



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

*Assessing the progress  
in four key policy areas  
of the strategy*

**Prepared by:**  
Romano Centro  
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# CONTENTS

<b>LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS</b> .....	6
<b>EXECUTIVE SUMMARY</b> .....	7
<b>INTRODUCTION</b> .....	9
<b>EMPLOYMENT</b> .....	10
Improving access to labour market and effectiveness of employment services .....	11
Fight against discrimination in employment and antigypsyism at workplace.....	14
<b>HOUSING AND ESSENTIAL PUBLIC SERVICES</b> .....	16
Access to basic amenities .....	16
Access to secure and affordable housing .....	17
Effectiveness of housing benefits and social assistance to maintain housing .....	18
Fight against residential segregation, discrimination and other forms of antigypsyism in housing .....	18
<b>IMPACT OF HEALTH CARE POLICIES ON ROMA</b> .....	21
Ensuring equal access to public health care services.....	22
Addressing needs of the most vulnerable groups among Roma .....	23
<b>EDUCATION</b> .....	24
Access to quality preschool education.....	25
Improving quality of education until the end of compulsory schooling .....	26
Increasing the share of Roma youngsters completing vocational training, upper secondary school and higher education.....	27
Policies or programmes targeted to support disadvantaged students .....	28
Fight against discrimination and antigypsyism in education .....	30
<b>RECOMMENDATIONS</b> .....	32
<b>BIBLIOGRAPHY</b> .....	34

## LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

AMS	<i>Arbeitsmarktservice</i> (public employment service)
ESF	European Social Fund
EU	European Union
FRA	European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights
NGO	Non-Governmental Organisation
NRCP	National Roma Contact Point
NRIS	National Roma Integration Strategy
RCM	Roma Civil Monitor pilot project
WWII	Second World War

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

### Employment

In employment, the NRIS process brought the most significant change. A Roma targeted ESF programme enabled civil society to conduct ten projects on empowerment of Roma in employment from 2015 to 2019, compared to one project before 2015. From 2019, a similar number of projects will be in place until 2022.

### Housing and essential public services

The housing situation of Roma in Austria is worse compared to the average population as the share of families living in substandard apartments is higher. The vast majority of Roma do have access to secure and affordable housing, whereby municipal housing, social benefits and housing allowances play an important role. Among the EU migrants affected by poverty and without access to social welfare, the share of Roma is very high. They have to rely on the informal housing market or sleep rough in public places. For travelling groups two halting sites for Roma exist, attempts to build further halting sites did not succeed so far. The NRIS does not address housing.

### Impact of health care policies on Roma

The health situation of Roma in Austria is widely unknown. Taking into account the disadvantaged situation in education and the labour market, it can be assumed that Roma are in a disadvantaged position regarding health as well. Especially the low level of health literacy should be addressed according to experts and civil society. In health care, no Roma targeted programmes are in place and the National Contact Point decided not to include health in the NRIS.

### Education

Despite clear evidence on the low educational level of Roma in Austria and the high demand from civil society for Roma targeted educational programmes, the implementation of the NRIS did not bring much progress and did not set ambitious objectives in this area. Funding for existing programmes grew slightly, but from a low level. The existing programmes could therefore neither be expanded much in quantity, nor in quality.



## INTRODUCTION

Roma inclusion policies have been in place in Austria since the Roma were recognised as a national minority in 1993. Before, civil society was active to fight discrimination and gain the status as a national minority. Following the EU framework on national Roma integration strategies (NRIS) in 2011, a National Roma Contact Point (NRCP) was established in the Federal Chancellery. This NRCP then presented the already existing programmes as an integrated set of policy measures for Roma inclusion<sup>1</sup> and founded a dialogue platform on Roma inclusion to foster exchange between the administration and the Roma civil society.

In 2016, a National Roma Integration Strategy was issued and open for consultation. In 2017, the NRIS was revised by the NRCP and adopted by the government. The strategy is dedicated to improving the situation of Roma by addressing education, employment, fight against antigypsyism, empowerment of women and youth, empowerment of Roma civil society and enhancing participation. The areas of health and housing are not included in the NRIS. The process of the dialogue platform and the development of the NRIS brought an increased interest in and more awareness on the situation of Roma in parts of the administration, especially on the national level. To some extent, Roma inclusion gained increased priority. Despite this, the NRIS did not set ambitious objectives and did not bring a significant change in Roma inclusion regarding education, housing and health care. In employment, the NRIS led to a Roma targeted ESF-programme which enabled civil society to extend support activities and develop new projects for Roma.<sup>2</sup>

For this report, the available public resources on the NRIS and Roma inclusion policy were analysed. Further, the relevant existing data on the four policy areas employment, housing, health and education were examined and are presented in the report. The perspective of civil society is represented through publications, the documentation of the NRIS process, interviews with civil society representatives and the long-term experience of *Romano Centro*.

<sup>1</sup> Austrian Federal Chancellery, *Roma in Austria*, 2011.

<sup>2</sup> The development of Roma inclusion policy is described in: Roma Civil Monitor/Romano Centro (2018) *Civil society monitoring report on implementation of the national Roma integration strategies in Austria. Focusing on structural and horizontal preconditions for successful implementation of the strategy*. Available at: <https://cps.ceu.edu/sites/cps.ceu.edu/files/attachment/basicpage/3034/rcm-civil-society-monitoring-report-1-austria-2017-eprint-fin.pdf>

## EMPLOYMENT

### *The situation of Roma in the Austrian Labour market*

The lack of data on the Roma and their situation in Austria hampers a conclusive assessment on the situation in the labour market. Data is available only to a limited extent.

The Viennese Workers Chamber published a study on the employment and life situation of migrants in Vienna in 2015. The study separately examined the situation of two minorities, the Kurds and Roma migrants in Vienna. Roma-migrants in Vienna, mostly from the Balkans are estimated to be largest Roma-subgroup in Austria with a number of several tens of thousands of people. The research was done among members of the workers chamber, so all of them were employed or no longer unemployed than six months. Therefore, this research does not reflect the situation of long-term unemployed or self-employed Roma. The results show that Roma more often work in jobs with unfavourable working contracts. The share of temporary employees (9 per cent) is higher than in the group of migrants in general and triple compared to the group of non-migrants (3 per cent). The share of people in marginal employment is also significantly higher among the Roma than among the migrants or non-migrants. Compared to other migrants and the non-migrants, Roma-migrants are also more often affected by unfavourable working hours at weekends or public holidays, in the evenings or at night as well as in shift work. The results allow to conclude that Roma are in a disadvantaged position in the Austrian labour market.<sup>3</sup>

Previous research examining the same target group of Roma-migrants in Vienna found that the unemployment rate among the Roma is higher (13 per cent) than among the migrants (9 per cent) and the non-migrants (3 per cent).<sup>4</sup>

In Burgenland, a rural area where many Austrian Roma live, the situation is likely to be worse than in the city. According to a research project conducted by a local Roma-organisation in 2013 and 2014, 44 per cent of the adults there were unemployed.<sup>5</sup>

### *Employment in the NRIS*

The Austrian NRIS strongly focusses on the area of employment. Compared to the other three policy areas, in employment the most significant impact of the NRIS can be observed. The NRIS recognises the disadvantaged position of Roma in the Austrian labour market and sets the following objectives:

- Access to the labour market is improved,
- Obstacles to enter the labour market are reduced for socially and economically disadvantaged Roma, especially for women.

Roma, especially women, with a low income are not affected by a level of poverty which is endangering their livelihood. The strategy aims to address discrimination through specific and targeted inclusion programmes in the following areas:

- vocational education and training, especially courses to improve German or literacy, as well as other qualifications,
- counselling, job-coaching and job-exchanges,

<sup>3</sup> Susi Schmatz and Petra Wetzel, *MigrantInnen in Wien. Zur Beschäftigungs- und Lebenssituation von Roma/Romnja und Kurden/KurdInnen mit Migrationshintergrund*, 2015, 7-9.

<sup>4</sup> Susanne Schmatz, Sanja Selak-Ostojić, Petra Wetzel, Walter Reiter, *Roma in Österreich: Integrationsaspekte in den Bereichen Beschäftigung, Wohnen und Freizeit*, 2014, 29.

<sup>5</sup> Volkshochschule der Burgenländischen Roma, *Dokumentation – Information – Integration. Auswertung der Fragebögen zur Erhebung der Lebenssituation der Roma und Romnja im Burgenland*, 2014, 21.

- “infotainments” (events to communicate information on the labour market, combined with cultural elements),
- anti-discrimination and sensitisation workshops for employers, workers councils, trade unions, labour market or educational institutions, teachers and media representatives.<sup>6</sup>

Apart from the anti-discrimination workshops it is questionable if the measures named in the NRIS will be able to counter discrimination. Without doubt they are needed and suitable to improve the disadvantaged position of Roma in the labour market.

### Improving access to labour market and effectiveness of employment services

The public employment service (AMS – *Arbeitsmarktservice*) supports unemployed persons in finding a job and is also responsible for the allowance for unemployed persons. To keep this allowance, the job seekers have to prove their willingness to find a job, can be obliged to attend further education and to send applications regularly.

The public employment service is easily accessible to all persons in general, as well to Roma. Roma targeted activities are not in place in the public employment service. Roma civil society and experts argue that the services are too superficial in many cases and do not address the needs of many individuals. They state that besides training, the public employment service should offer additional support in cooperation with Roma organisations.<sup>7</sup> Another problem raised by civil society is the lack of translators in the counselling centres of the public employment service. This affects many Roma migrants from the Balkans or EU-member states like Romania or Bulgaria, who often do not have sufficient language skills to communicate successfully with their counterpart. In Oberwart (Burgenland), there were three cases reported from 2014 to 2016, where the employees of the labour market service discriminated against Roma individuals seeking for support.<sup>8</sup> According to a representative from the local Roma-NGO *Verein Karika*, the situation has improved after the Roma-NGO and the employment service collaborated in a project. In 2013 and 2014, in these regions 98 adults were asked about their experience with the public employment service. 77 per cent responded that the trainings offered by the employment service did not improve their situation on the labour market.<sup>9</sup>

#### ESF Roma programme 2015-2019

In 2015, the Federal Ministry of Labour, Social Affairs and Consumer Protection issued a call titled “Roma-Empowerment in the Labour Market”. The call contained two different instruments: within instrument A, organisations were invited to apply for funding to develop and implement counselling and qualification measures; instrument B was a call to develop a curriculum for the qualification of key employees in the field of Roma empowerment. The total budget of the funding programme is 3.5 million EUR for 42 months (November 2015 to April 2019 for one part of the projects, January 2016 to June 2019 for the other part). Organisations were invited to apply for projects up to a maximum amount of 123,000 EUR a year or 432,250 EUR for the whole period. 50 per cent of the funding programme is covered from the ESF, the other 50 per cent from the national

<sup>6</sup> Bundeskanzleramt, *EU Rahmen für nationale Strategien Rahmen zur Integration der Roma bis 2020. Strategie zur Fortführung der Inklusion der Roma in Österreich*, 2017, 13-14.

<sup>7</sup> Susanne Schmatz, Sanja Selak-Ostojić, Petra Wetzel, Walter Reiter, *Roma in Österreich: Integrationsaspekte in den Bereichen Beschäftigung, Wohnen und Freizeit*, 2014, 32-33.

<sup>8</sup> See cases 53 and 54 in Romano Centro, *Antigypsyism in Austria*, 2015, 25-26 and case 44 in Romano Centro, *Antigypsyism in Austria*, 2017, 20.

<sup>9</sup> Volkshochschule der Burgenländischen Roma, *Dokumentation – Information – Integration. Auswertung der Fragebögen zur Erhebung der Lebenssituation der Roma und Romnija im Burgenland*, 2014, 19.

budget.<sup>10</sup> The ESF Roma programmes 2015-2019 and 2019 to 2022 (see below) with a total budget of 7.5 million EUR constitute 0.86 per cent of the total ESF expenditure (875,739,295 EUR) in the respective period.<sup>11</sup>

Due to the Austrian ESF regulations and the status of Burgenland as a transition region, Burgenland was not included in this funding programme. There, the Federal Ministry of Labour funded a project to foster labour market integration, which was implemented by the NGO *Verein Karika*. The project terminated by December 2018. According to information from the organisation, a similar project to foster labour market integration will be continued with funding from the Burgenland state government.

Under instrument A of the ESF-Roma programme, ten projects are funded. The following table lists the organisations and the projects:

Organisation (s)	Project title	City	Website
Verein Phurdo Zentrum Roma-Sinti	ROMA-EMPOWERMENT FÜR DEN ARBEITSMARKT  Armutsbekämpfung durch Partizipation am Arbeitsmarkt und der Arbeitsmarktpolitik	Salzburg	<a href="http://www.phurdo.org/esf.html">http://www.phurdo.org/esf.html</a>
Caritas Wien	CAMBRO - Offener Lern- und Beratungsraum	Vienna	<a href="https://www.caritas-wien.at/hilfe-angebote/asyl-integration/ausbildung-arbeit/beratung-begleitung/cambro/">https://www.caritas-wien.at/hilfe-angebote/asyl-integration/ausbildung-arbeit/beratung-begleitung/cambro/</a>
Romano Centro – Verein für Roma	Romano Zuralipe – Programm zur Stärkung von Roma/Romnja am Arbeitsmarkt	Vienna	<a href="http://www.romano-centro.org">www.romano-centro.org</a>
Volkshilfe Österreich	Thara Romani Zor!	Vienna	<a href="https://www.volkshilfe.at/was-wir-tun/positionen-projekte/roma-und-sinti/thara-romani-zor/">https://www.volkshilfe.at/was-wir-tun/positionen-projekte/roma-und-sinti/thara-romani-zor/</a>
Volkshilfe Ober-österreich	Maro Drom – Unser Weg	Linz/Wels	<a href="https://www.volkshilfe-ooe.at/erwachsene/beratung/fluechtlinge-migrantinnen/marodrom/">https://www.volkshilfe-ooe.at/erwachsene/beratung/fluechtlinge-migrantinnen/marodrom/</a>
itworks Personalservice & Beratung gemeinnützige GmbH/ Kulturverein österreichischer Roma	Roma/Romni Qualifizierungs- und Beratungszentrum	Vienna	<a href="https://www.itworks.co.at/projekte/beratungs-und-betreuungseinrichtungen/romaromni-qualifizierungs-und-beratungszentrum.html">https://www.itworks.co.at/projekte/beratungs-und-betreuungseinrichtungen/romaromni-qualifizierungs-und-beratungszentrum.html</a>
Caritas Graz	ZORROM– Arbeit und Bildung für Roma	Graz	<a href="https://www.caritas-steiermark.at/hilfe-angebote/migrantinnen-fluechtlinge/integration/zorrom-arbeit-und-bildung-fuer-roma/">https://www.caritas-steiermark.at/hilfe-angebote/migrantinnen-fluechtlinge/integration/zorrom-arbeit-und-bildung-fuer-roma/</a>

<sup>10</sup> Bundesministerium für Arbeit, Soziales und Konsumentenschutz, *Roma-Empowerment für den Arbeitsmarkt. Erster Aufruf zur Einreichung von Projektanträgen zur Aktivierung und Stabilisierung von Roma und Sinti durch Beratung, Ausbildung, Training, Antidiskriminierungsmaßnahmen bzw. Disseminationsaktivitäten*, 2015.

<sup>11</sup> <https://www.esf.at/esf-in-oesterreich/>

MENTOR GmbH & Co OG	Lacodrom – Roma Empowerment für den Arbeitsmarkt	Vienna	<a href="https://www.mentor.at/kurse/roma-empowerment-arbeitsmarkt/">https://www.mentor.at/kurse/roma-empowerment-arbeitsmarkt/</a>
Zentrum für soziale Innovation/ Österreichischer Roma Verband	Anerkennung, Kompetenz und Information	Vienna	<a href="http://www.romaverband.at/">http://www.romaverband.at/</a>

The ESF-Roma projects will terminate in April/June 2019. At the time of writing of this report, no information on the number of beneficiaries or the outcomes of the projects are available.

Under instrument B, the Roma organisation *Verein Phurdo* (Salzburg) and *Volkshilfe Oberösterreich* developed a curriculum for a “training course for key employees for Roma-Empowerment” in 2016.<sup>12</sup> Up to now, the training course was not implemented. According to information from the ministry, it will take place in 2019 the earliest.

The target group of the ESF Roma programme are all Roma in Austria, regardless of their status as an ethnic group or not. In the call it was stated that gender-balanced access to the programmes had to be ensured. The funded projects shall address Roma explicitly, but not exclusively, which means that non-Roma persons are not excluded from the services. The call for the projects did not include a specific reference to women, children or youth.

### **ESF Roma programme 2019-2022**

In August 2018, a second call on Roma empowerment in the labour market was published by the Federal Ministry of Labour, Social Affairs, Health and Consumer Protection for the period of May 2019 to December 2022. The total budget is 4 million EUR, the maximum amount for one project is limited to 440,000 EUR. It is planned to start the first projects in May 2019. According to the schedule, the decision on the selection of projects will be published by the end of February 2019. Regarding the content, the second call equals the first one. The projects are expected to offer counselling, qualification and education, anti-discrimination and dissemination of information. The call asked for holistic interventions, which means that multiple problems shall be addressed through a comprehensive set of measures. Roma participation in the development and implementation as well as qualification for Roma employees in the projects are important criteria. The projects have to contribute to gender equality, non-discrimination and be accessible for persons with disabilities, as a general provision for all ESF projects in Austria.<sup>13</sup>

The ESF Roma programme is the most significant change the NRIS has brought so far. Financially, the programme brought a high increase of available funds for Roma integration. The programme enabled organisations to create Roma-targeted projects in cities where there have not been such before, i.e. *Verein Phurdo* in Salzburg or Caritas in Graz. In Vienna, where most of the projects were before and also within this programme, the ESF-Roma-programme enabled to address certain target groups better (i.e. youth) and brought more counselling centres and support services for Roma. The geographical spread of the projects is still limited as there is a focus in Vienna and not projects in the western states of Tyrol and Vorarlberg nor in the southern Carinthia. This corresponds with the large number of Roma living in Vienna and the eastern part of Austria one the

<sup>12</sup> See website: <http://www.phurdo.org/esf.html>.

<sup>13</sup> Bundesministerium für Arbeit, Soziales, Gesundheit und Konsumentenschutz, *Roma-Empowerment für den Arbeitsmarkt. Zweiter Aufruf zur Einreichung von Projektanträgen zur Aktivierung und Stabilisierung von Roma/Romnien durch Beratung, Ausbildung, Training, Antidiskriminierungsmaßnahmen bzw. Disseminationsaktivitäten*, 2018.

one hand and on the existence of Roma-organisations on the other hand which are not in place in these states.

Up to now there is no evaluation of these projects available. From a civil society perspective, it is evident that many of these projects positively contribute to the employability and employment of Roma as well as to the empowerment of Roma individuals and Roma civil society. The programme opens space to strike new paths and address new target groups.

It is not clear if and how the successful measures of these projects will be introduced into mainstream labour market policies or how they will be continued by civil society after the end of the programme in 2022. Due to a lack of other funds, Roma civil society is highly dependent on this funding programme and would be seriously weakened if there would not be a similar programme after 2022.

### Fight against discrimination in employment and antigypsyism at workplace

Research on discrimination against Roma in the labour market was conducted to a small extent in 2011. The results show that many feel discriminated in employment, although the level of discrimination is not higher than in the group of migrants.<sup>14</sup> The number of reported cases in employment is low. The ombudspersons and civil society organisation do receive single requests from victims of discrimination in the field of employment.<sup>15</sup> Romano Centro collects cases of discrimination also in the field of employment. There are cases where an employee successfully fought against discrimination and received compensation<sup>16</sup> as well as cases in which an employee chose not to take legal measures because he/she needed the job to uphold her/his residence status.<sup>17</sup> The reason for the low number of reported cases is not the low level of discrimination but the fear of job-loss or the lacking knowledge of the legal provisions or supporting organisations.<sup>18</sup>

Victims of discrimination in the area of employment enjoy legal protection through the Act on Equal Treatment.<sup>19</sup> This includes all areas involved in performing a job: job advertisements, the start and the termination of an employment contract, training, internships and practical training, career counselling, job offers from the Austrian Public Employment Service as well as access to self-employment. Free consulting and support for affected persons is offered by the Ombud for Equal Treatment, the Chamber of Labour or various establishments in the federal states. The Commission for Equal Treatment assesses whether discrimination is present in a (free and) non-public procedure. This procedure can be initiated by the affected person or with the support of the Ombud for Equal Treatment or other establishments. The procedure ends with a legally non-binding confirmation from the Commission for Equal Treatment of whether discrimination is present, and reparations are recommended. The Commission for Equal Treatment cannot award compensation or issue an enforceable decision. On the other hand, rulings and

<sup>14</sup> Andreas Riesenfelder, Susanne Schelepa, Petra Wetzels, *Beschäftigungssituation von Personen mit Migrationshintergrund in Wien*, 2012, 284-288.

<sup>15</sup> There are no statistics on Roma-related cases, see Romano Centro, *Civil society monitoring report on implementation of the national Roma integration strategies in Austria. Focusing on structural and horizontal preconditions for successful implementation of the strategy*, 2018, 20. Available at: <https://cps.ceu.edu/sites/cps.ceu.edu/files/attachment/basicpage/3034/rcm-civil-society-monitoring-report-1-austria-2017-eprint-fin.pdf>

<sup>16</sup> See Antidiskriminierungsstelle Steiermark, *Antidiskriminierungsbericht Steiermark 2014*, 42 and case 52 in Romano Centro, *Antigypsyism in Austria*, 2015, 25.

<sup>17</sup> See case 45 in Romano Centro, *Antigypsyism in Austria*, 2017, 20.

<sup>18</sup> Susanne Schmatz, Sanja Selak-Ostojčić, Petra Wetzels, Walter Reiter, *Roma in Österreich: Integrationsaspekte in den Bereichen Beschäftigung, Wohnen und Freizeit*, 2014, 32-34.

<sup>19</sup> Detailed information can be found in Romano Centro, *Civil society monitoring report* (see footnote 15).

settlements made in court are legally enforceable. According to the Austrian Equal Treatment Act, in the event of discrimination in the workplace the affected person is entitled to compensation for material losses and personal impairment suffered. Compensation must be sued for at the competent court whereby the risk of legal costs must be noted. Free legal counselling and support is offered, for instance, by the member organisations of the Litigation Association Against Discrimination.<sup>20</sup>

<sup>20</sup> This summary of the legal situation was taken from Romano Centro, *Antigypsyism in Austria*, 2017, 21.

## HOUSING AND ESSENTIAL PUBLIC SERVICES

### *Housing in the NRIS*

The NRCP published a Roma-strategy in autumn 2016 and invited civil society to comment on the document via a comment function on a website.<sup>21</sup> In contrast to the EU framework on National Roma Integration Strategies, the draft did not include a chapter on housing. Civil society representatives and other individuals, such as academics, demanded to include the topic of housing in the strategy,<sup>22</sup> without success.

The NRCP justified the decision not to include housing with a reference to a survey, where the "civil society" would see a low need for action in the area of housing. The NRCP states that therefore the Roma strategy does not include housing as a main priority but would continue with already existing policies without further naming them or describing how these will improve the situation of Roma.<sup>23</sup>

In the area of housing, data on the situation of Roma is only available to a very limited extent. The results of the existing research do not allow to conclude on the overall housing situation of Roma in Austria since the sample was very small and geographically focussed on Vienna and Burgenland. Despite this, the results do show some trends.

According to a research conducted among migrants in Vienna, Roma migrants find themselves in a disadvantaged position in the area of housing compared to non-Roma migrants or the non-migrants. The share of persons living in a substandard apartment is very high (38 per cent), the apartments are smaller, and the authors conclude that especially Roma live in apartments with a high dwelling density compared to other persons. Those living conditions as well result in a lower satisfaction with the dwellings.<sup>24</sup> These results were partially similar to the results from another research on the living conditions of Roma, which also found that a high share lives in substandard flats.<sup>25</sup>

### Access to basic amenities

From the situation described above, it can be assumed, that access to basic amenities is given for a vast majority of Roma living in Austria. Persons living in substandard flats do have access to basic amenities at least in their houses (i.e. shared toilettes). For people living in informal dwellings, access to basic amenities is not secured. *Romano Centro* in various occasions supported families who do not have warm water or sufficient heating in their apartment. In other cases, families temporarily lose their access to electricity or gas due to financial problems or debts. If they fail to pay their invoices, the providers terminate the delivery of gas or electricity.

<sup>21</sup> A description of this process can be found in Romano Centro, *Civil society monitoring report on implementation of the national Roma integration strategies in Austria. Focusing on structural and horizontal preconditions for successful implementation of the strategy*, 2018, 14-15.

<sup>22</sup> See the comments Nr. 14, 74 and 80 to the NRIS. Unfortunately, the consultation-webpage [www.romadialogplattform.gv.at](http://www.romadialogplattform.gv.at) had been deleted by the end of 2017 and the consultation process is therefore no longer available. The comments are preserved in a list, but it is difficult to find out to which part of the strategy the comments refer, see Bundeskanzleramt, *Kommentare und Rückmeldung an die Teilnehmenden*, 2018, 1.

<sup>23</sup> Bundeskanzleramt, *Kommentare und Rückmeldung an die Teilnehmenden*, 2018, 1.

<sup>24</sup> Susi Schmatz and Petra Wetzel, *MigrantInnen in Wien. Zur Beschäftigungs- und Lebenssituation von Roma/Romnja und Kurden/KurdInnen mit Migrationshintergrund*, 2015, 14-17.

<sup>25</sup> Susanne Schmatz, Sanja Selak-Ostojić, Petra Wetzel, Walter Reiter, *Roma in Österreich: Integrationsaspekte in den Bereichen Beschäftigung, Wohnen und Freizeit*, 2014, 37-38.

## Access to secure and affordable housing

The vast majority of Roma living in Austria lives in secure and more or less affordable housing. Regarding affordability it has to be mentioned that the prices for housing in general rose significantly in the last years.<sup>26</sup> The question of affordable housing therefore becomes relevant for a broader part of the Austrian society.

Access to secure and affordable housing depends on the socio-economic situation and on the residence permit of a person or family. In the private market it has become customary, that landlords ask for a confirmation on the income. People who do not work or have a low income or unsecure labour contract therefore have lower chances to find an apartment. The disadvantaged situation of Roma in the labour market (see chapter 1) is therefore very likely to negatively affect their housing situation. Persons who receive social benefits do have lower chances to find a dwelling on the private market as well. Beside these obstacles, there are quite high costs at the beginning of a tenancy. Tenants have to pay a caution (usually three monthly rents), the rent for the first month in advance, and in many occasions a broker fee (up to two monthly rents) too.

Social/municipal housing is available in Vienna to a very high extent and therefore plays an important role for Roma living there. To a smaller extent, this is also the case in other cities like Linz. The access for foreign citizens had been opened in Vienna in 2006. Already before many Austrian and migrant Roma with Austrian citizenship had access to municipal housing. Access to municipal housing is only possible if certain criteria are fulfilled. One of the criteria is a permanent residency in the respective city, i.e. two years in Vienna. In Graz, applicants for municipal housing have to prove a permanent residency of five years in the city or a total residency of 15 years or five years of employment in Graz.<sup>27</sup> Therefore, municipal housing is not a solution for the housing needs of persons who newly arrive in Vienna. Municipal housing is more affordable than housing in the private market, therefore it is an attractive option for many disadvantaged Roma families.<sup>28</sup> In terms of income, the criteria between different cities vary significantly. One person in Vienna is allowed to have an income up to 46,450 EUR a year, in Graz this is limited at 27,000 EUR. In Vienna the relatively high-income limit is in place to foster social diversity and avoid segregated poor neighbourhoods. Due to a very high demand caused by the fast increase of the population, in Vienna families very often have to wait for some years for their municipal flat. There are no indications that Roma are discriminated in the access to municipal housing nor that there is a concentration of Roma in a certain area or housing complex.

For persons (Roma and non-Roma) without a legal status or with a temporary status in Austria it is very difficult to get standard housing because they are not able to meet the landlords' expectations on income and have serious problems to procure the money to enter a tenancy.<sup>29</sup> For those called "poverty-migrants" from the eastern EU-states this means that they have to rely on the informal housing market with all the negative implications like exorbitant rents, unsecure tenancy, lack of basic amenities and overcrowded dwellings or stay without housing and sleep rough, i.e. in public spaces or under bridges, with or without tents. EU-citizens who never worked in Austria do not have

<sup>26</sup> The average housing costs (rent and running costs) per square metre rose between 13 and 15 per cent (depending on the type of rent) from 2013 to 2017, see Statistik Austria, *Wohnen. Zahlen, Daten und Indikatoren der Wohnstatistik*, 2018, 40.

<sup>27</sup> [https://www.graz.at/cms/beitrag/10273051/7763343/Gemeindewohnung\\_Ansuchen\\_Voraussetzungen.html](https://www.graz.at/cms/beitrag/10273051/7763343/Gemeindewohnung_Ansuchen_Voraussetzungen.html). According to information from a local Roma project, municipal housing does not play an important role for Roma in Graz.

<sup>28</sup> See Susanne Schmatz, Sanja Selak-Ostojić, Petra Wetzel, Walter Reiter, *Roma in Österreich: Integrationsaspekte in den Bereichen Beschäftigung, Wohnen und Freizeit*, 2014, 35-38.

<sup>29</sup> For the case of refugees, this problem is described in Anita Aigner, *Housing entry pathways of refugees in Vienna, a city of social housing*, Housing Studies, 2018.

access to the regular services for homeless people. In Vienna, since 2009, there is a special service for them in winter opening access to warm and dry sleeping places as well. Vienna offers as many places as needed. Other state governments and city administrations only offer a small number of sleeping places or refuse to offer support even in winter and even when children sleep rough. For those who depend on the informal housing market the risk of being subjected to fraud or exploitation is very high.<sup>30</sup>

Among the homeless EU citizens or those living in informal dwellings, the share of Roma is very high in all over Austria.<sup>31</sup> Occasionally, repression is used against them with the aim to make them move back to their country of origin.<sup>32</sup>

For travelling groups, i.e. from France or Belgium, who do cross Austria mostly in the summer months, two halting sites in Linz and Braunau (both Upper Austria) are in place. These halting sites were built by the municipalities after initiatives from civil society organisations and in cooperation with them. The sites are administered by the respective municipal authority. Some organisations and politicians called for more halting sites in other federal states, up to now they were not successful.<sup>33</sup>

## Effectiveness of housing benefits and social assistance to maintain housing

Housing benefits and social assistance contribute to a big extent to the affordability of dwellings for persons and families with a low income. As housing is in the responsibility of the nine federal states, there are nine different systems which show significant differences regarding i.e. access to the benefits or the amounts which are covered. According to a study, the system is effective all in all. Despite this, there are states where the benefits do not fully cover the (rising) costs for dwellings which means that these costs overburden the households' financial capacity.<sup>34</sup> The federal government plans to change the framework for the social assistance in 2019. How these changes will affect the housing situation of the beneficiaries cannot be assessed yet. Especially for migrants and families with more children the reform is likely to bring decreased allowances which will also negatively affect their housing situation.

## Fight against residential segregation, discrimination and other forms of antigypsyism in housing

### **Residential segregation**

Before WWII there were at least 124 Roma settlements in the state of Burgenland. They were all destroyed during the Nazi regime, after the Roma were deported and murdered.<sup>35</sup> Nowadays, in Austria exists only one segregated Roma settlement outside the town of

<sup>30</sup> See for example Erika Geser-Engleitner, *Bettelnde Notreisende in Vorarlberg. Eine empirische Untersuchung*, 2016, 79-81.

<sup>31</sup> See for Vorarlberg Erika Geser-Engleitner, *Bettelnde Notreisende in Vorarlberg. Eine empirische Untersuchung*, 2016, 41-44, for Salzburg Heinz Schoibl, *Notreisende und Bettel-MigrantInnen in Salzburg. Erhebung der Lebens- und Bedarfslagen*, 2013, 14-17. The city of Vienna (Fonds Soziales Wien)

<sup>32</sup> A case of such a forced eviction was already described in Romano Centro, *Civil society monitoring report on implementation of the national Roma integration strategies in Austria. Focusing on structural and horizontal preconditions for successful implementation of the strategy*, 2018, 21-22.

<sup>33</sup> I.e. in Tirol, see Alexandra Plank, „Es braucht mindestens zwei Durchreiseplätze für Roma“, <https://www.tt.com/panorama/gesellschaft/8651837/es-braucht-mindestens-zwei-durchreiseplaetze-fuer-roma> [10.01.2019].

<sup>34</sup> for details on the legislation in the nine federal states and an assessment on the effectiveness of housing benefits see Alexis Mundt and Wolfgang Amann, *Leistbares Wohnen – Bestandsaufnahme von monetären Leistungen für untere Einkommensgruppen zur Deckung des Wohnbedarfs*, 2015.

<sup>35</sup> Gerhard Baumgartner, „Auf den Spuren der ‚verschundenen‘ Roma-Siedlungen des Burgenlandes“, in *Romane Thana. Orte der Roma und Sinti*, ed. Andrea Härle et.al. (Wien: Czernin Verlag, 2015), 67-76.

Oberwart in Burgenland. The settlement is a result of institutional discrimination in the post-war era. The few survivors of the genocide were not allowed to live in the city, instead they were given empty barracks next to the waste disposal site. Later in the beginning of the 1970s, a hospital was built on this site and the settlement was moved even further away from the city, where it is up to these days.<sup>36</sup> According to Manuela Horvath from the Catholic Church's pastoral care for Roma, 45 people live there currently. Despite the discriminatory history of the settlement, there are no demands to move closer to the city centre by the Roma living there.

### **Discrimination in housing**

So far, specific research on the discrimination of Roma in housing is not available. The European Agency for Fundamental Rights (FRA) examined discrimination in housing against migrants from Turkey and Sub-Saharan Africa in Austria. 23 per cent of Turkish and 39 per cent of the migrants from Sub-Sahara Africa reported discrimination in the access to housing in the last five years. Compared to the results in other EU member states, the level of discrimination in Austria is among the highest.<sup>37</sup> It is very unlikely, that the situation is much better for Roma than for the groups which were examined in the survey. Therefore, it can be assumed that Roma are affected by discrimination in housing to a similar extent than other migrants. Despite this, civil society organisations record only few cases which were reported to them or the Ombud for Equal Treatment.<sup>38</sup> A study on the living conditions of Roma found that different mechanisms of discrimination affect Roma in housing.<sup>39</sup> In the last years there were no political initiatives to fight discrimination in housing. The alarming results from the FRA survey cited above did not gain much attention and did not cause a debate on the topic of discrimination in Austria at all. The provisions from the Racial Equality Directive in housing are implemented in different laws on the national level and on the level of the nine federal states. The Austrian Equal Treatment Act prohibits discrimination based on ethnicity and gender in accessing housing. If, for example, conclusion of a rental agreement is refused, there is entitlement for compensation of material losses and for suffering personal detriment. Compensation must be sued for at the competent district court. The Ombud for Equal Treatment offers free legal counselling and support. Housing ads aimed solely at Austrians or excluding migrants are also prohibited. If housing from the jurisdiction of the states is in question, their anti-discrimination laws are applied. These require an arbitration procedure in Vienna and Lower Austria: Filing a lawsuit at a court is only possible when the competent authority (Lower Austria: Anti-Discrimination Agency, Vienna: Agency for Combating Discrimination) confirms failure to come to an agreement. If an agreement is reached, this contract can be legally enforced by both sides.<sup>40</sup> As described in the first RCM report, the penalties for discrimination and in this case, for landlords who discriminate, are too low to serve as a deterrent.<sup>41</sup>

<sup>36</sup> Helmut Samer, *Die Roma von Oberwart. Zur Geschichte und aktuellen Situation der Roma in Oberwart*, 2001, 33-41.

<sup>37</sup> European Agency for Fundamental Rights, *Second European Union Minorities and Discrimination Survey, 2018*. Available at: <http://fra.europa.eu/en/publications-and-resources/data-and-maps/survey-data-explorer-second-eu-minorities-discrimination-survey>

<sup>38</sup> see case 23 in Romano Centro, *Antigypsyism in Austria*, 2015, 16 and cases 35 – 39 in Romano Centro, *Antigypsyism in Austria* 2013, 12. Unfortunately, there are no statistics on Roma-related cases.

<sup>39</sup> Susanne Schmatz, Sanja Selak-Ostojčić, Petra Wetzel, Walter Reiter, *Roma in Österreich: Integrationsaspekte in den Bereichen Beschäftigung, Wohnen und Freizeit*, 2014, 36.

<sup>40</sup> This summary of the legal situation in cases of discrimination in housing was taken from Romano Centro, *Antigypsyism in Austria* (2017), 12.

<sup>41</sup> Romano Centro, *Civil society monitoring report on implementation of the national Roma integration strategies in Austria. Focusing on structural and horizontal preconditions for successful implementation of the strategy*, 2018, 19-20.

Travelling groups who stay in Austria for some days in summer are vulnerable to discrimination and even violent attacks. The city of Wels in Upper Austria introduced a discriminatory camping ban for Roma, which was then found unconstitutional and repealed by the state government in 2015. Despite this, politicians demanded to reintroduce a camping ban for Roma in 2017.<sup>42</sup> Violent attacks against travelling Roma occurred in 2005 and 2013. Following the attack in 2013, eight persons were convicted for incitement because they called to attack the families on a social media platform.<sup>43</sup>

In 2016, homeless Roma families, up to 70 people in total, were attacked in Linz. Their tents were set on fire three times within two weeks. Alongside the arson attacks, racist and inciting comments were published on a website. The authorities from the city and the state failed to provide a temporary secure tenure for the victims, even after their belongings were put on fire for the third time.<sup>44</sup>

<sup>42</sup> See case 15 in Romano Centro, *Antigypsyism in Austria*, 2015, 13 and case 13 in Romano Centro, *Antigypsyism in Austria*, 2017, 10.

<sup>43</sup> see case 61 in Romano Centro, *Antigypsyism in Austria*, 2013, and Romano Centro, *Antigypsyism in Austria* 2015, 12.

<sup>44</sup> see cases 10, 29 and 37 in Romano Centro, *Antigypsyism in Austria*, 2015. Romano Centro demanded the city of Linz to protect the families and not to further defame them as "organised gangs" as happened in a press release by the mayor. Caritas Linz supported the affected families already before and after the attacks.

# IMPACT OF HEALTH CARE POLICIES ON ROMA

## Roma and Health

Data on the health situation of Roma in Austria is very scarce. One study was published in 2015, which examined the situation of Roma without insurance in Vienna and the situation of Roma in Burgenland. This means that the study did not examine the situation of most of the migrant Roma, which are estimated to be the biggest group in Austria. Despite this, the study identified the following barriers in access to health care:

- experiences of discrimination as well as fear and distrust due to the traumas caused in the holocaust,
- a lack of knowledge of German language among migrant Roma,
- a low level of health literacy also regarding knowledge on the institutions of health care,
- the cost of co-payment in the access to essential medicines.

The Roma representatives and health care providers participating in this research saw a need for educational programmes on health literacy, for translators, Roma-mediators and more Roma staff in health care.<sup>45</sup>

Research published in 2012 showed similar results. Due to the disadvantaged socio-economic situation of Roma in Austria it can be assumed that the health situation is negatively affected by poor housing conditions, bad working conditions and a low educational level. There are indications that especially women suffer from psychosomatic health issues caused by the multiple burden of care work and paid employment.<sup>46</sup>

## Health in the NRIS

The NRCP published “integrated packages of political and legal measures in the context of a broader social inclusion policy” for Roma inclusion in 2011. This document contained a chapter on health. In autumn 2016, the NRCP published a draft of the NRIS and invited civil society to comment the document via a comment function on a website.<sup>47</sup> In contrast to the EU framework on National Roma Integration Strategies and the previous Austrian NRIS from 2011, the draft did not include a chapter on health. Civil society representatives and other individuals, such as academics, unsuccessfully demanded to include the topic of health in the strategy.<sup>48</sup> This was surprising since the NRCP itself commissioned the above mentioned study on the health situation of Roma which was published in 2015.<sup>49</sup> After the consultation process, the new NRIS was adopted by the government in June 2017, replacing the document from 2011. Since the presentation of the results of the study from 2015, the topic of health has not been on the agenda of the NRIS process.

Roma organisations demanded research on the health situation of Roma and stressed their observation that physical and mental illnesses are more frequent among the Roma than

<sup>45</sup> Ursula Trummer, Sonja Novak-Zezula, Ina Wilczewska, *Roma & Gesundheit. Gesundheit, Gesundheitswissen und Zugang zur Gesundheitsversorgung*, 2015, 34-36.

<sup>46</sup> European Training and Research Centre for Human Rights and Democracy – ETC Graz, Austria. *FRANET National Focal Point Social Thematic Study. The situation of Roma*, 2012, 37-43. Available at: <https://fra.europa.eu/sites/default/files/situation-of-roma-2012-at.pdf>

<sup>47</sup> See footnote 21.

<sup>48</sup> See the i.e. the comments 43, 44, Bundeskanzleramt, *Kommentare und Rückmeldung an die Teilnehmenden*, 2018, 14-15.

<sup>49</sup> Ursula Trummer, Sonja Novak-Zezula, Ina Wilczewska, *Roma & Gesundheit. Gesundheit, Gesundheitswissen und Zugang zur Gesundheitsversorgung*, 2015.

the non-Roma.<sup>50</sup> *Romano Centro* reported its experience from the work with children that overweight, poor diet and insufficient physical activity frequently occur and bring negative consequences already during childhood and youth. Regarding adults, a need for information on preventive medical measures was described in the comments to the strategy and programmes to foster health literacy among the Roma were demanded. The situation of Roma without health insurance was another challenge raised by civil society. Regarding mental health it was put forward that available treatments were not used due to a lack of information or shame. Additionally, the lack of therapy in relevant foreign languages and the lack of therapy addressing trauma caused by persecution, serious discrimination and genocide were mentioned.<sup>51</sup> *Romano Centro* as well demanded a focus on women's health because many women visiting the organisation's counselling service suffer health problems while taboos in speaking about gynaecologic problems exist among many Roma women. Especially a need for prevention programmes for Roma girls on health was stated due to the observations that Roma youth and their parents lack knowledge in this regard.<sup>52</sup> The NRCP justified the decision not to include health with a reference to a survey, where the "civil society" would see a low need for action in the area of health. The NCP states that therefore the NRIS does not include health as a main priority but would continue with already existing policies without further naming them or describing how they will improve the situation of Roma.<sup>53</sup>

Roma-targeted programmes are not in place in health care. Among the Roma-organisations, none of them has a strong focus on this topic. Some of them offer information occasionally<sup>54</sup> or as a part of other projects, i.e. for youth or in education.

### Ensuring equal access to public health care services

The extent of discrimination and antigypsyism in health care is completely unknown in Austria due to a lack of research. A study in 2015 shortly mentions discrimination as a barrier to the access of health care as a result which was raised in a focus group with Roma representatives.<sup>55</sup> In the reports on antigypsyism in Austria only one case was reported, where a doctor did not examine a child properly and behaved condescending towards the mother, although the child was seriously ill.<sup>56</sup> Research on migrants and health care address the topic of discrimination and show that prejudice and a lack of respect and cultural awareness can lead to discriminatory behaviour among health care professionals.<sup>57</sup>

Training on antigypsyism or to recognise and avoid discrimination of Roma is not in place for health care professionals.

<sup>50</sup> Similar, researchers concluded that according to the data on the situation of Roma in the labour market and their educational level, it is very likely that they are disadvantaged in health as well, see Judith Anzenberger, Andrea Bodenwinkler, Elisabeth Breyer. *Migration und Gesundheit. Literaturbericht zur Situation in Österreich. Wissenschaftlicher Ergebnisbericht*, 2015, 72-73.

<sup>51</sup> See comment 43, Bundeskanzleramt, *Kommentare und Rückmeldung an die Teilnehmenden*, 2018, 14.

<sup>52</sup> See comment 44, Bundeskanzleramt, *Kommentare und Rückmeldung an die Teilnehmenden*, 2018, 15.

<sup>53</sup> See the answers to comments nr. 43 and 87, Bundeskanzleramt, *Kommentare und Rückmeldung an die Teilnehmenden*, 2018, 14 and 24.

<sup>54</sup> i.e. the small Roma womens' organisation VIVARO sometimes offers workshops on health topics, [www.vivaro.at](http://www.vivaro.at). [11.1.2019].

<sup>55</sup> Ursula Trummer, Sonja Novak-Zezula, Ina Wilczewska, *Roma & Gesundheit. Gesundheit, Gesundheitswissen und Zugang zur Gesundheitsversorgung*, 2015, 30.

<sup>56</sup> see case 56 in *Romano Centro, Antigypsyism in Austria*, 2015, 26.

<sup>57</sup> Judith Anzenberger, Andrea Bodenwinkler, Elisabeth Breyer. *Migration und Gesundheit. Literaturbericht zur Situation in Österreich. Wissenschaftlicher Ergebnisbericht*, 2015, 60.

The Federal Law on Equal Treatment offers legal protection in cases where persons are discriminated in health care on the ground of ethnicity. Patients can seek support from the Ombud for Equal Treatment or the Ombudspersons for health care in the respective federal state. The reports show that this opportunity is not used very often: 2016 the Ombud for Equal Treatment reports around 40 cases in health care (not only due to ethnicity but on all grounds of discrimination), in 2017 around 20 cases.<sup>58</sup>

In 2018 the national health research institution *Gesundheit Österreich* together with Pro-Roma and Roma-organisations applied for a research project to identify specific barriers faced by Roma in early childhood interventions and to develop training for health care professionals. A decision on the application is expected by the end of March 2019.

### Addressing needs of the most vulnerable groups among Roma

People without health insurance are the most vulnerable and it is obvious that the share of Roma among them is very high, as they build a big part of the EU citizens without access to the social welfare system. Their access to health care is very limited. In Vienna, some institutions are in place for this target group, which cover the most urgent needs, in Graz there is another medical service for persons without health insurance. In most cities such services do not exist. In cases of emergency, hospitals are obliged to treat all patients.

<sup>58</sup> Anwaltschaft für Gleichbehandlung, *Teil II des Gleichbehandlungsberichts für die Privatwirtschaft 2016 und 2017. Gemäß § 24 des Bundesgesetzes über die Gleichbehandlungskommission und die Gleichbehandlungsanwaltschaft, Wien*, 15-16.  
[https://www.gleichbehandlungsanwaltschaft.gv.at/at.gv.bka.liferay-app/documents/340065/720923/GAW+T%C3%A4tigkeitsbericht+2016\\_17/ae93f363-c4ad-4ea6-8496-b979a7647519](https://www.gleichbehandlungsanwaltschaft.gv.at/at.gv.bka.liferay-app/documents/340065/720923/GAW+T%C3%A4tigkeitsbericht+2016_17/ae93f363-c4ad-4ea6-8496-b979a7647519) [13.02.2019]

## EDUCATION

### *The educational situation of Roma*

In education, data on the situation of Roma exists. The Vienna Workers Chamber published two studies on the employment situation of migrants in Vienna. Both of them separately examined the situation of two minorities: the Roma and the Kurdish. The researchers also investigated the educational levels. The result was striking: While the share of people with the lowest qualifications was 8 per cent in the group of non-migrants and 22 per cent in the groups of migrants, in the group of Roma it was 58 per cent. The result of the Kurdish people was much better with 20 per cent.<sup>59</sup> These numbers do not reflect the situation of all Roma in Austria, though they reflect the situation of a high percentage of Roma living in Austria as the group of migrant Roma in Vienna is estimated to be the biggest.

The educational situation of this group and the Austrian Roma (Sinti, Lovara and Burgenland-Roma) was also examined in the participatory research project ROMBAS. During this research project, Romani men and women conducted interviews on the educational situation in their respective group. The results showed that the educational level of both the migrant and the Austrian Roma was lower than the average of the Austrian population: while the share of people with lower secondary education was 19 per cent in average, it was 45 per cent among the Austrian Roma (another 15 per cent did not finish school) and 29 per cent among migrant Roma (another 7 per cent did not finish school) The educational level of the Austrian Roma increased over the last three generations. ROMBAS found a difference in the educational success between Romani men and women: the girls/women have a higher educational level than the boys/men.<sup>60</sup>

The reason for the low educational level is on the one hand discrimination in the educational systems of the respective countries of origin. On the other hand the Austrian school system demands the parents to contribute to a high extent which leads to a high degree of inheritability of education. Due to this system, many Romani families do not advance in the educational level from one generation to the other, since the parents are not capable to offer the support the children would need.<sup>61</sup>

### *Education in the NRIS*

Despite strong evidence on the disadvantaged situation of Roma in education and a strong demand for action from the civil society, the NRIS in 2017 did not foresee an extension of measures to improve the situation and did not set ambitious objectives.

In education, the NRIS foresees less Roma-targeted measures than in employment, despite the fact that one of the main reasons for the disadvantaged position of Roma in the labour market is the low educational level. The NRIS refers to general structural changes in the educational system and points out that Roma will benefit from those changes. The right-wing federal government which was elected in 2017 already began to reform the educational system and plans further changes. Many experts fear that the situation of the most disadvantaged will worsen due to these changes. For example, since September 2018 children who do not speak enough German when entering school are almost completely separated from the others for one semester, a year or even up to two

<sup>59</sup> Susi Schmatz and Petra Wetzel, *MigrantInnen in Wien. Zur Beschäftigungs- und Lebenssituation von Roma/Romnja und Kurden/KurdInnen mit Migrationshintergrund*, 2015, 4.

<sup>60</sup> Mikael Luciak, ed., *ROMBAS Studienbericht. Zur Bildungssituation von Roma und Sinti in Österreich*. Wien: Initiative Minderheiten, 2014, 97-104.

<sup>61</sup> Mikael Luciak, ed., *ROMBAS Studienbericht. Zur Bildungssituation von Roma und Sinti in Österreich*. Wien: Initiative Minderheiten, 2014, 203-205.

years and are not allowed to learn other subjects than German language in this time. Their interaction with the regular pupils is limited to sports, music and arts.<sup>62</sup>

Measures to foster equal opportunities like the extension of pre-school education or a higher number of schools where the children stay for the whole day (and therefore the role of the parents is less important) are not priorities for the government. The budget for those important structural reform was cut.<sup>63</sup> The government's educational policy therefore foils the NRIS as the NRIS exactly names these reforms to improve the educational situation of Roma. Concerning Roma-targeted measures, the NRIS aims to uphold the services offered by Roma NGO since many years, naming Roma-School-Mediators, extra-curricular tuition and classes in Romani language (see below).

### Access to quality preschool education

The NRIS does include a higher enrolment rate of Romani children in pre-school education services as a target on the one hand, on the other hand measures to reach this objective are not planned. The NRIS refers to the overall extension of pre-school education facilities, which was planned and started by the government until 2017. The government which was newly elected in 2017 foils this objective with cutting the available budget for the extension of pre-school education.<sup>64</sup>

Pre-school education in kindergarten is obligatory in the last year before entering school. Children have to be in kindergarten at least 20 hours a week. This obligatory year is free of charge for the parents. If the children and parents fail to fulfil this obligation, an administrative penalty up to 220 EUR is in place. Parents of 4-year-old children who are not enrolled in kindergarten are invited to a mandatory advising session.

For younger children, pre-school services vary in terms of availability, cost, age groups and opening days/hours considerably between the federal states. For poor families who cannot afford these costs, they can be lowered. In Vienna, where public kindergarten is free of charge, the parents have to pay the food. These costs can be lowered when the parents apply for and fulfil the criteria.

Despite this, the most socially disadvantaged families, i.e. with both parents unemployed, do not have a strong incentive to send their children to kindergarten before the obligatory year since i.e. in Vienna they have to pay at least a (reduced) fee for the food and they have low chances that their child will get a placement since children of parents who work have priority access. Romano Centro's experience shows that many children who would urgently need pre-school education from a young age due to their socio-economic situation, do only attend it in the last year before school.

In the ROMBAS research project it became evident that the kindergarten enrolment rate is lower among Roma than among non-Roma. The rate of children in school age who do not fulfil the criteria of school maturity/school readiness is significantly higher. They enter school in the same age, but in a pre-school class instead of the first grade.<sup>65</sup>

Roma parents have different views on early childhood education. Interviews with parents showed that many of them have a very positive approach towards kindergarten, they see

<sup>62</sup> Bundesministerium für Bildung, Wissenschaft und Forschung, *Deutschförderklassen und Deutschförderkurse Leitfaden für Schulleiterinnen und Schulleiter*, 2018. Available at: <https://bildung.bmbwf.gv.at/schulen/unterricht/ba/deutschfoerderklassen.pdf?6hwy6c>

<sup>63</sup> Patricia Huber, *Trotz 12-Stunden-Tag: Regierung kürzt bei Ausbau von Kindergärten und Ganztagschulen*, 11.07.2018. Available at: [https://kontrast.at/regierung\\_kuerzt\\_kindergartenausbau/](https://kontrast.at/regierung_kuerzt_kindergartenausbau/)

<sup>64</sup> Patricia Huber, *Trotz 12-Stunden-Tag: Regierung kürzt bei Ausbau von Kindergärten und Ganztagschulen*, 11.07.2018. Available at: [https://kontrast.at/regierung\\_kuerzt\\_kindergartenausbau/](https://kontrast.at/regierung_kuerzt_kindergartenausbau/)

<sup>65</sup> Mikael Luciak, ed., *ROMBAS Studienbericht. Zur Bildungssituation von Roma und Sinti in Österreich*. Wien: Initiative Minderheiten, 2014, 101-102.

it as an important part of a child's education and development, particularly to improve the language skills in German and as a preparation for school. Many of them are also dependent on kindergartens since they are employed. For the unemployed parents and/or very poor parents, the low costs for food and the limited access to public kindergartens free of charge hamper enrolment before the compulsory year.

The Roma-NGOs do not offer programmes to foster Early Childhood Education among Roma. In some projects, i.e. the Roma-School-Mediation programme, enrolment in Early Childhood Education is supported but is not the main objective of the programme.

### Improving quality of education until the end of compulsory schooling

Access to school for all children irrespective of their ethnic affiliation can be taken for granted in Austria. Despite this, the Austrian school system is highly selective and many problems Roma face in education derive from general structural challenges.<sup>66</sup> Compared to other countries, children have a low chance to reach a higher level of education than their parents. One of the strongest factors for a child's success in school is the educational level and economic status of his/her parents, not talent or diligence.<sup>67</sup> Roma migrated from Serbia, Macedonia or EU-member states like Romania, Bulgaria or Slovakia, often have a very low level of education due to discrimination and school segregation in their respective country. Although in Austria parents and children are not systematically discriminated directly, the children have lower chances to succeed in school since their parents cannot fulfil their obligations to teach them at home. It is important to understand that primary school in Austria is still half-day and the parents are responsible to learn and support children with homework. All-day schools have to be paid and children whose parents have jobs have priority access. Therefore, the most disadvantaged with the lowest educational level are often left aside by the system and parents are expected to support their children at home, although they are not capable to do so due to their own low educational level. The quoted statistics on the employment and educational situation of Roma in this report as well as the experience of Roma organisations active in the area of education show that Roma very often belong to this group of the most disadvantaged. To contribute to an improved educational achievement of Roma children, all-day-schools should be in place for all children who need it, not only for those whose parents work. Romano Centro experiences that very few children from all-day-schools ask for the organisations support due to problems in school. From this it can be concluded, that all-day-schools do create more equal opportunities for children from disadvantaged Roma-families. Unfortunately, many of the most disadvantaged children do not get this opportunity due to their parents' unemployment. Placements in all-day-day-schools are given to these children only in cases of social hardship, i.e. when the parents are illiterate, and when parents are supported in requesting such placement. In one case, Romano Centro supported an illiterate mother to get a place in an all-day-school. Before her daughter had serious problems to cope with homework, after some months in all-day-school these problems did not appear anymore, and the child was able to follow classes like the others.

The enrolment rate of primary school children in Austria is very high, this also includes Roma. From the experience of *Romano Centro*, it can be concluded that non-enrolment of Roma children only occurs exceptionally and for a short time, i.e. when a family recently migrated from another country. In those cases, the families sometime do not know the inscription procedure, or they lack all the documents needed, i.e. a confirmation of residency or a legal status. Some parents do not know, that school enrolment is also possible for children who do not have a permanent residence in Austria. Despite this, in the federal state of Upper Austria, the school authority denies access to school to around

<sup>66</sup> This was argued by Marcel Fink, *Austria. Promoting Social Inclusion of Roma. A Study of National Policies*, 2011, 48.

<sup>67</sup> See i.e. the results of OECD, *Education at a Glance*, 2018, 234-242.

20 to 30 Roma children from Romanian families due to their non-permanent legal status.<sup>68</sup> It is questionable if this refusal is in line with the law, which prescribes compulsory schooling for all children with a permanent residence, but as well a right to go to school for those who live in Austria for a limited time.<sup>69</sup>

Teachers and schools do not have enough supporting resources like social workers or psychologists in school to deal with a higher number of socially disadvantaged families. This is very likely to be one of the main reasons of the partially dissatisfactory outcomes. Depending on the type of school, the number of pupils who do not reach the level of the next grade differs from around 1 per cent in the first grade of lower secondary school (5<sup>th</sup> year in school) up to more than 20 per cent in the first grade of secondary technical and vocational high schools (9<sup>th</sup> year in school). Many of those children repeat grades, though the older they are, the higher is the rate of those who leave school.<sup>70</sup> Among the Roma children visiting 5<sup>th</sup> grade or higher which are supported by Romano Centro, the rate of those who already repeated a grade is around 30 per cent and every year single cases of early school leaving can be observed. Nonetheless, extra-curricular tuition is a successful tool to avoid grade repetitions and early school leaving in many cases.

The lack of supporting resources in schools with a high number of socially disadvantaged families causes another phenomenon of segregation. If the children have serious problems, lack support at home and cannot catch up to the others during the first (in many cases) three years of primary school they are very likely to end up in special schools for disabled children or in integration classes. For this, a diagnosis on a learning disability is needed. Children from migrant families are overrepresented in such schools and classes. Many parents turn to Romano Centro when the procedure towards a diagnosis and the placement in a special school begins. Few of them are well informed about their rights and choices.

### Increasing the share of Roma youngsters completing vocational training, upper secondary school and higher education

Apart from the Roma-targeted measures to improve the educational situation of Roma (see below) there have been no further targeted measures to increase the share of Roma youngsters completing vocational training, upper secondary school and higher education.

Extra-curricular tuition during primary and lower secondary school can have a very positive impact on successful completion of upper secondary school and vocational training since the achievements in these schools decide upon the future possibilities of the children. The Roma-School-Mediators focus much on primary schools and have a positive long-term effect on the school achievement of the children. In the secondary schools they work, they support the transition from school to the labour market through developing perspectives with the children, motivation and providing information.

In lower secondary schools (new secondary school), job-coaching is in place to accompany the transition from school to vocational education in the last compulsory year (9<sup>th</sup> school year) or for pupils who are in danger to drop out before. Romano Centro experiences that this is useful though it happens very late and the pupils do not have the chances to significantly improve their grades to find a better training company for apprenticeship. Many children in their early teenager years from disadvantaged families do not have orientation what to do with their live later on. Some do not care at all about their future while not being aware that their actual achievement in school will have a huge influence on the rest of their lives.

<sup>68</sup> This information was given by Caritas Linz at 10.1.2019.

<sup>69</sup> see § 17 Bundesgesetz über die Schulpflicht (Schulpflichtgesetz 1985).

<sup>70</sup> Statistik Austria, *Bildung in Zahlen 2016/17. Schlüsselindikatoren und Analysen*, 2018, 55-56.

In the upper secondary level (9<sup>th</sup> to 13<sup>th</sup> year) the Austrian educational system has two main branches: 1. the dual system comprising a part-time vocational school and apprenticeship in a company. 2. The youngsters can choose to visit a college for higher vocational education, a school for intermediate vocational education or the upper level of an academic secondary school.

For the colleges for higher vocational education as well as for the upper levels of secondary school, the pupils have to have very good grades in lower secondary school and/or have to successfully complete an exam to enter. To enter the dual system, the pupils have to complete the 9<sup>th</sup> school year in any school and then find a training company which employs them for the apprenticeship for two to four years. More than 220 professions are recognised, though there is a high concentration among some of them.<sup>71</sup> Pupils with bad grades, a lack of motivation or a lack of support from their parents often struggle with finding a training company. The companies offering good apprenticeship in jobs with high labour market demand do select the best pupils they can get. Therefore, disadvantaged youngsters often only find less attractive jobs like trained retail saleswoman/salesman, hairdresser or car mechanic. According to research the share of Roma-migrants in Vienna completing upper secondary education is lower than in average. 28 per cent complete apprenticeship and vocational school (compared to 40 per cent among the Non-migrants), ten per cent complete colleges for higher vocational education or the upper level of academic secondary school (compared to 22 per cent) and only four per cent complete higher education (compared to 29 per cent).<sup>72</sup> Regarding this group, there is no data on the choices of professions available. In Burgenland, a study interviewing adult Austrian Roma from all age groups showed an alarming result on vocational education. There, only four per cent finished an apprenticeship, four per cent upper secondary education or a college for higher vocational education and three per cent higher education. 59 per cent finished compulsory school, another 28 per cent visited compulsory school but did not successfully finish it.<sup>73</sup>

The number of early school leavers who did not achieve more than lower secondary education was at 15.5 per cent in Austria in 2016. This is on the one hand better than the OECD average (20,3 per cent), but the situation is worse than in the neighbouring countries Germany and Switzerland who have a similar educational system. To reduce this high number, in 2016 a compulsory education/formation until the age of 18 was introduced. Parents are obliged to take care that their children visit school or vocational training until the age of 18. In case the parents do not fulfil their obligation, administrative penalties up to 500 EUR are in place. In practice, this obligation does not guarantee that youngsters find a placement in vocational training or an apprenticeship training position.

### Policies or programmes targeted to support disadvantaged students

In general, support programmes for disadvantaged pupils are growing in Austria. For example, social work in schools increased in the last years. Despite this, there are still not enough support systems in place to counterbalance the disadvantages children from families with a low educational level face. NGOs like Caritas, the Red Cross or small associations started many initiatives and projects in the last years to support disadvantaged children. The city of Vienna started a large scale extra-curricular tuition

<sup>71</sup> Information on the educational system in Austria is available at: <https://www.bildungssystem.at/en/> [13/02/2019].

<sup>72</sup> Susi Schmatz and Petra Wetzel, MigrantInnen in Wien. Zur Beschäftigungs- und Lebenssituation von Roma/Romnja und Kurden/KurdInnen mit Migrationshintergrund, 2015, 4

<sup>73</sup> Volkshochschule der Burgenländischen Roma, *Dokumentation – Information – Integration. Auswertung der Fragebögen zur Erhebung der Lebenssituation der Roma und Romnja im Burgenland*, 2014, 14.

programme in 2015, where more than 27,000 Viennese school children were supported in groups in 2016/2017.<sup>74</sup> Roma targeted programmes are in place, although to a low extent:

- **Roma School Mediators:** *Romano Centro* offers Roma School Mediation in public schools in Vienna. Four Roma School Mediators work in nine schools permanently and do support up to 20 other schools occasionally. They support communication between teachers and other school staff and parents, improve the social situation of the families in cooperation with a social worker and communicate important information. Their work leads to a better school achievement of Roma pupils, reduces prejudice and fosters mutual understanding. Every school year, more than 300 children and their parents are in contact with the four Roma School Mediators. The school principals highly appreciate the Roma School Mediators and report the very positive effects on the educational achievement of Roma children to *Romano Centro* regularly.
- **Extra-curricular tuition:** Extra-curricular tuition is offered for Roma-children in Vienna and Oberwart (Burgenland). In Vienna, two Roma-targeted programmes are in place. *Volkshochschule Vienna* offers extra-curricular support in groups in cooperation with Roma organisations.<sup>75</sup> *Romano Centro* offers individual extra-tuition in the families' homes for up to 140 pupils every year. The children get one to three hours of individual support every week. Parents and children are counselled on the educational system and the opportunities for their children. In Oberwart, *Verein Roma Service* provides support in groups for Roma school children in the afternoons.
- **Roma fund:** The Roma fund was founded in 1995 from money collected after the bomb attack in Oberwart where four Roma were murdered. The fund as well receives money from public authorities and donations. In 2006, the fund assets amounted to 1 million EUR. One of the fund's objectives is to financially support the education of Roma children, youth and adults.<sup>76</sup>
- **Classes in Romani language:** In Viennese public schools classes in Romani language are offered to a small extent. In 2016/2017, three teachers for Romani were employed by the school authority. 183 children were enrolled in this year.<sup>77</sup> By November 2018, after an initiative of *Romano Centro*, a fourth teacher for Romani was employed in a school with a high number of Roma children.

These Roma-targeted programmes contribute positively to the educational success of many Romani children. Due to very limited budgets and a geographical limitation on Vienna and Burgenland, they only reach a very small part of those who would need such support. The Roma-School-Mediators and the extra tuition programmes have to be applied for as a project every year and the available funding only grew to a very limited extent. Through the NRIS process, the Federal Ministry of Education increased its contributions. On the other side, in 2018, funding from the national integration programme to *Romano Centro* for the Roma-School-Mediators project was cut by 15 per cent. The NRIS process helped to maintain the existing programmes and to slightly increase available funding, but

<sup>74</sup> <http://magazin.vhs.or.at/magazin/2018-2/265-herbst-2018/schwerpunkt-jugend-junge-erwachsene/foerderung-2-0-vhs-lernhilfe-an-wiener-schulen/> [09.01.2018]

<sup>75</sup> <https://www.vhs.at/de/e/lernraum-wien/romalernhilfe> [09.01.2019]

<sup>76</sup> Helmut Samer, *Die Roma von Oberwart. Zur Geschichte und aktuellen Situation der Roma in Oberwart*, 2001, 86 and Rudolf Sarközi, Roma. *Österreichische Volksgruppe. Von der Verfolgung bis zur Anerkennung*, 2008, 103-104. Unfortunately, information on the outcome of the fund, i.e. the number of supported individuals or the average amount of an annual support is not available and was not shared for this report by the responsible fund administrators despite several requests.

<sup>77</sup> Bundesministerium für Bildung, Wissenschaft und Forschung, *Der muttersprachliche Unterricht in Österreich. Statistische Auswertung für das Schuljahr 2016/17. Informationsblätter zum Thema Migration und Schule Nr. 5/2018-19*, 2018, 16-18.

did not contribute to expand the programmes in quantity nor in quality as was asked for by many Roma NGOs. Already in 2011, a study of national policies on Roma inclusion, recommended that those programmes should be further expanded.<sup>78</sup>

### **ESF call on education**

Roma were mentioned as a target group in a call issued by the Federal Ministry of Education in 2018. The call invited to propose projects to improve educational achievement of marginalised persons through improving the transition from secondary education to higher education or professional education. Roma were named as an example for marginalised groups<sup>79</sup>, which is notable in Austria and for sure a result of the NRIS, which foresees educational projects for (young) adults. At the time of writing this report, it was not yet clear whether projects were elected who directly target Roma and to what extent the programme will effectively reach Roma.

### **Fight against discrimination and antigypsyism in education**

Unfortunately, research on discrimination of Roma in the Austrian educational system was not conducted until now. From reported cases and the experience of NGOs in this field, some conclusions can be derived.

Direct discriminatory treatment of children by teachers is rarely reported, although it exists. More often, teachers fail to intervene adequately in cases of discriminatory behaviour against Roma pupils by other children.<sup>80</sup> In 2012 researchers found that Roma are the ones who are most affected by interethnic violence in Vienna.<sup>81</sup>

Experience from Romano Centro shows that antigypsyist prejudice is as widespread among teachers as in the whole society. Many of them think that something like a Roma culture would stand against attending school. If children do not come to school, some do not make enough efforts to find out why, as they think that this is in the order of things. Many teachers only recognise Roma pupils as Roma if there are serious problems with them, since this is what they expect from Roma. Therefore, their expectations regarding the school achievement of Roma children is very low many times.

Fighting discrimination in education turns out to be difficult in many cases. In general, discrimination in education is not discussed much in Austria. The NGO *Initiative for a non-discriminatory education system* started to publish reports on discrimination in education (all grounds) in 2016 and tries to raise the importance of the topic in the public debate since then. The initiative calls for a change towards a school which is sensitive to racism and discrimination and demands that children who are affected by discrimination must not be left alone longer.<sup>82</sup> At the beginning of 2019, in Vienna an Ombud institution for education was opened. Its goal is to contribute to non-discriminatory, non-violent and participative educational institutions.<sup>83</sup>

<sup>78</sup> Marcel Fink, *Austria. Promoting Social Inclusion of Roma. A Study of National Policies*, 2011, 49.

<sup>79</sup> Bundesministerium für Bildung, Wissenschaft und Forschung, *Call 2018-0022: Verbesserung der Durchlässigkeit des Bildungssystems und des Zugangs zu höherer Bildung*. [https://bildung.bmbwf.gv.at/schulen/euint/eubildung\\_esf/esf\\_programm\\_2014\\_2020/esfcall\\_2018\\_0022.pdf?6muf8](https://bildung.bmbwf.gv.at/schulen/euint/eubildung_esf/esf_programm_2014_2020/esfcall_2018_0022.pdf?6muf8) [8.1.2019]

<sup>80</sup> see i.e. case 49 in Romano Centro, *Antigypsyism in Austria*, 2017, 22.

<sup>81</sup> see Edma Ajanovic and Birgit Sauer. "Schools as "Protected Space"? Good Practices but Lack of Resources: the Case of Austria" In: *Children's Voices. Interethnic Violence in the School Environment*. Edited by Zorana Medaric and Mateja Sedmak, 85-120. Koper: Annales University Press, 2012. 114-115.

<sup>82</sup> Initiative für ein diskriminierungsfreies Bildungswesen, <http://diskriminierungsfrei.at/> [09.01.2019].

<sup>83</sup> Für diskriminierungskritische, gewaltfreie und gemeinsam gestaltete Bildungseinrichtungen, [https://www.ots.at/presseaussendung/OTS\\_20190201\\_OTS0067/fuer-diskriminierungskritische-gewaltfreie-und-gemeinsam-gestaltete-bildungseinrichtungen](https://www.ots.at/presseaussendung/OTS_20190201_OTS0067/fuer-diskriminierungskritische-gewaltfreie-und-gemeinsam-gestaltete-bildungseinrichtungen) [15.02.2019].

The legal regulations on anti-discrimination do not put much responsibility on teachers. In the area of employment, an employer is obliged to protect employees from discrimination, i.e. when colleagues discriminate another employee. Such a clear provision is not in place in the anti-discrimination legislation in the area of education, so teachers are not legally obliged to intervene if children are discriminated by others. Such obligation could be derived from other legal provisions indirectly, but as far as known this was not examined in a legal case up to now.

Educational segregation of Roma in the sense of Roma-schools, Roma-classes or -groups does not exist in Austria. The educational system is not selective on the ground of ethnicity, though – as already mentioned above – it is highly selective on social and educational background. Children from disadvantaged families are more likely to fail in school and/or are put to special schools for disabled pupils due to learning disabilities. These mechanisms of social selection in schools affect Roma to a high extent. Not directly due to their ethnicity, however they belong to the most disadvantaged groups in terms of social and educational background in Austria.

School curricula do not make an explicit reference to the history of the Roma. Various school books include very short chapters on the Roma genocide, some also include chapters on the bomb attack in Oberwart 1995, the current situation of Roma or poems of Roma writers. Due to the large number of different school books which are in use all over Austria, the question of representation of Roma in school books cannot be assessed in this report. Further research on this topic would be helpful, as the lack of representation is brought forward by Roma representatives on many occasions.

The Federal Ministry of Education supported the development of teaching resources on the “The Fate of European Roma and Sinti during the Holocaust” which is available in 11 languages including two Romani dialects.<sup>84</sup> Furthermore, the ministry supported the development of teaching resources aimed at children from 5<sup>th</sup> grade on Roma history and culture in Austria, based on the exhibition “*Romane Thana – Places of the Roma and Sinti*”.<sup>85</sup> Workshops for schools on the Roma history and current situation are offered in Vienna by *Verein Exil* or *Romano Centro*, as well as by the Roma organisations in Burgenland. *Romano Centro* offered trainings for teachers on Roma history, antigypsyism and the current situation (focus on education) of Roma in collaboration with the University College of Teacher Education Vienna. Unfortunately, the last training was cancelled due to a lack of registrations. Occasionally, representatives of *Romano Centro* are invited to this University College to speak about the educational situation of Roma in Vienna before the future teachers.

<sup>84</sup> The Fate of European Roma and Sinti during the Holocaust, <http://www.romasintigenocide.eu/en/home> [09.01.2019].

<sup>85</sup> *Romane Thana – Orte der Roma und Sinti*, <http://www.romane-thana.at/> [09.01.2019].

## RECOMMENDATIONS

### Employment

#### **To the Federal Ministry of Labour, Social Affairs and Consumer Protection**

- Roma-targeted programmes should be continued. The existing programmes should be evaluated to learn more on the needs of the target groups and to be able to improve the services.
- Successful measures should be transferred to the public labour market service and integrated into mainstream policies.
- Networking between the public labour market service and other mainstream institutions and the providers of Roma-targeted programmes from civil society should be strengthened.

### Housing and essential public services

#### **To the Federal government/the National Contact Point**

- Research on the housing situation of Roma should be commissioned by the NCP.
- Housing should be included in the current and a future NRIS and Roma targeted programmes should be developed based on research.

#### **To the governments of the federal states**

- Temporary housing for homeless EU-citizens should be provided, especially in winter time.
- People living in informal dwellings should be supported to find secure and affordable housing and be protected against exploitation.
- More adequate halting sites for travelling Roma should be built.

### Impact of health care policies on Roma

#### **To the Federal Ministry of Labour, Social Affairs, Health and Consumer Protection/the National Contact Point**

- Further research on the health situation of the Roma as well as on discrimination and other barriers in the access to health care should be commissioned.
- Health care should be included in the current and a future NRIS and Roma targeted programmes should be developed based on research.
- In cooperation with Roma civil society, health literacy among Roma should be fostered and prevention measures should be promoted in the communities.
- Awareness raising on the situation of Roma should be introduced for authorities and health care professionals.

### Education

#### **To the Federal Ministry of Education, Science and Research**

- The existing Roma-targeted programmes should be evaluated and extended to meet the high demand and to contribute more to the improvement of the educational level of Roma.
- The representation of Roma history and culture school books should be examined. Together with the Roma organisations, content on those topics should

be developed. Teachers should be encouraged to use the existing teaching resources on the topic of Roma through workshops and seminars.

- Roma history and culture as well as antigypsyism should be introduced into school curricula and should be dealt with in connection with other topics like diversity, social exclusion, minorities or equality.

#### **To the state government of Vienna**

- The city of Vienna has the largest number of Roma in Austria and therefore should support more Roma-targeted programmes to meet the high demand and to contribute more to the improvement of the educational level of Roma.
- Classes in Romani language should be offered to more Roma children. The school authority therefore should actively search for teachers for Romani in cooperation with civil society.

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