



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

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

Prepared by:
Nevepe Press Rom News Agency - Radio PatrIn
June 2018



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*

**Civil society monitoring report
on implementation of the
national Roma integration strategy
in Netherlands**

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

***EUROPE DIRECT is a service to help you find answers
to your questions about the European Union***

Freephone number (*):
00 800 6 7 8 9 10 11

(*) The information given is free, as are most calls (though some operators, phone boxes or hotels may charge you)

LEGAL NOTICE

"The European Commission support for the production of this publication does not constitute endorsement of the contents which reflects the views only of the authors, and the Commission cannot be held responsible for any use which may be made of the information contained therein."

More information on the European Union is available on the Internet (<http://www.europa.eu>).

Luxembourg: Publications Office of the European Union, 2018

| | | | |
|-------|------------------------|--------------------|------------------------------------|
| Print | ISBN 978-92-79-97727-5 | doi:10.2838/020066 | Catalogue number DS-05-18-090-EN-C |
| PDF | ISBN 978-92-79-97726-8 | doi:10.2838/962097 | Catalogue number DS-05-18-090-EN-N |

© European Union, 2018

Reproduction is authorised provided the source is acknowledged.

The report has been prepared by *Nevepe Press Rom News Agency – Radio Patrin* and Ms. Georgeta Pintilie, independent researcher.

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.

CONTENTS

| | |
|---|-----------|
| LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS | 6 |
| EXECUTIVE SUMMARY | 7 |
| INTRODUCTION | 9 |
| GOVERNANCE AND OVERALL POLICY FRAMEWORK | 10 |
| Representing the interests of Roma in the Parliament | 10 |
| Mainstreaming Roma inclusion across ministries and other national level public authorities | 10 |
| Mainstreaming Roma inclusion across local authorities | 11 |
| Promoting empowerment and participation of Roma | 12 |
| Guarantees for the effectiveness of programmes with the largest budgets..... | 12 |
| Availability of reliable data on the situation of Roma..... | 13 |
| ANTI-DISCRIMINATION | 14 |
| Educational and residential segregation | 14 |
| Forced evictions..... | 15 |
| Discriminatory behaviour by police, misconduct by prosecutors or courts | 15 |
| Access to identity papers | 15 |
| ADDRESSING ANTIGYPSYISM | 16 |
| Institutional settings for fighting discrimination and addressing antigypsyism | 16 |
| Analysing and forming narratives and attitudes towards Roma | 16 |
| RECOMMENDATIONS | 18 |
| BIBLIOGRAPHY | 19 |

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

| | |
|------|--|
| FRA | EU Agency for Fundamental Rights |
| NGO | Non-Governmental Organisation |
| NISR | Netherlands Institute for Sinti and Roma |
| NRCP | National Roma Contact Point |

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The results of the implementation of the policy measures aimed to integrate Roma in Netherlands are very difficult to assess. Firstly, most of the measures are mainstreamed and Roma are considered a potential target group. Secondly, the ethnically disaggregated data are absent, reducing drastically the possibility to evaluate if the measures have even reached Roma and with what results.

Roma, Sinti and Travellers are involved in the policy cycle to a minimum extent, regardless if they are considered potential target or “the target” group. They were not consulted when the set of integrated policy measures was drafted to be sent to Brussel, as part of the EU Framework for National Roma Integration Strategies up to 2020.¹ In many instances, Roma are not aware of those policies. Roma are treated as subjects or beneficiaries in most projects/programs, and rarely as real partner in the policy design, implementation or evaluation, be it at national or local level. The relatively small size of the Roma population makes it irrelevant for the politicians and policy makers but made visible in the public discourse with references mainly to i.e. “*socially unacceptable and criminal behaviour and exploitation of Roma children*”.

Governance and overall policy framework

Roma, Sinti and Travellers’ representation on the political scene and in policymaking is almost inexistent. There is a need for a space of constructive interaction with the other stakeholders, who are already taking decisions on their behalf. This needs to take place at the national level through i.e. National Roma Platform, as well at the local level. They must be actively engaged and acknowledged as partners and not just as project beneficiaries and consumers of social benefits.

The grassroots organizations, due to close relations and trust within the communities, have the potential to play an important role in the success of the inclusion measures. They must be supported to become a partner, empowered to take the lead and create the projects that respond to the needs of the communities. There should be an interest in challenges faced by Roma, Sinti and Travellers women and youth, apart from the exclusive focus on early marriages and school drop-out. They should also be supported to voice these challenges.

Anti-discrimination

According to the factsheet prepared by FRA, Roma, Sinti and Travellers in the Netherlands are on the last place/least likely to report cases of discrimination.² The reasons can range from lack of trust in authorities, to not knowing how or where to report discriminatory acts or getting used to the situation. Another reason for lack of data regarding cases of discrimination against Roma can be due to privacy protection law. The Ombudsman office cannot register the ethnicity of the person submitting discrimination complains. This can lead to a false conclusion that Roma, Sinti and Travellers do not experience discrimination in the Netherlands.

One type of discrimination against Roma, Sinti and Travellers, acknowledged by authorities, concerns their rights on the labor market. There are in place several measures to combat this type of discrimination, but their efficiency is limited. Another case of discrimination is the extinction policy against the site for the Travellers caravans,

¹ https://ec.europa.eu/info/policies/justice-and-fundamental-rights/combating-discrimination/roma-and-eu/roma-integration-eu-countries_en#nationalromaintegrationstrategies

² http://fra.europa.eu/sites/default/files/fra_uploads/2109-FRA-Factsheet_ROMA_NL.pdf

investigated end of 2017 by the Ombudsman office.³ In a special situation are the Roma with a "stateless" status, living in uncertainty and passing this status to their children as well.

Addressing antigypsyism

Roma, Sinti and Travellers in the Netherlands are rarely in the focus of the public debate or media, unless they are subjects for topics such as criminality, migration, early marriages, stateless. Recent developments in the world, especially the refugees' crisis, capture the focus of the public opinions away from the Roma, Sinti and Travellers, but the prejudices and the stereotypes are always present. These aspects corroborated with the lack of visible role models and the ignorance regarding the contribution of this ethnic group to the Netherlands history and culture are fostering the antigypsyism and the hate-speech/crime. As any other form of racism, antigypsyism needs to be recognized and addressed through legislation, but also through education.

³ Nationale Ombudsman, Rapportnummer: 2017/060. *Woonwagenbewoner zoekt standplaats*. Available at: <https://www.nationaleombudsman.nl/system/files/onderzoek/DEF%20Rapport%202017060%20Woonwagenbewoner%20zoekt%20standplaats.pdf>

INTRODUCTION

According to the Council of Europe, the “Roma population” (the term used in document as an umbrella term for Roma, Sinti and Travellers), in Netherlands is approximated at 40,000 people (i.e. 0.24 per cent of the population). They are not recognized as national minorities. The Travellers are not even recognized as an ethnic minority, but, along with other Dutch caravan dwellers, just “ordinary citizens with special living style” after the *Woonwagenwet* (The Caravan Act) was withdrawn, in 1999.

Roma are not a homogeneous group either. There are Dutch Roma, who arrived in the Netherlands around 1900, those who arrived in the Netherlands in 1960s, 1970s, 1990s from Eastern and South Europe, especially former Yugoslavia, and Roma from Romania and Bulgaria, after their accession to European Union.⁴

This situation does not only reflect the group diversity, but also the diversity of experiences, opportunities and challenges Roma face in Netherlands, which can be addressed by the public policy, be it targeted or mainstreamed.

In 2011, the Dutch Government had submitted the document “Policy measures in the Netherlands for the social inclusion of Roma”,⁵ as a response to the EU Framework for National Roma Integration Strategies, launched by the European Commission. This set of general policy measures followed the principles of the Dutch Government policies on integration, social cohesion and citizenship, meaning it was not targeting specifically Roma, Sinti and Travellers in the Netherlands. Its focus was on the four main priorities: education, housing, health and employment, but the Netherlands has added two more priorities considered relevant for its local context: combating socially unacceptable and criminal behaviour and exploitation of Roma children. The document was clearly stating that “integration is not the responsibility of the public authorities, but rather of those who decide to settle in the Netherlands” and that “a person’s future is more important than their origin”.⁶ Since 2011, a policy paradigm shift has been produced, where now the mainstream measures are complementary to targeted measures, specifically for Roma.

This monitoring report aims at presenting the implementation of the Dutch integrated set of policy measures addressing the situation of Roma, focusing on analysing governance, anti-discrimination and antigypsyism. The report is based on qualitative research and the data used was collected through semi-structured interviews and focus groups, with non-governmental organization representatives, community leaders and members, desk research, consulting the latest monitoring reports and research produced by public authorities, academia, equality body, etc. Roma, Sinti and Travellers voices were given priority in this research.

As an observation from the developing this report, it was noticed the difficulty of bring together people from different communities or from the same community. This reflects the lack of exercise in working together as a cohesive group and the necessity to build trust among each other. The report was intended to include the opinion of as many stakeholders as possible. Therefore, an invitation was addressed to the local and national public authorities (i.e. municipalities, National Roma Contact Point), but unfortunately it was met with refusal. NRCP justified the refusal by the fact that in their understanding this report should be “a document from the perspective of the NGO, not from the perspective of a governmental institution”.

⁴ Jenissen, R. (ed.) (2011) *De Nederlandse migratiekaart: Achtergronden en ontwikkelingen van verschillende internationale migratietypen*, The Hague, Boom Juridische Uitgevers.

⁵ <http://english.minbzk.nl/subjects/@128068/integration-policy>

⁶ *Idem*.

GOVERNANCE AND OVERALL POLICY FRAMEWORK

Representing the interests of Roma in the Parliament

Roma interest and participation in the voting during the national election is low according to the answers received during the interviews. There are no official data on Roma political participation, but previous reports (i.e. FRANET, 2012) and the interviews confirmed the low participation. At least in what was concerning their specific communities, many community leaders said that less than 30 per cent are voting at the national elections. Most of the interviewees justified their lack of interest by distrust, by the fact that they do not feel represented by any party and no party has advocated effectively for Roma cause and inclusion. To the lack of representation can be added the use of antigypsyist rhetoric by politicians, although not with a clear antigypsyist agenda.

There is no Roma representative in the Dutch parliament and numerous community members mentioned that due to the relatively small size of the Roma group, no political party expressed any interest in including a Roma candidate on their lists, nor payed attention to the needs of the Roma electorate. As an interviewee indicated: "Roma do not bring votes, we do not vote, we are not attractive for any politician."

Mainstreaming Roma inclusion across ministries and other national level public authorities

The National Roma Contact Point (NRCP) is within the Ministry of Social Affairs and Employment, Directorate Society and Integration. The current representative was appointed in February 2017. The person was serving as an assistant of the previous NRCP representative. Therefore, he is well acquainted with the institutional set up and Roma communities and leaders. Although it is a formal position in the governmental structure, there is no information regarding the tasks and the mandate of the NRCP or the ways it is communicating and collaborating with other authorities on the topic of Roma social inclusion. Dutch document of integrated set of policy measures do not even mention the NRCP and/or its mandate. There are limitations in the effective means the NRCP representative and/or office: only one employee, part time position, no budget.

Since taking office, the NRCP representative has continued the regularly consultative meetings with a core group of three Roma representatives, all belonging to the same Roma group, leaving unrepresented Sinti, Travellers and "old Dutch" Roma communities. This core group is supposed to have a consultative role, being the solution agreed by NRCP and the ministry above it, against setting the Roma National Platform.⁷ The decision was motivated by lack of funding, human resources and the bureaucracy a platform would imply. The Roma, Sinti and Travellers communities view the Roma National Platform as an inclusive space of constructive interaction with the other stakeholders, who are already taking decisions for them, i.e. public authorities and institutions.

Meanwhile, the NRCP representative has expressed his intention to extend the core group with new members. This is a very important step forward, but one must be aware of the inclusive nature this group should have and invite representative members of all groups i.e. Sinti, Travellers. A working and cooperation environment should be created so all groups could feel welcomed and awarded equal partner status. As per summer 2018, the core group activity is in standby while the representative of the Directorate Society and Integration is looking for possible solutions for the effective cooperation with the Roma, Sinti and Travellers communities.

⁷ Not to be mistaken with Roma Platform – a national network of Roma and Sinti NGOs to promote cooperation and dialogue with the authorities and institutions, which is no longer active due to lack of funds.

Other ministries or national institutions are directly or indirectly involved in the implementation of this set of general policy measures aiming at improving Roma social inclusion, through their mainstreamed or targeted measures, programmes, projects. These institutions are: Ministry of Security and Justice, Ministry of Education, National Police, Ministry of Health, Wellness and Sport, etc.

One example of public initiative was the Netherlands Institute for Sinti and Roma (NISR), created in 2010 and financed through the Ministry of Health, Wellness and Sport. The objective was to work with municipalities, institutions and all Sinti and Roma legally residing in the Netherlands. In 2012, the NISR was closed because the institute was "not functioning properly and lacking knowledge and support both from municipalities and Sinti and Roma."⁸

Taking in consideration the limitations of the position of the NRCP, the lack of active involvement of the representatives of Roma, Sinti and Travellers communities and not acknowledge them as partners in the policy design, implementation and evaluation, the lack of coordination and evaluation systems for this set of policy measures one can interpret it as lack of political will to pursue Roma integration.

Mainstreaming Roma inclusion across local authorities

The local authorities, the municipalities were considered, from the beginning, responsible for the implementation of the "Policy measures in the Netherlands for the social inclusion of Roma". Municipalities with more concentrated Roma population receive public funds for programs in which Roma are directly targeted or they are a "potential" target. These municipalities have employees designated to work with Roma. The local police offices in these municipalities have designated personnel who is in contact with the local Roma communities. In the vast majority of cases, Roma are just the beneficiaries and not the partners or employees in these projects/programs.

An example of initiative at local level was the Platform Roma Gemeenten (Association of Dutch Municipalities).⁹ In 2010, Platform for Roma Municipalities (Association of ten Dutch Municipalities) was set up by the Ministries of Housing, Spatial Planning and the Environment and the Ministry of Education, Culture and Science. This platform has received 600,000 EUR to promote education for Roma children in those municipalities and to strengthen the municipality's capacity to work with Roma in the field of education. The municipalities were submitting projects for 1-2 years.

The official authorities claimed that this project was successful, that it strengthened local authorities' capacity; it created a network of professionals, experience and knowledge exchange, and even some limited improvements in the Roma communities. However, in 2011, the Sinti and Roma spokespersons were very critical of the results of the Platform and the NISR.¹⁰

Although the project that promoted the Platform Roma Municipalities has finished, the network still exists, and it is an institutional structure which can be used for future pilot projects. One such project was "Combat of the exploitation of Roma children",¹¹ where nine municipalities, most of them part of the Platform were working together. Once again, in this project, Roma communities are just the target group, nothing more.

One of the main complaints during the interviews, coming from the communities' leaders is the lack of acknowledgement as partners in the relation with the local authorities. This

⁸ Boer & Croon (2012) *Evaluatie Nederlands Instituut voor Sinti en Roma*, Amsterdam: Boer & Croon.

⁹ <https://GehonoEerde+Projectvoorstellen+RomaGemeenten.pdf>

¹⁰ http://fra.europa.eu/sites/default/files/fra_uploads/2109-FRA-Factsheet_ROMA_NL.pdf

¹¹ <https://hetccv.nl/onderwerpen/multi-probleemgezinnen-met-een-roma-achtergrond/>

step, once taken can lead to trust building, cooperation and better results for the projects, in general.

It must be mentioned that there are also exceptions and some community leaders and NGO representatives said that they have good relations with their mayor offices and local administrations and even worked together in some project for their communities, i.e. housing projects.

Promoting empowerment and participation of Roma

Until 2012, the participation and representation of Roma, Sinti and Travellers in non-governmental organization was very fruitful and diverse both in actions/activities and numbers. After that, most of the initiatives ceased to exist: i.e. NISR, Roma Platform, or have become inactive i.e. Foundation Triana Utrecht, etc.

There are Roma, Sinti and Travellers NGOs, some of them active, but self-empowerment initiatives in Roma communities are rare or do not exist, due to the difficulty in accessing funding. This situation is mainly generated by the lack of organizational capacity of the grass-roots organizations, lack of skills to apply for funding and implement a project. Capacity building projects need to be initiated by the authorities to strengthen these organizations, so they can become a real partner for the successful implementation in inclusion measures.

The human rights initiatives belong to mainstream structures, not to the Roma ones, and currently these initiatives are not focused on the problems Roma communities are confronting. There are non-Roma NGOs who have been running projects on education, early childhood development, early marriages in which Roma were part of their target group. Roma, in general are not involved in forming relevant policies in a transparent and democratic manner. There is a need for Roma to be accepted and invite in local initiative as partners, because this is a modality to share knowledge and experiences, build trust and capacity.

Guarantees for the effectiveness of programmes with the largest budgets

To guarantee for the effectiveness of a program in which Roma is a potential or the target group, there should be a possibility to assess the fact that the group has even taken part in the program. Most of the programs are mainstreamed and, in these cases, Roma are a potential target group. Part of the problem is that the program is not really targeting Roma, and hence no incentives to measure how it reaches out. Moreover, the ethnically disaggregated data are not available. Therefore, it will be very difficult to evaluate the effectiveness of these programs for Roma, if Roma have participated in the mainstream programs, or if there are bottlenecks which have excluded Roma.

For instance, Dutch Government allocates 400 million EUR a year to "Combat educational disadvantages". Roma are benefiting from these funds by attending the public education system. Roma attending the public schools, coming from low-income family or other disadvantaged situations, should be in the potential target group. However, reports on Roma education mention truancy and early school dropout, their over-representation in lower educational levels and in special schools, etc.¹² The fact that they perform poorly according to the reports can be one of the indicators that the educational program was ineffective or that very probably Roma had access to a less financed, lower quality education.

Another example is the "National approach to combat poverty", where 4 millions EUR were made available for vulnerable groups, in 2016-2017, by the Ministry of Social Affairs and Employment. Again, monitoring reports specify that large parts of Roma population have

¹² <https://www.defenceforchildren.nl/images/68/4552.pdf>

financial difficulties; therefore, they are in the target group.¹³ The data once more is not available and the only way to estimate the effectiveness of this program will be, to a certain degree, based on the future monitoring reports on the socio-economic situation of Roma.

These types of projects are implemented by local or national authorities or organizations, Roma being in general the target group. They are not involved in implementation, monitoring or evaluation of these projects. Roma getting a partner role in any of these project phases would increase the commitment to the project and contribute to the accountability sharing.

Unfortunately, no national or local authority accepted to provide answers to the questions regarding the programs accountability, ways to improve or adjust the programs and most of the information regarding these programs and their results are not available. One justification is that the information regarding the impact of the project on Roma community is missing since ethnic data are not collected.

Availability of reliable data on the situation of Roma

There is no systematic collection of data concerning the situation of Roma, Sinti and Travellers in Netherland due to Dutch Data Protection Act, Police Data Act and Municipal Database of Personal Files Act. This unavailability of reliable data makes difficult to estimate any results of the mainstream programs and indicate any further readjustment, if needed. Most of the statistical data are dating back to 2002 or even earlier and statistical information in recent years is virtually absent.

¹³ Erasmus Universiteit Rotterdam/Risbo, 2015. *Monitor Sociale Inclusie: vervolgmeting 1 Eerste vervolgmeting naar de woon- en leefomstandigheden Roma en Sinti in Nederland*. Oktober 2015.

ANTI-DISCRIMINATION

The Dutch set of policy measures for Roma inclusion does not mention direct, indirect and multiple discrimination in relation to Roma and does not take into consideration the rights of Romani women at all. Regarding the Racial Equality Directive, the Ombudsman office stated that the legislation in Netherlands is in accordance with the European standards.

A study in 2012 reveals that Roma in the Netherlands are generally “aware of complaints procedures regarding discrimination, but rarely make use of them”.¹⁴ One reason can be the low trust in the institutions in charge, such as the police, the Equal Treatment Commission or Ombudsman.

The number and type of discrimination faced by Roma in the Netherlands is difficult to estimate even by the authorities in charge.

When asked for the number of complaints submitted and the type of discrimination Roma face, both the Ombudsman office and the College of the Human Rights were not able to answer, as they do not have information regarding the ethnical background of those filling a complaint.

Educational and residential segregation

In the Netherlands there are no segregated schools attended only by Roma, Sinti and Travellers. However, the number of Roma, Sinti and Travellers children in special schools is considerably higher than the national average. Being of Roma, Sinti or Travellers origin is considered to be of a disadvantaged background, which is associated in most cases with Dutch language deficiency or learning difficulties, according to the interview with the local Roma expert. During one of the focus groups, several community members have expressed their concern about the accuracy of the school evaluation results and the good intentions of the evaluators, in direct relation to the high number of Roma children being advised to attend special schools or vocational education and training instead of academic education. Another concern expressed during the focus groups, by the participants, was about the high level of truancy among Roma pupils, which was associated by Roma parents and children with the discrimination against Roma, in society and in the education system.

There is no official evidence of discrimination of Roma at school, relate to enrolment policies in schools or to bullying and harassment at school. There is a tendency among Roma not to report cases of discrimination, due to distrust in authorities, the difficult procedure, etc., which results in a lack of reliable registration data on the issue.

In the Netherlands, a study revealed that many Roma children attend only primary school, and many go to special schools for pupils with learning problems.¹⁵ The study argues that the high truancy rate among Roma children results from discrimination against Roma in the Dutch education system and in society, combined with low parental expectations regarding education.

Regarding residential segregation, Roma are living in mix neighborhoods. Most of them are living in social houses due to low income, but there are cases of family living in their privately-owned houses.

Travellers and part of Sinti are living on caravan sites. The challenges faced for decades by the caravan dwellers are presented in the section below.

¹⁴ http://fra.europa.eu/sites/default/files/fra_uploads/2109-FRA-Factsheet_ROMA_NL.pdf

¹⁵ <https://www.defenceforchildren.nl/images/68/4552.pdf>

Forced evictions

There are no cases of forced eviction among Roma, but for those living in caravan their municipalities have initiated an "extinction policy". In 1999, the Caravan Act was repealed, the government paving the way for local authorities to adopt an extinction policy regarding the caravan sites. The legal situation is not clear because the right to live in a mobile home - a caravan on legal campsites, constitutes integral part of the Housing Act. This legal uncertainty is speculated by the local authorities.

Due to decentralization, it is up to the municipalities to reduce the number of sites, to demolish the caravan when the owner is deceased and to allow or deny the right of the other family members to take over the contract.

All these actions lead in time to shortage of sites, which affects the quality of living conditions, and lead to illegal residency, overcrowding, etc. In the Netherlands, Travellers are not the only ones living in the caravans. There are an estimated 30 thousand caravan dwellers, spread over 1,150 caravan locations in 370 municipalities.

Their situation made the subject of a recent research undertaken by the Ombudsman who decided in favour of the caravan dwellers. The Ombudsman's recommendations to the Dutch Government were, among others, to designate a minister in charge of "developing a vision on the location policy together with municipalities, in accordance with the human rights framework for the cultural identity of caravan dwellers and monitor the impact of government policy on the protection of the cultural identity of caravan dwellers".¹⁶

Discriminatory behaviour by police, misconduct by prosecutors or courts

The low rate of reported discrimination act against Roma, Sinti and Travellers is well known by authorities, equality bodies, research institutions and NGOs.

Through the research carried out for this monitoring report it was not possible to find any evidence of discriminatory behavior towards Roma, Sinti or Travellers by police, or other law enforcement authorities, prosecutors or courts. The lack of ethnical disaggregated data makes it difficult to investigate into these types of cases.

In principle, the institution of the national Ombudsman is in charge with investigating the cases of discriminatory acts committed by the public institutions against citizens. Therefore, there are independent mechanisms to investigate possible cases of discriminatory behavior by law enforcement authorities.

It was impossible to find out if there were such cases and what where the disciplinary measures taken in such conditions.

Access to identity papers

The website of the Dutch Government mentions: "In the Netherlands more than 4,000 people are now registered as stateless in the Personal Records Database".¹⁷ Among them are 200 Roma, with unknown country of origin, living in uncertainty, with very few rights and no access to public services. The government monitoring report mentions that these people suffer because of the stress and have developed mental illnesses.¹⁸ One important aspect to be mentioned, their children at birth receive the same stateless status.

¹⁶ Nationale Ombudsman, Rapportnummer: 2017/060, *Woonwagenbewoner zoekt standplaats*. Available at: <https://www.nationaleombudsman.nl/system/files/onderzoek/DEF%20Rapport%202017060%20Woonwagenbewoner%20zoekt%20standplaats.pdf>

¹⁷ Dutch Government website: <https://www.government.nl/topics/dutch-nationality/statelessness>

¹⁸ Erasmus Universiteit Rotterdam/Risbo, 2015. *Monitor Sociale Inclusie: vervolgmeting 1 Eerste vervolgmeting naar de woon- en leefomstandigheden Roma en Sinti in Nederland*. Oktober 2015.

ADDRESSING ANTIGYPSYISM

Institutional settings for fighting discrimination and addressing antigypsyism

The Dutch set of policy measures for Roma inclusion does not target the antigypsyism. Antigypsyism is not recognized in the Netherlands by the state as a specific form of racism against Roma, Sinti and Travellers. Consequently, the institutional setting that can have a role in initiating and coordinating programs and actions aiming at countering acts of antigypsyism, antigypsyist attitudes and discourses are missing. It is up to the individuals and possibly to grass-roots organization to address antigypsyism.

The number of Roma, Sinti and Travellers working in public administration and political positions is extremely small, according to the interviews. There are no programs available to train them for jobs in institutions like police or municipality to ensure the diversity in public administration.

Roma, Sinti and Travellers are not recognized as national minorities in the Netherlands, but no other ethnic group has a national recognition. The difference in the case of Roma, Sinti and Travellers – a relatively small ethnic group, is that the lack of recognition makes difficult any accurate information about them, starting with the real size of the group, geographical distribution or any other to socio-economic indicators.

On the other side, the Netherlands has officially recognized the Roma Genocide during the Second World War, when in May of 1944, 245 Dutch Roma and Sinti were rounded up and deported to Nazi concentration camps and only 30 returned.

There have been erected commemorative monuments for the Roma victims of the Second World War. The government has financed several projects, exhibitions, websites, and online educational platforms¹⁹, to raise awareness about the tragedy.

On 4-5 May, every year, the Netherlands is commemorating the victims of the Second World War and one of the Sinti survivors, Zoni Weisz was invited to the ceremony to speak about his personal experience.

Analysing and forming narratives and attitudes towards Roma

The failure to promote Roma, Sinti and Travellers role models in the public sphere, the daily stigmatization and discrimination, the prejudice and stereotypes made many Roma, Sinti and Travellers to hide their ethnic background in public. In cases of mixed families, the Roma parent accept that the children take the family name of the non-Roma parent, thinking that this is a way to protect her/his children of future discriminatory acts, due to a Roma name.

The authorities although addressing real problems in the society, are perpetuating the negative image of the Roma. An important program – in terms of resources allocated, partners, duration, etc., called “Combat of the exploitation of Roma children” looks at the ways and means of law enforcement in the case of multi-problem families with Roma background.²⁰ Nine municipalities, National Police and Salvation Army are partners in the local pilot project, but not a single Roma organization. When describing the program, it is mentioned: “Roma children in the Netherlands are at risk of becoming victims of exploitation: criminal exploitation, meaning the children are used for theft and pickpocketing or forced marriage”. “Roma children are systematically trained from a young age in committing various forms of property crime.” Although is specified on the website that this framework can be applied for any other multi-problem families facing many other

¹⁹ <http://romasinti.eu/>

²⁰ <https://hetccv.nl/onderwerpen/multi-probleemgezinnen-met-een-roma-achtergrond/>

forms of obstacles and that not all Roma families are problematic, all the information, the title of the project, the video materials are using Roma as example.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Governance and overall policy framework

- The National Roma Contact Point should set up the National Roma Platform where, aside from other stakeholders, representatives of each group: Roma, Sinti and Travellers can express themselves and interact.
- Local authorities should ensure that, in each local project where Roma, Sinti or Travellers are part of the target group, at least one local Roma Sinti or Travellers organization must be partner.
- The National Roma Contact Point and the Government should set up a framework to support the improvement of the organizational and managerial capacity of Roma, Sinti and Travellers organizations.

Anti-discrimination

- The Government should immediately take act of the recommendations of the National Ombudsman concerning stopping the "extinction policy" of the caravan sites, which affects directly the Sinti and Travellers communities' and other caravan dwellers human rights.
- The Ministry of Justice and Safety should address and design legal measures to solve the problem of "stateless Roma".
- The Ministry of Social Affairs and Employment, Ministry of Health, Welfare and Sport together with the Ministry of Education, Culture and Science should provide support for advocacy work on positive actions for Roma and combating discrimination in the field of housing/caravan sites, health, education and labor market.

Addressing antigypsyism

- The Netherlands should recognize antigypsyism as a special form of racism, not just as discrimination
- The National Roma Contact Point together with the relevant public authorities should launch rights awareness campaigns, as well as information activities regarding where and how to complain when their rights are violated, to ensure access to justice, fighting hate speech and hate crime
- The National Roma Contact Point together with the relevant public authorities should encourage and support the promotion of Roma, Sinti and Travellers role models for empowering and increasing the communities' self-esteem and change mainstream society perception of these ethnic groups.
- The Ministry of Education, in cooperation with Roma Sinti and Travellers organizations should develop and promote an awareness campaign on their history, culture and contribution as members of the Netherlands society, for centuries.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Boer & Croon, 2012. *Evaluatie Nederlands Instituut voor Sinti en Roma*. Amsterdam: Boer & Croon.

Centrum voor criminaliteitspreventie en veiligheid. *Multi-probleemgezinnen met een Roma achtergrond*. Available at: <https://hetccv.nl/onderwerpen/multi-probleemgezinnen-met-een-roma-achtergrond/>

Erasmus Universiteit Rotterdam/Risbo, 2015. *Monitor Sociale Inclusie: vervolgmeting 1 Eerste vervolgmeting naar de woon- en leefomstandigheden Roma en Sinti in Nederland*. Oktober 2015.

Jenissen, R. (ed.), 2011. *De Nederlandse migratiekaart: Achtergronden en ontwikkelingen van verschillende internationale migratietypen*. The Hague, Boom Juridische Uitgevers.

MOVISIE, 2013. *Monitor Inclusie :Nulmeting Ervaringen et opvattingen van Roma, Sinti en professionals over de sociale inclusie van Roma en Sinti op de domeinen onderwijs, arbeid, wonen, geondheid en veiligheid*.

National Strategy for Roma Integration in the Netherlands. Available at : http://ec.europa.eu/justice/discrimination/roma-integration/netherlands/national-strategy/national_en.htm

Nationale ombudsman, Rapportnummer: 2017/060. *Woonwagenebewoner zoekt standplaats*. Available at: <https://www.nationaleombudsman.nl/system/files/onderzoek/DEF%20Rapport%202017060%20Woonwagenebewoner%20zoekt%20standplaats.pdf>

HOW TO OBTAIN EU PUBLICATIONS

Free publications:

- one copy:
via EU Bookshop (<http://bookshop.europa.eu>);
- more than one copy or posters/maps:
from the European Union's representations (http://ec.europa.eu/represent_en.htm);
from the delegations in non-EU countries
(http://eeas.europa.eu/delegations/index_en.htm);
by contacting the Europe Direct service (http://europa.eu/europedirect/index_en.htm)
or calling 00 800 6 7 8 9 10 11 (freephone number from anywhere in the EU) (*).

(*) The information given is free, as are most calls (though some operators, phone boxes or hotels may charge you).

Priced publications:

- via EU Bookshop (<http://bookshop.europa.eu>).

