



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

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

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

AF	Swedish Public Employment Service
<i>Boverket</i>	National Board of Housing, Building and Planning
CABS	County Administrative Board in Stockholm County
DO	Swedish Equality Ombudsman (<i>Diskrimineringsombudsmannen</i>)
GO	The Government Offices
MUCF	Swedish Agency for Youth and Society
NBHW	National Board of Health and Welfare
NRIS	National Roma Integration Strategy
SKL	Association of Local Authorities and Regions
SNAE S	Swedish National Agency for Education

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Swedish governments of varying political affiliation of the past decade have all displayed a very conscious will and outspoken ambition to remedy the excluding and abusive practices of past centuries against the Roma minority. There has been a vast number of well-financed initiatives to thoroughly investigate and report on historic and current ill-treatment and discrimination on account of antigypsyism, and on writing up problem analyses as well as suggestions for suitable measures in cooperation with Roma representatives. There has also been a number of concrete initiatives with a certain amount of funding for actual implementation of some of these suggested actions, such as giving out commissions to relevant authorities on different levels for Roma targeted programmes, as well as some additional funding for Roma civil society to participate in driving development activities for the Roma community.

However, in spite of all well-meant efforts to report on the current problems the Roma minority are facing, and despite obliging authorities to consult Roma representatives on decisions that concern them, actual funding, actions plans and monitoring of their implementation are lacking. Without concrete, well-funded and mandatory provisions the well written National Roma Strategy will not meet its goals.

Employment

The Roma minority in Sweden face both structural and direct discrimination in their attempts at accessing the labour market. Apart from structural factors such as overall low education level within the group, Roma testify to experiences of prejudice that affect access to work. An additional consequence is that the interviewees find that they constantly need to relate to their identity and make considerations whether they should live openly or concealed as Roma in different situations. A majority say they would not share that they are Roma when looking for work. The knowledge that many Roma feel compelled to hide their Roma identity in the labour market makes higher demands on the work for Roma inclusion by the authorities and municipalities.

Within the framework of the *Government Strategy for Roma Inclusion*, the Public Employment Service was commissioned to participate in pilot activities in 2012-2015, including spreading information and knowledge among Roma about services and individual support, cooperating with the pilot municipalities and Roma representatives and ensuring necessary knowledge about Roma as a national minority within the authority. In those employment offices where this resulted in the employment of a Roma bridge builder, there has been positive response from the community and some of these positions have been made permanent.

However, no systematic work towards employers to counter antigypsyism is revealed in surveys and materials reviewed. Instead, the work is aimed at counteracting antigypsyism mainly for officials in the Employment Service and the municipalities.

Based on completed interviews and surveys, it is not possible to derive any change for Roma in the labour market in the ten pilot and development municipalities since 2014 when the first national situation description was carried out within the framework of the strategy for Roma inclusion.

Housing and essential public services

The *Government Strategy for Roma Inclusion* states that the issue of discrimination in the housing market should be a long-term priority and there has been some measures, including a commission to the National Board of Housing, Building and Planning to develop and spread a guidance material aimed at property owners and landlords with the purpose of increasing knowledge about the situation of the Roma in the housing market and counteracting discrimination. The material focuses on awareness raising regarding

particular rights as a national minority, historic and current vulnerability that causes structural discrimination and common misunderstandings and prejudice.

Historic and current antigypsyism has led to a credibility gap between Roma and landlords and social services in connection with applying for housing. Property owners and public officials do show a general good will to counter discrimination, but they do not want to distinguish ethnic and cultural groups in their work which works poorly in a society that is steeped in ethnic and cultural stereotypes. An unwillingness from Roma to report discriminatory behaviour and some hiding their Roma identity on their part is closely linked to the number of discriminatory acts against Roma being unknown and therefore not visible in the statistics.

Stumble blocks include limited knowledge about the *Government Strategy for Roma Inclusion* and the Roma minority by housing companies and municipal officials, in combination with broad scale complex structural discrimination from interacting factors such as unemployment and early extensive indebtedness.

The biggest obstacles to Roma having equal opportunities in the housing market in 2032,¹ is a general ignorance of the issue. Roma hiding their Roma identity when applying for housing fare better than Roma that are open about their identity. Change is unfortunately moving slow, if at all. Factors behind Roma exclusion from the housing market are complex and need to be tackled simultaneously by various authorities in collaboration. For this to come in to effect, the Swedish Government need to commission and budget concrete assignments with these authorities with concrete sub-targets and proper follow-up.

Impact of health care policies on Roma

The *Government Strategy for Roma Inclusion* states that the objective set by the Parliament for public health work is to create societal conditions for good health on equal terms for the entire population. In June 2018, the Parliament adopted a new overall national goal of a public policy for health which is „to create social conditions for good and equal health throughout the population and to end the influenceable health gaps within the timeframe of a generation“. The health status in Sweden is good and develops positively for most people but the pace of development is slower for groups with a lower social position, education and income, which means that the gap in health status between groups in the Swedish society is widening and inequality is increasing. Roma’s health situation is strongly influenced by their life situation, which is characterised by, among other things, exclusion, powerlessness and discrimination.

Roma generally need more knowledge and guidance on how the healthcare system work. When it comes to interpretation into Romani in the health and medical care, the Public Health Authority observes that the supply is poor. Furthermore, a few of the Roma interviewed, especially the elderly and women, used or viewed the internet as an alternative way of getting information on health-related issues. There is a need to make health-related information available and provide support to those who so desire when it comes to establishing health-promoting life habits. Many Roma need support to understand oral and written information provided in the health and medical care sector.

Specific efforts for Roma, described by county and municipal public officials, were in some cases within the activities of the child health care centres and otherwise within the framework of the pilot activities for Roma Inclusion, but these projects including health communicators and health guides were concluded when the external funds ended.

¹ Target year of the ongoing Swedish National Strategy for Roma Inclusion 2012-2032

Lack of access to rights and discrimination affect everyday life for many Roma and their health. Lack of knowledge about Roma culture and Roma's specific health-related needs amongst public service providers affect the accessibility of health care services for Roma. Good health for the Roma interviewed meant being included and involved in society, and above all, not having to hide that you are Roma.

Education

It is important to note that even in a country like Sweden where there is a 100% functioning infrastructure evenly distributed to the benefit of all citizens, and no Roma living in segregated communities, school attendance and completion rates for Swedish Roma is still very low and many young and old are still functionally illiterate. The general low level of education is also one of the most critical factors to remedy for the Roma minority to be able to take charge of their own destiny and raise the overall living conditions of the group as a whole.

These circumstances combined with other discriminatory practices where the Roma were not allowed to settle, own property or access other basic society services has resulted in a situation where a Roma child, even today in a highly developed and equal country like Sweden, is very likely to not finish primary school. A few graduates from secondary school and even fewer move on to university, where no financially driven affirmative actions of any kind of support exist in Sweden in relation to minorities or to any other disadvantaged young people

Examples of good practices exist in the form of Roma bridge builders mediating between Roma families and the schools, some folk high schools with specific programs aimed at Roma inclusion in higher education, a Roma folk high school, and a teacher education for first language teachers in Romani, as well as some Roma media promotion of education. However, proposed goals in the education area, to ensure an equal higher education participation of Roma, have not been made explicit parts of the Roma strategy; so, on the whole, the educational opportunities of Roma children have depended not so much on the formal guarantees of equality and access to schooling but on the extent of the commitment by public agencies to counter the underlying social and familial barriers to participation.

INTRODUCTION

The Roma have been part of the population in Sweden since at least the 16th century. The Roma minority is officially made up of five loosely defined subgroups who have different background as to when they arrived in Sweden and some language and cultural variations but share a common experience of exclusion. From early on they suffered persecution, expulsions and stigmatising stereotypes. As the Swedish nation developed into a modern society, the Roma underwent a process of exclusion and marginalisation which forced them to form a parallel society with its own social structure in order to survive. Even as late as the second half of the 20th century, the Roma were not allowed to settle or access schools, health care and jobs, and Roma women suffered from forced sterilisations. When the first efforts were made to include the Roma into Swedish society, the project aimed at extinguishing the Roma culture and force them to be assimilated into the majority society.

In 1999, the Roma received the official status of national minority in Sweden which grants particular rights regarding use and preservation of language and the right to maintain and develop your own culture. The status comes with extra resources for national programmes revolving around language and culture, and extra leverage when civil society is to be consulted for different policies and actions.

With a new awareness rising in the new millennium and a new political agenda focusing on minority rights as part of human rights, the official policy started its shift towards the concept of inclusion instead. This political shift correlated with the launch of the EU framework for National Roma Integration Strategies by 2020 in May 2011, which acts as a foundation for the Swedish National Roma Integration Strategy (NRIS) entitled „*En samordnad och långsiktig strategi för romsk inkludering under 2012-2032*” [A coordinated and long-term strategy for Roma inclusion in 2012-2032] that was adopted by the government in February 2012.

The ambition to have a new approach to the situation of Roma in Sweden led to the instalment of the *Delegation on Roma Issues* in 2006 which included Roma experts, and which produced the Government official report in 2011 that was the foundation for the development of the NRIS.

The strategy identifies six areas of priority: education, work, housing, health, social care and social protection. The target group is primarily Roma who are living in social and economic exclusion and are exposed to discrimination. Women and children are a special priority. Access to the labour market is emphasised as a central point, particularly to break the social exclusion cycle of young Roma to help them establish themselves in society.

Apart from their own national council with Roma representatives and assignments for the different governmental bodies, the government has initiated and co-funded projects where a number of municipalities have been able to try out different strategies as pilots regarding Roma inclusion. The purpose has been to develop models for the municipalities and to build structures and good examples of Roma inclusion within the various target fields of the strategy.

Initially, there were five cities in 2012-2015: Luleå, Göteborg, Linköping, Helsingborg and Malmö. Several authorities were simultaneously given commissions within the strategy, for example *The Swedish Public Employment Service, Arbetsförmedlingen*. Another five cities were appointed in 2016-2017: Borås, Gävle, Haninge, Stockholm and Uppsala. Roma participation and influence were to be secured in the process, as well as long-term strategies and a focus on integration in to the regular structures in the municipalities.

The methodology used in the production of this report is a combination of desk research, including the study of diverse existing studies, databases and annual reports available at internet pages of governmental authorities, research institutions and other relevant sources, and oral and written interviews with governmental, county and municipal officials.

Further information was gathered through conducting informal interviews and focus groups with members of Swedish Roma NGOs, both national and local, representing all regions (NGOs' names as translated): Roma Federation, Roma Institute, Roma and Travel Delegation, Roma International, Romano Paso Research Centre, Roma Youth Delegation, Trajosko Drom and Vorta Drom. The consultations with these NGOs were organised through a snowball sampling of 37 interviewees with whom focus groups and informal interviews were done. Interviewees representing an even section of society regarding gender and age groups.

EMPLOYMENT

Improving access to labour market and effectiveness of employment services

One of the target areas for the NRIS is improving access to the labour market for Roma. It concludes that major obstacles for inclusion are low overall education levels within the group, as a result of long-term structural discrimination within the education system; direct discrimination on the labour market, due to widespread prejudice against Roma in society, and lack of equal access to the services of the *Public Employment Service* (PES). The latter is an important national actor, in cooperation with the municipalities, when it comes to providing adult learning to finalise school grades, in providing apprenticeships, targeting discriminating and racist attitudes by employers and to aid in youth transition from school to work.

Within the framework of the strategy, the PES was commissioned to participate in the pilot activities for Roma inclusion in 2012-2015. The assignment included, on the basis of local conditions, spreading information and knowledge among Roma about the service and support that the authority can offer, ensuring individual support, cooperating with the pilot municipalities and Roma representatives and experts, and ensuring that within the authority there is necessary knowledge about Roma as a national minority.² During 2016-2019, the commission continues including special focus on strengthening the work to improve women's opportunities to benefit from the efforts.³

In order to have a governing effect, developments in relation to the targets of the NRIS should be regularly monitored and analysed. Even though the strategy points out that recurring descriptions of Roma ability to exercising their rights in different areas of activity should provide an indication of sufficient and correct actions being implemented, and that such continuous follow-up that points to both deficiencies and improvements would contribute to driving the development,⁴ this particular and very important aspect of successful implementation is lacking, and moreover targets remain general instead of specific.

There is no clear pattern to be found for how the pilot and development municipalities and the PES work with Roma inclusion. On the one hand, the basis for analysis is limited with no clear strategy on how to collect data or common indicators and the working methods differ, which may indicate that long-term structures and efforts are missing. The need for initiatives in public activities that are most prominent is first the individual support that is required to increase the individual's ability to get a job. Here the emphasis is on meeting individuals where they are and offering initiatives that can lead the individual to employment. Personal meetings with so-called *bridge builders*, Roma mediators, are requested. Partly to help increase confidence in the authorities and reach more people within the target group, and partly to facilitate direct support and guidance to employment and studies for Roma. Young people are a group that should be given particular priority.⁵

² Government commission to the Public Employment Service 2012: <https://www.regeringen.se/regeringsuppdrag/2012/04/a20121386disk/>

³ Government commission to the Public Employment Service 2016: <https://www.regeringen.se/regeringsuppdrag/2016/03/uppdrag-till-arbetsformedlingen-om-romsk-inkludering/>

⁴ Government Offices of Sweden. 2010. *Romers rätt – en strategi för romer i Sverige [Roma rights: A strategy for Roma in Sweden]*. Available at: <http://www.regeringen.se/rattsdokument/statens-offentliga-utredningar/2010/07/sou-201055/>

⁵ Roma inclusion on the job market 2018 <https://www.arbetsformedlingen.se/Om-oss/Statistik-och-publikationer/Rapporter/Ovriga/2018-07-05-Romsk-inkludering-i-arbetslivet.html>

The government's goal is full employment. This applies to the population as a whole and thereby also includes Roma. The PES is responsible for bringing together job seekers with employers who are looking for labour and for contributing to the permanent long-term increase in employment. The authority should prioritise those who are far from the labour market and design the activity so that it promotes diversity and gender equality and counteract discrimination in working life and a gender division in the labour market.⁶

As the administrative authority, the PES also has an explicit responsibility for giving the national minorities the opportunity to influence issues that concern them and, as far as possible, consult with representatives of the minorities on such issues. It is also obligatory to inform the national minorities of their rights in an appropriate manner when necessary.

The labour market policy is a state responsibility and the formal responsibility of the municipalities in this field is limited. The municipalities, on the other hand, cooperate closely with the PES and in some 85 per cent of the municipalities there is some form of municipal labour market activity. Actions and support are especially offered to those groups who, for various reasons, need extra support to enter the labour market.⁷

The European Commission against Racism and Intolerance (ECRI) is an independent body set up by the Council of Europe to monitor the human rights situation. On 27 February 2018, they published a country report on Sweden. The most prominent recommendations regarding the situation of the Roma are about developing indicators to measure progress and effects, as well as the importance of Roma information centres. ECRI emphasizes the importance of a coherent overall vision to address structural and institutional causes of persistent marginalisation and discrimination of Roma. Today, most of the activities are predominantly project-oriented.⁸

A crucial component in creating confidence and mutual trust, but also in being able to offer the right support and guidance, is that PES staff and municipal employees within activities for job seekers have knowledge of Roma as a national minority, about customs and culture and about the exclusion that Roma can experience. This aspect is touched upon in the strategy, but not given enough emphasis and even though there have been some – successful – measures to employ Roma mediators they have been scarce and project oriented. For example, many Roma state that the opportunity to use their language in contacts with the PES and the municipality creates security and gives an increased probability of getting the right information and taking part of the efforts. The fact that there is material translated into Romani is also perceived by some to show respect for the Roma group. Most interviewees also emphasise the importance of having Roma represented in the authorities and the municipality to contribute to the inclusion of Roma. There is also a need to create confidence that Roma can help Roma.⁹

Many have good experiences of contacts with bridge builders and customer resources, but also people with Roma background who do not work specifically with Roma. Interviewees emphasise that Roma employees facilitate knowledge transfer, can contribute to participation and influence, and serve as role models for the Roma group.

The importance of Roma not only being employed to work with Roma, but to be considered for all types of employment, is emphasised. This is highlighted by several as a more important effort than any other. It can hopefully signal to other employers and contribute to an increased opportunity for Roma to establish themselves in the labour market. By

⁶ Government Offices of Sweden. 2010. *Romers rätt – en strategi för romer i Sverige [Roma rights: A strategy for Roma in Sweden]*. Available at: <http://www.regeringen.se/rattsdokument/statens-offentliga-utredningar/2010/07/sou-201055/>

⁷ Law on National Minorities, revised 2019: <http://www.minoritet.se/5102>

⁸ <https://www.coe.int/t/dghl/monitoring/ecri/Country-by-country/Sweden/SWE-CbC-V-2018-003-SWE.pdf>

⁹ Focus group with members of the Roma community, 2018

giving confidence one gets confidence, and by gaining the opportunity to come up with solutions to problems, the confidence gap can decrease. Here, consultations with Roma associations and organisations are also highlighted as important, by several interviewees. It is also a way of reaching Roma women and paying attention to their needs.

Several emphasise the importance of being listened to and getting the chance to be helped to a profession you are interested in, rather than following a finished template. Commitment, creativity and individual guidance are requested, and that officials stand for what they promise. Efforts such as driver's licenses for various vehicles, vocational training, internships and summer jobs are sought after and are perceived to benefit the group. Opportunity for part-time work is required to be able to combine parental leave with work or studies. Several interviewees also want to have practical help to contact employers and visit workplaces, be introduced and feel that there is long-term support. Outreach field work towards employers where officials spread a positive image of Roma, not just paper work in the office, is perceived to contribute to confidence in the PES and the municipalities.

Out of the five municipalities and ten employment offices that answered our questionnaire, the majority state that they provide support and guidance to job-seeking Roma, without specifying how. One municipality states that job-seeking Roma receive support and guidance individually and that no targeted activities to the target group take place. Three municipalities and three employment offices state that they have employed bridge builders or customer resources with a focus on Roma. Four municipalities and five employment offices state that collaborations with other actors take place to promote Roma inclusion in the labour market. Gender equality projects or targeted initiatives for women are highlighted as an effort in one of the municipalities.¹⁰

Example of good practice: Bridge-Builders

Government funded projects with Roma bridge builders in the *Public Employment Service* since 2012 has been a much-appreciated venture, and many of the Roma employed in the project have stayed at permanent positions as a resource for the local communities.

The benefits of a person with Roma language and cultural competence in contact with public activities, either in groups or individually, are highlighted by most interviewees. Those who have had contact with a bridge builder or equivalent in the municipality or the Employment Service are very positive about it and think that it is a crucial tool for reaching out with guidance and information. It inspires confidence and is perceived as a security for the individual to have contact with someone who understands the situation of the Roma.

For more information, please, see: <http://www.minoritet.se/2419>

Fight against discrimination in employment and antigypsyism at workplace

Based on completed interviews and surveys, it is not possible to derive any change for Roma in the labour market in the ten pilot and development municipalities since 2014 when the first national situation description was carried out within the framework of the strategy for Roma inclusion.¹¹

¹⁰ *Roma inclusion in the job market*, 2018 <https://www.arbetsformedlingen.se/Om-oss/Statistik-och-publikationer/Rapporter/Ovriga/2018-07-05-Romsk-inkludering-i-arbetslivet.html>

¹¹ *Ibid*

Interviewed Roma testify to experiences of prejudice and negative perceptions that are expressed in words, body language and action and affect access to work. This suggests that several of the interviewees were exposed to antigypsyism. An additional consequence is that the interviewees find that they constantly need to relate to their identity and make considerations whether they should live openly or concealed as Roma in different situations. A majority say they would not share that they are Roma when looking for work.

The knowledge that many Roma feel compelled to hide their Roma identity in the labour market makes higher demands on the work for Roma inclusion by the authorities and municipalities. Long-term and strategic work is required, to ensure that Roma can exercise their right to work, which both makes visible and counteracts the obstacles faced by Roma as job seekers. Based on the interview material, confidence in employers is low.¹²

The prevalence of prejudices and negative perceptions of Roma in the labour market is recurring in the interviews that have been conducted. Many have their own strategies to avoid identity affecting the ability to work. It may be about hiding the Roma identity, for example, by changing the name, abstaining from revealing Romani language skills, stating origin from a country that is not associated with the Roma background, or, conversely, emphasising the Roma identity and working to refute prejudice. Regardless of strategy, it has consequences both at an individual level and for the opportunity to work. One young Roma woman tells about her first visit to the PES:

"When I showed my CV to the administrator, she asked me to delete a merit, namely that I knew Romani. When I asked why, she explained that it was because „then they 'll understand that you are Roma".¹³

It is noteworthy that a government official urges a young citizen to hide his or her identity from others, and this is a clear example of how a young person's self-esteem can be destroyed. Unfortunately, this is a very common experience.

No systematic work towards employers to counter antigypsyism is shown in the responses from the PES and the municipalities. Instead, the work is aimed at counteracting antigypsyism mainly for officials in the employment service and the municipalities. On the direct question if the activities are in dialogue with employers about Roma as a national minority, there are two employment agencies that responded that this is happening. They mention participation in conferences and consultations with representatives for employers where the topics are brought up but there does not seem to be a more structured approach. It is suggested that individual employees may sometimes have a more structured dialogue with the employers about the situation and conditions of the Roma. One municipality states that there is no dialogue with employers around Roma as a group, but that this can happen at the individual level when needs arise.

Courses for staff about Roma as a national minority and antigypsyism are said to have been carried out in three municipalities and at five employment offices. One municipality states that a Roma process leader has been hired to work on the issue in the labour market unit. Another municipality has an action plan as a tool for systemizing the knowledge-enhancing efforts. General skills training for equal treatment and service is also offered to employees within municipalities and employment agencies. Some activities state that they

¹² Focus groups with members of the Roma community, 2018

¹³ Interview with a 20-year-old Roma woman, November 2018

work with confidence-building initiatives aimed at all target groups, Roma as well as non-Roma.¹⁴

One important track is about how public activities at a more structural level can work for Roma inclusion in the labour market. Other efforts are needed so that even Roma who are not open with their identity should be able to be so and have the same access to work as non-Roma. Here, the importance of employing Roma persons with competence about the situation of the Roma in various public service positions is emphasised. Partly to increase diversity in public activities and show examples of role models, and partly to raise knowledge about Roma within the activity. Furthermore, part-time jobs and teleworking may be promoted to support gender equality. In order to get to the structural antigypsyism that Roma face in the labour market, the work needs to be more deeply integrated into regular activities, including in contacts with employers in different contexts.

¹⁴ County Administrative Board, Situation report on Roma inclusion 2018:
<https://www.lansstyrelsen.se/stockholm/tjanster/publikationer/2018/romsk-inkludering-lokalt---nulaget-i-kommuner-med-statligt-stod-2012-2017.html>

HOUSING AND ESSENTIAL PUBLIC SERVICES

Improving access to secure and affordable housing

Up until the middle of the 20th century, Roma were excluded by local authorities who actively tried to prevent Roma families from becoming registered in the municipalities. Without it, it is difficult to benefit from social rights such as child allowance, pension and the possibility of schooling. In addition, it was often required that you were fiscally registered in a municipality to be eligible to have a place in the housing queue, which made it impossible for Roma to get a permanent home. Those who lacked a permanent home were forced to live in tents and caravans, from where they were often driven by landowners.¹⁵ During the 1950s the approach shifted towards including the Roma population into the project of building the Swedish welfare state, and the then estimated Swedish Roma population of around 1,000 individuals became the target of various social initiatives with the aim of assimilating the group into the rest of society.

Difficulties faced by Roma in the housing market today are, in addition to discrimination, linked to economic and social vulnerability. The prolonged discrimination of Roma in Sweden has led to many Roma having poor conditions in school and in the labour market. It is estimated that between 80 and 90 per cent of the adult Roma population are unemployed and live on social security benefits. In order to ensure the human rights of Roma in Sweden, the government emphasises the importance of taking a comprehensive approach to Roma life situation. The NRIS states that the issue of discrimination in the housing market should be a long-term priority and that measures to promote equal opportunities for Roma should be taken.¹⁶ In spite of an ambitious overall goal and a few educational commissions on the subject, little progress has been made on the complex issue of housing, mainly due to a lack of concrete sub-targets for the strategy and adequate budgets for the relevant authorities.

Within the framework of the NRIS, the *National Board of Housing, Building and Planning* has the task of assisting the *County Administrative Board of Stockholm* in the work of developing a study that aimed to make visible how Roma have access to their rights in the housing market in the five pilot municipalities and to describe the situation of the Roma in relation to the goal that a Roma who turns 20 in 2032 must have equal opportunities in life as one who is not Roma. The assignment was reported in the final report *The Swedish National Board of Housing, Building and Planning's current situation description – part of Roma inclusion 2012-2032*.¹⁷ The report shows that there have been a few improvements as of yet regarding the possibilities for Roma in accessing housing.

Another government assignment has been to produce a guidance material aimed at property owners and landlords with the purpose of increasing knowledge about the situation of the Roma in the housing market and counteract discrimination. The work was to be carried out together with a network of Roma representatives, as well as representatives of property owners and landlords. Within the framework of the

¹⁵ Government Offices of Sweden. 2014. *White Paper on abuses and rights violations against Roma in the 20th century*. Available at: <http://www.government.se/information-material/2014/03/white-paper-on-abuses-and-rights-violations-of-roma-during-the-1900s/>

¹⁶ Government Offices of Sweden. 2010. *Romers rätt – en strategi för romer i Sverige [Roma rights: A strategy for Roma in Sweden]*. Available at: <http://www.regeringen.se/rattsdokument/statens-offentliga-utredningar/2010/07/sou-201055/>

¹⁷ Report by The Swedish National Board of Housing, Building and Planning 2018 <https://www.boverket.se/globalassets/publikationer/dokument/2018/boverkets-andra-nulagesbeskrivning---en-del-av-romsk-inkludering-2012-2032.pdf>

assignment, they worked with co-determination to produce a web education that would be led by Roma education leaders. The training is offered free of charge and is given on site to interested housing companies, and Roma educational leaders are holding the group discussions that are part of the education. The assignment is financed during the period 2016 to 2018. The education was completed in the autumn of 2017 and the work is now focused on spreading the material.¹⁸ During the spring of 2018, one housing company has completed the training. The National Board of Housing, Building and Planning's perception is that it has taken time to see an impact but notes that the interest in the education still exists and has increased, mainly in the development municipalities¹⁹ where the municipality is a driving force.

The municipalities' work on the housing issue varies. In one development municipality they convey that the work within the field of housing has been limited, but that they have conducted a dialogue with housing companies on how they can jointly develop the work related to the strategy for Roma inclusion. In another, the issue of training initiatives for the housing company's staff has been raised and they have also examined the interest in the educational material from National Board of Housing, Building and Training's on equal treatment of Roma in the housing market. Another has, for example, taken advantage of comments from Finnish Roma²⁰ in the municipality that deal with their particularly vulnerable situation in the housing market, because they cannot conceal their Roma identity, and have thereby identified a need to further educate the social services' employees on issues relating to Roma and residents.²¹

The awareness of housing companies of the municipalities' work on the strategy for Roma inclusion varies. In three of the municipalities, the housing companies know that each municipality works in some way with Roma inclusion and they state that they have come into contact with the municipality's work in different ways. In one development municipality, it is said that a representative from the housing company has been invited to a meeting with several municipal administrations. In the second development municipality, the housing company has not heard anything about the work for Roma inclusion and has no knowledge of what this work entails. The interviewee emphasises that she knows that the work with Roma inclusion exists, but that the questions rarely reach „out in the periphery where these issues really should, and where they are seen very little” but that she thinks that they stay higher up in the municipal organisation. Finally, in the last of the pilot municipalities, the municipality's work for Roma inclusion has not been heard about at all.²²

Change in regard to better possibilities for Roma in accessing housing is unfortunately moving slow, if at all. The factors behind Roma exclusion from the housing market are complex and need to be tackled simultaneously by various authorities in collaboration. For

¹⁸ <https://www.boverket.se/sv/om-boverket/publicerat-av-boverket/webbutbildning/utbildning-for-likabehandling-av-romer-pa-bostadsmarknaden/>

¹⁹ Development Municipalities 2012-2015; Luleå, Malmö, Helsingborg, Linköping and Gothenburg: 2016-2018; Borås, Gävle, Haninge, Stockholm and Uppsala.

²⁰ Finnish Roma are one of the five official Roma subgroups in Sweden. They stand out visually in society due to a particular kind of traditional clothing.

²¹ Report by The Swedish National Board of Housing, Building and Planning 2018 <https://www.boverket.se/globalassets/publikationer/dokument/2018/boverkets-andra-nulagesbeskrivning---en-del-av-romsk-inkludering-2012-2032.pdf>

²² Inquiry among development municipalities for Roma inclusion, 2018

this to come in to effect, the Swedish government needs to commission and budget concrete assignments with these authorities with proper follow-up.

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

When it comes to the housing issue, it is the housing companies and the property owners who are the most important actors. However, the municipalities have a central role in the work to improve the situation of the Roma, as they are responsible for activities that are crucial for Roma's opportunities for inclusion in society.

Structural discrimination is also an obstacle for Roma in the housing market. The structural discrimination exists at the community level and is expressed in a lack of understanding and suspicion. The long-term antigypsyism in Sweden has led to a distrust of Roma against public institutions and private companies. There is a trust gap between Roma and landlords as well as social services in connection with applying for housing which impedes communication and mutual understanding. Property owners and public officials show a general good will to counter discrimination, but they do not want to distinguish ethnic and cultural groups in their work. They emphasise that they do not take into account ethnicity or cultural affiliation in any assessments or measures because everyone is entitled to the same service. The National Board of Housing, Building and Planning points out that this works poorly in a society that is steeped in ethnic and cultural stereotypes.²³

There are also social housing programmes with directives from the municipalities about handing over certain housing to the social services as welfare housing. The brokerage process for these homes is entirely the responsibility of the social administration. These are also the only dwellings that are not conveyed via the municipal housing queue in their stock. The target groups for these are people with various social problems, with a priority for children and the elderly.²⁴

None of the housing companies say that they carry out any kind of work to prevent discriminatory behaviour especially against Roma, but they all tell about a more general approach to discriminatory behaviour, which is based on no one being discriminated against regardless of background. Nevertheless, there are needs for targeted efforts for Roma. Many of the Roma interviewees do not know how to go about getting a home, not least for the elderly who in some cases have low computer skills. It is conveyed in interviews that due to this a need was identified, for talking to the housing companies and convey the knowledge that a problem has been identified about the queuing systems they use, since not everyone can read, write or know how to use a computer, regardless of background. At the same time, there are among some development municipalities prospected plans to work out a training material aimed at Roma. The idea is to produce a video material that will be available on the internet. The material should be easily accessible in its design and will be displayed at special meetings with Roma. The educational material will concern questions about searching for housing and how the housing queue works, what requirements there are for the tenants, how they should proceed if they have ended up with debts resulting in bad credit levels, their own role in the housing process and more.²⁵ The work will be evaluated by the County Administrative Board in the status report of Roma Inclusion of 2020.

²³ County Administrative Board, Situation report on Roma inclusion 2018: <https://www.lansstyrelsen.se/stockholm/tjanster/publikationer/2018/romsk-inkludering-lokalt---nulaget-i-kommuner-med-statligt-stod-2012-2017.html>

²⁴ The National Board of Health and Welfare: <https://www.socialstyrelsen.se/nyheter/2016/flerfarhjalpmedboendeavkommunen>

²⁵ Interviews with Roma, housing companies and municipalities, 2018

Roma-related issues are not very visible in the housing sector. This is partly because many Roma choose not to report when they are subjected to discriminatory behaviour because they do not believe they will be trusted and do not want to risk having to leave their residence. It is also a contributing factor that the interviewed housing companies do not work with national minority issues. The interviews with Roma reveal that they constantly relate to different forms of discrimination, such as direct and indirect discrimination, harassment and structural discrimination. This resulting, among other things, in the fact that many choose to hide their Roma identity and that they do not stand up for their rights. It goes against the minority policy and reinforces the Roma group's exclusion. It also makes it probable that there is a large unknown number of discriminatory acts against Roma not visible in the statistics.²⁶

Housing companies attach great importance to the fact that they apply so-called straight housing queue²⁷ and believe that there is therefore no discrimination against Roma within their stock. They claim that they have not received any complaints with any antigypsyism connection. There is a significant risk that the housing companies lean too much on the computerised queuing systems and that they are not open to the possibility that there may be discrimination within their stocks that management does not know about.²⁸

Discrimination in connection with applying for housing is only part of the discrimination that Roma can be exposed to in connection with the housing issue. Violations can also occur in the accommodation itself, by employees of the housing company or by neighbours, and there is a risk that it will not come to the management's knowledge if they do not clearly signal that this is an important issue. There is a large gap between how the interviewed Roma and the housing companies perceive the situation of the Roma in the housing market.²⁹ The housing companies do not see that there is any form of discrimination against Roma in connection with the rental process or within their stock, while the Roma describe large, recurrent problems with different forms of discriminatory behaviour in connection with both housing searches and in the accommodation.^{30 31}

Knowing Roma culture and the history of antigypsyism, makes it possible to raise awareness and change the nuances of their approach. The work on Roma inclusion has not led to any change that is reflected in the Roma's perception of how widespread discrimination against Roma is in the housing market or in the housing companies' interest in working with Roma rights. However, it has resulted in the issue being highlighted and that some housing companies are aware that the municipalities are working with Roma inclusion. During the autumn of 2017, the National Board of Housing, Building and Planning has developed an education on equal treatment of Roma directed at housing companies. The present-day description shows that the content of the education fits well with the need that exists, but that it needs to be spread more. However, interest in the education has so far been weak from the housing companies. The biggest obstacles to Roma having

²⁶ *Ibid*

²⁷ Example of Queuing rules: https://nya.bopplats.se/om/nyheter/nyheter/bostadsformedlingPM_;
<https://bostad.stockholm.se/Lista/Regler/>

²⁸ Report by The Swedish National Board of Housing, Building and Planning 2018
<https://www.boverket.se/globalassets/publikationer/dokument/2018/boverkets-andra-nulagesbeskrivning---en-del-av-romsk-inkludering-2012-2032.pdf>

²⁹ *Ibid*

³⁰ Interviews with Roma, housing companies and municipalities, 2018

³¹ Diskrimineringsombudsmannen (2012) *Roma Rights: Discrimination, paths of redress and how the law can improve the situation of Roma*, Equality Ombudsman at:
<http://www.do.se/contentassets/b7f4b55bcf8e4a40b5db846f7f45a2a3/report-roma-rights.pdf>

equal opportunities in the housing market in 2032 are structural discrimination and ignorance of the issue. The housing companies need to understand that they have a responsibility in the collective work to work with the rights of minorities, increase their knowledge about Roma culture and history, be self-critical about whether there is antigypsyism in their companies and stocks, and the social benefits of strengthening the business so that it helps to reduce antigypsyism. It also needs to create an atmosphere where Roma feel confident in showing their Roma identity and notifying any discriminatory behaviours in order to get rid of the unrecorded unequal treatment, and to meet Roma rights.³²

Interviews that have been conducted with Roma, as well as reports and judgments in cases run by the Equality Ombudsman (DO), show an extensive problem. The harassment mentioned in the interviews is almost exclusively neighbours, while those reported to the DO often deal with landlords or property caretakers. Half of all DO's judgments and settlements on housing discrimination since the agency was established in 2009 apply to Roma. They are about Roma who have been denied access to tenancy or purchase of condominium, or who have been harassed by their landlord.

It is important to keep in mind the special vulnerability of Roma women as they risk double discrimination on the grounds of both gender and ethnicity. Particularly noticeable may be, for example, for Finnish Roma women who wear their traditional costume. A report that the DO produced in 2012 shows that Roma women accounted for 70 per cent of the approximately 230 reports that were submitted to the Ombudsman against ethnic discrimination in 2004-2010. Around 20 percent of the cases reported by Roma concerned discrimination on the housing market, 45 cases in total and 31 of those from women.³³

Another area where Roma women are more vulnerable is the lack of access to adequate counselling and shelters for victims of domestic violence. Because of the low level of trust in relevant authorities such as the police and the social services, Roma women are reluctant to seek aid. Public authorities need to make themselves more accessible and approachable by educating themselves on the particular difficulties Roma women may face and how to help solve them in a way that is sustainable for the individual woman and her children.

How interviewed Roma feel that they are being treated when they seek housing is closely linked to whether they have chosen to be open with or hide their Roma identity. Those who say they have been treated well when they have applied for housing state that they have hidden their identity. Those who openly tell that they are Roma testify that there is a change in the behaviour of the one they speak with at the moment when they tell.

The housing companies do not point out any policy that ensures that there is no discriminatory behaviour further down in the organisation and they also do not show openness about the risk that it may occur. There is a risk that operational personnel will not report antigypsyism from neighbours to the management if they have not received signals that the management wants such information. The interviews also show that there is a need for increased awareness that the queuing systems used to ensure that one does not discriminate in connection with rental can have a discriminatory effect in itself. All

³² County Administrative Board, Situation report on Roma inclusion 2018: <https://www.lansstyrelsen.se/stockholm/tjanster/publikationer/2018/romsk-inkludering-lokalt---nulaget-i-kommuner-med-statligt-stod-2012-2017.html>

³³ Diskrimineringsombudsmannen (2012) Roma Rights: Discrimination, paths of redress and how the law can improve the situation of Roma Equality Ombudsman at <http://www.do.se/contentassets/b7f4b55bcf8e4a40b5db846f7f45a2a3/report-roma-rights.pdf>

housing seekers are not literate and not all of them have computer knowledge. This means that the systems used can seem discriminatory in themselves.³⁴

Example of good practice: Training for housing companies

The National Board of Housing, Building and Planning has a government commission during 2016-2018 to develop a web-based training for housing companies about the Roma minority. The materials have been developed in cooperation with Roma representatives who may be hired as teachers together with the course. The initiative and working process has initially been well executed, but response and interest in the course from companies and municipalities has unfortunately been vague, and there needs to be an evaluation of the project in order to develop the process for spreading the material further.

For more information, please, see: <https://www.boverket.se/sv/om-boverket/publicerat-av-boverket/webbutbildning/utbildning-for-likabehandling-av-romer-pa-bostadsmarknaden/>

Access to basic amenities for Roma EU-mobile citizens

During the past ten years, there has been a new group of Roma who travel to Sweden to make a living in accordance with the right to free movement as EU citizens. Most of these intra EU-mobile Roma known to the authors of this report, mainly come from Romania and Bulgaria and stay for around three months at a time. Coming to Sweden they look for temporary jobs but usually have to support themselves, and their families at home, through begging in the streets. Living conditions for this group are harsh as they also live as homeless people finding temporary shelter and sometimes camping together on fields on the outskirts of towns. Local municipalities in Sweden have a very varied approach as to how much official support is available for this group.

Some cities like for example Gothenburg cooperate with NGOs and churches, including financial support to make living conditions better and to respect and help fulfil the human rights of these persons while staying in the municipality.³⁵ The options for shelter, water and sanitation services etc are dependent upon individual initiatives by public officials as apart from the way the Swedish welfare system usually works, firmly based on regulations and the rule of law. But the resources allocated for this are few and random. On the other side of the spectrum there are municipalities who impose bans on begging, which is the primary livelihood of many Roma travelling in and out of Sweden from other EU countries. These bans, however, have been lifted by higher instances such as county governments and administrative courts as unlawful.³⁶

³⁴ Report by The Swedish National Board of Housing, Building and Planning 2018
<https://www.boverket.se/globalassets/publikationer/dokument/2018/boverkets-andra-nulagesbeskrivning---en-del-av-romsk-inkludering-2012-2032.pdf>

³⁵ Action plan of action for socially vulnerable EU citizens, City of Gothenburg, available at:
<http://goteborg.se/wps/portal?uri=gbglnk%3a2015811161230809>

³⁶ *Inget förbud mot tiggeri i Vellinge kommun [No ban on begging in Vellinge municipality]*. Förvaltningsrätten Malmö, 8 February 2018. Available at:
<http://www.forvaltningsrattenimalmo.domstol.se/Om-forvaltningsratten/RSS-nyheter-och-pessmeddelanden/Inget-forbud-mot-tiggeri-i-Vellinge-kommun1/>

In one area, however, there has been a recent movement towards a more restrictive legislation and practise, and that concerns forced evictions where the Swedish parliament recently passed a law that will make it easier for the police to break up temporary camps.³⁷

The Swedish Association of Local Authorities and Regions (SKL) issue guidelines and legal interpretations for obligations regarding EU-mobile citizens for the municipalities, even though these to some extent are self-governing. These guidelines tend to favour a restrictive interpretation of the rights of people who stay temporarily in the municipalities, and are vague on issues where there are clear rights to claim in accordance with the Swedish Social Services Act.³⁸ The Swedish government prefers to address this issue in terms of human rights abuses of Rumania and Bulgaria and to focus on bilateral aid for them to fulfil the rights of their Roma population.³⁹ Swedish NGOs, however, which work with this target group, point out that the remittances from mobile workers are very effective in terms of helping Roma families create a better life for themselves in their home countries.

³⁷ *Avlägsnande – en ny form av särskild handräckning* [Removal – a new form of special assistance]. Ministry of Justice, available at: <https://www.regeringen.se/rattsliga-dokument/proposition/2017/03/prop.-201617159/>

³⁸ <https://skl.se/ekonomijuridikstatistik/juridik/euratt/utsattaemedborgare.2952.html>

³⁹ https://www.regeringen.se/contentassets/b9ca59958b5f43f681b8ec6dba5b5ca3/framtid-sokesslutredovisning-fran-den-nationella-samordnaren-for-utsatta-eu-medborgare-sou-2016_6.pdf

IMPACT OF HEALTH CARE POLICIES ON ROMA

Ensuring equal access to public health care services

In the area of health, the NRIS states: „*The objective set by the Parliament for public health work is to create societal conditions for good health on equal terms for the entire population.*”⁴⁰ In June 2018, the Parliament adopted a new overall national goal for public health policy „*to create social conditions for good and equal health throughout the population and to end the influenceable health gaps within the timeframe of a generation*”.⁴¹ By strengthening the equality aspect within the public health goal, the purpose is to contribute to reducing the health gaps in society. In Public Health Authority’s (*Folkhälsomyndigheten*), annual report on the development of health, it is made clear that the health status in Sweden, in an international perspective, is good and develops positively for most people. But the achievements in longer and healthier lives differs between groups with different social positions. In some groups, the positive development has been slow or not moving.⁴² In addition to differences in health between socio-economic groups, there are also health differences between people in particularly vulnerable situations and the rest of the population. According to the Commission for Equality in Health (*Kommissionen för jämlik hälsa*), control over one’s own life, trust in others, influence and participation in society are equally key areas for achieving equitable health. Other target areas for public health, which can be of great importance for Roma, are the early childhood, knowledge and education, work and livelihood opportunities, housing and the local environment and living conditions.

The report „How are Sweden’s national minorities doing” from 2010 highlighted that there was a lack of knowledge among the majority population and the authorities about Sweden’s national minorities and their culture, rights and health situation. It also emerged that there were challenges in being targeted by health promotion and accessing health care for the national minorities due to discrimination, exclusion and unemployment. It was also clear that the health problems were different for the different national minorities. The report showed that Roma’s health situation was strongly influenced by their life situation, which was characterised by, among other things, exclusion, powerlessness and discrimination.⁴³

Based on completed interviews, it is noted that knowledge of health care providers counties and municipalities about Roma’s special status and rights is relatively low. Roma, interviewed for this study, as well as the officials argued that the knowledge among Roma is generally low on their rights, and that Roma generally need more knowledge and guidance on how the healthcare systems work. In the light of the fact that there are experiences of poor treatment by staff, there is a risk that Roma do not seek for care or do not do so in time. Few Roma, according to the interviewees, refrain from seeking care for financial reasons. However, most of the Roma interviewed believe that dental care is far too expensive and something that comes into question only in emergency situations.

⁴⁰ Prop. 2017/18:249. *God och jämlik hälsa – en utvecklad folkhälsopolitik.*
https://www.riksdagen.se/sv/dokument-lagar/dokument/proposition/god-och-jamlik-halsa---en-utvecklad_H503249

⁴¹ *Ibid*

⁴² SOU:2016:55. *Det handlar om jämlik hälsa.*
https://www.regeringen.se/4a52ad/contentassets/ca4b953b5fbf403cbd1d1eaa58f9ea10/det-handlar-om-jamlik-halsa_sou-2016_55.pdf

⁴³ *Statens folkhälsoinstitut. Hur mår Sveriges nationella minoriteter?*
https://malmo.se/download/18.3744cbfb13a77097d87b125/1491303883730/Aterrapportering_regeringsuppd_rag_nationella_minoriteters_halsa.pdf

Even county officials highlighted the need for preventive measures when it comes to adult Roma dental health.⁴⁴

Roma women run a higher risk of developing cervical or breast cancer because of related health information and invitations to screenings not being accessible, as they are often written and sent out in a manner that may be hard to interpret if you live in an environment where these issues are not discussed. Older women have also lived through the decades up to 1970 where Roma women could be subjected to forced sterilisation and are therefore sceptical of public health care providers in regard to reproductive health.

There are few efforts aimed specifically at Roma. Officials, in both the municipalities and counties, pointed out that health promotion and preventive measures are general and that Roma as a population group are included in all health promotion and preventive measures, as these must cover the entire population. The County Administrative Board's latest situation description reveals that in the pilot municipalities and county councils no specific policies and action plans that deal with Roma's rights and the conditions for health appear to exist. According to the officials in the county councils, there was no specific education on the Roma minority for the staff. Some referred to existing education days on diversity. In some municipalities, various development projects had led to some knowledge of Roma. The officials in the municipalities had different views on whether there had been training initiatives on life situation of Roma for the municipality's staff. One example given was that within the framework of the City Museum's exhibition in Gothenburg, there had been lectures and seminars that added knowledge.⁴⁵ No one was aware that Roma were a prioritised target group in addition to the regular activities, or that their municipality was part of the development project within the Roma inclusion strategy, except that in some municipalities there were staff specifically employed as Roma bridge builders. When it comes to interpretation into Romani in the health and medical care, the Public Health Authority observes that the supply is poor. Finnish-speaking Roma state that interpretation is sometimes arranged via the Finnish-speaking healthcare professional when such is available. Written information or health information materials are not available in Romani. Officials in the county councils assumed that the National Healthcare Advisory Service, (*Sjukvårdsupplysningen 1177*), had health information in Romani. A few of the Roma interviewed, especially the elderly and women, used or viewed the internet as an alternative way of getting information on healthcare-related issues.⁴⁶

Example of good practice: Supporting healthy lifestyle among Roma youth

Better health for young Roma is a collaboration project between the Roma association Vorta drom, Helsingborg municipality, the Skåne Region and The Skåne Sport (*Skåneidrotten*).

The aim is to help young Roma with obesity to a healthy life style through exercise and a changed diet. Through strengthening the children's health, they can also gain better confidence and succeed better in school. The aim is also to develop society's work methods so that they are better adapted to the target group's needs and provide desirable results. The project was originally funded by MUCF and the Swedish Inheritance State Fund from 2015 and is now mainstreamed into the regular activities of the Helsingborg municipality.

For more information, please, see: <https://romskinkludering.helsingborg.se/battre-halsa-for-unga-romer/>

⁴⁴ Interviews with Roma, county council and municipal representatives, October 2018

⁴⁵ Folkhälsomyndigheten. Nulägesbeskrivning 2018 av området hälsa i strategin för romsk inkludering. <https://www.folkhalsomyndigheten.se/publicerat-material/publikationsarkiv/n/nulagesbeskrivning-2018-av-området-halsa-i-strategin-for-romsk-inkludering/>

⁴⁶ National Healthcare Advisory Service: <https://www.1177.se/>

The officials described that there was a lack of cooperation with Roma organisations. Special resources allocated to collaboration with Roma organisations did not exist although they are supposed to be included in the regular activities, as stated in the Government commission to development municipalities within Roma Inclusion.⁴⁷ Some of the officials in the municipalities argued that there was interest in increasing collaboration but there were no resources for this nor knowledge of functioning forms and working methods.

Civil servants in county councils and municipalities described specific efforts for Roma within the framework of the pilot activities for Roma inclusion and, in some cases, within the activities of the child health care centres. Projects for social inclusion within health in the pilot municipalities that included Roma and where these actively participated, revolved around health communicators, Roma bridge builders and health guides in so-called *Hälsotek* (municipal activities that, in cooperation with, among other primary care and non-profit organisations, offer activities and provide support and advice on health issues). These projects have been partly funded by state resources. The projects with health communicators and health guides were concluded when the external funds ended.⁴⁸

In one municipality, there was a plan for national minorities that was continuously evaluated and followed up on. The steering document was based on an action plan for national minorities and the work on Roma inclusion was based on the national strategy for Roma inclusion. In another municipality, a proposal for a strategy for Roma inclusion had been produced which had been sent out for referral to the different municipal districts. The action plan had been developed at the overall city level in dialogue with the city's bridge builders and other Roma representatives for organisations. In another municipality, work was underway to develop a social sustainability program that comprised a total of eight programs and strategies (including accessibility, public health and national minorities). *Hälsotek* and a venture with health guides were made in collaboration with Roma associations. In another municipality, financial support for leisure activities was granted based on the Roma target group's own wishes.⁴⁹

The municipalities have different working methods and strategies to reach out with information that can benefit Roma health and life situation. Information that may be of importance for Roma health and living conditions can be accessed through the municipalities' websites and through collaboration with Roma councils and spokespersons. However, local authorities' knowledge of the Roma group's health and life situation was limited. In some municipalities there is information on health promotion initiatives at the overall level of the municipalities' websites. Other examples of how municipalities reach out with targeted health information are through consultation with professionals or public officials within the health sector and Roma representatives. The Roma consultation representatives have the task of conveying information that has emerged in the consultations to their own Roma groups. Work is also underway with the aim of promoting women's health when there are special needs, which had been identified on the basis of rights linked to the Social Services Act.⁵⁰ In another municipality, Roma are informed via a social guidance reception two days a week and via a meeting place (platform) once a month. In addition to the traditional channels of reaching out with general as well as

⁴⁷ <https://www.regeringen.se/regeringsuppdrag/2016/06/bidrag-till-utvecklingskommuner-for-romsk-inkludering/>

⁴⁸ Folkhälsomyndigheten. *Nulägesbeskrivning 2018 av området hälsa i strategin för romsk inkludering*. <https://www.folkhalsomyndigheten.se/publicerat-material/publikationsarkiv/n/nulagesbeskrivning-2018-av-området-halsa-i-strategin-for-romsk-inkludering/>

⁴⁹ Interviews with Roma, county council and municipal representatives, October 2018

⁵⁰ Social Service Act (2001:453) https://www.riksdagen.se/sv/dokument-lagar/dokument/svensk-forfattningssamling/socialtjanstlag-2001453_sfs-2001-453

targeted information for the Roma target group, social media has become more prominent as a way to reach out to more, especially to young Roma. A survey by the Swedish Public Health Authority also showed that access to interpreters and written information on health information on Romani varied greatly among the municipalities.⁵¹

The interviewed Roma felt that it is very important with measures that can contribute to increasing Roma's confidence in authorities and civil society. The interviews pointed out that there is a need for measures to, for example, improve the conduct within the health care system. According to the interviewed Roma, the knowledge of the rights of Roma, as well as the specific needs of health promotion and disease prevention efforts that the Roma groups may have, needs to increase. Training initiatives in several different areas and for different target groups are important. There is a need to make health-related information available and provide support to those who so desire when it comes to establishing health-promoting life habits. The interviewed Roma clearly indicated that many Roma need support to understand oral and written information provided in the health and medical care sector. This means being able to speak to the professional staff and understand your medical condition in order to be able to actively participate in and decide on different care options. The interview results also showed that Roma women need more information about their rights and also support to be able to claim these rights when it comes to their own health.

Social community and active participation in society are health-promoting factors in the Roma culture that the interviewees highlighted. Many also described positively that they helped each other, practically and economically. Music, dance and family celebrations were also mentioned as important health factors as well as being loving towards their children. From the Roma perspective, the interviewees have emphasised that they want access to their rights and become a part of society without losing the Roma culture. The interviewed Roma as well as the officials emphasised that work and education are very important public health factors, too. In addition to measures aimed at the structural risk factors for ill health such as the lack of participation, unemployment, poverty and low social status, measures were requested that provide knowledge and support to Roma who wish to establish more health-promoting life habits. The lack of social meeting places and health promotion activities is addressed by many of the Roma interviewed. The interviewees describe that the isolation in the home, which many especially older women experiences, alongside a large workload, can be the cause of the various physical problems and depression that occur among Roma women. The interviewees want support and better opportunities to meet within the Roma group but also to meet people outside the Roma groups.^{52 53}

Apart from Roma who are Swedish citizens or who live permanently in Sweden, there is a newer group of EU-mobile citizens who stay for shorter intervals in Sweden in order to support families at home, mainly in Rumania and Bulgaria. In accordance with EU regulations EU citizens have the right to access health care in another member state. The critical situation for many mobile Roma, however, is that they often lack inclusion into the health insurance system of their home country, which leaves them without formal access to the Swedish health care system without having to pay for the whole cost themselves.⁵⁴

⁵¹ Folkhälsomyndigheten. Nulägesbeskrivning - rapport om romers rättigheter och förutsättningar för hälsa i pilotkommuner. <http://www.minoritet.se/4363>

⁵² Länsstyrelsen Rapport 2018:26 *Romsk inkludering lokalt – nuläget i kommuner med statligt stöd 2012–2017* https://www.lansstyrelsen.se/download/18_7ab1493f1677d97be13b13d/1545033885129/Rapport%202018-26%20Romsk%20inkludering%20lokalt%20-%20nuläget%20i%20kommuner%20med%20statligt%20stöd%202012-2017.pdf

⁵³ Interviews with Roma, county council and municipal representatives, October 2018

⁵⁴ *Do vulnerable EU citizens have the right to health care in Sweden?* <https://skl.se/ekonomijuridikstatistik/juridik/euratt/utsattaemedborgare/utsattaemedborgarefragorochsvar/kommunensochlandstingetsansvar/harutsattaemedborgaremojlighetattfahalsoochsjukvardisverige.7037.html>

Swedish law provides everyone who stay in Sweden the right to subsidised emergency healthcare but since Roma who stay here and live as homeless people often begging in the streets, live under very harsh circumstances, they risk developing long-term health problems that are severe but that do not immediately fall under this category. Instead their health lies in the hands of individual doctors or health care centres who provide this health care on the basis of their medical ethics.

Fight against discrimination and antigypsyism in health care

The non-discrimination principle, which is expressed in the anti-discrimination legislation's prohibition of discrimination in health and medical care and other medical activities is primarily about ensuring that the Roma's problems and needs are also taken into account in the same way as everyone else's.⁵⁵ Health care is governed by the patient rights that are formulated in the Health and Medical Care Act. The overall goal for health and medical care is good health and care on equal terms for the entire population, which means that it must be accessible for everyone on equal terms, to use health care services. All care must be given with respect for all people's equality and with dignity for the individual person. The possibilities of obtaining care shall not be affected by age, gender, education, ability to pay, nationality and/or ethnicity. According to the Health and Medical Care Act, the patient must be given individually adapted information about his or her health condition and about the methods for examination, care and treatment available. The care that is offered should, as far as possible, be designed on the basis of the individual patient's needs and wishes. Healthcare professionals should have knowledge of the cultures of national minorities in order to facilitate the treatment and be able to eliminate misunderstandings between healthcare providers and people from the national minorities. The Swedish public health policy has as an overall national goal to create social conditions for good health on equal terms for the entire population.⁵⁶

The interview results show that Roma sometimes experience poor treatment and discrimination in contact with the healthcare system. Interviewees perceive that the treatment and accessibility depend on how the individual healthcare centre is organised and on the staff's own values and working methods. But still many of the Roma interviewed conveyed that they felt relatively safe with the care they had received. At the same time, most of the Roma interviewed conveyed the view that Roma generally probably do not feel as safe with the healthcare system. One experience among the Roma interviewed was that women's needs, especially the older Roma women, were not met to the same extent as men's in the healthcare sector. Reasons for this, that the interviewed Roma highlighted, were that there are cultural aspects that are not noticed in the healthcare system and general problems with the fact that staff do not listen actively to an equal amount to women as to men and that men are better at claiming their rights.

The results also show that few Roma participate in public associations and civil society, and that well-being and safety at school is a central area that affects the health of the Roma. The officials say that employees in municipalities and county councils rarely reflect on their own treatment in meetings with, for example, Roma. They stated that there are still many prejudices about Roma. The interviewees, both Roma and officials, argued that a lack of knowledge of Roma culture and specific needs and prejudices negatively affects the situation of both individual Roma and Roma as a group.⁵⁷

⁵⁵ Anti-discrimination law (2018:567) http://www.riksdagen.se/sv/dokument-lagar/dokument/svensk-forfattningssamling/diskrimineringslag-2008567_sfs-2008-567

⁵⁶ Health and Medical Care Act (2017:30) https://www.riksdagen.se/sv/dokument-lagar/dokument/svensk-forfattningssamling/halso--och-sjukvardslag_sfs-2017-30

⁵⁷ Interviews with Roma, county council and municipal representatives, October 2018

Lack of knowledge about Roma culture and Roma's specific health-related needs affect the health of Roma as a group, and Roma's experiences consist of both structural and individual discrimination. In the health and medical care sector, there is a need to prioritise and continuously work with treatment issues regarding Roma and other minority groups. This can be done, for example, by integrating the Roma issues into broader work with rights by developing proper tools for analysing access to health care provisions from a Roma perspective. Another measure is to give staff training and support in the work with values and norm-critical assessment to better understand their own often unconsciously biased premises. The training initiatives should be offered to the units where the development need is greatest. During the interviews with health care representatives, these strongly emphasised the principle that every citizen should be treated equally. The motive pointed out was that one wants to avoid discrimination and stigmatisation. However, the legislation gives municipalities and county councils the opportunity and right to special solutions in order to meet the needs of national minorities, including the Roma. But since the knowledge of this is generally low, there is a risk that Roma will not have full access to their rights.⁵⁸

The view of the interviewees is that the most important efforts are to improve Roma's confidence in society and authorities, and to bridge the mutual gaps in trust and counteract prejudice and mistrust of Roma. One part of this is to use working methods that enable increased participation and increased influence on the part of the Roma in general in society, such as Roma mediators employed as staff with service providers. There is a need to develop working methods for dialogue and collaboration between municipalities and county councils and Roma. Different efforts aimed at Roma groups need to be preceded by a careful dialogue and anchoring between the parties. More developed forms of cooperation and systematic exchange of information could contribute to the municipality and county council gaining more knowledge about Roma's culture and specific health-related needs, but also contribute to creating mutual trust. Another way to establish a dialogue is to go through Roma bridge builders and health communicators.

Most interviewees believe that there is a general ignorance of Roma history and culture in Swedish society, even among service persons in the municipalities. It was interpreted as a contributing factor to service people having prejudice about Roma. For this reason, the interviewees were of the opinion that service persons, including teachers and other school staff, healthcare professionals and home care services, need knowledge-enhancing efforts regarding Roma culture, tradition and history.

The majority of the interviewees were open about their Roma identity. Some of them, however, hid their Roma identity in whole or in part during medical visits. The reason for this was concern about being discriminated against, being left out or having to answer for various issues. The Roma interviewed also pointed out that there was a need for role models for Roma children and young people. Many of the Roma interviewed experienced uncertainty about the future in Sweden with regard to vulnerability and discrimination. Several of them conveyed that they carry fears after centuries of discrimination and exclusion. Good health for the Roma interviewed meant being included and involved in society, but also being healthy and not having to hide that you are Roma. Other factors that they felt could affect the health and life situation positively were having a job or an employment so that economic independence was achieved.⁵⁹

⁵⁸ Länsstyrelsen Rapport 2018:26 *Romsk inkludering lokalt – nuläget i kommuner med statligt stöd 2012–2017*

<https://www.lansstyrelsen.se/download/18.7ab1493f1677d97be13b13d/1545033885129/Rapport%202018-26%20Romsk%20inkludering%20lokalt%20-%20nula%20i%20kommuner%20med%20statligt%20stod%202012-2017.pdf>

⁵⁹ Interviews with Roma, county council and municipal representatives, October 2018

EDUCATION

Improving access to quality preschool education and care

Förskola (or *Förskoleklass*, similar to kindergarten) is mandatory in Sweden. The Swedish school system is regulated through the Education Act, which as of January 2018 increased the mandatory schooling from the previous nine years and now mandates ten years of school attendance for all children from the year they turn six.⁶⁰ *Förskola* is provided by municipalities for children with ages one to five. The amount of municipal subsidy for pre-school depends on the child's age and whether the parents work, study, are unemployed or on parental leave for other children.⁶¹ Children whose parents are unemployed or on parental leave must be offered a preschool place for at least three hours a day, or 15 hours a week. Some municipalities offer more.⁶²

According to the OECD's *Education at a glance* country note, access to early childhood education and care among young children is more equitable in Sweden than most OECD countries. In Sweden, enrolment of 3-5-year-olds in early childhood education and care (ECEC) is nearly universal. Enrolment rates in ECEC are 95 per cent for 3-year-olds, 94 per cent for 4-year-olds and 95 per cent for 5-year-olds. 46 per cent of all children under 3 are enrolled in ECEC. However, while only 25 per cent of children under 2 are enrolled in ECEC, by the age of 2 the rate has reached 90% per cent. Across the OECD countries, children under 3 are more likely to participate in ECEC when they come from relatively advantaged socio-economic backgrounds. However, a child's background makes less of a difference in Sweden where 52 per cent of children from households in the lowest income tercile are enrolled in ECEC, compared with 59 per cent of those from the wealthiest tercile (OECD averages: 28 per cent and 44 per cent respective). ECEC has been the focus of policy attention in Sweden over recent decades. Expenditure on ECEC services amounts to 1.9 per cent of Sweden's gross domestic product (GDP), the highest share among OECD countries.⁶³

Furthermore, gender-aware education is increasingly common, striving to provide children with the same opportunities in life regardless of gender.⁶⁴ The Swedish Education Act, along with the Swedish Discrimination Act, strives to protect children and students from discrimination and degrading treatment. In essence, the principals of pre-schools, schools and adult education programmes are responsible for enforcing prohibitions against discrimination and degrading behaviour, and for promoting equal treatment. All students have access to a school doctor, school nurse, psychologist and school welfare officer at no cost.⁶⁵

Three hours a day of public preschool attendance is free of charge from the autumn term of the year in which your child turns 3. For further attendance, the municipality or the education provider determines the fees. The Education Act states that fees must be reasonable. Currently all municipalities use a system with a maximum fee. This means that an upper limit („*maxtaxa*“) is set for how high fees can become for different types of

⁶⁰ Hofverberg E (December 14, 2017) *Sweden: Mandatory Kindergarten Approved*, available at: <http://www.loc.gov/law/foreign-news/article/sweden-mandatory-kindergarten-approved/>

⁶¹ <https://sweden.se/society/education-in-sweden/>

⁶² <http://www.omsvenskaskolan.se/engelska/foerskolan-och-foerskoleklass/>

⁶³ Sweden – country note – Education at a glance (2018):OECD indicators: https://read.oecd-ilibrary.org/education/education-at-a-glance-2018/sweden_eag-2018-67-en#page2

⁶⁴ <https://sweden.se/society/education-in-sweden/>

⁶⁵ *Ibid*

families.⁶⁶ Municipalities must also offer preschool places to all children from the year they turn 3 (public preschool, 3 three hours a day) as well as to children in need of special support.⁶⁷

However, the quality of Swedish education has been keenly debated over the past decade, following declining results among Swedish students in international comparisons. Sweden has moved to improve performances and to raise the status of the teaching profession for long-term benefits.⁶⁸ One such move has been that since 2013 professional certification is required for school and pre-school teachers on permanent contracts. The decision, a milestone in Swedish education policy, aims to raise the status of the teaching profession, support professional development and thus increase quality in education.⁶⁹

Improving quality of education until the end of compulsory schooling

The Roma minority in Sweden have had a different history than the majority society and other groups regarding the possibility to access school education. Even though it has been mandatory for children to attend primary school from the year they turn seven in accordance with *Skollagen* and the right to education since 1842, Roma children were instead not allowed to attend school up until the year 1965. On few occasions teachers visited Roma camps during summer and offered lessons that the families had to pay for themselves.⁷⁰ These circumstances combined with other discriminatory practices where the Roma were not allowed to settle, own property or access other basic society services has resulted in a situation where a Roma child, even today in a highly developed and equal country like Sweden, is very likely to not finish primary school. Few graduates from secondary school and extremely few move on to university.⁷¹ There are multiple coercive factors at play. One of the major obstacles is the relationship between school and other municipal authorities and the Roma families where mutual distrust and misunderstandings cause disruptions in the child's progress in school and cuts them out of pedagogical and other support measures the municipality has to offer.⁷² Interviews with schools in Malmö revealed that few Roma parents participated in information meetings for parents at the schools and information in a language that is understood and to not just inform but to create dialogue was suggested as possible remedies for this.⁷³

The right to education also encompasses rules promoting the interests of children with different forms of disadvantages and a specific rule which guarantees a right to mother tongue teaching, although it is not always asked for by Roma families, partly because some want to hide their Roma identity for fear of harassment. There is, in any case, a shortage of teachers in the Romani language.⁷⁴ Therefore, in combination with the extra cost, some municipalities do not guarantee mother tongue teaching. In a study by the Swedish School

⁶⁶ <http://www.omsvenskaskolan.se/engelska/foerskolan-och-foerskoleklass/>

⁶⁷ *Ibid*

⁶⁸ <https://sweden.se/society/education-in-sweden/>

⁶⁹ *Ibid*

⁷⁰ Government Offices of Sweden. 2014. *White Paper on abuses and rights violations against Roma in the 20th century*. Available at: <http://www.government.se/information-material/2014/03/white-paper-on-abuses-and-rights-violations-of-roma-during-the-1900s/>

⁷¹ Liedholm M., Lindberg G. (2010) *Romska barn i skolan*, Lund: Lund University.

⁷² *Ibid*

⁷³ *Ibid*

⁷⁴ Halleröd B. (2011) Sweden. *Promoting the Social Inclusion of Roma European Commission*, at: http://ec.europa.eu/social/main.jsp?pager_offset=20&catId=1025&langId=en&newsId=1407&tableName=news&moreDocuments=yes ; Liedholm M., Lindberg G. (2010) *Romska barn i skolan* , Lund: Lund University

Inspectorate in 2012, only 5 out of 22 municipalities could provide it in Romani.⁷⁵ Teachers in Romani state that they try to convince school authorities that they need to work actively to encourage parents to identify as Roma and to collaborate with them on alternative methods to reach the families but that they often are met by resistance and instead do this on their spare time through their private networks.⁷⁶

Almost 90 percent of children in Sweden attend pre-school, but very few Roma children do which gives them a disadvantage in school later on. Many Roma children do not attend school regularly, but their absences tend not to result in enforcement.⁷⁷ There is also evidence that teachers "tend to have lower expectations about Roma children attending school, which also sometimes results in insufficient efforts to address school absence".⁷⁸ Teachers' own perception on this vary, where some emphasise the importance to take in to account that "Roma have another kind of lifestyle with other choices where school education is not as important" and that "you should be pleased if the children attend regularly, but not pressure them too much as that may have the opposite effect" while others instead provide positive examples of the work they have done in building trusting relationships with the parents which have resulted in the children and parents feeling safe and confident with school and completing their grades with better results.⁷⁹ One problem that is brought up by Roma bridge builders is that Roma children mostly attend schools in disadvantaged areas (not Roma specific though) with a higher circulation of teachers, which makes it harder to build trusting long-term relationships.⁸⁰

On the whole, the educational opportunities of Roma children have depended not so much on the formal guarantees of equality and access to schooling but on the extent of the commitment by public agencies to counter the underlying social and familial barriers to participation.

During the past decade there are also Roma who come, primarily from Romania and Bulgaria, to stay temporarily in Sweden as mobile EU citizens, trying to support themselves and their families at home by selling and begging in the streets.⁸¹ Since 2013, most refugee and immigrant children, regardless of whether their families have a full residence permit, have been guaranteed the right to education under the Education Act.⁸² This applies to others who stay in the country unlawfully, for example refusing to accept a decision on expulsion. The Swedish Association of Municipalities and the Schools Board of Appeal have on different issues decided against the obligation to provide education in case of children of EU-migrants.⁸³ According to one survey only six out of 136 respondent

⁷⁵ Skolinspektionen (2012) *I marginalen -En granskning av modersmålsundervisning och tvåspråkig undervisning i de nationella minoritetsspråken Kvalitetsgranskning* (Rapport 2012:2) Stockholm, Skolinspektionen.

⁷⁶ Interviews with mother tongue teachers in Romani, 2018-10-26

⁷⁷ Catholic International Education Office, Human Rights Council (2015) Universal Periodic Review (UPR) 21st Session, Sweden. Key Issue: Right to Education
[file:///C:/Users/mlssnsh/Downloads/OIEC_UPR21_SWE_E_CoverPage%20\(2\).pdf](file:///C:/Users/mlssnsh/Downloads/OIEC_UPR21_SWE_E_CoverPage%20(2).pdf)

⁷⁸ CAHROM (Ad Hoc Committee of Experts on Roma Issues) (2013) Thematic Report on School Attendance of Roma Children, In Particular Roma Girls CAHROM (2013)5 Strasbourg, Council of Europe.

⁷⁹ Interviews with teachers in primary school, October-November 2018

⁸⁰ Focus group with Roma bridge builders, 2018-11-06

⁸¹
<https://skl.se/ekonomijuridikstatistik/juridik/euratt/utsattaemedborgare/utsattaemedborgarefragorochsvar.13958.html>

⁸² Education Act (2010:800) <https://www.skolverket.se/andra-sprak-other-languages/english-engelska>

⁸³ SKL (Sveriges Kommuner och Landsting) (2016) *Har utsatta EU- medborgare rätt till skolundervisning? [Do vulnerable EU citizens have the right to schooling?]*, at:

municipalities offered schooling to the children of such EU mobile citizens. However, the Education Ordinance gives education providers an explicit opportunity to go beyond what the law provides.⁸⁴

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

Less than one per cent of Roma are estimated to enter higher education, this in comparison with higher education participation rates for the whole population in Sweden being 43 per cent paints a vivid image of the need of support of secondary and higher education.⁸⁵

In a collaboration project by three universities (Seville, Sussex and Umeå) called Higher Education Internationalisation and Mobility (HEIM), a report found that the development of Roma persons' inclusion in higher education is "complex in terms of both knowledge and to bringing about change" because of the fact that financing higher education in Sweden is not perceived as an issue due to the measures of the state to grant funding for the cost of living, for up to 12 semesters, through grants and loans from the state student financing organization CSN, and that higher education school tuition is free for Swedish citizens. Because of this funding system there are "no financially-driven affirmative actions of any kind in Sweden in relation to minorities or to any other disadvantaged young people".⁸⁶

According to the HEIM report⁸⁷ this system has not altered the socio-economic profile of Swedish students as much as intended at its inception. Higher education in Sweden is still lacking much representation from low-educated and low-income households in Sweden due to other factors such as "an unwillingness to take loans for education, lower trust that higher education will pay off by securing a good job and perhaps another kind of fear of non-successful studies or unemployment as a graduate with high study loans than in a family with other expectations and economy". In Sweden otherwise, it is the norm for young people from middle-class homes and upwards is to take these very favourable student loans which are granted to any who apply and are considered a good investment for the future. This loan is to cover living cost since education is free of charge. Young people from working class or other less privileged groups have a cultural and historic scepticism towards this and are often discouraged by their families. Another complicating aspect is that self-identification and generalised estimates are the basis for who belongs to the Roma minority due to the fact that there is no registration of ethnicity in Sweden, which makes data collection problematic.⁸⁸

Even though Swedish adult education in municipalities offers both studies to attain the education level of compulsory schooling and for completing an upper secondary qualification to enable university education and is also tuition-free, and there is a possibility of a study loan for personal subsistence which is cancelled if the individual concerned continues to university and takes up further loans, some Roma have ended up with big study loans for these levels of basic and qualifying education as they have not

<https://skl.se/ekonomijuridikstatistik/juridik/euratt/utsattaumedborgare/kommunenochlandstingetsansvar/harutsattaumedborgareratttillskolundervisning.7038.html>

⁸⁴ Neville Harris, David Ryffé, Lisa Scullion, Sara Stendahl "Ensuring the Right to Education for Roma Children: an Anglo-Swedish Perspective", *International Journal of Law, Policy and the Family*, Volume 31, Issue 2, 1 August 2017, Pages 230-267

⁸⁵ Alexiadou, N., Norberg, A. 2015. *Roma, Education, and Higher Education policies: The International Context & and the Case of Sweden. Report as part of the Higher Education Internationalisation and Mobility: Inclusion, Equalities and Innovation Project*. Marie Skłodowska-Curie Actions, Research and Innovation Staff Exchange, Horizon 2020. Grant agreement No. 643739

⁸⁶ *Ibid*

⁸⁷ *Ibid*

⁸⁸ *Ibid*

completed or not continued. A proposal has been made that for at least the compulsory level, there should not be needed any study loans, but personal subsistence for adults should be financed in another way. However, there is nothing yet decided on this. These second-chance pathways to higher education can result in debt, and in a social network one or two examples of indebted students may deject possible students from choosing this option which could have directed them onward.⁸⁹

There are some positive examples of good practices in that three folk high schools on upper secondary level have taken distinct actions to expand Roma minority participation; two have distinct programmes for Roma who wish to study and have possibilities for preparing students for higher education, and one has a profile as a Roma folk high school and has good results of its students getting a secondary school diploma and moving on to the labour market.⁹⁰

There have also been positive initiatives with some promotion of competence development and education within the Roma community from certain media like the magazine *È Romani Glinda*⁹¹ and the public national radio channel *Radio Romano*⁹² which have given examples of stories of educated Roma and how they moved to their current jobs.

The biggest mistake found in earlier strategies according to the HEIM report is that the Roma people were not asked about projects and strategies “with authorities taking a paternalistic attitude, as if the Roma population cannot know what is best for them”.⁹³ And even though earlier governmental reports propose goals in the education area for the end of the 20 year period to ensure that as many Roma people as in the non-Roma population participate in higher education and received degrees it did not turn out to be an explicit part of the final strategy which works towards a right-based approach in mainstreaming the application of the existing frameworks to Roma young people, in order to ensure equivalent conditions to the non-Roma.⁹⁴ There are no special funds for special actions to ensure this goal is reached. Instead it is a question for municipalities, authorities, universities and other public bodies in cooperation with Roma activists on how this goal can be operationalised in various localities.

Example of good practice: Universities’ focus on Roma education

The Swedish government has taken measures to remove some of the barriers to education for Roma children by initiating and funding an education programmes and positions for Roma bridge builders to work as mediators in schools with many Roma children and aid in constructive communication between Roma families and the school. They also serve as positive role models for the Roma children as adult professional Roma who has moved on to higher education and has accessed job positions. There has been some positive outcome of this with better mutual trust and understanding and higher school attendance and

⁸⁹ Government official investigations 2018:71
<https://www.regeringen.se/4a57d7/contentassets/d2112ee65999452b937573e1c91bc9d9/en-andra-och-en-annan-chans-ett-komvux-i-tiden.pdf>

⁹⁰ <http://arkiv.minoritet.se/romadelegationen/www.romadelegationen.se/extra/pod/indexe3ea.html>

⁹¹ www.romaniglinda.se

⁹² <http://sverigesradio.se/sida/default.aspx?programid=2122>

⁹³ <http://www.diva-portal.org/smash/get/diva2:806117/FULLTEXT02>

⁹⁴ Government Offices of Sweden. 2010. *Romers rätt – en strategi för romer i Sverige [Roma rights: A strategy for Roma in Sweden]*. Available at: <http://www.regeringen.se/rattsdokument/statens-offentliga-utredningar/2010/07/sou-201055/>

completion, and more thorough research on this is being conducted at Södertörn University at the moment.

Also, Södertörn University is in charge of teacher education in Romani, and was given a national commission by the government to build a training program for Roma bridge builders for municipal schools and social services.

For more information, please, see:

<https://www.regeringen.se/regeringsuppdrag/2016/04/uppdrag-till-statens-skolverk-och-socialstyrelsen-att-ta-fram-och-tillgangliggöra-en-utbildning-för-brobyggare-med-romsk-sprak--och-kulturkompetens/>

Fight against discrimination, segregation and other forms of antigypsyism in education

The delayed inclusion of Roma children into the mandatory schooling and not being allowed to settle or access basic society services has had a negative impact on the possibilities for Roma to partake in their rights to education both as general citizens, but also as a recognised minority with further rights to their culture and language being incorporated in educational settings without discriminatory practices of lower expectations and lack of support needed and guaranteed through adoption and extension of the NRIS in Sweden. Thus, the very real likelihood of Roma children not finishing primary school, graduating from secondary school or moving on to higher education is an important issue to remedy.

One major issue that is often brought up but not strategically and thoroughly addressed is the lack of education on the Roma minority both in teacher education and school curriculum which leads to ongoing prejudices and lack of understanding of the Roma situation and impedes the possibility for children to be open about their Roma identity in school. Roma youth often express lack of hope and even dreams of a future with a professional career but believe that they must follow the path of unemployed parents as a result of a discrimination and antigypsyism in society and therefore often do not see formal education as meaningful but rather look out for other opportunities for making a living. The lack of Romani mother tongue teachers and other pedagogic professionals' knowledge of the NRIS and the Roma minority situation are thus some clear areas within education in need of policy expansion to combat institutional antigypsyism.

Prejudice and antigypsyism are also perceived by the Roma families to play a role in the high rate of Roma children being taken into custody by the municipal social services and since school teachers are in close daily contact with the children they are often the ones responsible for reporting the families if they experience any concerns, a fact which often cause stress for the parents in being able to form a trusting relationship with the teachers. Parents often also express worries about if the children are well treated or if they are being subjected to discrimination and hate crimes both by other pupils as well as from staff.⁹⁵

Swedish law, like the Anti-Discrimination Act from 2008, requires school authorities and providers to actively work against discrimination on racial bases as well as actively promote equality in educational provision. According to the Equality Ombudsman the school is now an arena experiencing little discrimination against Roma, although the extent of unreported cases is unclear.⁹⁶ Although the picture has improved there is still evidence

⁹⁵ Interview with Roma parents, 2018-10-02, 2018-10-30

⁹⁶ Diskriminerings Ombudsmannen (2012) *Romers rättigheter - Diskriminering, vägar till upprättelse och hur juridiken kan bidra till en förändring av romers livsvillkor*, Diskrimineringsombudsmannen at <http://www.do.se/globalassets/publikationer/rappport-romers-rattigheter-.pdf>

of direct antigypsyism in the form of bullying of Roma children in school⁹⁷ and stigmatisation.⁹⁸ Many Roma children themselves often describe their days in school as filled with harassment and racial slurs.⁹⁹

Signs of institutional antigypsyism can also be found in that although Swedish authorities regularly consult with Roma organisations on how to remove barriers to accessing the right to education in consistency with the EU Race Equality Directive, but consultations are often on unequal terms and many Roma civil society representatives witness that their perspective is rarely represented in reports and policy documents.¹⁰⁰

As is stated in the report on Roma children in schools: *“Even though the ambition to treat everyone equally is commendable in many aspects, respect and good treatment should of course apply to everyone, the equal principle can be a trap. Of course, different conditions require different efforts, which can be prevented if one strongly claims the principle of treating everyone equally”*¹⁰¹ (authors translation). They also emphasise that *“Our entire evaluation shows the need for collective forces and the need for the Roma to respond to and act in the school issue. They and society cannot afford the failed schooling that most Roma children are exposed to.”*¹⁰²

⁹⁷ Catholic International Education Office, Human Rights Council (2015) Universal Periodic Review (UPR) 21st Session, Sweden. Key Issue: Right to Education
[file:///C:/Users/mlssnsh/Downloads/OIEC_UPR21_SWE_E_CoverPage%20\(2\).pdf](file:///C:/Users/mlssnsh/Downloads/OIEC_UPR21_SWE_E_CoverPage%20(2).pdf)

⁹⁸ Wigerfelt B., Wigerfelt A. S. (2015) 'Anti-Gypsyism in Sweden: Roma's and Travellers' experiences of bias-motivated crime', Internet Journal of Criminology at
http://www.internetjournalofcriminology.com/Wigerfelt_And_Wigerfelt_Anti-Gypsyism_in_Sweden_IJC_Feb_2015.pdf

⁹⁹ Focus group with Roma school children, 2018-11-01

¹⁰⁰ Focus group with Roma activists, 2018-10-15

¹⁰¹ Liedholm M., Lindberg G. (2010) Romska barn i skolan, Lund: Lund University. Page 14

¹⁰² *Ibid*, p. 74

RECOMMENDATIONS

Employment

1. The government should, within the budget for 2020, initiate and finance programmes to extend the number of Roma bridge builders employed in positions at the Swedish Public Employment Service to encompass all major cities in the areas with the largest Roma populations.
2. The Swedish Public Employment Service should, in accordance with the amended Anti-Discrimination Act with extended requirements for active measures to prevent discrimination, and within the NRIS, develop a programme to include employers of both public and private sectors in the work against antigypsyism.
3. The Ministry of Labour should initiate programmes, within the government budget for 2020, via the municipalities that target Roma youth in particular, with internships and summer jobs to help integrate them into the labour market already at the end of lower secondary school and to guide and motivate them.
4. The Ministry of Labour should lead information campaigns to lift Romani as a qualification for employing staff at the Swedish Public Employment Service and at the municipalities.
5. The Public Employment Service should conduct local councils with Roma in order to stocktake the need of directed measures to help more Roma enter the labour market.

Housing and essential public services

6. The government should finance that the education programme on equal treatment of Roma on the housing market that has been commissioned and developed by the National Board of Housing, Building and Planning, is taught by Roma education leaders to staff on all levels at the housing companies within the year 2020. The education should ensure that housing companies understand that they have a responsibility in the collective work for the rights of minorities, increase their knowledge about Roma culture and history, be self-critical about whether there is antigypsyism in their companies, and the social benefits of strengthening the business so that it helps to reduce antigypsyism. Also, to signal to operational personnel that the management are interested in reports of antigypsyism within their stock.
7. There is a need to create an atmosphere where the Roma feel safe in being open with their Roma identity and to report discrimination to get rid of unrecorded offences. The Equality Body should actively work on reaching out to the Roma community and work on creating structures that help Roma report incidents.
8. The National Board of Health and Welfare should develop an education programme for the local municipal social services about the historic and present circumstances impeding Roma access to housing, in order to compensate for the structural discrimination in all fields of life making up barriers for equal access to the right to housing.
9. The government should commission the Swedish Association of Local Authorities and Regions to create clear directions for the municipalities regarding the rights of EU-mobile citizens in accordance with the Swedish Social Service Act within the timeframe of 2019.

Impact of health care policies on Roma

10. The government and the Swedish Association of Local Authorities and Regions should investigate how to get the county councils, who have the greatest responsibility for health care services, more involved in the work with the NRIS.
11. The government should commission the Swedish Agency for Youth and Society to strengthen the organisational and financial possibilities for Roma civil society to work together with the counties and municipalities on long-term strategies for health enhancing work and for building trusting relationships with the Roma community.
12. The government should allocate resources to the National Board of Health and Welfare to produce and spread knowledge to the county and municipal service providers about the Roma as a national minority and their specific rights, among others the right to get information in and to use Romani in contact with health care providers.

Education

13. The number of positions for Roma acting as bridge builders within the school system should be increased on all levels in order to facilitate trust, understanding and communication between the education providers and families from the Roma minority. The parliament should oversee legislation and the possibilities to order municipalities to install such positions within the relevant services.
14. The government should within the next budget for 2020 launch a financial programme to in full finance living costs for adults who need additional schooling to complete primary and secondary school.
15. The mismatch between the official school curriculum and the teacher education, concerning history and current situation of the Roma minority, impedes actual implementation in schools. The Swedish National Agency for Education, and the Swedish Higher Education Authority should see to it that teacher education includes knowledge on the Roma minority. The Ministry of Education and Research should ensure that current teachers as well receive this competence.
16. The Ministry of Education should improve the preconditions and remove barriers for facilitating that Roma children get the mother tongue instruction in Romani they are entitled to. They must oblige the municipalities to inform the families about their specific rights as a national minority.

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