



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

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

Prepared by:
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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

CEO	Croatian Employment Office
CIHI	Croatian Institute for Health Insurance
ESF	European Social Fund
FRA	European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights
MSE	Ministry of Science and Education
NRCP	National Roma Contact Point (the Croatian Government's Office for Human Rights and Rights of National Minorities)
NRIS	National Roma Inclusion Strategy
REYN	Roma Early Years Network
RNM	Roma National Minority

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

An external evaluation of the current Croatian National Roma Integration Strategy¹ has stated that the most progress in this area has been seen in education despite its ongoing problems, e.g., in outreach for preschool, segregation in education, and poor quality of education. The situation in other fields is more problematic; for example, the Government has to decide if it will continue improving housing conditions in segregated Roma settlements or rather focus on the elimination of residential segregation. Croatia is facing a severe labour shortage that could be saturated by members of the Roma community, but most of them do not have necessary formal education. Adult education for Roma is an area that could be better covered by affirmative measures in the next strategic period. In all areas, efforts are still needed to combat the discrimination of Roma and to fight antigypsyism.

Employment

The CEO has a dedicated budget for Roma employment measures with an annual allocation of about 1.3 million EUR (10 million HRK) per year; however, the allocation is not always fully spent. The CEO implements nine mainstream measures, and in two of them Roma are identified as an explicit target group. These measures provide financial support to beneficiaries and/or employers to create new workplaces, preserve existing ones, promote self-employment, broaden the business, or to provide education and training. Additionally, the CEO implements a set of Roma-targeted activities. However, more than 90 percent of the funds spent in 2017 for Roma employment were used to finance “public works” that do not have a long-term impact on improving Roma employment and employability.

Many Croatian citizens have emigrated, and this fact has led to a labour shortage. Employers have turned to the Roma community and many Roma have been employed, but this did not happen as result of the CEO measures, as these are not sufficiently used by employers and jobseekers. The reason may be that these measures do not match the needs of either the labour market or the specific needs of Roma jobseekers. For example, more than 90 percent of Roma registered at the CEO did not finish their elementary educations or had just finished their elementary education, but the CEO does not provide any support to help them attain at least a secondary education.

Housing and essential public services

Most Roma live in segregated Roma settlements. Many households do not have water, electricity, or gas inside the house, and houses are not connected to sewer systems. The desegregation of Roma settlements is not a priority for the Government or the local and regional authorities. However, there is political will to improve the living conditions in the Roma settlements; the process of legalising residences started a few years ago, some community centres were built, and there is a plan for building playgrounds and more community centres. However, in the long run this situation is potentially dangerous for Roma inclusion. Residential segregation is the main cause of segregation in education and has a negative impact on Roma generally and on society as a whole. Roma settlements are located far away from public and social services and, due to poor transportation facilities, their access to such services is limited. Moreover, an individual who lives in a segregated settlement will lose access to social benefits should s/he own a personal vehicle, which reinforces this segregation.

¹ Friedman, E., Horvat, M. (2015) Evaluation of Croatian national Roma inclusion strategy. Evaluation report. Available at: <https://pravamanjina.gov.hr/UserDocsImages/dokumenti/Evaluation%20of%20Croatian%20NRIS%20-%20Report%20EN.pdf>

Social housing is run by local and regional governments and is not available in less wealthy areas such as rural municipalities and smaller towns (e.g., Mimosa County, Sisačko-Moslavačka County, Koprivničko-Križevačka County, etc.). Social housing is provided by large local or regional authorities, such as the town of Zagreb where Roma can access it based on their social vulnerability. In smaller, less wealthy localities, the only way for Roma to get out of the segregated settlements is to buy a dwelling or to rent, which has been done by a significant number of employed Roma who have the financial means for such investment.

Impact of health care policies on Roma

When analysing the Roma inclusion in the area of health care, it appears that health is the most neglected area among those analysed in this report. The Ministry of Health is the only institution where data on ethnicity are not systematically collected. The life expectancy of Roma is lower than that of the mainstream population, and the reasons for that could be found in their comparative nutrition, housing environments, regularity of visits to doctors, demonstrating the impact of poverty among Roma. More than 90 percent of Roma have health insurance coverage, and most of those who do not have unemployment insurance are those who missed the deadline to apply for it after they finished their educations or after an employment contract expired.

The biggest problem underlined by Roma communities in segregated settlements is that sometimes emergency vehicles do not come when called for emergency assistance.

Education

The Ministry of Science and Education (MSE) implements affirmative measures for Roma inclusion at all levels of education except adult education. Yearly, the MSE supports the inclusion of Roma in education with a budget of about 1.5 million EUR (11 million HRK).

Roma children access kindergarten free of charge, but many still do not attend preschool education before the age of five, and segregation in preschool education is significant. There are indications that the quality of education in mostly-Roma preschool groups is not equal and that it is poorer than in other preschool groups. Elementary education is free (subsidised by the Government) and in some schools there are Roma assistants.

All Roma in secondary, tertiary and higher education are provided with scholarships and dormitory free of charge. More than 800 Roma pupils are enrolled in secondary education, but most of them are enrolled in vocational education and their chances to attain tertiary education are very limited. Each year the number of Roma university students varies between just 20 and 30 – a very low number considering the average age of the Roma population.²

² Roma inclusion in the Croatia Society: a Baseline Data Study, Suzana Kunac, Ksenija Klasnić, Sara Lalić. Available at: <https://ljudskaprava.gov.hr/UserDocsImages//dokumenti//Roma%20Inclusion%20in%20the%20Croatian%20Society%20-%20a%20Baseline%20Data%20Study.pdf>

INTRODUCTION

Officially there are 16,975 Roma in Croatia, representing 0.40 per cent of the overall population, but recent estimates assume this number is closer to 25,000 - 30,000. As discussed in the first [Roma Civil Monitor report, focusing on the topics of governance, antidiscrimination and fighting antigypsyism](#), Croatia has a special law on the Roma National Minority (RNM), who can elect their own representatives at the national, regional and local levels. The central Government has a committee for monitoring the National Roma Integration Strategy (NRIS) and national authorities report about its implementation, which has been externally evaluated in 2015. Every local and regional government is recommended to develop an action plan for Roma inclusion as long as there is a defined number of Roma inhabitants on their territories, but in reality, many of them have failed to do so. In practice, leadership on the Roma agenda is more often taken up by regional governments than by local ones. Counties are the units taking leadership at the regional level for Roma integration.

The current NRIS aims to eliminate school segregation by 2020. The Roma Education Fund (REF) has noted significant progress in data gathering and some improvement in Roma enrolment into elementary school, with completion rates up, and into obligatory preschool, as well as an official political commitment to end segregation. However, in reality, approximately 40 percent of Roma children between six and 15 are still segregated in settings where all or most of the pupils are Roma.

The Ministry of Internal Affairs implements some affirmative measures for including Roma in police academies, and the Ombudsperson's office organises seminars to tackle discrimination by employees of public administrations who are professionally in direct contact with Roma. Despite these efforts, the high incidence of anti-Roma discrimination indicates the low effectiveness of (the enforcement of) equality legislation.

Roma continue to be the targets of racially motivated crime, with violent incidents in areas surrounding Roma settlements going unreported due to limited trust and mutual understanding between the Roma community and the police. There are concerns that ethnic profiling practices are increasing.

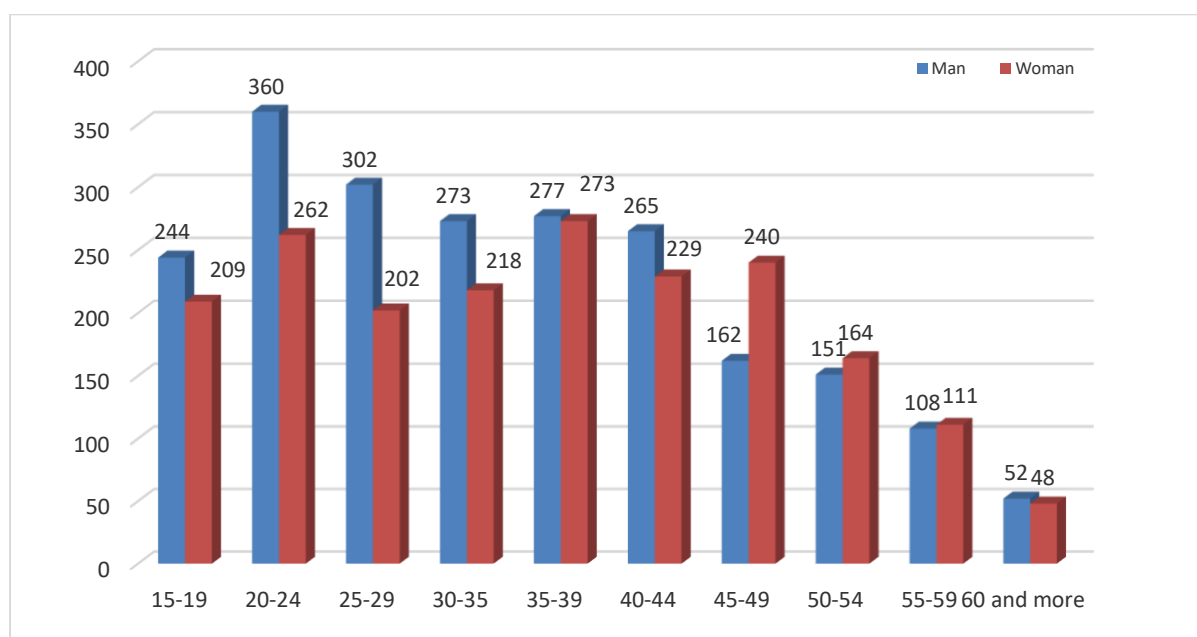
The current report was developed following a series of discussions and desk research activities. Consultations were done with Roma and pro-Roma civil society and other relevant institutions. The opportunity to participate was given to a broader circle of stakeholders who were asked to grade the relevance of diverse topics/issues, and the report focused on those that the stakeholders identified as the most relevant. The desk research included study of relevant documentation. Additionally, a series of informal, short meetings were organised with relevant individuals from the local, regional and national governments and with the NGO sector. Formal interviews were conducted with representatives of several public institutions (Ministry for Social Policy and Youth, National Roma Contact Point, Ministry of Education, Croatian Employment Office, Ombudsperson's Office, Councils of the Roma National Minority), with representatives of Roma and pro-Roma civil society associations, and with nine individual members of the Roma community. Also, a second round of desk research was done after recommendations were received from the interviewed stakeholders. To discuss the preliminary findings of this report, focus groups were organised with 39 members of the Roma community (separate focus groups of Roma women and Roma youth were organised). For additional information, targeted interviews were conducted with institutions and individuals.

EMPLOYMENT

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

The Croatian NRIS acknowledges employment as one of the priority areas when considering Roma inclusion, employment being one of the most challenging areas when analysing the situation of Roma. One goal presented in the strategy is to narrow the gap between Roma and non-Roma in the labour market.³ According to FRA research from 2016, 62 percent of Roma aged over 16 are unemployed, while only eight percent are employed.⁴ A comprehensive report on the situation of Roma in Croatia shows that 2.1 percent of Roma aged between 15 and 65 are self-employed and 7.3 percent are employed full-time within the same age group.⁵

Representation of unemployed Roma per age and gender



Source: Croatian Employment Office

When it comes to the official data from the Government, the current situation is presented as slightly better compared to the FRA report because the statistics refer only to those Roma who are registered at the Croatian Employment Office (CEO); still, it is known that Roma are overrepresented among the unemployed in Croatia. In June 2017, there were 4,150 Roma (1,956 women and 2,194 men) unemployed, representing 2.4 per cent of the

³ NRIS. Available at: <https://www.zagreb.hr/UserDocsImages/arhiva/Nacionalna%20strategija%20za%20uklju%C4%8Divanje%20Roma%202013-2020.pdf>

⁴ FRA. *Second European Union Minorities and Discrimination Survey Roma – Selected findings*. Available at: https://fra.europa.eu/sites/default/files/fra_uploads/fra-2016-eu-minorities-survey-roma-selected-findings_en.pdf#page=19

⁵ Suzana Kunac, Ksenija Klasnić, Sara Lalić (2012) *Roma inclusion in the Croatia Society: A Baseline Data Study*. Available at: <https://ljudskaprava.gov.hr/UserDocsImages//dokumenti//Roma%20Inclusion%20in%20the%20Croatian%20Society%20-%20a%20Baseline%20Data%20Study.pdf>

total number of unemployed persons in Croatia,⁶ while the Roma population represents just 0.4 per cent (16,975 individuals) of the total population in Croatia.⁷ The employment policies' ineffectiveness is mostly noticed among Roma unemployed youth (defined as ages 15 to 35) who represent 49.9 per cent of all unemployed Roma.

The CEO chairs a working group aimed at developing active employment policy measures that includes social partners such as associations, employers and scientific institutions. The package of mainstream active employment measures includes few measures where Roma or some other vulnerable groups (e.g. women, youth and others) are mentioned as specific targets. When it comes to Roma, the CEO is also taking into consideration those suggestions received from the NRCP or those collected during their participation on the Committee for monitoring implementation of the NRIS.⁸

The package of mainstream measures includes nine active policy employment measures:⁹

1. employment support (the CEO is financing up to 50 percent of the employer's total costs for newly employing somebody and up to 75 percent if the hired person lives with disabilities; the duration of the support is 12 months);¹⁰
2. in-training support for already-employed persons (the CEO is financing up to 70 percent of the eligible costs of employee training; the highest amount available per employee is 18,000 HRK or EUR 2 446 ; the duration of the support is up to six months);
3. self-employment support (financial support for establishment of a company, for expansion of a business, etc.);
4. training for the unemployed (the CEO is financing different types of trainings such as retraining and vocational training; the total expense is covered by the CEO, and trainees receive up to 200 EUR for attending).
5. support for mentoring (through this measure the CEO is financially supporting employers for their mentoring services and at the same time providing the minimal salary for those attending particular job training);
6. measures for acquiring one's first work experience/internship (through this measure the CEO is motivating people who are long-term unemployed and providing financial support to employers and employees);
7. public works (associations and local authorities can use this measure for their programmes that have a social impact; the length of support is 6 to 9 months and during that time the CEO is covering either 50 or 100 percent of the minimum wage salary costs;
8. job preservation support (the CEO is providing financial support for employers who are in financial problems, up to a certain percent of salary costs, but the amount cannot exceed Croatia's minimum wage);
9. support for permanent seasonal workers (the CEO is providing financial support for the employees who worked at least six months for one employer and who are going to work for the same employer in the next season).

Currently there are no longer measures addressing Roma only, although this was the case in the past. Until 2016, under the CEO, there were targeted measures for Roma, but due to the large number of measures in place, the Government requested their reduction and

⁶ CEO, 2017. *Izvešće o aktivnostima Hrvatskog zavoda za zapošljavanje u području zapošljavanja osoba romske nacionalne manjine za period siječanj – lipanj 2017. godine*. [Report on the activities of the Croatian Employment Service in the field of employment of Roma national minorities for the period January – June 2017].

⁷ Census, 2011. Available at: https://www.dzs.hr/Hrv_Eng/publication/2012/SI-1469.pdf

⁸ In-person interview with a representative of the CEO, conducted 22.10.2018.

⁹ The measures are described at governmental webpage: <http://mjere.hr/>

¹⁰ For more information visit: <http://mjere.hr/mjere/potpore-za-zaposljavanje/>

simplification and the CEO developed this new set of nine mainstream measures.¹¹ Since 2017, Roma have been identified as an explicit target group in the specific measures of employment support and public works. Roma can benefit from mainstream measures like any other Croatian citizen if they fulfil the criteria of the particular measure. The CEO allocated a separate budget for Roma employment even though the employment initiatives for Roma can also be supported through the mainstream budget. The budget allocated in 2017 for the employment initiatives for Roma was 1.5 million EUR (10.81 million HRK) and approximately 80 percent of this allocation was actually spent. The largest percentage of the spent budget, more than 90 percent (1.12 million EUR or 8.4 million HRK), was spent through the measure of public works. In 2017, of 748 Roma who accessed an active employment policy measure, 626 used the measure of public works.

The goal of the public works measure is to activate long-term unemployed persons registered at the CEO, but the measure does not lead to long-term employment. In practice, Roma are “activated” through the measure, but after its end (i.e., after 6-9 months) they are again unemployed and not competitive on the labour market.¹² The measure of public works is accepted among the Roma community as a way to increase income. Even though the measure officially aims at activating long-term unemployed Roma, many Roma and pro-Roma activists and experts in Roma inclusion do not consider this measure as an effective solution for improving Roma participation in economic and social life. The CEO is also not satisfied with the outcomes of the measure, as it has no long-term impact.¹³ The Roma community is divided about it; some support the measure because Roma financially benefit from it, but others see it as a political tool for buying votes for different elections.¹⁴ Both Roma and mainstream politicians use the programme of public works for their political interests – exchanging work opportunities for votes.

In addition to the active policy employment measures, the CEO implements other activities which aim to accelerate the inclusion of Roma in the labour market, including:¹⁵

- public meetings: the goal is to inform the unemployed about topics and activities that can help them to access employment; from January until June 2017, 114 Roma were included in this activity, 44 of who were women;
- individual consulting: employment consultants evaluate the work abilities, professional and personal potential of jobseekers and help with developing an employment/profession plan for them; from January until June 2017, the mandatory (for all unemployed, not only Roma) service of individual consulting was used by 2,946 Roma, of whom 1,380 were women.
- Group consulting workshops: the goal is to increase competence, skills, and motivation for active job-seeking; the workshops for active job-seeking include four modules:
 1. writing CVs,
 2. active job search techniques,
 3. preparation for job interviews, and
 4. workshops for the activation of long-term unemployed persons.

From January until June 2017 the workshops were attended by 189 Roma, 80 of whom were women.

- Assessment of work abilities: the goal is to identify jobs suitable for older people (45+); from January until June 2017 only three Roma women used this service.

¹¹ In-person interview with the representative of the CEO, conducted 22.10.2018.

¹² *Ibid.*

¹³ In-person interviews with Roma activists, a representative of the CEO, and Roma focus groups.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*

¹⁵ CEO, 2017.

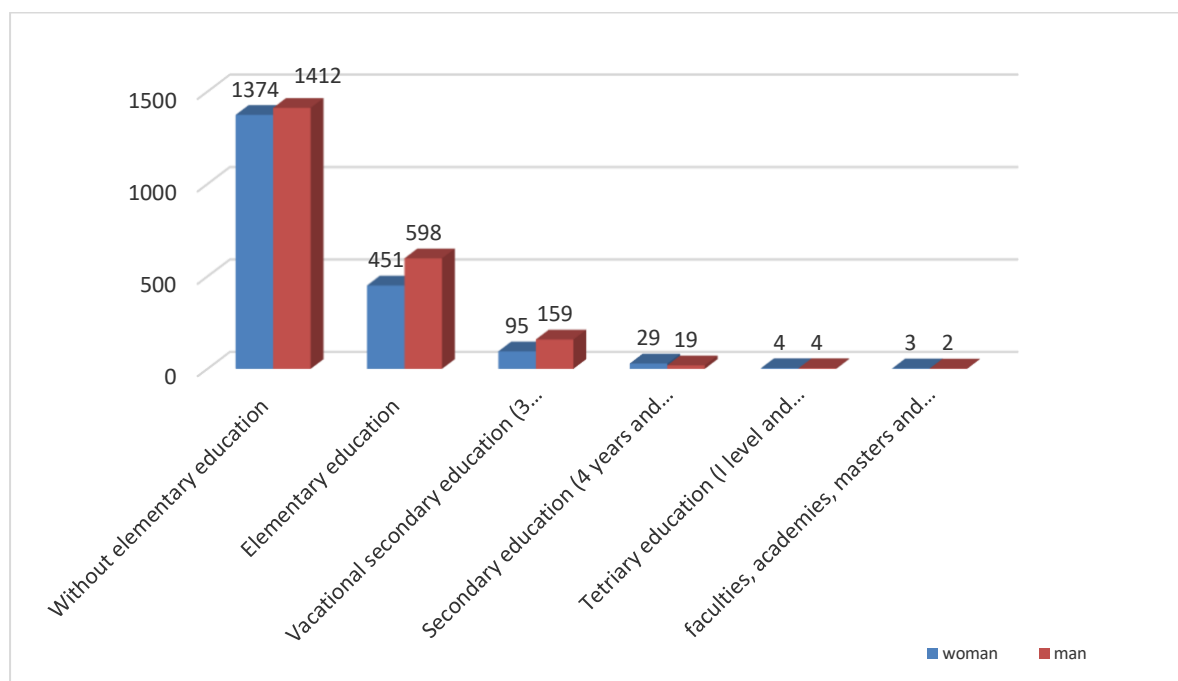
- Engaging in activities in the field of professional information and consulting: the goal of this activity is to inform the unemployed about labour market demand, to synchronise their desires and options with the labour market, and to provide them information about the available education from which they will gain the skills requested by employers; from January until June 2017, 346 Roma were included in the activity, 173 of whom were Roma women.
- Targeted visits to employers by employment consultants: the goal is that employment consultants inform employers about active policy measures and possibilities to employ Roma; they also try to build a positive attitude among employers about Roma employment and education; from January until June 2017, 126 visits were done, and 34 meetings were held with Roma associations, associations of employers, unions and other stakeholders.
- Promotion activities of the active measures for Roma employment and self-employment: the goal is to inform stakeholders about the active policy employment measures through round tables and other gatherings.
- Public meetings to provide information about self-employment: the goal is to inform Roma of self-employment financing options, etc.

Even though these activities are reported on by the CEO, the Roma community is not seeing their effects. The Roma who were interviewed and attended our focus groups did not have any information about such meetings with employers. While regular consultations with employment consultants are obligatory, the outcomes are mostly advice and information about opportunities that do not tackle the main problems of Roma unemployment, which are discrimination and the low level of educational attainment among the Roma registered at the CEO. It seems that activities for Roma are developed by a top-down approach and do not take into account Roma jobseekers' real capacities and needs (for example, their low education levels – almost 95 percent of registered Roma jobseekers have an elementary education or even less) and therefore they cannot take advantage of the many available measures, while other measures that are necessary for them are simply missing.

One of the biggest problems about Roma employment is educational attainment – 68.7 percent of Roma registered at the CEO have not finished elementary education, while another 24 percent finished only an elementary education.¹⁶ The CEO and the Roma community have identified adult education and training as a solution for this problem, but the Government has not been able to effectively coordinate implementation of such opportunities. When it comes to education and training, the measures provided by the CEO just target people with secondary educations. In 2017, Roma were not part of any of the educational and training programmes provided by the CEO. Adult education should be covered by the MSE and/or the CEO, but in fact it is not covered by either with respect to secondary education. Adults can finish their elementary educations at evening schools, and this cost is covered by the MSE, but if they want a secondary education then they need to cover the costs by themselves. This is too expensive for unemployed Roma, because one year of secondary education at an open (public) university can cost as much as 1,000 EUR per year. This situation is one of the obstacles preventing adult Roma from accessing secondary education.

¹⁶ In-person interview with the representative of the CEO, conducted 22.10.2018.

Representation of unemployed Roma per educational level and gender



Source: Croatian Employment Office

In several localities, local or regional CEO-organised trainings were attended by 99 Roma in 2017; those trainings were financed through ESF or local/national (public) resources.¹⁷ This situation clearly shows that interest among the Roma population exists, but the channels for Roma adults to achieve a better education are limited.

In the last few years, Croatia has encountered the problem of emigration. This is affecting the entire country, but at the same time it is providing Roma with more opportunities to work more than are the existing employment policies. Indeed, in the last few years the number of employed Roma has been increasing due to this phenomenon. From January until June 2017, 430 Roma became employed, of which 135 were Roma women, including Roma with an elementary education only (155), followed by Roma without an elementary education (129) and Roma with a vocational education (122). The biggest number of employed Roma were men between 20 and 24 years old (111).¹⁸ During the same period, the CEO employed just 200 Roma (127 men and 73 women) through its public works measures and only a very few Roma through its other measures (seven through “employment support” measure, and only one through support of self-employment).¹⁹

This shows that more than half of the Roma employed accessed the labour market without any support from the active employment measures policy. This could indicate that the measures are not promoted well enough, or are not responding to the needs of the Roma community and potential employers who want to employ Roma). In addition, 265,333 EUR of the 2017 allocation for promoting Roma employment were not spent; at the same time, there is a lack of an educated workforce on the market, but not one Roma person accessed the educational measures targeting the Roma community. This clearly shows that there is a gap between the CEO measures offered and the support the Roma community needs.

¹⁷ In-person interview with a representative of the CEO, conducted 22.10.2018.

¹⁸ CEO, 2017.

¹⁹ CEO, 2017.

The fight against discrimination in employment and antigypsyism at the workplace

Another big obstacle to Roma employment is the discrimination against Roma that appears during the employment process. Discrimination during employment is very often covert or indirect, which makes it very hard to prove. Discrimination towards Roma is frequent when it comes to career advancement and trajectories.

Persons interviewed for this report testified as follows:

*"I applied for a job in one bar in the town of Čakovec. They asked me over the phone to attend an in-person interview. After I arrived, they said to me that the position had been filled. After that my friend called the same bar and they told him over the phone that they are still looking for a worker."*²⁰

Similar situations were also described by many young Roma from northern and eastern Croatia.

*"I did not get the job even though I worked my entire internship in that hospital and the practice is that those who intern, get the job. This was not the practice in my case. How could they select another person? I had the same qualification as the one hired, and I had done an internship there."*²¹

*"I applied for the job and the employer did not believe that my diplomas and CV were mine and were legitimate."*²²

*"I have worked for a construction company for several years now and I have still not been offered a permanent contract, while others who are not Roma and joined the company after me got a permanent contract."*²³

*"I work as a court bailiff, and when it is my turn to take charge of a shift, my colleagues make comments like 'What have we come to if Roma are going to lead the shift?'."*²⁴

These kind of testimonies from Roma are common all over Croatia. Roma from Međimurje, Osječko Baranjska county, and all of eastern Croatia brought discrimination during employment procedures into focus more often than did Roma from the western part of Croatia. The eastern part of Croatia is quite undeveloped, with fewer job opportunities. Combining this fact with discrimination towards Roma and the fact that many Roma have not been given an opportunity to work, those from the east underline discrimination as the main problem. Roma from the western part of Croatia also mention discrimination, but they do not underline it as the main problem. In those areas there are many more job offers, and Roma do manage to be employed. Mostly they say *"Some of the non-Roma discriminate against us but there are some who are not like that, and they accept us as equal workers"*.²⁵ Roma from the western part of Croatia, especially from Istra County and other touristic places, are not active in Roma civil society because they have a better life than many other Roma in Croatia. Some are in tourism and many work in hotels, bars and

²⁰ Young Roma man from Međimurje County interviewed for this report.

²¹ Young Roma man from Zagreb interviewed for this report.

²² Young Roma woman from Međimurje who lives in Zagreb interviewed for this report.

²³ Young Roma man from Međimurje County interviewed for this report.

²⁴ Young Roma man from Međimurje County who works in Sisačko-Moslavačka County interviewed for this report.

²⁵ In-person interview with three Roma families from Rijeka.

for cleaning services run by local authorities. There are several Roma from Slavonski Brod and Međimurje County who are hired as seasonal workers in hotels and resorts, especially in Istra County.²⁶

There is quite a big number of Roma in Croatia whose appearance does not fit Roma stereotypes. Those Roma who work and have a “non-Roma” appearance often hide their Roma identity to prevent discrimination towards them.

When it comes to fighting discrimination towards Roma during employment processes, there are some ongoing activities. For example, the CEO is implementing the activity of *Targeted visits to employers by employment consultants*; the Ombudswoman’s office organizes seminars for employers, police and other targeted groups and employees of different institutions and public bodies; and the NRCP is working on preventing discrimination at national level, an example of which is the campaign “DOSTA” (“Enough/Stop”) with video spots.²⁷ The NRCP is also contributing in this regard, collecting data about the implementation of the NRIS, organizing campaigns, reacting to the ongoing developments in society, and many other things.²⁸ Combating discrimination is a long-term process and it can be seen that the current measures are not yielding results. Roma are one of the most discriminated groups in Croatia; according to the latest research done there, 28.2 percent of Roma said they had been discriminated against in the last 12 months. That data also shows that 44.81 percent of Roma felt discriminated against during the employment process because of their Roma origin.²⁹

‘Antigypsyism’ as a term is not part of Croatian legal or policy documents and stakeholders are not familiar with it. The Government and other stakeholders focus on suppressing the consequences of antigypsyism, but ignore the racism against Roma that is the root problem. Even those people who do not encounter Roma use antigypsyist slang words and sentences, such as: *Cigan* (‘Gypsy’, when they want to offend somebody); ‘Gypsy business’ (meaning some illegal work); ‘*ciganluk*’ (when something is messy or when people want to cheat each other); ‘*ciganjenje*’ (when you ask for some special discount or you do not want to pay something); and children are intimidated with the warning that “*You’re going to be stolen by Gypsies*”. These kinds of slang words and negative representations of Roma in the mass media contribute to building prejudices towards Roma among people who never lived among, worked with or even encountered Roma. This kind of situation affects the Roma community and its individual members, resulting in a number of Roma hiding their identity at the workplace.

²⁶ Interviewed young Roma from Town of Slavonski Brod.

²⁷ Video spot, campaign “DOSTA”: <https://vimeo.com/11338438>

²⁸ For more information visit: <https://ljudskaprava.gov.hr/polozej-i-prava-pripadnika-nacionalnih-manjina-u-republici-hrvatskoj/353>

²⁹ Suzana Kunac, Ksenija Klasnić, Sara Lalić (2012) *Roma inclusion in the Croatia Society: A Baseline Data Study*. Available at: <https://ljudskaprava.gov.hr/UserDocsImages//dokumenti//Roma%20Inclusion%20in%20the%20Croatian%20Society%20-%20a%20Baseline%20Data%20Study.pdf>

HOUSING AND ESSENTIAL PUBLIC SERVICES

Access to basic amenities

Roma in Croatia live either in segregated settlements or dispersed throughout integrated areas. Most Roma (the exact number cannot be stated as there are no official data) live in one of three types of segregated settlements:

- The first type is in enclaves inside towns, such as the *Vrtni put* or *Plinarsko naselje* areas of Zagreb.
- The second type can be found in the suburbs, such as the Josip Rimac suburb of Slavonski Brod.
- The third type is isolated, located outside villages or towns.

Most Roma settlements lack stores, libraries, theatres, hospitals and other public services and public institutions (e.g., social services, employment offices and other similar institutions) or are located far away from them. This is often the case in the rural areas of Croatia, where the situation is worse compared to urban areas. Around 70 percent of the households in such settlements do not have indoor plumbing.³⁰

The latest research done in Croatia covering 128 localities in 12 counties,^{31 32} shows that of 128 localities, just one did not have access to electricity, 13 did not have access to the water system, 55 did not have access to the sewer system, and 74 did not have access to the gas network.³³ In localities where access to communal infrastructure exists, 88 percent of households are connected to electricity, 66 percent have water supply, 40 percent are connected to the sewer system and only 15 percent of households are connected to gas. Of the 1,550 households included in the research, 11.2 percent did not have electricity, 43.3 percent did not have water inside the house, and 49.9 percent were not connected to the sewer system.³⁴

Public services located far away from the Roma settlements are difficult to reach by many Roma families as most of them do not possess vehicles and public transportation is often not available or inaccessible.³⁵ Many Roma families who live in the segregated settlements receive social benefits. The current legislation does not allow car owners to draw social benefits. If a social benefit user possesses a car or is found to be driving such a car, that person is disqualified from receiving social benefits. Such situations intensify segregation as it becomes difficult for these families to buy groceries, visit the doctor, or transport their children to kindergarten.

³⁰ Suzana Kunac, Ksenija Klasnić, Sara Lalić (2012) *Roma inclusion in the Croatia Society: A Baseline Data Study*. Available at: <https://ljudskaprava.gov.hr/UserDocsImages//dokumenti//Roma%20Inclusion%20in%20the%20Croatian%20Society%20-%20a%20Baseline%20Data%20Study.pdf>

³¹ *Idem*.

³² "Localities" include places inhabited by more than 30 Roma identified through mapping of Roma communities within the "Database research". Mapping was done together with Roma individuals, associations and Councils of Roma national minority.

³³ Suzana Kunac, Ksenija Klasnić, Sara Lalić (2012) *Roma inclusion in the Croatia Society: A Baseline Data Study*. Available at: <https://ljudskaprava.gov.hr/UserDocsImages//dokumenti//Roma%20Inclusion%20in%20the%20Croatian%20Society%20-%20a%20Baseline%20Data%20Study.pdf>

³⁴ *Idem*.

³⁵ Act on social welfare, article 29 which state that owner of the car or the person who is driving the car which is not in his/her ownership cannot use the social benefit. Available at: <https://www.zakon.hr/z/222/Zakon-o-socijalnoj-skrbi>

Access to secure and affordable housing

Many Roma settlements were built illegally. Legalisation of such settlements was launched a few years ago.³⁶ The latest research data show that 13.6 percent of all dwellings inhabited by Roma already had all the necessary permits and did not need to be legalised. Another 11.9 percent did not enter the process of legalisation even though their dwelling was illegal (fully or partially); 31.4 percent managed to legalise their dwellings; 28.6 percent are still in the process of legalisation; and 2.3 percent were denied legalisation because the land ownership was unclear or the land use was unresolved in legal terms.³⁷

The 35.4 percent of Roma who do not live in legalised dwellings and are not in the process of legalisation are deeply worried about the possibility of being evicted, while 41.9 percent of Roma are not worried about this at all. Of the 1,463 households included in the research, 63 percent lived in "good housing conditions" and 28.2 percent in "relatively good conditions". Four percent of Roma households living in huts and improvised dwellings have the worst living conditions.³⁸

Although many Roma live in settlements, many also try to move away from them. In the last few years many Roma have become employed, and so they have taken advantage of opportunities to apply for bank loans to purchase property outside of the Roma settlement.³⁹

Social housing provision in Croatia falls under the competence of the local or regional authorities.⁴⁰ There are, therefore, regional inequalities in accessing social housing in cities such as Zagreb or in small towns where just a few Roma have access to social housing depending on availability. In Zagreb, many Roma (there is no ethnically disaggregated data available) are housed in dwellings provided by the town. Although there is no special focus on ethnically targeting Roma during the allocation of social housing, the criteria are based on social status, and as Roma are among the poorest groups of people with larger numbers of children in very poor housing conditions, they can get prioritised on that basis.

Effectiveness of housing benefits and social assistance to maintain housing

The bigger, richer self-governments offer financial support to poor families to help them cover water, electricity, garbage disposal and other housing expenses.

The Ministry for Social Policy runs financial support schemes of up to approximately 26 EUR (200 HRK) per month to cover electricity bills for poor families. The eligibility criteria are that one is a beneficiary of the guaranteed minimum income scheme or lives with a beneficiary of the guaranteed minimum income scheme; or that one draws a disability benefit or lives with a beneficiary of the personal disability benefit.⁴¹

³⁶ Act on Proceeding with Illegally Constructed Buildings (Official Gazette, 86/12, 143/13, 65/17) and its supplement from 2017: <https://www.zakon.hr/z/486/Zakon-o-postupanju-s-nezakonito-izgra%C4%91enim-zgradama>

³⁷ Suzana Kunac, Ksenija Klasnić, Sara Lalić (2012) *Roma inclusion in the Croatia Society: A Baseline Data Study*. Available at: <https://ljudskaprava.gov.hr/UserDocsImages//dokumenti//Roma%20Inclusion%20in%20the%20Croatian%20Society%20-%20a%20Baseline%20Data%20Study.pdf>

³⁸ *Idem*.

³⁹ In-person interviews with representatives of Roma associations and focus groups with Roma.

⁴⁰ The social housing stock is not known, as some flats are owned by the Government, some by local authorities. Not all of the public stock is meant to be used for social housing.

⁴¹ Ministry of Social Policy: <https://mdomsp.gov.hr/istaknute-teme/socijalna-politika/naknada-za-ugroznog-kupca-energenata/1935>

The Ministry for Social Policy also provides financial support to poor people who need basic household appliances such as refrigerators and stoves, as well as support for clothing or footwear. This can be as much as 266 EUR (2,000 HRK) in one year, but in some exceptional situations it can be as much as 1,333 EUR (10,000 HRK) per year.⁴²

In some localities, firewood is provided directly, or financial support for purchasing firewood is provided by the Ministry of Social Policy.⁴³

When it comes to social housing and social policies, Roma are not recognised as a specific group and no measures specifically target them. Social support and social benefits are the same for all citizens in Croatia, but more such benefits are available from the bigger, richer self-governments. NGOs report that in some cases social workers reflect negative attitudes towards Roma, and that kind of behaviour prevents Roma from exercising their rights.

The fight against residential segregation, discrimination and other forms of antigypsyism in housing

Almost each county in Croatia with a significant Roma population has some type of Roma settlement within its jurisdiction.⁴⁴ Most Roma live in spatially, socially and ethnically segregated settlements. The desegregation of Roma settlements is a goal in all the relevant literature about Roma inclusion, but no effective government policies have been put in place so far regarding such desegregation. Both non-Roma and Roma politicians have instead taken steps in the opposite direction, supporting programmes for improving the conditions in Roma settlements by arguing that such measures are accepted by the Roma community. There are no reflections on the potentially segregating outcomes of these processes of legalisation, investments into building roads, electricity networks, community centres and playgrounds in segregated areas. There is a lack of political will and courage to cope with the problem of segregation even though desegregation could have a much stronger impact on Roma inclusion on the long run. Residential segregation is also a main cause of and reason for educational segregation. Roma are not becoming part of mainstream society; instead, they live in areas where they mainly speak Romanes in daily life, and this influences their prospects for attaining education and employment. They have fewer connections with mainstream society, and this also prevents their social inclusion. In many cases, Roma living in settlements become the victims of collective blame. In some cases, police interventions have targeted Roma settlements in ways that could never happen in areas where Roma live among and with non-Roma.

Interventions where the design of the programme has not been sufficiently thought through are among the most problematic. For example, in the municipality of Darda in eastern Croatia, Roma who have been living in huts are to be provided with new houses co-financed by the ERDF.⁴⁵ This project demonstrates that unless they are offered other options, Roma will not opt to move away from their segregated neighbourhoods but will accept new houses even under the condition of remaining in what is an impoverished neighbourhood.

⁴² Ministry of Social Policy: <https://mdomsp.gov.hr/istaknute-teme/socijalna-politika/jednokratna-naknada/1934> and in-person interviews with social benefit users.

⁴³ Interviewed with representatives of Roma associations.

⁴⁴ A Roma Atlas was done for Međimurje County by UNDP – there are 12 Roma settlements there; other counties have not yet been mapped. For more information see: <https://medjimurska-zupanija.hr/2014/02/04/novi-atlas-romskih-naselja-za-kvalitetniju-lokalnu-politiku/>

⁴⁵ Sinisa-Senad Music (2019) *Civil society monitoring report on implementation of the national Roma integration strategies in Croatia: Focusing on structural and horizontal preconditions for successful implementation of the strategy*. European Commission. Available at: <https://cps.ceu.edu/sites/cps.ceu.edu/files/attachment/basicpage/3034/rcm-civil-society-monitoring-report-1-croatia-2017-eprint-fin.pdf>

IMPACT OF HEALTH CARE POLICIES ON ROMA

Ensuring equal access to public health care services

In the area of health care, the aim is to improve the Roma population's health outcomes and to improve their access to health care and the quality of care they receive. When it comes to Roma inclusion, health care is the most neglected area in Croatia. The focus in this area is on health insurance and vaccination coverage. Health care, however, is about much more than just nutrition, dental care, access to clean water or a healthful housing environment.

In Croatia, every person who has a valid health card issued by the CIHI has access to health care. FRA research reports that 82 percent of Roma have health insurance.⁴⁶ According to the recent baseline data research on the situation of Roma in Croatia, this percentage is even higher, as much as 92.8 percent of Roma with medical insurance.⁴⁷ Those Roma who do not have a valid health card issued by the CIHI in most cases did not meet some criteria or respect some procedures; just as the majority population does, Roma people can also pay for medical assistance, especially in emergency situations. Many of them have lost their medical insurance because they missed the deadline to apply for it after they ended a particular job or finished their education. Many Roma have resolved this by accessing the measure of "Public works" through which they were temporary employed and regained the right to medical insurance.⁴⁸

There is a lack of information regarding Roma health because health care institutions do not have to practice ethnic data collection.

The life expectancy of Roma is significantly lower compared to the majority population in Croatia; the gap between Roma and non-Roma can be as much as 10 years,⁴⁹ and just two percent of Roma retire after living to retirement age.⁵⁰

Health can be affected by housing environments, nutrition and poverty. Lack of access to water; working with dangerous materials (garbage and raw materials); burning things in settlements close to children and dwellings; unhealthy habits and similar issues definitely impact Roma health and life expectancy.

The latest research shows that 27.8 percent of Roma in Croatia do not visit a doctor even when they find there is a need for it. Other reasons for not seeing a doctor are the distance and the transportation expenses from their home to medical institutions.⁵¹

⁴⁶ FRA (2016) *Second European Union Minorities and Discrimination Survey: Roma – Selected findings*. Available at: https://fra.europa.eu/sites/default/files/fra_uploads/fra-2016-eu-minorities-survey-roma-selected-findings_en.pdf#page=29

⁴⁷ Suzana Kunac, Ksenija Klasnić, Sara Lalić (2018) *Roma inclusion in the Croatia Society: A Baseline Data Study*. Available at: <https://ljudskaprava.gov.hr/UserDocsImages//dokumenti//Roma%20Inclusion%20in%20the%20Croatian%20Society%20-%20a%20Baseline%20Data%20Study.pdf>

⁴⁸ Data collected during focus groups with Roma and in-person interviews with Presidents of associations.

⁴⁹ European Commission, *Roma Health Report: Health Status of the Roma Population, Data collection in the Member States of the European Union, 2014*

⁵⁰ FRA (2016) *Second European Union Minorities and Discrimination Survey: Roma – Selected findings*. Available at: https://fra.europa.eu/sites/default/files/fra_uploads/fra-2016-eu-minorities-survey-roma-selected-findings_en.pdf#page=29

⁵¹ Suzana Kunac, Ksenija Klasnić, Sara Lalić (2018) *Roma inclusion in the Croatia Society: A Baseline Data Study*. Available at: <https://ljudskaprava.gov.hr/UserDocsImages//dokumenti//Roma%20Inclusion%20in%20the%20Croatian%20Society%20-%20a%20Baseline%20Data%20Study.pdf>

Dental care is an area that is neglected by the Roma community. In the last 12 months, only 37.6 percent of Roma had visited a dentist, while 14.6 percent have never visited a dentist.⁵²

Lack of education and in some cases, illiteracy, often lead to situations in which Roma people do not understand the instructions or prescriptions issued by doctors and other medical workers.

The fight against discrimination and antigypsyism in health care

In some segregated Roma settlements, communities complain that when they have emergency situations, emergency vehicles do not come to their location. These cases were reported from Roma settlements in Međimurje County and around the town of Delnice.⁵³ Medical institutions often said they did not respond to the call because they found the situation was not urgent, or that false calls had been frequently made from the Roma settlement,⁵⁴ or even that Roma from the settlement called them just for transportation to medical institutions, not for emergencies.⁵⁵

Roma in Croatia believe that if medical attention is needed, they will get it (87.4 percent), they trust and have confidence in health system employees (82.2 percent) and think that doctors are good at their jobs (80.6 percent). At the same time, 20.8 percent of Roma had some negative experiences with employees in medical institutions. Most of the Roma who had some negative experience in health care (33.4 percent) had the feeling that they waited longer than others for access to medical services.⁵⁶

There have been no specific actions to combat discrimination towards Roma in the health sector. Doctors and medical workers, as part of society, reflect the general prejudices against Roma that come from the overall attitudes towards Roma in Croatia.

Discrimination in health care does not just concern Roma patients, but also Roma who have wanted to become health professionals. There have been several Roma who finished university and faced problems during the employment process in medical institutions or who face some kind of discrimination in their workplace.

⁵² Suzana Kunac, Ksenija Klasnić, Sara Lalić (2018) *Roma inclusion in the Croatia Society: A Baseline Data Study*. Available at: <https://ljudskaprava.gov.hr/UserDocsImages//dokumenti//Roma%20Inclusion%20in%20the%20Croatian%20Society%20-%20a%20Baseline%20Data%20Study.pdf>

⁵³ In-person interview with Roma families who had such a case.

⁵⁴ Suzana Kunac, Ksenija Klasnić, Sara Lalić (2018) *Roma inclusion in the Croatia Society: A Baseline Data Study*. Available at: <https://ljudskaprava.gov.hr/UserDocsImages//dokumenti//Roma%20Inclusion%20in%20the%20Croatian%20Society%20-%20a%20Baseline%20Data%20Study.pdf>

⁵⁵ Information gathered during a round table held in Međimurje.

⁵⁶ Suzana Kunac, Ksenija Klasnić, Sara Lalić (2018) *Roma Inclusion in the Croatian Society: a Baseline Data Study*. Available at: <https://ljudskaprava.gov.hr/UserDocsImages//dokumenti//Roma%20Inclusion%20in%20the%20Croatian%20Society%20-%20a%20Baseline%20Data%20Study.pdf>

EDUCATION

Access to quality preschool education

Education is the area where Roma inclusion has made the most progress. This is so because nowadays, compared to 10 or 20 years ago, there is a larger number of Roma children enrolled at all levels of education. Between 2007 and 2011, with funds from the Roma Education Fund⁵⁷, a larger number of Roma children accessed preschool education compared to previous years. The number of Roma children enrolled in preschool education has varied between 586 and 826.⁵⁸ In the beginning of the 2017/2018 school year, there were 1,020 Roma children enrolled in preschool education.⁵⁹ The overall goal of the NRIS when it comes to education is to increase Roma children's access to quality education at all levels. The NRIS goal is to increase preschool coverage of Roma children and to increase the quality of preschool education.⁶⁰

This measure from the NRIS aims to ensure free preschool education (kindergarten) for Roma children, which can be provided by local authorities, associations, private companies or religious institutions. In all these cases, the financial cost is shared between local authorities and parents. In the case of Roma children, the parental share is covered by the MSE. In 2017, the MSE covered the financial parental share for Roma children in kindergarten with approximately 352,296 EUR (2.64 million HRK) and for Roma children in preschool programmes with an amount of around 94,653 EUR (709,902 HRK). In total, the MSE financed Roma inclusion in preschool education in 2017 with an amount of around 446.949 EUR (3.35 million HRK).

The number of Roma children enrolled in kindergartens at the beginning of the 2017/2018 school year was 488 (270 boys and 218 girls).⁶¹ The Roma children are said to be part of 218 integrated groups and three segregated groups.⁶² Each segregated group can have up to 25 Roma children; in reality there are more than three segregated groups because the City of Zagreb has a Roma kindergarten run by a Roma association that has not reported its groups to the MSE.

The mainstream measure that applies to Roma enrolled in preschool education is one year of a compulsory (minimum 250 hours) preschool programme prior to enrolment in elementary school for all children.⁶³ This legislation is valid from 2015. In the beginning of the 2017/2018 school year there were 532 Roma (265 boys and 267 girls) enrolled in the obligatory preschool programme.⁶⁴ Roma children attend 96 integrated groups

⁵⁷ REF program in cooperation with Medjimure County: preparation and enrolment of Roma kids into integrated kindergartens.

⁵⁸ Government of Croatia, NRIS for period from 2013 until 2020, available at: <https://www.zagreb.hr/UserDocsImages/arhiva/Nacionalna%20strategija%20za%20uklju%C4%8Divanje%20Roma%202013-2020.pdf>

⁵⁹ Preschool education is open to children from the age of six months until they enrol in mandatory elementary education. There are three levels of preschool education. One year before entering elementary education, preschool is mandatory for all children. For more information visit: https://mzo.hr/sites/default/files/links/hrvatski_obrazovni_sustav.pdf

⁶⁰ Government of Croatia, NRIS for 2013-2020, available at: <https://www.zagreb.hr/UserDocsImages/arhiva/Nacionalna%20strategija%20za%20uklju%C4%8Divanje%20Roma%202013-2020.pdf>

⁶¹ Kindergarten has three levels (from six months to 1 year – nurturing; from 1-3 years; and then from 3 years until the child enters elementary school. More information available at: <https://mzo.hr/hr/rubrike/rani-predskolski-odgoj-obrazovanje>

⁶² Information provided by MSE.

⁶³ See: https://narodne-novine.nn.hr/clanci/sluzbeni/2014_09_107_2081.html

⁶⁴ The mandatory preschool programme is mandatory for all children one year before they enrol in elementary school. More information is available at: <https://gov.hr/moja-uprava/obrazovanje/predskolski-odgoj-i-obrazovanje/program-predskole/216>

and 14 segregated groups. Mandatory preschool is free of charge for all children. In the beginning of this new policy implementation, some local authorities (Slavonski brod, Podturen) encountered obstacles to providing Roma children (especially from segregated Roma settlements) a path to accessing their right to one year of a preschool programme. Some Roma children were not able to access this right because local authorities either did not ensure their transportation or did not have the money and/or the political will to finance transportation from segregated Roma settlements to institutions that can provide the service of a preschool programme. Some local authorities did not have capacities for the implementation of the preschool programme. UNICEF, REF, REYN and other stakeholders worked on that problem and the issues were resolved. While capacity problems in some areas were resolved, segregation intensified in the process. Thirteen preschool programmes are established close to Roma settlements.⁶⁵

The latest research in Croatia shows that 68.9 percent of Roma children between 3 and 6 years old do not attend any education (whether optional kindergarten or compulsory preschool or elementary). However, the situation is better when it comes to Roma six-year-olds, as 74.7 percent of them are enrolled in education (29.7 percent in preschool programmes, 24.3 percent in kindergartens, and 20.7 percent in elementary education).⁶⁶ There are two main reasons why Roma children enrol at a later age in preschool education. One is that the Roma community considers the age of 0-3 too early for preschool.⁶⁷ In this case, additional work with both the Roma and non-Roma community is needed in cooperation with stakeholders such as local authorities and kindergartens. There is a good example from the town of Mursko Središće where cooperation between REF, local authorities, a kindergarten and representatives of the Roma community from a segregated settlement was established. Through a joint effort, they managed to enrol Roma children by age three into integrated groups in the local kindergarten. The achievements of those children who had attended kindergarten in elementary education were so good⁶⁸ that the cost of transportation from the Roma settlement to the kindergarten became a line in the budget of Međimurje County even the county does not have an obligation to cover such costs because preschool education at age three is not mandatory. This is a positive example of Roma children being included into quality, integrated, day-long preschool education. Another obstacle for Roma children to access preschool education is the limited capacity of the preschool institutions to enrol more children. There are areas where there are many more children than there are available places in kindergartens and the enrolment is decided based on a points system. Families with both parents working receive more points and are granted places. This is problem has not been addressed yet by authorities, but the fact is that in many Roma families, one or both parents are unemployed, so their children are awarded fewer points and do not access kindergarten ahead of the compulsory preschool year.

Information about the quality of the education offered by the preschools is not available. Many stakeholders, such as Roma associations, REF, REYN and others, deem one year of a preschool programme insufficient for Roma children, as it will not ensure them a better start in elementary education. There is no proof confirming the assumption that education in the preschools is not at the level of quality that it should be, especially in Roma segregated groups, but stakeholders working on the topic say they have

⁶⁵ Information provided by MSE.

⁶⁶ Suzana Kunac, Ksenija Klasnić, Sara Lalić (2018) *Roma inclusion in the Croatia Society: a Baseline Data Study*. Available at: <https://ljudskaprava.gov.hr/UserDocsImages//dokumenti//Roma%20Inclusion%20in%20the%20Croatian%20Society%20-%20a%20Baseline%20Data%20Study.pdf>

⁶⁷ In-person interview with Roma and focus groups with Roma.

⁶⁸ The official reports are not available. More information available at: <http://www.romaeducationfund.org/ensuring-readiness-and-success-primary-school-croatia-integration-medimurje-county?page=58>

indications this is the case. Critics of the educational quality in preschools are basing their assumptions on the educational outcomes of the Roma children in elementary education. In the school year 2017/2018, among all the Roma first-graders (729) there are 12 percent (88) of them who are repeating the first grade. The worst situation that school year was in Varaždinska County, where of 48 first-graders, 27.08 percent had to repeat that grade.

Improving the quality of education until the end of compulsory schooling

Compulsory education in Croatia is understood to mean one year of preschool and eight years of elementary education. In the beginning of the 2017/2018 school year there were 5,134 (2,589 boys and 2,545 girls) Roma children enrolled in elementary education of which 382 (209 boys and 173 girls) were repeaters.

357 Roma children participated in full day programme in school, including the afternoon activities and preparation of homework (so-called 'extended stay'). In some elementary schools in Međimurje County and Zagrebačka County, extended stays are also provided for Roma pupils in upper elementary education.⁶⁹ The MSE is covering the cost of extended stays for Roma children. In 2017 the MSE covered the cost of extended stays for Roma children amounting to about 93,002 EUR (697,520 HRK).⁷⁰

The MSE, based on the need, allows schools to organize extra classes for learning the Croatian language. In the 2017/2018 school year, 336 Roma children were enrolled in such classes.⁷¹

As elementary school is compulsory, transportation is organised for all who live more than three kilometres from an elementary school. The MSE has employed around 20 Roma assistants, and for their salaries in the year 2017 around 231,600 EUR (1.74 million HRK) was spent.⁷² After the MSE changed its policies, it is no longer newly employing Roma assistants, but some of the schools (for example, the Elementary School Škurinje in the town of Rijeka) employ Roma assistants on a yearly basis and their salaries are financed from different projects. Roma assistants who had active contracts with the MSE would work there until they resigned or retired. The main problem for Roma assistants is that there is no definition or job description regarding their scope of work. In some schools they are allowed to hold classes, in some schools they discipline Roma children, in some they are translating from Croatian for the children, and in some they are working as janitors.⁷³

The MSE also finances, for poor Roma children from elementary schools that successfully apply for such funding, summer schools, schools in nature and graduation trips. In 2017 the MSE spent around 99,346 EUR (745,095 HRK) on such activities.

According to the latest research done in Croatia, 95.2 percent of Roma children between age 7 and 14 are enrolled in elementary school. Roma dropout happens later in education.⁷⁴ Elementary education is obligatory up to age 15 and not after that. The data show that only 88.5 percent of Roma children are still in elementary education by age 14 (2.3 percent are in secondary education) and that only 33 percent of Roma

⁶⁹ Data provided by the MSE.

⁷⁰ *Ibid.*

⁷¹ *Ibid.*

⁷² *Ibid.*

⁷³ In-person interview with four Roma assistants.

⁷⁴ Suzana Kunac, Ksenija Klasnić, Sara Lalić (2018) *Roma Inclusion in the Croatian Society: a Baseline Data Study*. Available at: <https://ljudskaprava.gov.hr/UserDocsImages//dokumenti//Roma%20Inclusion%20in%20the%20Croatian%20Society%20-%20a%20Baseline%20Data%20Study.pdf>

children are in elementary education by age 15 (31.9 percent are in secondary education).⁷⁵

When it comes to elementary education quality, there is again a lack of data, but the perception of stakeholders such as REF, REYN, and Roma associations is that the quality of education in the segregated Roma classes is lower than in other classes. According to the MSE in 2017 there were 60 Roma segregated classes.

Some statements provided by Roma pupils in secondary and tertiary education could confirm suspicions about the quality of education in segregated Roma classes in elementary education:

*"I was the best in my class and when I wanted to learn more, I asked the teacher to transfer me to the non-Roma class. She did not allow me that. I was an excellent student, but when I enrolled in secondary education, I had less knowledge than my peers."*⁷⁶

*"In the classroom I could not concentrate, my peers were noisy and many of them could not understand the teacher. We were drawing, we drew a lot."*⁷⁷

To improve the quality of education in segregated classes in elementary schools, teachers have to be educated and motivated.⁷⁸ An individual approach is needed. In some schools, Roma children achieve better results attending segregated classes. In some schools, teachers are motivated to include Roma (for example, the Mala Subotica and Macinec Elementary Schools), and in some schools there is a small number of children in each class, which allows the teacher to use an individual approach (for example, Elementary School Fran Krsto Frankopna in Brod na Kupu). In some schools, teachers have undergone training provided by SbS and REYN (such as the Elementary School in Slavonski Brod). Many Roma children need additional support during elementary education, especially in the beginning. This need was noticed by civil society because many projects are financed by REF, the MSE and other donors whose activities are focused on Roma children in elementary school. However, the MSE has not found a sustainable solution to support Roma children and their teachers, especially teachers of segregated Roma classes.

Support of secondary and higher education, particularly for professions with high labour market demand

In the 2017/2018 school year there were 805 Roma (446 boys and 359 girls) enrolled in secondary education. Of all the Roma in secondary education, 55 were repeaters (31 boy and 24 girls). Roma students were distributed as follows:⁷⁹

- First year of secondary school: out of 311 Roma pupils (182 boys and 129 girls), 41 were repeaters (23 boys and 18 girls),
- Second year of secondary school: out of 259 Roma pupils (136 boys and 123 girls), 11 had to repeat the year (7 boys and 4 girls),
- Third year of secondary school: out of 205 Roma pupils (118 boys and 87 girls), three had to repeat the year (two boys and one girl),
- Fourth year of secondary school: 29 Roma pupils (10 boys and 19 girls), no repeaters.

⁷⁵ Suzana Kunac, Ksenija Klasnić, Sara Lalić (2018) *Roma inclusion in the Croatia Society: A Baseline Data Study*. Available at: <https://ljudskaprava.gov.hr/UserDocsImages//dokumenti//Roma%20Inclusion%20in%20the%20Croatian%20Society%20-%20a%20Baseline%20Data%20Study.pdf>

⁷⁶ In-person interview with female Roma students of the Police Academy.

⁷⁷ In-person interview with female Roma students of the Law University.

⁷⁸ In person interview with representatives of REYN and Step by Step (SbS).

⁷⁹ Information provided by MSE.

- Fifth year of secondary school: one Roma girl, no repeaters.

The largest number of Roma in secondary education was enrolled in vocational schools lasting three years – 540 students (330 boys and 210 girls); 133 Roma children (34 boys and 99 girls) were enrolled in secondary education lasting four years; 103 Roma children (58 boys and 45 girls) attended programmes for children with developmental difficulties; and just 11 enrolled in college preparatory school (gymnasium).⁸⁰

Every Roma child in secondary education is awarded a scholarship of around 666 EUR (5,000 HRK) per year. In the 2018/2019 school year, the MSE decided that Roma children who repeating grades in secondary education will also be awarded with scholarships of around 400 EUR (3,000 HRK) per year. This reintroduces that measure after suspending it for several years. The MSE considers the scholarships for Roma a source of motivation and it was decided to continue to motivate Roma children who had to retake the year in order to finish secondary education.⁸¹ In 2017 (when Roma who failed the class were not awarded the scholarship) the MSE spent around 465,121 EUR (3.49 million HRK) on Roma secondary scholarships.⁸² Zagreb, the capital of Croatia, also provides scholarships for Roma according to its local Action Plan for the implementation of the NRIS. The City of Zagreb will provide around 80 scholarships for Roma enrolled in secondary education in the 2019/2020 academic year. The amount of the scholarships provided the city are around 3,733 EUR (28,000 HRK) per year per Roma pupil in secondary education.⁸³ Roma who are enrolling into secondary education in a town other than their residence get the cost of their dormitory and meals covered by the MSE as well.

Every year there are as many as 30 Roma secondary students. Any Roma student can apply for and get a scholarship from the National Foundation for the Support of Pupils and Student Standards, but basically the scholarships are financed by the MSE. All Roma students (full-time or part-time, i.e., working and studying at the same time) are awarded scholarships of approximately 1,333 EUR (10,000 HRK) in Zagreb.

Most Roma are enrolled in vocational schools. One reason is their low scores during admission processes, including their low achievements in elementary education, and the second reason is how they have been advised by their elementary schools and the CEO during professional orientation. Those Roma who finish elementary education are offered a professional orientation meeting, held at the CEO. Roma civil society and politicians consider this to be an act of discrimination and bad practice because the CEO employees provide suggestions based just on the students' grades and on what they believe will be the highest chance for them to get a job after finishing their secondary education, and their recommendations can be biased.⁸⁴

The latest research shows that only 31.1 percent of Roma between 15 and 18 are enrolled in secondary education. From that age group, 15.9 percent of Roma children drop out of secondary education.⁸⁵ The Croatian Government provides scholarships and accommodation for Roma in both secondary and tertiary education, but Roma still drop out of secondary and tertiary education. Some missing tools to prevent dropout would be mentoring, a platform where Roma students could connect, and tutoring. In almost

⁸⁰ Information provided by the MSE.

⁸¹ In-person interview with representative of the MSE.

⁸² Information provided by the MSE.

⁸³ Data provided by representatives of the Council for the Roma National Minority of the City of Zagreb.

⁸⁴ In-person interview with a representative of the CEO, interviews with Roma associations.

⁸⁵ Suzana Kunac, Ksenija Klasnić, Sara Lalić (2018) *Roma inclusion in the Croatia Society: A Baseline Data Study*. Available at: <https://ljudskaprava.gov.hr/UserDocsImages//dokumenti//Roma%20Inclusion%20in%20the%20Croatian%20Society%20-%20a%20Baseline%20Data%20Study.pdf>

all of the neighbouring countries programmes like *Romaversitas* exist, as do mentoring and tutoring services - except in Croatia.

The fight against discrimination and antigypsyism in education

One NRIS goal is desegregation and inclusive education. Many Roma children still attend school in segregated classes. In many cases, Roma face segregation in education because of residential segregation. Recently, in Međimurje County and some other counties, some schools have just been attended by Roma pupils. Some of the reasons for this is that many non-Romani Croats have emigrated, others have not had children, and others have enrolled their children into different kindergartens and schools for different reasons, one being the low level of the education provided by schools with many Romani pupils. Segregation in education is not being addressed by the MSE, so these problems should be tackled by schools and local authorities. The best example of the prevention of segregation was done in Kutina, where a public bus system was introduced. The transportation system allows children from Roma settlements to attend school. The expenses of the local transportation are completely covered by the local authorities.⁸⁶ In the last decade there has never been even one example of residential desegregation, even though this is an NRIS goal. More is being done to support residential segregation in terms of legalisation, or investments into Roma settlements, etc. Stakeholders like REF and REYN are changing their approach and, as part of their advocacy activities, focus on increasing the quality of education in the segregated groups that exist in compulsory schooling. The MSE has not yet confirmed whether the quality of the education in segregated (mostly Roma) classes or groups is actually lower than in classes and groups with a minimum of Roma. As mentioned above, "antigypsyism" is not a familiar term to Croatian society, but its consequences can be seen in cases of teachers unwilling to work with Roma children because they believe all Roma have limited potential. There is no systematic approach regarding eliminating this discrimination towards Roma that would target teachers, professors, pupils and students. That kind of work is done *ad hoc* on a project basis by associations, individuals, and some institutions such as the Ombudswoman's office.

⁸⁶ Information provided by the town of Kutina.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Employment

To the Government, the MSE and the CEO:

1. **Ensure continuity of funding and programmes for Roma adults to increase their educational levels and skills in order to be competitive on the labour market.** Increase the competitiveness of Roma on the labour market to increase their employability and reduce their unemployment rate by developing a new set of Roma employment measures that are based on Roma needs. Its focus should be on increasing adult Roma educational attainment and providing adult Roma with specific skills in high demand on the labour market. More than 90% of the registered Roma at the CEO never completed their elementary education or only completed their elementary education, and the measures provided by the CEO and the MSE are not providing opportunities for them to attain secondary education.

To the CEO:

2. **A new set of employment measures should be developed, in cooperation with experts, Roma and employers, and should aim to facilitate long-term employment for Roma.** More than 90 percent of the budget allocated for the employment measures for Roma is spent on the measure of "Public Work" which does not have long-term outcomes for Roma employment. More than 50 percent of newly-employed Roma did not use the measures provided by the CEO. The new set of measures should be developed in coordination with Roma and employers and the focus of the measures should be on facilitating long-term employment for Roma.

To the CEO, the Government and the NRCP:

3. **Develop a strategy to combat antigypsyism.** Discrimination towards Roma is one of the main obstacles when it comes to Roma career advancement and employment. Discrimination towards Roma in these areas is often hidden, indirect and hard to prove. A strategy for combating antigypsyism should be developed and implemented in order to prevent and decrease these practices of discrimination towards Roma.

Housing and essential public services

To the Government:

4. **Develop a strategy and action plan for the desegregation of Roma settlements.** Most Roma live in segregated settlements. Therefore, any investments into Roma settlements with the goal of improving Roma housing conditions and increasing the available social services within Roma settlements should be considered temporary and transitional. Bearing in mind the consequences of Roma spatial and residential segregation, the Government should develop a desegregation strategy complemented by action to ensure future inclusion of Roma in terms of their residency.
5. **Elevate social housing policy management to the national level.** Social housing is one option for desegregating Roma settlements and promoting the residential inclusion of Roma into mainstream society. However, social housing is not effective when it comes to Roma who live in poor, rural, small localities. Social housing should be managed from the national level instead of from the

local and regional level in order to provide all Roma a channel for residential inclusion into mainstream society.

Impact of health care policies on Roma

To the Ministry of Health:

6. **Introduce the practice of collecting data disaggregated by ethnicity.** The Health Ministry should embrace the practice of other ministries and public bodies and start to collect data disaggregated by ethnicity. Such data are essential for developing efficient measures and policies and for ensuring that Roma have equal access to quality health care.

To the Government, the NRCP and the relevant ministries:

7. **Introduce Roma health mediators.** The Roma community in Croatia has a very low level of education, which often is an obstacle to accessing their rights and communicating with doctors, social care workers and others. In order to improve communication between Roma people, institutions and officials, Roma mediators should be introduced. Roma mediators can contribute to increasing Roma participation and ensuring that Roma people fully understand and fulfil their obligations in accordance with accessing their rights.

Education

To the MSE:

8. **Develop a tool for measuring and monitoring the quality of education in classes/groups at preschools that are Roma-segregated in comparison with integrated, mainstream classes/groups.** A large number of Roma children attend segregated compulsory education. In the last two decades, the number of Roma children has increased, as has their segregation in education. Therefore, there is still a large gap in the educational outcomes of non-Roma and Roma children. Desegregating education is not realistic in the short term. The MSE should, therefore, run a research project to verify the quality of the education in the classes/groups of compulsory education that are Roma-segregated. The MSE should also systematically monitor the quality of education in Roma-segregated classes/groups and act on the basis of its findings to improve the quality.
9. **Ensure the availability of programmes for teachers to empower them with new knowledge and skills for educating Roma children.** Bearing in mind that many Roma children come from socially vulnerable families, that their mother tongue is not Croatian, and that their housing conditions are not satisfactory, teachers who work with Roma in compulsory education should commit themselves to attending training workshops and other forms of education in order to acquire new knowledge and a specific skill set that would enable them to improve and increase the transfer of knowledge from them to the Roma children they teach.
10. **Provide programmes for Roma children and youth that will help them transition among the educational levels.** Mentoring, tutoring and programmes such as *Romaversitas* need to be developed and implemented to support Roma in secondary and tertiary education. The goal of all programmes should be to support Roma children in transitioning between levels of education, to raise their GPA, to prevent dropout, and to prepare them for the labour market and reaching their full potential.

To local authorities:

11. **Development and implement a scoring system for kindergarten enrolment that is fairer and involves social awareness.** In some localities there are fewer capacities in the kindergartens than there are children who should be enrolled. The point system for selecting the children for the available places awards more points to families where both parents are working. Because preschool is the start of education and not a babysitting agency, local authorities should find a way to provide preschool education for all of the children on their territories or a way to make the admission system more inclusive and provide equal chances for preschool enrolment to children from socially deprived families (and others). Roma children, in most cases, come from families where at least one parent is not employed, and under the current point system they have less of a chance to enrol their children in kindergarten.

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