



Civil society monitoring report
on implementation
of the National Roma Integration Strategy
in Estonia

*Identifying blind spots
in Roma inclusion policy*

Prepared by:
Estonian Human Rights Centre
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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The previous Roma Civil Monitor reports¹ uncovered the problem that there is a lack of active Roma rights advocacy organisations in Estonia. This report explores the reasons behind the problem, by laying out the context of civil society development in Estonia, analysing the State measures to empower Roma organisations, and evaluating the obstacles faced by existing Roma advocacy organisations.

Support and funding for civil society in Estonia

The first chapter provides an overview of the framework for civil society development in Estonia. It outlines that the Ministry of the Interior is responsible for preparing Civil Society Development Plans, which have not specifically mentioned the Roma community. The Ministry of the Interior also supports NGOs through National Foundation of Civil Society (NFCS), which provides grants to NGOs for capacity building, however, no Roma organisations have applied for funding. NFCS also finances NGO counselling in county development centres. For example, the consultant in Valga county (where the majority of Roma community in Estonia is situated) was once approached by a member of the Roma community who was interested in writing a project to create a Valga Roma Service Centre, but the idea was never realised. The Integration Foundation, which initiates and supports activities aimed at integration among Estonians and non-Estonians, as well as activities related to immigration and emigration, supports the Roma community with organising cultural activities but has not engaged in capacity building of Roma rights advocacy organisations.

Case study 1: State's action for Roma civil society empowerment

The second chapter looks into a specific government initiative to empower the Roma community – EC-funded projects ESTROM and ESTROM 2, implemented by the Ministry of Culture with the aim to develop a support network for empowerment of Roma integration stakeholders. One of the main goals of the projects is to find spokespersons for the Roma community through offering various trainings to more active Roma youth and women. Representatives of the Roma community noted that the planning process of the projects could have benefitted from a more meaningful participation of the Roma community, stressing that it is essential to give the Roma community an opportunity to contribute to project planning and preparation, as well as to conduct clear and open communication throughout the project.

Case study 2: Obstacles faced by Roma NGOs

The third chapter looks into practical obstacles faced by Roma advocacy organisations. There are currently three registered Roma advocacy NGOs, but none of them have paid employees or consistent activities (there are a few more NGOs which are active in promoting Roma culture). Currently, the same few members of the Roma community lead all the organisations. One of the main problems is that they work for the organisations on a voluntary basis alongside their main job. Also, there are not enough active members in the organisations to share responsibilities. Another obstacle is that there is a lack of people who have knowledge about the functioning of NGOs, especially regarding project-writing and dealing with bureaucracy. The representatives emphasised that it would be necessary to have a targeted long-term support for step-by-step planning of the work of the NGO, including project-writing. As existing Roma advocacy NGOs are not active, it also means that they have been not included in consultative processes and bodies related to the development of civil society.

¹ The first annual cycle of the Roma Civil Monitor was focused on the horizontal precondition of the Roma inclusion – governance, fight against antigypsyism and anti-discrimination. The second cycle concerned the four key policy fields – education, employment, healthcare and housing. All reports are available at: <https://cps.ceu.edu/roma-civil-monitor-reports>

INTRODUCTION

The guiding document of the national integration policy in Estonia is the development plan “Integrating Estonia 2020”. There is no separate strategy for Roma integration and the development plan includes no specific measures for the Roma community. The plan points out that the Estonian Roma community is small, which makes it difficult to consider them as a separate target group in integration policies.² According to the National Population Register, there are approximately 650 people living in Estonia who self-identify as Roma.³ Unofficial data and international organisations suggest that the numbers are higher in reality and there are approximately 1,000-1,500 people of Roma origin in Estonia.⁴

The [first Roma Civil Monitor report](#) identified that Estonia lacks active Roma civil society organisations with the capacity to represent the Roma community on issues of social justice, equality and human rights in policy development and decision-making. The report also highlighted that according to a 2018 survey, the level of participation of the representatives of the Roma community in citizens’ associations (e.g. apartment association, cultural society, youth club, charity organisation, trade union or political party) is very low – only six people of 59 (11%) said they participated in any associations. Nevertheless, another recent survey indicates that at least part of the Roma community is interested in increasing their participation in Estonian society – approximately 80% of the respondents wanted to know more about how the society works, and interest was expressed towards project writing and management and getting to know the activities of other cultural communities in Estonia.⁵

The [second Roma Civil Monitor](#) report uncovered that the current policy of treating the Roma as any other cultural minority leads to their specific needs and challenges being overlooked. This emphasises the need for active Roma advocacy organisations that could participate in consultations with the government and highlight the specific needs of the community.

Based on these gaps identified by previous reports, the authors chose to focus the present third report on investigating the reasons behind the lack of active Roma rights advocacy organisations in Estonia. The report looks into the obstacles Roma organisations face, as well as the options for the State to empower Roma civil society to represent Roma interests on a high level. The report focuses specifically on the NGOs that have the goal of Roma rights advocacy, and does not focus on the organisations that only deal with cultural activities.

While compiling this report, the authors interviewed two members of the European Roma Forum in Estonia and the project manager of the ESTROM projects initiated by the Ministry of Culture. The authors also sent information requests to the Ministry of Culture, Ministry of the Interior, National Foundation of Civil Society, Valga County Development Centre, and the Integration Foundation. In addition, the authors performed desk research into the relevant development plans, reports and minutes from the meetings of the Advisory Council for Roma Integration.

² Lõimuv Eesti 2020 (*Integrating Estonia 2020*), p. 10. Available at: https://www.kul.ee/sites/kulminn/files/23748_en_proofreading_je2020_eng.pdf

³ E-mail from the Estonian Population Register (06.03.2018)

⁴ Baltic Research Institute, “Ülevaade romade olukorrast Eestis” (*Overview of the situation of the Roma in Estonia*), 2013

⁵ Karabeshkin & Derman “Eesti Romade kuuluvustunne ja osalemine ühiskonnaelus” (*Roma community’s participation in society*), 2018.

SUPPORT AND FUNDING FOR CIVIL SOCIETY IN ESTONIA

The framework for civil society development in Estonia

In Estonia, the Ministry of the Interior examines, envisages and coordinates national policies in the field of civil society. The aim is to ensure the development of a secure and open society through more effective cooperation between state structures, local authorities and civil society organisations.⁶

The basis for civil society development and national promotion is the Estonian Civil Society Development Concept.⁷ Every five years, the Ministry of the Interior also prepares a Civil Society Development Plan, the last one is for the period 2015-2020⁸ and the one for the period 2021-2030⁹ is in preparation.

The previous Civil Society Development Plan for 2011–2014¹⁰ did not specifically address the empowerment of the Roma community, but it outlined an action: "Deliberately involving least active groups in civic education initiatives". The aim was to increase the participation skills and experience of members of national minority communities to encourage non-Estonian community groups to participate more actively in third sector initiatives and networking. According to the final report of Civil Society Development Plan 2011-2014, civic education workshops were organised for people in rural areas, for school students, parents and unemployed young people.¹¹ Nothing specific was carried out for the Roma community during the period.

The general objective of the 2015-2020 Civil Society Development Plan¹² is to increase the operational capacity of civil society and to have active citizens. The development plan is predominantly aimed towards supporting existing civil society organisations and their capacity building, and it includes no basic empowerment that could benefit the Roma community.

In spring 2018, the preparation of a new civil society programme for the years 2021-2030 started.¹³ The Ministry of the Interior, in their own words, are preparing the Civil Society Program 2021-2030 in a co-creative and inclusive manner.¹⁴ Development of the programme is directed by a 22-member joint commission of the government and

⁶ Ministry of the Interior, Civil Society. Available at: <https://www.siseministeerium.ee/et/eesmark-tegevused/kodanikuuhiskond>

⁷ Ministry of the Interior, The Concept of the Development of Estonian Civil Society. Available at: <https://www.siseministeerium.ee/et/eesmark-tegevused/kodanikuuhiskond/eesti-kodanikuuhiskonna-arengu-kontseptsioon>

⁸ Ministry of the Interior, Civil Society Development Plan 2015–2020. Available at: https://www.siseministeerium.ee/sites/default/files/dokumendid/Arengukavad/kodanikuuhiskonna_arengukava_2015-2020_0.pdf

⁹ Ministry of the Interior, Civil Society Programme 2021-2030. Available at: <https://www.siseministeerium.ee/et/tegevusvaldkonnad/kodanikuuhiskond/kodar>

¹⁰ Ministry of the Interior, Civil Society Development Plan 2011-2014. Available at: https://www.siseministeerium.ee/sites/default/files/dokumendid/kodar_vv_.pdf

¹¹ Ministry of Interior, Final Report on the implementation of the Civil Society Development Plan 2011-2014. Available at: https://www.siseministeerium.ee/sites/default/files/dokumendid/Arengukavad/kodar_lopparuanne.pdf

¹² Ministry of the Interior, Civil Society Development Plan 2011-2014. Available at: https://www.siseministeerium.ee/sites/default/files/dokumendid/Arengukavad/kodanikuuhiskonna_arengukava_2015-2020_0.pdf

¹³ Ministry of the Interior, Civil Society Programme 2021-2030. Available at: <https://www.siseministeerium.ee/et/tegevusvaldkonnad/kodanikuuhiskond/kodar>

¹⁴ Response to information request, Ministry of the Interior, 08 November 2019.

representatives of civil society organisations.¹⁵ The commission is responsible for implementing the Estonian Civil Society Development Concept. The NGO representatives were selected through a contest, there are no Roma organisations included.

Specific measures for involvement of less active groups

Ministry of the Interior

According to the Ministry of the Interior, they work to ensure that information about civil society and its role reaches all Estonian citizens. For example, they write articles, organise civil society debates in collaboration with the Parliament (*Riigikogu*), visit schools and organise events.¹⁶

No specific actions are planned for the participation of Roma community in civil society. The Ministry of the Interior has not taken any specific steps concerning Roma when formulating civil society policy or drawing up the civil society programme.¹⁷

Ministry of Culture

The task of the Ministry of Culture is to support the cultural life of the minorities living in Estonia and to preserve their cultural identity and language. The ministry also supports cultural societies of the minorities and helps to promote their cultural life and activities.¹⁸

To address Roma integration issues and coordinate information the Advisory Council for Roma Integration has been established next to the Ministry of Culture.¹⁹ The role of the Advisory Council is to analyse the integration issues and, consequently, make proposals to relevant organisations to address these issues and promote Roma integration.

Also, for the second year in a row, the Ministry of Culture carries out projects aimed at Roma empowerment funded by the European Commission (*discussed in chapter 2*).

National Foundation of Civil Society (Kodanikuühiskonna Sihtkapital)

National Foundation of Civil Society (NFCS) is a state financed civil society fund established by the Ministry of the Interior. NFCS aims to contribute to the capacity building of non-profit organisations and encourage civic action.²⁰ NFCS provides grants through open calls to NGOs that are at least one year old, act ethically in public interest and are not under the dominant influence of the state, local municipality or business organisations.²¹

According to NFCS, their role is not to focus specifically on smaller or larger target groups, but to be present for all NGOs when they need to address their organisation's capacity building.²² Nevertheless, NFCS does analyse from which regions and categories they receive fewer applications or none at all (these are mainly NGOs from Ida-Viru County, which communicate in Russian). To improve the situation, more information events have

¹⁵ Ministry of the Interior, Civil Society Programme 2021-2030. Available at: <https://www.siseministeerium.ee/et/tegevusvaldkonnad/kodanikuuhiskond/kodar>

¹⁶ Response to information request, Ministry of the Interior, 8 November 2019

¹⁷ *Ibid.*

¹⁸ Ministry of Culture. Available at: <https://www.kul.ee/en>

¹⁹ Ministry of Culture, Advisory Council for Roma Integration. Available at: <https://www.kul.ee/et/romade-loimumise-noukoda>

²⁰ The National Foundation of Civil Society. Statute of the Association. Available at: <https://www.kysk.ee/pohikiri>

²¹ Brochure introducing the activities of the National Foundation of Civil Society. Available at: https://www.kysk.ee/failid/Upload/files/sisulehtede-failid/KYSK_voldik_2019_ENG_A4_bleed3mm.pdf

²² Response to information request, National Foundation of Civil Society, 11 October 2019.

been organised in Ida-Viru County and Russian-language consulting services are ordered in Ida-Viru County and Narva.²³

NFCS has experimented with separate application rounds for less empowered organisations. This was done for NGOs in Ida-Viru county. Unfortunately, it was not successful because the less empowered organisations would have first needed to be trained in the field of writing and carrying out projects, before participating in application rounds.²⁴

NFCS has made proposals to the Ministry of Culture and the Ministry of the Interior on how to better involve minority organisations. The proposals are also presented in the Civil Society Development Program 2021-2030.²⁵

Roma associations are eligible for NFCS support, but equally with the others. Roma associations have not communicated with NFCS and have not applied for funding to carry out its activities. Once, years ago, the community representative attended an information event, but with that, the communication with the community has ended.²⁶

County Development Centres (MTÜ konsultandid maakondades)

NFCS finances NGO counselling in county development centres.²⁷ There is a non-profit organisation consultant in each county who advises for free local NGOs in all areas of the NGO work, including preparing applications. They also regularly organise thematic trainings for regional NGOs, but they are not prepared to advise anyone on human rights or the rights of national minorities.

A non-profit organisation consultant from Valga County (where the largest Roma community is in Estonia) confirmed that they have not received project proposals aimed at the Roma community.²⁸ Once, the consultant was approached by someone from the Roma community who was interested in writing a project to create a Valga Roma Service Centre. But this did not go beyond the idea because it was not clear who would be the target group and the beneficiaries.²⁹

Consultant from Valga County stated that separate nationality-based and targeted advertising for information days is not performed. When carrying out consultations, Valga County Development Centre takes into account the client as a person, with a personal approach. Separate training and counselling on how to communicate and involve the Roma community have not been carried out.³⁰

Integration Foundation (Integratsiooni Sihtasutus)

The Integration Foundation is an entity established by the Government of Estonia in 1998. It initiates and supports activities aimed at the integration of Estonian society among Estonians and non-Estonians, as well as activities related to immigration and emigration.

²³ Response to information request, National Foundation of Civil Society, 11 October 2019.

²⁴ *Ibid.*

²⁵ Ministry of the Interior, Civil Society Programme 2021-2030. Available at: <https://www.siseministeerium.ee/et/tegevusvaldkonnad/kodanikuuhiskond/kodar>

²⁶ Response to information request, National Foundation of Civil Society, 11 October 2019.

²⁷ County Development Centres. Available at: <https://www.arenduskeskused.ee/en/>

²⁸ Response to information request, Valga County Development Centre, 14 October 2019

²⁹ *Ibid.*

³⁰ *Ibid.*

The Foundation initiates and supports activities aimed at the integration of Estonian society and assists participants in the migration process.³¹

Over the last five years, the Integration Foundation has supported a small number of activities aimed at the Roma. The activities supported are not related to advocacy, but to the activities of Roma cultural societies and dance groups. The following cultural societies have received funding through umbrella organisations: NGO Romany Dance Ensemble AL SOL³², NGO Romany Dance hobby school KHAMORO³³, NGO Roma Cultural Centre in Tallinn.³⁴

In the past five years, the Integration Foundation has also supported two projects aimed at promoting Roma culture. The project "Insight into the Estonian Roma community through the eyes of Roma children", presented by the NGO Ambulatoorium was awarded 5200 euros. The Romany Dance Ensemble AL-SOL, which organised a series of concert lectures "Roma: the Millennium Journey", was awarded 3200 euros.³⁵

Integration Foundation organises grant-information days in Tallinn and Narva. It also provides personalised advice to organisations through Skype meetings. In order to activate national minorities, Integration Foundation organises an annual co-operation day where different stakeholders can empower each other.³⁶

In January 2020, the Integration Foundation published a job advert to find a "Roma community mentor", who could support the integration of the Roma, including raising the Roma community's awareness of their rights and obligations, contributing to the capacity of the public sector to ensure Roma rights and overcome cultural differences. The target group of the service is Roma families, whose registered place of residence is mostly in Valga county, and Roma children and young people who need support in their education. The service will be provided in close cooperation with Valga municipality government and educational institutions of the municipality.³⁷

³¹ Integration Foundation. Available at: <https://www.integratsioon.ee/en/integration-foundation-strategy-2015-2020>

³² NGO Romany Dance Ensemble AL SOL. Available at: <http://www.alsol.ee/>

³³ NGO Romany Dance hobby school KHAMORO. Available at: <https://www.facebook.com/Mustlastantsukool-KhamoroGypsy-dance-school-Khamoro-319962804705504/>

³⁴ NGO Roma Cultural Centre in Tallinn. Available at: <https://eestiema.ee/mustlased/>

³⁵ Response to information request, Integration Foundation, 30 October 2019

³⁶ *Ibid.*

³⁷ Job advert for Roma community mentor, 14 January 2020. Available at: <https://www.cv.ee/toopakumine/integratsiooni-sihtasutus/roma-kogukonna-mentorit-a4083774.html>

CASE STUDY 1: STATE'S ACTION FOR ROMA CIVIL SOCIETY EMPOWERMENT

In 2017 and 2018, the Ministry of Culture implemented the project ESTROM with the goal to develop a support network for empowerment of Roma integration stakeholders, particularly Roma youth and women. The project was financed by the European Commission (95%) and the Ministry of Culture (5%). The main objectives of the project were to identify local stakeholders in the field of Roma integration and encourage their cooperation; identify young Roma and Roma women who are interested in being active in civil society and participate in training in order to become mediators or spokespersons of the Roma community; and to empower Roma organisations.

Project activities included trainings for Roma youth and activists, stakeholder meetings, seminar for teachers working with Roma children, Roma Holocaust Remembrance Event, study on Roma participation in society, and setting up a website. The events were attended by 132 different people with predominantly Roma background.³⁸

According to the Ministry of Culture, the first project fulfilled its goal, although lasting impact still requires years of continuous action. The Ministry stressed the importance of finding people from different Roma groups who are more motivated and to provide them with individualised training. It was outlined as positive that the project provided the Ministry with an opportunity to build links and mutual trust with the Roma community and its various groups.³⁹

Feedback for the project was collected mainly through an oral discussion at the end of each training. According to the Ministry of Culture, feedback sheets did not prove to be effective, as they were often too complicated to complete; most participants had not been to any trainings before. The general feedback was to continue similar activities in the future. However, most of the collected feedback focused on practical issues, such as food, rather than the content of the trainings.⁴⁰

As main challenges, the Ministry outlined the lack of capable spokespersons in the target group, generally low level of education, which makes it difficult to find possible spokespersons with secondary education, also issues with motivation and discipline.⁴¹ The project manager found that the goals for the first project were too ambitious, the content of the trainings was too challenging for the participants. Furthermore, the content was planned to be progressing with each training, however, most participants changed every training. Also, it was difficult to find a trainer who would speak both Estonian and Russian, and could keep the attention of the group.⁴²

The follow-up project ESTROM 2 is implemented from 1 August 2019 to 31 July 2020, also funded by the European Commission. The project includes similar activities to the first project, such as another seminar for teachers working with Roma children, trainings for Roma youth and women (including individual training for three young Roma activists), events for Roma Day and Roma Holocaust Remembrance Day, cooperation meetings with

³⁸ Project ESTROM, available at: <https://www.eestiromad.com>

³⁹ Response to information request by Mall Saul, Adviser of the Cultural Diversity Department, Ministry of Culture, 25 October 2019.

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*

⁴¹ *Ibid.*

⁴² Interview with Darja Sudelainen-Fedosov, ESTROM project manager, 2 December 2019.

local authorities. In addition, the project aims to develop cooperation between the Baltic States to support Roma integration.⁴³

Based on the feedback received from the trainers during the first project, the Ministry decided to focus more on self-motivation issues during the trainings.⁴⁴ The project manager also shared her recommendations regarding the content of the trainings. It was decided to provide a basic level of trainings on self-development to Roma all over Estonia, rather than higher level trainings to a small group of people. As a positive development, the project manager outlined that interest in the trainings had increased a lot compared to the first project, more people participated and stayed throughout whole trainings.⁴⁵

Representatives of the European Roma Forum in Estonia expressed that the planning process of the ESTROM projects lacked a meaningful participation of the Roma community. The active members of the Roma civil society were involved later during the implementation of the project, to assist with gathering participants for trainings, on a voluntary basis.⁴⁶ The members of the European Roma Forum in Estonia stressed that it is essential to offer the opportunity to the Roma community to contribute to project planning and preparation in a meaningful way, as well as to conduct clear and open communication throughout the project. They noted that communication between the various stakeholders of the project was often one-off, without follow-up.⁴⁷

The project manager noted that information was shared and input was asked during the meetings of Advisory Council of Roma Integration. Also, the active members of the European Roma Forum in Estonia were put in charge of organising the Roma Holocaust Remembrance Day and Roma Day (in ESTROM 2 project), which were added to the project as a result of consulting with the representatives of the Roma community.⁴⁸ However, this work is done by the representatives of the Roma community on a voluntary basis and without any formal partnership agreement.⁴⁹

One risk that can be outlined is that there is one official of the Ministry of Culture responsible for leading the project initiative on behalf of the state. As the initiative is led by one person and there is no specific Roma integration strategy, there is a risk that the momentum could be lost if there should be any changes within the Ministry of Culture. Impact of the projects would be greater if they were a part of a specific long-term strategy and involve the participation of the Roma community in a meaningful way from the start.

⁴³ Minutes from the meeting of Advisory Council for Roma Integration, 01.07.2019. Available at: https://www.kul.ee/sites/kulminn/files/romade_loimumise_noukoja_koosoleku_protokoll_21.06.2019.pdf

⁴⁴ Response to information request by Mall Saul, Adviser of the Cultural Diversity Department, Ministry of Culture, 25 October 2019.

⁴⁵ Interview with Darja Sudelainen-Fedosov, ESTROM project manager, 2 December 2019.

⁴⁶ Interview with Zalina Dabla and Anette Ross, representatives of the European Roma Forum in Estonia, 16 October 2019.

⁴⁷ E-mail exchange with Anette Ross, representative of the European Roma Forum in Estonia, 21 November 2019.

⁴⁸ Interview with Darja Sudelainen-Fedosov, ESTROM project manager, 2 December 2019.

⁴⁹ Interview with Zalina Dabla and Anette Ross, representatives of the European Roma Forum in Estonia, 21 January 2020.

CASE STUDY 2: OBSTACLES FACED BY ROMA NGOS

The first Estonian Roma Civil Monitor report uncovered that there are three registered Roma advocacy NGOs in Estonia: *Lõuna-Eesti Romade Liit* (Southern Estonian Roma Association), *Kesk-Eesti Romade Liit* (Central Estonian Roma Association) and *Euroopa Romade Foorum Eestis* (European Roma Forum in Estonia). None of the organisations have any paid employees and have not been consistently active.⁵⁰ In addition, there are several Roma dance groups and a Roma Cultural Centre (*Tallinna Mustlaste Kultuurikeskus*) registered as NGOs.⁵¹ These organisations are not focused on Roma rights advocacy, but on cultural activities.

The three Roma advocacy NGOs, as well as several other no longer active or registered organisations, were initiated by Roman Lutt, a well-known member of Roma civil society who passed away a few years ago. In each organisation, there was one other active participant. After Roman Lutt passed away, the activity of the organisations waned. Currently, there are only single members of the Roma community holding up all the organisations, who are also members of the Advisory Council for Roma Integration.⁵² They have expressed their intent to merge the organisations into one – *Eesti Romade Liit (Estonian Roma Union)*.⁵³

One of the main obstacles faced by the organisations, outlined by the representatives of the organisations, is that all the work going into the organisations is done on a voluntary basis alongside their main job. The organisations do not have any funding to have paid employees. Also, there are not enough active members in the organisations to share responsibilities.⁵⁴

According to a representative of European Roma Forum in Estonia, another obstacle is that there is a lack of people who have in-depth knowledge about the functioning of NGOs, especially regarding project-writing and dealing with the bureaucracy. Members of the organisations find meeting the requirements of project application rounds difficult – it is easier to organise one-off events without project grants, as that removes the need for reporting or accurate record keeping.⁵⁵

The representatives emphasised that it would be necessary to have a targeted long-term support for step-by-step planning of the work of the NGO and getting to know the project world. In the past, the Ministry of Culture organised a training in cooperation with the Integration Foundation, but it did not meet the needs of the Roma community.⁵⁶

As outlined in the first chapter, Estonia has a strategy and plans for general civil society development. However, Roma have not been outlined as a target group in any policies, targeted support has mainly been offered to Russian-speaking NGOs. Roma organisations could benefit from a specific strategy and targeted approach. The framework for NGO counselling already exists in the form of National Foundation of Civil Society County

⁵⁰ Estonian Human Rights Centre, *Civil society monitoring report on implementation of the national Roma integration strategies in Estonia – Focusing on structural and horizontal preconditions for successful implementation of the strategy*, p. 11, December 2018.

⁵¹ E-business register, Centre of Registers and Information Systems. Available at: <https://ariregister.rik.ee>

⁵² Zalina Dabla and Farida Tšimbota, Advisory Council for Roma Integration – <https://www.kul.ee/et/romade-loimumise-noukoda>

⁵³ Minutes from the meeting of Advisory Council for Roma Integration, 18.12.2018. Available at: https://www.kul.ee/sites/kulminn/files/romade_loimumise_noukoja_koosoleku_protokoll_0.pdf

⁵⁴ E-mail exchange with Anette Ross, representative of the European Roma Forum in Estonia, 21 November 2019; Interview with Zalina Dabla and Anette Ross, representatives of the European Roma Forum in Estonia, 16 October 2019.

⁵⁵ E-mail exchange with Anette Ross, representative of the European Roma Forum in Estonia, 21 November 2019.

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*

Development Centres. It could be considered to train the counsellors to provide targeted support to Roma organisations in counties with larger Roma communities.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Strategy for empowering Roma civil society

There is a need for a more strategic approach for empowering the Roma civil society, either by developing a specific strategy or highlighting the Roma as a specific target group in existing framework for civil society development. Here, cooperation among state institutions is key: since policymaking is divided among Ministry of Interior and Ministry of Culture, it is important to establish clear division of responsibilities, including an overarching coordination role. Moreover, the development of the Civil Society Development Plan should pay more attention to the meaningful inclusion of minority groups such as the Roma. This requires a substantial shift in understanding what inclusive strategy development practically means and the use of new formats.

Targeted support for existing Roma organisations

Roma organisations have expressed the need for targeted long-term support that would include step-by-step planning of the work of an NGO, project-writing and reporting.

The National Foundation of Civil Society could think about further ways to conduct application rounds for less empowered organisations. There could be simplified reporting processes for smaller grants or lump-sum payments for reaching specific targets without the need for a financial report. More efforts should be made to reach the communities, such as visiting locations or sending out personalised invitations to information sessions as well as follow up via channels that are used by the Roma. The counsellors of the National Foundation of Civil Society County Development Centres should be trained to reach out to the communities who are not so empowered and provide targeted support to Roma organisations in counties with larger Roma population.

In addition, Integration Foundation could expand its support also to organisations which are willing and able to do advocacy work rather than only focusing on cultural activities.

Meaningful participation of Roma community in planning processes

Representatives of Roma organisations have emphasised the importance of offering the Roma community the opportunity to contribute to planning and preparation of any measures that are meant to benefit the community. This requires better capacity both within the state institutions and the Roma community, including better understanding, more time for preparation. Funds could be allocated for Roma community inclusion in the planning stage of the projects, and various interactive and participatory tools could be used to facilitate idea gathering and validation of planned measures. The findings and recommendations of the expert group on the operation of the Housing (Traveller Accommodation) Act 1998, and their related recommendations, should be implemented as a matter of urgency.

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