non-governmental agencies of the Roma themselves, and Roma individuals. It was the first time that there was an official and meaningful dialogue between the officials and the Cypriot Roma. The *Gurbetties* who live in Limassol and Paphos participated in these meetings. During the debates that took place in the five meetings that the Platform held, it was revealed that the Roma face many problems in accessing housing, health, and social services, and raised questions to the public authorities on these particular issues and the various programmes provided within the areas they live.¹² As part of these

⁹ Social Welfare Services. Cyprus National Platform for Roma. Available at: <http://www.mlsi.gov.cy/mlsi/sws/sws.nsf/All/C1AFABBCD79188BEC2257FEF003BC41D?OpenDocument> (Access 10 March 2018)

¹⁰ *Policy Paper Cyprus*. "Hope for Children" CRC Policy Center. Available at: http://www.uncrcpc.org/news/doc_files/Policy%20Paper%20Cyprus_final_letterhead.pdf (Accessed 13 March 2018)

¹¹ Decision No. 72.892 of 02.12.2011.

¹² Social Welfare Services, Newspaper number 2. Available at: <http://www.mlsi.gov.cy/mlsi/sws/sws.nsf/All/C1AFABBCD79188BEC2257FEF003BC41D?OpenDocument>

meetings, Roma had the chance to consult directly with the authorities and could thus express their concerns and interests. At the same time, the public authorities informed Roma about relevant regulations. As far as their access to employment, for instance, the welfare officers informed Roma participants about a call for participation in a training programme in the hotel and food Industries.¹³ The aim of the specific programme is to train unemployed Guaranteed Minimum Income (GMI). Beneficiaries are expected to acquire, enrich, and/or upgrade their knowledge and skills in the above specialisations, aiming to their integration/reintegration into employment. Additionally, the programme aims to certify the competences and professional qualifications of unemployed GMI Beneficiaries based on the relevant National Professional Qualifications Standards.¹⁴

During the meetings of the Platform, a translator and mediator were helping to transfer all information to Roma in their spoken language, i.e. *Turkish*. Their participation and contribution appeared in the minutes of the meetings (the actual minutes are not publicly available but some information regarding the meetings of the Cypriot National Roma Platform can be found on the website of SWS).¹⁵

Even though valuable initiatives have been proposed by the participants of the Platform from all the contingencies and individuals who participated in the Platform meetings and the minutes highlight suggestions as to the Cypriot Roma social inclusion, there has not been any specific tangible decision and action at the policy level either regarding new policies for Roma nor programmes and resources to promote equal opportunities for Cypriot Roma and their effective and productive participation and inclusion in the society. This is despite the high expectations raised by Roma who participated in the Platform and who expected that the responsible bodies would be mobilised and would address and solve, at least, some of their problems.

After these meetings and given the disappointment, Cypriot Roma with the support of Greek-Cypriots decided to establish their own NGO called CYPROM, which is currently the only NGO focused on Cypriot Roma issues in the country. Both Roma and non-Roma are involved in the establishment of CYPROM. This Cypriot Roma NGO along with other Cypriots alliances may support the empowerment of Cypriot Roma and provide them more opportunities to contact officially the National Roma Contact point and other ministries and public and official authorities at the local and national level.

Promoting empowerment and participation of Roma

CYPROM is one of the few self-empowerment initiatives of the Cypriot Roma community together with other Cypriots. CYPROM was established on 14 July 2017 with aim to raise awareness, foster empathy and to contribute to managing and resolving Roma social problems by respecting their social and cultural identity. Young Cypriot Roma and non-Roma Cypriots with dreams for a better life and for their full integration into the society are involved in the association too. Although recently established, the association has already organised events open to the public to get to know them and to get to know Cyprus Roma's cultural and cultural heritage. Through events, film screenings and other actions, the Cypriot Roma are empowered and rallied. Also, the participation of Cypriot Roma in CYPROM and its board might empower their involvement in mainstream decision-making processes that will contribute to shaping and enhancing social inclusion measures and combating discrimination and antigypsyism.

¹³ Αρχή Ανάπτυξης Ανθρώπινου Δυναμικού Κύπρου (ΑΝΑΔ). Available at: http://www.hrdauth.org.cy/easyconsole.cfm/page/project/p_id/334 (Accessed 10 March 2018)

¹⁴ *Ibid.*

¹⁵ Webpage of the National Roma Platform, Social Welfare Services. Available at: <http://www.mlsi.gov.cy/mlsi/sws/sws.nsf/All/C1AFABBCD79188BEC2257FEF003BC41D?OpenDocument> (Accessed 19 June 2018)

Due to the fact that CYPROM is newly established, it has not received yet any proper political, institutional or any financial support. The association is in contact with ministries to inform them about housing and unemployment problems which Cypriot Roma face. The ministries have already responded with replies to the letters sent by CYPROM but no tangible help was achieved yet and it appears that there is a distant perspective in understanding the serious situation of Cypriot Roma especially as far as housing and employment.

Other activities taken by CYPROM included film screening of the documentary "Buçuk" (*The Half*) which took place in Limassol and Nicosia in November 2017 or celebrations of the International Roma Day on 8 April, in which both Roma and non-Roma have participated. Both groups had the chance to meet each other. Roma managed to show their traditions and customs and the participants were very impressed. These activities were regarded as a significant effort by Cypriot Roma, as it managed to bridge the gap between the Cypriot Roma and the local community. The customs and habits of the Cypriot Roma were presented to the public.

One of the examples of official bodies which has initiated in the recent years specific actions aiming to improve the situation of Cypriot Roma is the Ministry of Education and Culture (MoEc). Such actions may contribute to the empowerment of Cypriot Roma. More specifically, the MoEC has developed two main initiatives. The first initiative is the implementation of the extra-curricular courses for Cypriot Roma named "*The language, culture and tradition of Roma*". The courses are taught since 2013 and last 90 minutes per week for 24 weeks. The aim of the course is to increase students' awareness about their mother tongue, as well as about their history and culture. Students are expected to read, speak and understand their language, to improve their critical thinking, and reflect on their cultural and linguistic identity. Thus, Cypriot Roma children can be empowered and may strength their capacity to defend their basic human rights regarding their identity, culture and tradition. The second initiative relates to the notion that learning the official school language, i.e. Greek in this case, will be significant for Cypriot Roma to face literacy barriers. The MoEC suggested the implementation of the Greek lessons to Roma and all the vulnerable groups and immigrants free of charge. Learning Greek will give them more opportunities in the future to find job.

Guarantees for the effectiveness of programmes with the largest budgets

During the 2007-2013 ESIF programming period, Cyprus allocated 11.4 per cent (13 million EUR) of its total European Social Fund (ESF) budget for integrating disadvantaged people, including the Roma.¹⁶ The RoC will receive 422 million EUR from the ESF and the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF) between the years 2014-2020. With this amount, more investments will be made for the benefit of the vulnerable groups in which Cypriot Roma are included. It is expected that more actions and programmes will be provided to eliminate early school leaving. In addition, it is expected to provide provisions for creativity and psychosocial support services to students, as well as counselling and training programmes. All these programmes and actions will promote the social inclusion and will combat poverty.¹⁷

A few programmes funded by the EU aiming at empowering Roma across Europe and in Cyprus, given the participation of Cypriot institutions, have taken place in Cyprus. Such a programme was an EU-funded project *In-Service Training for Roma Inclusion*

¹⁶ European Commission, Available at: https://ec.europa.eu/info/sites/info/files/roma_cyprus_strategy_en.pdf (accessed 10 March 2018)

¹⁷ Hope for Children, CRC Policy Center, Policy paper, Available at: http://www.uncrcpc.org/news/doc_files/Policy%20Paper%20Cyprus_final_letterhead.pdf (accessed 10 March 2018)

(INSETRom),¹⁸ which was coordinated by the European University Cyprus. The project involved educational institutions from eight EU countries and was developed against the background of insufficient participation, unequal access and barriers faced by Roma in education. It was based on an assumption that the development of adequate teacher in-service training, improvement of classroom practices and the enhancement of family-school relationships all foster inclusion and equity. A research phase was followed by the development of a training curriculum, which included eight modules for in-service teacher training. In the final phase of the project, a series of teacher-training seminars took place, meant to train teachers in using the modules. The insights gained through this project contributed to a better understanding of what is needed to facilitate inclusive practices which promote participation and better educational outcomes for Roma pupils in Cyprus and the other partner countries. The project also revealed that training which is responsive to the concerns of both teachers and Roma families can have a positive impact on the effectiveness and success of training as such.

Another EU-funded project in which Cyprus participated was the two-year (2012-2014) *School Education for Roma Integration* (SEDRIN) project again with engagement of the European University Cyprus. The project involved eight institutions in seven EU countries and its application in Cyprus included investigation of Roma children's school exclusion from the perspective of their families and what were the needs of Roma women to be able to support their children to enrol and successfully empower them in school when at the age of early childhood.

The University of Cyprus was a partner of the Erasmus+ project *Schools as Learning Communities in Europe: Successful Educational Actions for all* (SEAS4ALL) and collaborated with the Primary School of Agios Antonios. The project's activities aimed at increasing educational success, social inclusion, reducing absenteeism and early school leaving and increasing school performance through a number of strategies that enhance, among other aspects, social cohesion, coexistence, and the participation of the community in the educational activities.

The Counselling Centre for the Support of the Families and the Youth "Irakleitos" which is member of the umbrella Community Council for Volunteerism (CVV) with the Municipality of Kato Polemidia (at the outskirts of Limassol), started a programme co-funded by the EU and the Cyprus government aimed at social integration of Roma families living in Polemidia (2009-2017). The first stage of the programme was to investigate and understand the problems and needs of Roma at their settlements in Polemidia. The second stage was the implementation of a project *Emotional Awareness of the Community for Integrating Roma People in the Cypriot society*. One of the main actions of the CVV was to conduct research among Greek-Cypriots living in Polemidia to investigate their attitudes and representations in relation to the Roma living in the community. Results are presented in a booklet titled *Roma: Myths, Prejudice and Reality*. The booklet also provides information relevant to Roma culture, their movements, and their establishment in Cyprus and in other European countries.

"Hope For Children" UNCRF Policy Center was involved in protection and promotion of Roma children in Cyprus through a project *PEER: Participation, Experiences and Empowerment for Roma Youth* funded by the DH and implemented from January 2015 to December 2016 by partners from nine EU countries (seven universities, two research institutes, two NGOs, and eight associated partners) with a total budget just over 800,000 EUR. PEER enabled Roma young people to co-lead and take part in activities that involve learning about participatory action research together and identifying issues that concern them, getting a better understanding about the issues by learning from others, analysing the issues and planning for change, carrying out their plan to achieve

¹⁸ INSETRom project. For more information and details about the, please, see: <http://www.iaie.org/insetrom/>

change, and reflecting on and sharing lessons about what has been achieved. The changes might be in their own understanding, the views and actions of their peers, their own and wider communities, or the actions and decisions of professionals and politicians.

All above-mentioned programmes were funded in different periods starting from 2009 and finishing in 2016 and were implemented by different institutions and centers aiming at the social inclusion not only of Cypriot Roma but in some cases of all the vulnerable groups who live in Cyprus. Most of the programmes/projects were funded by the EU and were focused on education. Moreover, some of the projects collaborated with a specific school in Limassol (Agios Antonios Primary school), given that this is the school with the larger Cyprus Roma pupil population. The first project (INSETRom project) aimed mainly at training of teachers who work with Roma. Due to the fact that teachers do not have permanent stay in a school (maximum 7 years), new teachers come to the school and they do not know what the previous teachers applied in education of Roma pupils and other vulnerable groups and what worked with them. More training of teachers should be made in order to continue the initiatives and proposal of the curriculum proposed by this project. The third and the fourth project went beyond school. They investigated the Greek-Cypriots' opinions and attitudes towards Roma and Cypriot Roma and investigated issues regarding Roma's school attendance and their needs. Both projects seemed to be useful as they give opportunities to Cypriot Roma (especially women) to express themselves and refer to their life, lifestyle and issues concerning the school system, health, unemployment, etc. Despite that the programme has finished, the Counselling Centre for the Support of the Families and the Youth "Irakleitos" keeps visiting the settlements at Polemidia and offers them support. However, more attention should be given on the Cypriot Roma who live there because they are isolated and they do not receive the assistance they would need. The last project called PEER was very productive as trainers visited both areas in Limassol Agios Antonios and Polemidia. At the end of the project one trainer with one teacher and two Roma children participated at the final conference and shared their experiences with other participants of the same project from other countries. This project gave opportunities to Roma children to travel, visit other places and meet with other Roma and make friends.

ANTI-DISCRIMINATION

Educational and residential segregation

In Cyprus, schools with a comparatively large number of Roma pupils have been included initially under the Zones of Educational Priority (ZEP), an initiative implemented within the 2007-2014 period. The ZEP initiative continued until the school year 2013-2014. In 2015, a new ESF-funded follow-up project called "Actions for Social and School Inclusion" (DRA.S.E)¹⁹ was launched by the Ministry of Education and Culture.²⁰

ZEP consisted of a small deviation from the mainstream education model, an institution introduced in 2004 and implemented only at a small number of schools across the country in areas which are deemed as socially disadvantaged based on several criteria, one of which is the presence of *alloglossoi* pupils. A ZEP was comprised of a cluster of schools which receive extra assistance from the MoEC, such as having fewer students in class, more hours of remedial teaching and free lunch for all students but may not deviate from the national curriculum. DRA.S.E today extends the ZEP provision to a larger number of schools.

Roma children are grouped in schools with *alloglossi* pupils and specifically with *Tourkoglossi* (Turkish-speaking) pupils. A report on discrimination of Roma from 2012 maintains that although "Greek language support classes are offered to the non-Greek speakers, the state is unable to avoid school segregation of the Turkish-speaking pupils, most of whom are Roma".²¹ As for discrimination in education, the report summarizes the main complaints submitted to the equality body over the years as follows: "religious confessions, exemption from the religious class, school segregation and the content and method of education of Roma pupils".²²

Although education is one of the main factors for the inclusion of Cypriot Roma in the Cypriot society housing is also very essential because it can determine other aspects of life like education, employment, health, and welfare services. Good practices and important measures have taken in Cyprus in to combat the residential segregation of Cypriot Roma. The policy refers to measures already taken to close the gap between the Cypriot Roma and the rest of society in two areas: first, repairs and improvements to 20 houses inhabited by Cypriot Roma (former Turkish-Cypriots' residences) in Limassol and 25 in Paphos. Given that following the 1974 Turkish military invasion in Cyprus, most *Gurbetties* moved from the south to the north, only during the last two decades Roma groups from the north moved to the south and settled in socio-economically deprived urban areas (UNOPS 2004). More specifically, starting from October 1999, but especially during and after 2001, for reasons that have not been identified, several Roma groups from the north moved to the south – mainly Limassol and Paphos – and settled in socio-economically deprived areas of these two towns. Since April 2003, when travel restrictions across the demarcation line were eased, the influx of Roma to the south increased.

Today, housing programmes for the Roma, consist of the construction of 16 prefabricated residential units outside Limassol and 24 outside of Paphos, equipped with basic facilities such as water, including drinking water, electricity, solar water heaters, telephone

¹⁹ MOEC, Newsletter 11 March 2016. Available at: <http://enimerosi.moec.gov.cy/archeia/1/ypp3831a> (Accessed 15 July 2018)

²⁰ EACEA National Policies Platform, 4.4 Inclusive programmes for young people, <https://eacea.ec.europa.eu/national-policies/en/content/youthwiki/44-inclusive-programmes-young-people-cyprus> (Accessed 15 July 2018)

²¹ Trimikliniotis, Nicos (2012), Discrimination on the ground of religion belief-Cyprus report. Utrecht: Human European Consultancy. p.12.

²² *Ibid*, p. 31.

installation line and drainage system.²³ Despite offering housing opportunities to returning Roma, this governmental policy seems to have created ghettos specifically aiming Roma, thus sustaining segregation. At the same time, there are families living in houses of low standard of comfort and quality. Especially those living in Polemidia area in Limassol, the conditions of their houses are bad (no water, no electricity, etc). It is the site of a former rubbish dump, away from any village or town and totally isolated from other communities, with no access to public transport.²⁴ Thoughts have been made to move the Roma from that area which are isolated and "transfer" them in other areas in different neighbourhood trying to avoid the ghetto and facilitating the inclusion with other non-Roma people.

Discriminatory behaviour by police, misconduct by prosecutors or courts

Regarding the discriminatory behaviour by police, prosecutors, or courts there is a lack of available information or data. To give a proper answer to this point a specific case study and evaluation of behaviours among Cypriot Roma and police/prosecutors/courts should be made.

²³ ECRI Report on Cyprus 2016. Available at: <https://www.coe.int/t/dghl/monitoring/ecri/Country-by-country/Cyprus/CYP-CbC-V-2016-018-GRC.pdf> (Accessed 3 June 2018)

²⁴ *Ibid*, p. 30.

ADDRESSING ANTIGYPSYISM

Institutional settings for fighting discrimination and addressing antigypsyism

In Cyprus there is a legislation against racism and racial discrimination in place.²⁵ The MoEC, following the suggestion of the Authority against the Discrimination had created a 'code of practice against racist behaviour'.²⁶ This code is a practical guide for managing incidents regarding racism, racist incidents, homophobia, transphobia, bullying, discrimination, stereotypes, diversity, etc. The aim of this code is to help reduce the incidents of bullying and discrimination in schools.

As regards to employment, due to the economic crisis, the rise of unemployment and the rise of xenophobic and racism did not give opportunities to Cypriot Roma and other Roma from other countries (Bulgaria, Romania, Greece, etc.) and asylum seekers and refugees to access the labour market. There is limited access to certain fields, mainly the agricultural sector. It is indicative that Cypriot Roma during the meeting of the Cyprus National Platform for Roma expressed their disappointment in finding full time regular jobs. As they claimed, when they apply for a vacancy they are rejected by employers because of their overall status and because employers prefer to employ Greek-Cypriots.

Specifically, 'antigypsyism' is not recognised by the state as a specific form of racism against Roma and as a root cause of exclusion of Cypriot Roma or other Roma living in Cyprus. Also, no specific initiatives in this area have been taken. Hence, there is not any structure established in Cyprus to initiate and coordinate programmes and initiatives for addressing antigypsyist attitudes.

Countering hate crime and hate speech against Roma, and antigypsyist rhetoric of politicians, public figures, and media

The European Commission against Racism and Intolerance (ECRI) considers that Cyprus has not developed a specific strategy for integrating Cypriot Roma in society; as observed in the ECRI's fourth report, the Roma continue to be ignored and avoided in society and that many Roma claim that they are "invisible".²⁷ At the same time, racism, discrimination, and prejudice persist. Roma, although few in number, they are an extremely vulnerable group that requires special attention to improve its situation.²⁸ ECRI thus recommends developing an integrated integration strategy of Roma in all areas of life, including measures aiming at the elimination of discrimination and prejudice, with objectives and targets, success indicators and a monitoring system assessment. As suggested, this must be achieved in close cooperation with the members of the Roma community and adequate funding should be spent so that the strategy becomes effective.²⁹

²⁵ Leandros Savvides et al., *Racism and related discriminatory practices in Cyprus*. ENAR Shadow Report 2011-2012. European Network against Racism. Available at: <http://cms.horus.be/files/99935/MediaArchive/publications/shadow%20report%202011-12/Cyprus%20-%20unedited.pdf> (Accessed 3 June 2018).

²⁶ Ministry of Education and Culture. 2016. *Code of Conduct against Racism And Guide for Managing and Recording Racist Incidents*. Available at: <http://naos.risbo.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/04/Cyprus-antiracism-code.pdf> (Accessed 3 June 2018).

²⁷ ECRI Report on Cyprus 2016, p. 21.

²⁸ ECRI Report on Cyprus 2011, p. 29.

²⁹ ECRI Report on Cyprus 2016, p. 21.

Analysing and forming narratives and attitudes towards Roma

A number of Cyprus Roma were relocated to remote areas primarily to satisfy the local communities, who treated them with hostility and did not wish to live close to them.³⁰ In 2010, a sociological research was conducted in the Polemidia area, aiming to address the attitudes and perceptions of the local habitants towards the Roma who were provided to live in prefabricated houses in predefined areas. 355 local residents participated in the survey of which 77.5 per cent stated that they disagreed with the move of Romani families at Polemidia and 40.8 per cent appeared to consider Roma dangerous.³¹

Moreover, Cyprus is one of two EU member states (the other one is Italy), where an absolute majority of respondents (50 per cent) disagree that society could benefit from better integration of the Roma.³² Similarly, the *Special Eurobarometer no. 393* survey indicated, that about 42 per cent of respondents believe that citizens in their country would feel uncomfortable if their children had Roma schoolmates; this number is similar to countries with larger Roma populations, like Hungary or Italy.³³

During meetings of the National Platform for Roma inclusion,³⁴ Roma participants explained that they cannot find a job easily because firstly they do not know very well the Greek language, and secondly, due to being Roma; employees prefer to employ Greek-Cypriots because they do not trust Cypriot Roma and the quality of their work.

Given that hate speech against Roma has not yet been investigated in Cyprus and that there are currently no specific studies available on this issue, this Report cannot provide specific information on the existence or not of the phenomenon. However, in preventing negative stereotyping and attitudes towards Roma, CYPROM through media and events (e.g. Cultural events on 8 April, the National Roma Day) raises awareness about the inclusion of Roma. Cypriot Roma and other members of the committee (non-Roma) visited in 2017 and 2018 local radios in order to present CYPROM and its aims. In addition, Cypriot Roma through their websites on Facebook and through other media talk about their past, their tradition, language, and culture.

³⁰ FRANET. 2012. *National Focal Point Social Thematic Study. The situation of Roma*. Available at: <http://fra.europa.eu/sites/default/files/situation-of-roma-2012-cy.pdf> (Accessed 29 June 2018).

³¹ Information Guide, "Gypsies: myths, prejudices and realities". 2010. (Guide of a project which was co-funded by the European Union and the Republic of Cyprus for the 2010 European Year for Combating Poverty and Social Exclusion).

³² *Idem*, p. 116.

³³ European Commission. *Discrimination in the EU in 2012. Report*. Special Eurobarometer n. 393. (2012) p. 113. Available at: http://ec.europa.eu/commfrontoffice/publicopinion/archives/ebs/ebs_393_en.pdf (Accessed 27 June 2018).

³⁴ Webpage of the National Roma Platform, Social Welfare Services. Available at: <http://www.mlsi.gov.cy/mlsi/sws/sws.nsf/All/C1AFABBCD79188BEC2257FEF003BC41D?OpenDocument> (Accessed 19 June 2018)

RECOMMENDATIONS

Governance and overall policy framework

- Officials, politicians, equality bodies, local and regional authorities, should invite representatives of Cypriot Roma and open a direct dialogue with them and discuss possible and effective practices focusing on employment and housing, as these two areas have been identified by the National Platform for Roma inclusion as the most demanding.
- The National Contact Point of Cyprus and the civil society should facilitate more intensive cooperation in the exchange of information, practices and experiences among Roma and non-Roma, at the local, regional and national levels.
- The Government should define and allocate clear budgets for the implementation of actions aimed at Roma inclusion.

Anti-discrimination

- Social surveys and data collection on the life conditions and situation of Roma, e.g. in areas of housing, employment, health care, should be conducted with support of the Government. The results of such surveys would be useful for the ministries and policy makers who could continue developing more specific measures and policies regarding Roma and Roma issues.
- Mainstream policies with significant impact on Roma should be monitored/assessed.
- Various ministries, e.g. the MoEC, the Ministry of Interior, the Ministry of Health, as well as municipalities, NGOs, etc. should evaluate their previous actions/interventions and implement new programmes for Roma with Roma.

Addressing antigypsyism

- The Municipalities and the NGOs should organise more campaigns to inform all Cypriots and other citizens living in Cyprus about Cypriot Roma and their organisation and their so far actions/activities.
- Various ministries, municipalities, NGOs, etc. should identify gaps and challenges in the possible application of hate crime and hate speech concepts within national legislation, policy, and practice. Given that hate speech against Roma has not been yet investigated in Cyprus and that there are currently no specific studies available on this issue, such studies need to be conducted and the government should then take actions with the collaboration and cooperation of ministries and/or NGOs to combat stereotyping, prejudice, hate-behaviours and hate-speech againsts Roma.
- The European training programme ROMED should be extended and thus give opportunities also to Roma in Cyprus to participate in their trainings on intercultural mediation. The training of mediators will improve Cypriot Roma access to local services.
- Roma mediators exist in other European countries and their value and significance has been repeatedly reported. Based on the extended knowledge regarding their value in other countries, the Government should define and allocate clear budgets for the training of Roma to become mediators and empower them to help their communities.

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ISBN 978-92-79-90574-2 doi:10.2838/209345