



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

*Identifying blind spots  
in Roma inclusion policy*

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December 2019



Justice  
and Consumers

**EUROPEAN COMMISSION**

Directorate-General for Justice and Consumers  
Directorate D — Equality and Union Citizenship  
Unit D1 Non Discrimination and Roma Coordination

*European Commission*  
*B-1049 Brussels*

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Luxembourg: Publications Office of the European Union, 2020

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PDF ISBN 978-92-76-19945-8 doi:10.2838/892832 Catalogue number DS-01-20-371-EN-N

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The report has been prepared by NGOs *Trajosko Drom* and Roma International.

The report was prepared as part of the Roma Civil Monitor pilot project, 'Capacity-building for Roma civil society and strengthening its involvement in the monitoring of National Roma Integration Strategies'. The pilot project is carried out for the European Commission, DG Justice and Consumers. It is coordinated by the *Center for Policy Studies* of the Central European University (CEU CPS), in partnership with the European Roma Grassroots Organisations Network (ERGO Network), the European Roma Rights Centre (ERRC), the *Fundación Secretariado Gitano* (FSG) and the Roma Education Fund (REF) and implemented with around 90 NGOs and experts from up to 27 member states.

Although the Roma Civil Monitor pilot project, as part of which the report was prepared, is coordinated by CEU, the report represents the findings of the author and it does not necessarily reflect the views of CEU. CEU cannot be held responsible for any use which may be made of the information contained therein.

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## LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

AF	Swedish Public Employment Service
CABS	County Administrative Board in Stockholm County
DO	Swedish Equality Ombudsman ( <i>Diskrimineringsombudsmannen</i> )
GO	Government Offices
IVO	Health and Social Care Inspectorate
JO	Parliamentary Ombudsman ( <i>Justitieombudsmannen</i> )
LVU	Swedish Care of Young Persons (Special Provisions) Act
NBHW	National Board of Health and Welfare
NRIS	National Roma Integration Strategy
SKL	Association of Local Authorities and Regions
SNAE	Swedish National Agency for Education
UKÄ	The Swedish Higher Education Authority

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Swedish governments of the 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 the 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, despite 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, action plans and monitoring of their implementation are still lacking. Without concrete, well-funded and mandatory provisions the well written National Roma Strategy will not meet its goals.

### Foster care and child protection services

Compulsory custody of children, under the Swedish Care of Young Persons Act (LVU) is an extraordinary measure that the state can use as a final solution when children are in danger and other softer measures are not considered possible. The best interest of the child is a child rights principle that shall be leading throughout the process. However, inquiries and legal proceedings are of an uneven quality which imperils the rule of law as well as the principle of what is best for the child. As to the Roma community, there is great concern that Roma children run a greater risk than the majority to suffer and not have their needs met in these situations.

Reports have expressed that Swedish social services lack understanding of the situation of the Roma community, not being aware of historic and present social conditions that affect the Roma minority and the relationship with majority society, culturally sensitive lack practices, and even though there is plenty of legislation that obliges social services to bridge this gap they still fail in using these. The consequence is that the Roma minority does not obtain the legal rights they are entitled to. Roma bridge builders, who voluntarily accompany Roma families to meetings with the social services, observe that the social services are uninterested in and often even opposed to receiving help from the Roma mediators, which means that this opportunity to provide relevant support and more informed assessment is unfortunately wasted.

### Adults with low education and no formal job experience

Up until a few decades ago, the Roma minority in Sweden lived in families and separate communities since they were not allowed to settle but forced to travel from town to town without access to public services. The togetherness that existed among the Roma provided security in which one took care of one another. In the 1970s to 1980s, the traditional occupational areas started ceasing and the state started turning towards the Roma minority with assimilation ambitions into the frameworks of the majority society.

As a result of being excluded from schools and employment opportunities, the now adult generation have few manageable paths that lead to higher education or jobs, and no policies actually target the issues of this generation. Therefore, many adult Roma are now trapped in a system of sickness benefits, sickness pension, social security contributions or attending some type of public sheltered training facility that does not lead anywhere.

## Domestic elder care, education and labour market

Swedish municipalities have a statutory obligation to provide elder care for its inhabitants in a form that is sensitive to the older persons individual situation, needs and cultural background. Official national minorities, like the Roma, have stronger legal protection regarding the rights to language and cultural context. However, in reality, very few elderly Roma people have access to elder care that meets their needs to a sufficient extent so that they can benefit from them. Because of historic abuse, elderly Roma and their families are reluctant to claim their rights in this area for fear of leaving their loved ones in the hands of majority society representatives, and it is the duty of the public services to bridge this lack of trust and make their services accessible to the Roma minority.

Solving the issue is crucial for liberating the younger generations from unpaid domestic care work and around the clock emergency standby duty that impedes their possibilities for part-taking in education and employment, particularly for women and girls.

## INTRODUCTION

The Roma have been part of the population in Sweden since at least the 16<sup>th</sup> century. Roma in Sweden were officially recognised as a national minority as of 1999 which granted them particular rights regarding use and preservation of language and the right to maintain and develop your own culture. Roma minority in Sweden is officially made up of five loosely defined subgroups determined by their arrival in Sweden and some language and cultural variations and by the common experience of exclusion. From early on they suffered persecution, expulsions and stigmatising stereotypes.

As the Swedish nation advanced into current society, the Roma underwent a process of exclusion and marginalisation which pressured them to form a parallel society with its very own social structure to survive. Even as late as the second half of the 20<sup>th</sup> 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. With a new awareness raising 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 (EUFW) 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 Roma minority and the relationship between the Roma and authorities in Sweden have greatly benefited from the demands of the EUFW that the Swedish government has responded to with sincere ambition. Since the introduction of the NRIS most government agencies and local authorities conduct councils with Roma representatives and a fair amount of this reach-out ambition has trickled down into the consciousness of the local Roma communities. There is also a constant flow of smaller public projects or funding initiatives allocated to Roma inclusion within the different societal fields and levels, including for Roma civil society initiatives, which have some effect on the living conditions for the Roma within the various thematic areas.

The general strengths of Swedish governance, society and focus on civil rights also influence the strengths of the NRIS, which are transparency, participation and trust-building. However, some other strengths of Swedish society paradoxically have a negative effect on the implementation of the NRIS. That is the broad and strong focus on measures towards general anti-discrimination and non-acceptance of general racism in the public discourse, which basically work well for other parts of the population when it comes to building the Swedish equality focused welfare state, but both create "blind spots" when it comes to the particular historic and present marginalisation of the Roma minority and the particular discriminatory effects of antigypsyism. Thus, the NRIS has yet failed to present targeted measures to an extent that would be able to have a structural impact on factors that would lead to relevant social development for the Roma, in particular within the prime field of education for Roma children which is the single most significant area for shaping a better future for the Roma minority in Sweden.

This report is the third and last of the pilot project with the full title of "[Capacity building for Roma civil society and strengthening its involvement in the monitoring of national Roma integration strategies](#)", which was commissioned by the European Commission and coordinated by Central European University. The [first monitoring report](#) reviewed key structural preconditions of NRIS's successful implementation: fighting discrimination and antigypsyism, governance and overall policy framework. The [second report](#) focused on the NRIS's key policy areas of education, employment, healthcare and housing. The third

report focuses on identifying blind spots in Roma inclusion policy and the three topics selected by the authors for Sweden were:

- Children taken into compulsory custody and the heightened risks and implications for the Roma family of child-family separation. This is a crucial issue that not only risk traumatising children and jeopardise their psychological development, but also has the Roma parents living in a heightened state of stress that impedes social interaction with schools and other authorities on an equal basis. It is also an area where historic abuse has caused a wound in the Roma community which is not yet healed and where lingering prejudice from majority society still risk inflicting serious damage to Roma families.
- The “forgotten generation” of young to middle aged adults with low education and no formal job experience and loss of traditional livelihood who are not met with adequate measures to access education or employment and are at risk for health and social problems. Policy measures up to date reveal a lack of deeper understanding of the complex social circumstances that this group face in everyday life and the broad approach that would be necessary to tackle the issue. Not resolving the problems also has a negative impact on children living in families with unemployed adults, which poses a barrier for the children when it comes to being able to uphold adequate school routines.
- The lack of accessible elder care for the Roma minority which poses a barrier for the younger generations to be able to partake in education and employment as they are tied to unpaid domestic responsibilities, particularly for women and girls. Swedish policy in this area typically focus on good *availability* and tend to oversee lack of *accessibility* for ethnic minorities, when services are supposed to be for “everyone”. Solving this issue would simultaneously remove an important barrier for gender equality.

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, such as the “White Paper on abuses and rights violations against Roma in the 20<sup>th</sup> century”, “Roma Rights: Discrimination, paths of redress and how the law can improve the situation of Roma”, “Elder care in minority languages 2016”, “When Society takes a Child”, as well as interviews with public officials and 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 and Trajosko Drom. The consultations with these NGOs were organised through a snowball sampling of 29 interviewees with whom focus groups and informal interviews were done. Interviewees representing an even section of society regarding gender and age groups.

## FOSTER CARE AND CHILD PROTECTION SERVICES

### Compulsory custody of Roma children

In Sweden there is a well-developed structure for making sure that every child is well taken care of and has access to all their legal rights to have a chance to develop on an equal basis, no matter the social standing of the parents. This entails that if the parents are considered incapable of providing a nurturing environment for the child, social authorities should intervene and in severe cases take the child into compulsory custody. It is crucial that this process is strictly conducted under rule-of-law, and there are structures to ensure this, which to a large degree are well functioning. However, there are indications that these structures operate in a manner that have the Roma family run a higher risk of not having their rights met in compulsory custody cases and that Roma children are taken from their parents without proper investigation. This circumstance also brings with it a heightened lack of trust for authorities where Roma parents are afraid to communicate openly with schools, which risks leading to barriers for the Roma children in accessing their right to education.

### How well does Swedish authorities fulfil the rights of the Roma minority?

According to Law 1990:52 on Swedish Care of Young Persons with specific provisions on juvenile care (LVU) there is a possibility for the Swedish state to, under specific extraordinary circumstances, make a compulsory custody of children by law.<sup>1</sup> To be able to do this kind of interference there must be a significant risk that the health or progress of the child is endangered.<sup>2</sup> The prevailing measure is very intervening since the state takes over the liabilities of the parents for as long as the need of care of the juvenile remains.<sup>3</sup> All arrangements should be made on the basis of what is best for the child, which is the principle that should be a guideline throughout all decisions taken regarding the child.<sup>4</sup> The objectives of the law is that the family should once again be united and that the family shall get the appropriate help and support from the authorities to make this come true. In some cases, the destructive patterns of the family can be so impregnable that a reunification is impossible according to what is best for the child, but the intention for the legislator is that there shall be a reunification if this is possible and that the authorities shall support this as well as possible.<sup>5</sup>

The compulsory custody ceases when the social welfare board regards that the child is no longer in need of care.<sup>6</sup>

<sup>1</sup> The Swedish Care of Young Persons (Special Provisions) Act, LVU 1§, 6§ [https://www.riksdagen.se/sv/dokument-lagar/dokument/svensk-forfattningssamling/lag-199052-med-sarskilda-bestammelser-om-var\\_d\\_sfs-1990-52](https://www.riksdagen.se/sv/dokument-lagar/dokument/svensk-forfattningssamling/lag-199052-med-sarskilda-bestammelser-om-var_d_sfs-1990-52)

<sup>2</sup> LVU 2§ [https://www.riksdagen.se/sv/dokument-lagar/dokument/svensk-forfattningssamling/lag-199052-med-sarskilda-bestammelser-om-var\\_d\\_sfs-1990-52](https://www.riksdagen.se/sv/dokument-lagar/dokument/svensk-forfattningssamling/lag-199052-med-sarskilda-bestammelser-om-var_d_sfs-1990-52)

<sup>3</sup> Parental Code 6:1 and LVU 11§ [https://www.riksdagen.se/sv/dokument-lagar/dokument/svensk-forfattningssamling/foraldrabalk-1949381\\_sfs-1949-381](https://www.riksdagen.se/sv/dokument-lagar/dokument/svensk-forfattningssamling/foraldrabalk-1949381_sfs-1949-381)

<sup>4</sup> Social Services Act (2001:453) kap 1:2§ [https://www.riksdagen.se/sv/dokument-lagar/dokument/svensk-forfattningssamling/socialtjanstlag-2001453\\_sfs-2001-453](https://www.riksdagen.se/sv/dokument-lagar/dokument/svensk-forfattningssamling/socialtjanstlag-2001453_sfs-2001-453)

<sup>5</sup> Gunnar Bramstång. 1985. Sociallagstiftningen. En kommentar till socialtjänstlagen, lagen om vård av unga samt lagen om vård av missbrukare. Stockholm: PA Norstedt & Söners förlag.

<sup>6</sup> LVU 21§ [https://www.riksdagen.se/sv/dokument-lagar/dokument/svensk-forfattningssamling/lag-199052-med-sarskilda-bestammelser-om-var\\_d\\_sfs-1990-52](https://www.riksdagen.se/sv/dokument-lagar/dokument/svensk-forfattningssamling/lag-199052-med-sarskilda-bestammelser-om-var_d_sfs-1990-52)

To make a decision of compulsory custody valid it must be tried in court.<sup>7</sup> This is one way of ensuring that the rule of law is upheld. The Administrative Law Court, in charge of the LVU-cases, has an obligation to guarantee that the case is sufficiently prepared.<sup>8</sup> This means that the court has the authority to send back material for further completion if it would turn out that the basis is too weak to make a judgement. Another essential principle that will ensure the rule of law is that the case should be conducted in an adversarial manner in order to assure that both parties has the knowledge and the possibility to comment upon the material in the specific case in order to be able to effect the outcome.

In 2017, there were 4,675 cases of compulsory custody in Sweden, which makes up approximately 2.5 per 1,000 of children below 18 years.<sup>9</sup> There is a big variety in the quality of investigation and how well authorities have been able to find the best solution for the specific case, particularly since the time-frame designated to these assessments is often rather short, and those conducting them are seldom specialised within the field of children. However, the Roma family runs a higher risk of not being properly assessed in these processes since there is still prejudiced attitudes, cultural misunderstandings and a wide gap of trust from both parts. The normative and rigid protocols form a barrier that leaves the Roma family at a disadvantage when trying to convey their perspective to the public official, particularly when these officials tend to be young and inexperienced and reluctant to make independent decisions. In cases of compulsory custody there is already a family crisis. The situation is probably more or less chaotic. Under these circumstances the social welfare board has already the upper hand and the risk of getting an even worse position due to prejudice and lack of knowledge about how the Roma community work makes the whole situation even worse. Roma history has too many examples of how authorities have abused their power in similar cases and the collective memory of these wrong doings should not be underestimated. The official authorities are responsible that the process is conducted in an objective manner free from prejudices. The official authorities are responsible that the Roma people are ensured their legal right to their culture and their language. And it is the responsibility of the official authorities to try and bridge the wide gap of confidence that exists between Roma people and the authorities. History reveals a scenario where the actual goal of the authorities during the 20<sup>th</sup> century seems to have been to part Roma children from their parents,<sup>10</sup> and there is now a huge responsibility to make amends for these historical assaults.

Roma women in particular live with the stress of a latent fear of having their children taken away based on external judgements and regulations that they feel they have no control over or insight into. Lack of trust, understanding and communication by social services of the relevant procedures forces women to keep a low profile and not report for example domestic abuse but rather stay in destructive situations that could put her and her children in danger.

In cases of compulsory custody, it is even more important that the process is guaranteed to be as objective as possible since when the court has made a decision on custody this decision is not easily reversed. Roma people also run a higher risk in that when a foster home is designated or foster care is supposed to end, there is still prejudice that living in the Roma community is not good and that Roma parents are not good parents. As one interviewee said: "*No matter how obvious it was that our seven-year-old granddaughter*

<sup>7</sup> LVU 4§ [https://www.riksdagen.se/sv/dokument-lagar/dokument/svensk-forfattningssamling/lag-199052-med-sarskilda-bestammelser-om-varld\\_sfs-1990-52](https://www.riksdagen.se/sv/dokument-lagar/dokument/svensk-forfattningssamling/lag-199052-med-sarskilda-bestammelser-om-varld_sfs-1990-52)

<sup>8</sup> The Administrative Court Procedure Act (1979:291) 1:8§ [https://www.riksdagen.se/sv/dokument-lagar/dokument/svensk-forfattningssamling/forvaltningsprocesslag-1971291\\_sfs-1971-291](https://www.riksdagen.se/sv/dokument-lagar/dokument/svensk-forfattningssamling/forvaltningsprocesslag-1971291_sfs-1971-291)

<sup>9</sup> <https://www.svt.se/nyheter/inrikes/antalet-barn-som-omhandertas-med-tvang-okar>

<sup>10</sup> Government Offices of Sweden. 2014. *White Paper on abuses and rights violations against Roma in the 20<sup>th</sup> century*. Available at: <http://www.government.se/information-material/2014/03/white-paper-on-abuses-and-rights-violations-of-roma-during-the-1900s/>

*was deeply attached to us and however we proved that we had a stable life with no remarks, the social worker dismissed us as foster home without even considering it when our daughter was unable to take care of her, and put her in a non-Roma household that were strangers to her.”<sup>11</sup>*

One important element in the process is the inquiry that the decision will be based upon, whether there will be a compulsory custody or not. It is utterly important that this inquiry is sufficiently substantiated in order to ensure that what is best for the child shall be guaranteed. In the preparatory work to the law LVU, it is observed that the quality of these inquiries varies a lot,<sup>12</sup> something that lawyers agree on. This might depend upon the fact that it is often young and inexperienced social service workers that are making the inquiry and they often lack the knowledge of how a family function.<sup>13</sup> Real cases reveal when young social welfare worker seem to lack understanding of how affecting it must be for a family to be in such an extraordinary situation and let alone understand the historical impact of authority assault that is a reality in Roma history: *“I saw that the social worker was in her early 20s and asked if she had children and she said no, and I could tell from the way she clung to her check-list that she had very little understanding and experience of how family life with children really is and how you go about to handle everyday life with managing everything and what is really important to a child and parent: love and deep caring – and not if you miss some formal appointments regarding your child, which was on her list.”<sup>14</sup>*

In court it is the attorney-at-law that makes the revision of the inquiry. Most of the times they accept the inquiries laid down by the social service. This means that the control mechanism, i.e. that material that is insufficiently prepared should be rejected, which is supposed to be a safeguard for the individual in some cases, does not work as well as it should. In addition, both the attorney-at-law and the social welfare worker normally have too little time to complete and review the inquiries which of course makes it even more difficult to produce high quality material.<sup>15</sup> Often neither the social service worker nor the legal representative is specialised within the field of children. There is a risk that the adversarial idea is forfeited if the attorney-at-law that is supposed to represent the child is inexperienced and has too little time to investigate the case. If the social services have a few weeks, the public council only gets an average of five hours to work on the case. Inquiries that would have been better off with some further work, risk to ‘slip through’ instead of being sent back for further investigation.

There is a risk that Roma children taken in custody is afflicted in two ways. First, it is a traumatic experience being taken and parted from you parents in the first place, and second, if the child is being placed in a foster home where the language and culture is unfamiliar this is likely to cause extra stress for the young person. Roma bridge builders (mediators) could assist with valuable expertise and help bridge mutual mistrust when attending in meetings with social services and affected families. They are well suited to find solutions and alternative options that would be better off for Roma children in these difficult circumstances. Even though the numbers are far too few, the Roma bridge builders actually employed in some municipalities or volunteering from NGOs, both witness that the social service seldom embrace the opportunity these resources bring. Instead the social services ignore the Roma mediators or even question why they attend the meeting. They often make it very clear that the cultural interpreters are not wanted and cannot

<sup>11</sup> Interview with grandparents of a Roma child, forcibly taken from her family into public custody, 2019-11-04

<sup>12</sup> Proposition 1989/90:28 sid. 71 ff [https://www.riksdagen.se/sv/dokument-lagar/dokument/motion/med-anledning-av-prop-19899028-om-var-d-i-vissa\\_GD02So6](https://www.riksdagen.se/sv/dokument-lagar/dokument/motion/med-anledning-av-prop-19899028-om-var-d-i-vissa_GD02So6)

<sup>13</sup> <https://www.advokaten.se/Tidningsnummer/2014/Nr-1-2014-argang-80/Nar-samhallet--tar-ett-barn/>

<sup>14</sup> Interview with a Roma father, 2019-10-31

<sup>15</sup> <https://www.advokaten.se/Tidningsnummer/2014/Nr-1-2014-argang-80/Nar-samhallet--tar-ett-barn/>

bring anything extra to the matter: "The family had asked me to accompany them for support because they knew that I was more familiar with the language of the authorities and also to explain certain things that they did not know how to communicate in a proper manner, but the social services were very annoyed by my presence and ignored me the whole meeting."<sup>16</sup> This is a very good opportunity for the social services to get an insight into the Roma minority, life circumstances and rights and maybe find alternative solutions better attuned to Roma needs. Unfortunately, these possibilities seem to be wasted only too often.

For the Roma minority to get their legal rights ensured, these rights must be practiced everyday life by authorities and majority society, if not, these rights will be nothing but ink on a paper. Social services are a sector where Roma rights and human rights can become alive and real. Official authorities are responsible for the historic fact that many Roma children<sup>17</sup> were parted from their parents and culture. Official authorities are responsible today for prejudice about the Roma to be extinguished and that Roma people are granted their legal rights.

### Regulatory and institutional framework for child's rights protection

When a child is taken into compulsory custody there shall be a care plan made in order to get the best care possible for the child.<sup>18</sup> In the case of compulsory custody of Roma children there are several laws and regulations that can be used to ensure that the right to language and culture of the Roma national minority is well provided for.<sup>19</sup> The National Board of Health and Welfare (NBHW), which is the authority that stipulate regulations for the social services, has laid down regulation concerning compulsory custody where they emphasise that special concern should be taken to essential values of the parents in order to cause as little divergence as possible for the child, which is even more important in cases when the child is from a different culture.<sup>20</sup> They also point out the importance of trying to uphold the principle of consecutiveness, which means that one should consider the possibilities to place the child within their natural network.<sup>21</sup> In the preparatory work of the law they suggest the social services to use the resources one can find in migrated families, where the whole family often is involved.<sup>22</sup> This is a condition that one can find in the Roma community where Roma children often have a deep and broad contact with their relatives. However, in 2006, the NBHW lays down in a report that there is a profound lack of knowledge about Roma culture and current and historical circumstances amongst the Swedish social services.<sup>23</sup>

In SOU 2016:44 the Swedish state observes that the progress of counteracting antigypsyism is not satisfactory, why there is reason to believe that the knowledge is not increasing in any significant way at the social services. According to laws and regulations special consideration can and shall be taken into account when Roma children are taken

<sup>16</sup> Interview with Roma bridge builder, 2019-10-25

<sup>17</sup> Government Offices of Sweden. 2014. *White Paper on abuses and rights violations against Roma in the 20<sup>th</sup> century*. Available at: <http://www.government.se/information-material/2014/03/white-paper-on-abuses-and-rights-violations-of-roma-during-the-1900s/>

<sup>18</sup> LVU 11§ [https://www.riksdagen.se/sv/dokument-lagar/dokument/svensk-forfattningssamling/lag-199052-med-sarskilda-bestammelser-om-var\\_d\\_sfs-1990-52](https://www.riksdagen.se/sv/dokument-lagar/dokument/svensk-forfattningssamling/lag-199052-med-sarskilda-bestammelser-om-var_d_sfs-1990-52)

<sup>19</sup> National Minority and Minority Language Act SÖ 2002:2, 2002:3, Regeringsformen 1:2§ st 6, Lag (2009:600), Lag (2009:724) [https://www.riksdagen.se/sv/dokument-lagar/dokument/svensk-forfattningssamling/lag-2009724-om-nationella-minoriteter-och\\_sfs-2009-724](https://www.riksdagen.se/sv/dokument-lagar/dokument/svensk-forfattningssamling/lag-2009724-om-nationella-minoriteter-och_sfs-2009-724)

<sup>20</sup> SOSFS General recommendations 1997:15 sid. 59 <https://lagen.nu/sosfs/1997:15>

<sup>21</sup> SOSFS General recommendations 1997:15 sid 61 <https://lagen.nu/sosfs/1997:15>

<sup>22</sup> Proposition 1989/90:28 sid 54 st 4 [https://www.riksdagen.se/sv/dokument-lagar/dokument/motion/med-anledning-av-prop-19899028-om-var\\_d-i-vissa\\_GD02So6](https://www.riksdagen.se/sv/dokument-lagar/dokument/motion/med-anledning-av-prop-19899028-om-var_d-i-vissa_GD02So6)

<sup>23</sup> Socialstyrelsens lägesbeskrivning Artikelnr: 2006-131-36 *Omhändertagande av romska barn*

into compulsory custody, but this is unfortunately far from what takes place in reality. Social services need to increase their knowledge about Roma culture *and* make sure that Roma people are met in an objective way free from prejudice in their contact with authorities. It is up to the authorities to make this happen in order ensure the Roma minority their legal rights. As we have seen there are several laws that stipulates the right to language and culture for Roma people. Many Roma are unfortunately only too aware that these rights seldom come into action in the reality of everyday life for Roma people. On most occasions the individual might not even know that he or she has a legal right, and sometimes one might not have the energy to fight the battle. In one case a Swedish Office of Antidiscrimination reported a Social Welfare Board for not having done enough to ensure that four Roma children taken in custody were ensured their legal right to their language and culture. In a decision from the Parliamentary Ombudsman (JO), the authority that is responsible for the supervision of Swedish official authorities, JO criticises the Social Welfare Board for not having done enough to ensure that the children's right to language and culture were properly met. The Social Welfare Board stated that the need was met when the children met with their parents. JO however, stated that this was *not* sufficient. During the time that the children were in foster home they had lost their language and did no longer know that they were Roma.<sup>24</sup>

<sup>24</sup> JO Yearly Report 2017/18 sid 444,  
<https://www.jo.se/Global/Ämbetsberättelser/JOs%20ämbetsberättelse%202017-18.pdf>

## ADULTS WITH LOW EDUCATION AND NO FORMAL JOB EXPERIENCE

### A forgotten generation

Young to middle aged adults with low education, no formal job experience and loss of traditional livelihood are often forgotten in policy production and have no way into the labour market and are at a heightened risk for suffering from mental health problems, substance abuse, recruitment into criminality and not adequately being able to support their children's schooling.

### Background and causes of the problem

All the way into the 1970s, the Roma people were not welcome to settle anywhere in Sweden. In the early 1980s they were given condemned properties and other houses that no one else wanted but were finally able to start a social integration process to become resident.<sup>25</sup> It took a decade to get to a point with more balanced living situations for the Roma, and generally such processes of becoming sedentary usually takes one or two generations.<sup>26</sup> This affected everything from educational to work opportunities. Once settled and no longer traveling, technology had developed to a point where the majority society no longer needed the goods and services that Roma had previously made their living of providing. Because the majority population no longer requests the goods and services for example farm free traders, craftsmen etc, which the Roma previously provided, the parent generation has not considered it worth transferring the professional knowledge they had to the younger generation. As a result, many of the traditional professions have died out. *"When I was a child, my parents used to travel to other places and buy rugs that they sold, and I learned from them. When I was younger, I used to be a god salesman and make good deals, but now everybody shops on the internet and do not need me to travel and get stuff."*<sup>27</sup>

Therefore, the labour market issue has become increasingly relevant in the past 20 years when the state has finally included the Roma as a national minority and legally equal citizens with rights to schooling and access to social security. But at the same time, the children's schooling and educational opportunities are also hampered by the fact that many of the adult or older Roma are functionally illiterate and unfamiliar with the education system due to previous generations being excluded from formal education in combination with deficiencies in communication and reach-out to Roma families by municipal services.<sup>28</sup> There is progress in this area, in particular where Roma bridge builders are employed to mediate between the communities and School and Social Services, but also a general backlash in the suburbs where most Roma live, due to national school politics in combination with many new coming war refugees from other countries in the last few years who need extra support.<sup>29</sup>

<sup>25</sup> White Paper on abuses and rights violations against Roma in the 20<sup>th</sup> century. 2014 <http://www.government.se/information-material/2014/03/white-paper-on-abuses-and-rights-violations-of-roma-during-the-1900s/>

<sup>26</sup> Selling, Jan et al. 2014. Antiziganism: What's in a Word? Cambridge Scholars Publishing.

<sup>27</sup> Interview with a 40-year old Roma man, 2019-10-04

<sup>28</sup> 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/>

<sup>29</sup> Roma inclusion on a local level – Report 2018:26 Stockholm County Board <https://www.lansstyrelsen.se/download/18.7ab1493f1677d97be13b13d/1545033885129/Rapport%202018->

In addition, there is direct discrimination on the labour market caused by prevailing antigypsyism as well as hidden structural discrimination that constitutes a barrier for accessing job opportunities. Negative stereotypes and prejudice about Roma being unreliable are so prevalent among employers that even officials at the Public Employment Service recommend their clients to hide their Roma identity in their CVs.<sup>30</sup> It is particularly difficult for Roma who directly distinguish themselves as Roma through clothing or lack of a Swedish surname etc. This makes the opportunities for competition considerably less for Roma than for any other group.<sup>31</sup>

During the 1970-1980s, state policies contributed to creating a grand dependency for the Roma group. A new source of income was created through social grants or social security. It is a major problem even today that young Roma are already early retirees before the age of 20, which lifts them out of the labour market altogether. It is more or less taken to completely remove the Roma population from the majority population and make them dependent on contributions.<sup>32</sup>

Much of it is because the problem itself is so complicated that the authorities do not have the knowledge, experience or interest to shoulder or deal with it. It is easier for authorities to let them have social security contributions, be on sick leave, receive early retirement pensions etc. *"When I had been trying for ten years to get a job, by myself and with the help of the Public Labour Office, they gave up and granted me an early retirement."*<sup>33</sup>

It has been noticed in schools that the teachers have already classified these children as less competent and placed them in special schools, etc. and from the young age they already have less opportunities to develop.<sup>34</sup> *"Those now in their 30s-40s are the first generation whose children have other conditions to attend school and be able to learn, during our 500-year stay in the country. This is because our children in 30-40 years have in turn to 85% not had parents who could read and write and support them or stimulate them other than a few and therefore these children have wanted to show their children the importance of going to school."*<sup>35</sup>

When Roma were permitted to and started to settle in the 1970s, they became more involved in Swedish society moving away from the old customs, methods of living and moving from city to city. *"The more contact with the community, we began to understand that here it is important to be able to read, write and communicate with the authorities in order to obtain their rights which led to realising the importance of education."*<sup>36</sup> However, this has led to a 'lost generation' in-between the old way of managing life and fully partaking in today's society. This generation still have skills more attuned to historically well adapted survival strategies but not the formal or informal experiences or networks required to advance on today's labour market or education system. This critical segment of Roma society has not been addressed with any adequate measures from the state to

[26%20Romsk%20inkludering%20lokalt%20-%20nuläget%20i%20kommuner%20med%20statligt%20stöd%202012-2017.pdf](#)

<sup>30</sup> *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*, 2019, European Commission <https://cps.ceu.edu/sites/cps.ceu.edu/files/attachment/basicpage/3034/rcm-civil-society-monitoring-report-2-sweden-2018-eprint-fin.pdf>

<sup>31</sup> *Romers rätt - en strategi för romer i Sverige [Roma rights: A strategy for Roma in Sweden]*. 2010 <http://www.regeringen.se/rattsdokument/statens-offentliga-utredningar/2010/07/sou-201055/>

<sup>32</sup> *Ibid*

<sup>33</sup> Interview with 45-year old Roma woman, 2019-10-10

<sup>34</sup> Selling, Jan et al. 2014. *Antiziganism: What's in a Word?* Cambridge Scholars Publishing.

<sup>35</sup> Interview Focus group with Roma community members, 2019-10-04

<sup>36</sup> *Ibid*

make amends for earlier exclusion from education or proper strategies to connect to existing job opportunities.

## Policy answers

The picture that develops from interviews with Roma representatives is that it appears to be a recurring phenomenon today that the majority of the authorities create temporary emergency solutions, measures from the top down and offer the Roma minority methods that are not sustainable.<sup>37</sup> Measures based on the majority society's interpretation of what might be appropriate, just as with the *Sami*<sup>38</sup> when trying to assimilate the *Sami* and get the opposite result.<sup>39</sup> *"This is still where we stand when it comes to the Roma group today, when the authorities want to change something it is perceived as a threat, or it comes from the top and is not anchored with the group, who then become scared and uncomfortable. The Roma do not see logic or motivation in receiving the measures offered when they are not anchored with them."*<sup>40</sup>

One example of this is the measure to educate Roma bridge builders at Södertörn University that are then told that they will get a certain amount of university credit points, but cannot count them as credit at other universities, they are only internal to that school.<sup>41</sup> At the same time, the Roma are deprived of agency and options to take responsibility for their own opportunities, since resource distribution and power hierarchies entails the power of initiative will always be on society's terms. Therefore, the measures will be ineffective and not leading to any results. As an example, interviews reveal that when given a chance to analyse and engage in dialogue with the people who have completed the bridge builder training it is revealed that often they are not competent to the level needed to be able to learn because they lack compulsory school, upper secondary education and college. Many of these then end up on symbolic positions that on the surface appears to be progress with Roma integration, but in reality, are stripped of the mandate to influence the outcome within their workplace. Those that come ahead a little do so because in those cases they had a different background; they have had high school skills.<sup>42</sup> Of around 35 students enrolled in the program since 2012 around 2/3 are still employed in positions as Roma bridge builders in 2019.<sup>43</sup>

The measures taken from the 1980s until today are usually emergency solutions with poor results. The percentage is still 80-85% of Roma lacking permanent employment.<sup>44</sup> These have some government sponsored activity or education but no clear goal that it leads to. For example, young Roma at folk high schools who just keep going there year after year because it is demanded by the Social Services in order to receive support payments. The local approaches to action are similar regardless of where in Sweden it is. Only an

<sup>37</sup> Focus group with Roma representatives, 2019-10-28

<sup>38</sup> Indigenous Finno-Ugric people inhabiting *Sápmi*, which today encompasses large northern parts of Norway, Sweden, Finland, and Russia; historically known in English as *Lapps* or *Laplanders*.

<sup>39</sup> Lindmark, Daniel & Olle Sundström, *The Church of Sweden and the Sami – a White Paper Project*. 2016. Summary in English: <https://www.svenskakyrkan.se/filer/The%20Church%20of%20Sweden%20and%20the%20Sami%20-%20a%20White%20Paper%20Project.pdf>

<sup>40</sup> Focus group with Roma representatives, 2019-10-28

<sup>41</sup> Interview with Roma NGO leader, 2019-11-04

<sup>42</sup> Focus group with Roma representatives, 2019-10-28

<sup>43</sup> *Roma inclusion – Annual Report, 2019:9*, Stockholm County Board <https://www.lansstyrelsen.se/download/18.338e9bd4169d8d48e31b30c/1554965365321/Rapport%202019-9%20Romska%20inkluderings%20årsrapport%202018.pdf>

<sup>44</sup> *Roma Inclusion in the Labour Market Af-2017/0027 3425* <https://www.arbetsformedlingen.se/Om-oss/Statistik-och-publikationer/Rapporter/Ovriga/2018-07-05-Romska-inkluderings-i-arbetslivet.html>

estimated 5-10% of them succeed because of the lack of goal-oriented planning for the studies and a lack of compulsory basic education level.<sup>45</sup>

The only successful example that the interviewees mention of where people succeeded in getting Roma educated and obtaining upper secondary education and then be able to go on to college and get permanent employment, is the Angered Folk High School in Gothenburg. Students at the school consist of an even distribution between the various subgroups of the Roma national minority. It is claimed that it is successful because it is a Roma run school, with knowledgeable staff.<sup>46</sup> Then there are Roma who have gone to regular school and managed, but only a handful have moved on to higher education and those who manage career-wise have mostly had to deny their Roma identity, their ethnicity, and it has come at a high price with identity crisis and troubled self-esteem since they have had to assimilate themselves.

Lack of opportunities to engage in society on equal terms has led many into depression and self-medication through substance abuse, with the latter also being a risk factor for criminality.<sup>47</sup> Prevalence of related social issues are higher within the Roma community compared to majority society. In all group discussions and interviews this crisis and chain of cause and effect *unemployment-depression-addiction-crime* is highlighted and many deal with this in their own families including drug related deaths. There is no data collected in Sweden on the ground of ethnicity and no state policies that target this complex directly, but the Roma civil society organizations are working on the issues.<sup>48</sup> *“Almost every Roma family is affected but it is shameful to talk about it and there are no official measures taken to address this complex afflicting a forgotten generation.”*<sup>49</sup>

<sup>45</sup> Interim report on the situation in school for the Roma minority, Dnr: 2017:885:  
<https://www.skolverket.se/publikationsserier/regeringsuppdrag/2018/nulagesbeskrivning-av-romers-situation-i-skolan>

<sup>46</sup> Interview with Roma NGO leader, 2019-11-04

<sup>47</sup> Interim report on health in the strategy for Roma Inclusion  
<https://www.folkhalsomyndigheten.se/publiceratmaterial/publikationsarkiv/n/nulagesbeskrivning-2018-av-omradet-halsa-i-strategin-forromsk-inkludering/>

<sup>48</sup> Focus group with Roma representatives, 2019-10-28

<sup>49</sup> Interview with Roma community member, 2019-11-04

## DOMESTIC ELDERCARE, EDUCATION AND WORK

### Lack of accessible elderly care for the Roma minority

Eldercare in Sweden is not well adjusted to meet the needs of the Roma minority which means that most Roma elders do not receive the care they have the right to within the municipalities' service system, which could be either placement at a retirement home or home care. Other social activities or meeting places are also not easily accessible for elderly Roma people and information about services and rights do not reach the Roma families. The repercussions of these circumstances are that many young Roma, particularly women, are tied up in family duties tending to older family members and have difficulties in being able to free enough continuous time to be able to focus on studies or a paid job position.<sup>50</sup> The original Government Official Report that forms the basis for the National Roma Integration Strategy mentions this phenomenon and the need for elder care in Romani, but the actual Government strategy lacks any suggestions on the matter.<sup>51</sup>

### Situation in the municipalities

The majority of Roma families in Sweden live in the suburbs of larger cities in areas where there is a great mix of ethnicities and nationalities. Even though there are no particular segregated Roma communities, families usually try to live close to each other if possible, to help out where needed. In recent decades there has been development where childcare is concerned, in that more Roma children attend pre-school, which frees female family members for work and education opportunities. However, there has been no corresponding development where eldercare is concerned. Because of recent memories of abuse from majority society, including forced sterilisations and evictions, elder Roma have little trust in public authorities and institutional staff, and their families have little inclination of leaving them "at the hands of non-Roma".<sup>52</sup>

Elderly Roma people and their families witness about negative experiences of how service and care within eldercare works. Many feel unsafe and are afraid of not being met with respect. They describe worries about not being understood and being able to express their needs in meetings with eldercare staff on different positions.<sup>53</sup> To train staff in discrimination issues and the rights of national minorities to raise knowledge is needed to alleviate the vulnerable position of the elders. Also, education on Roma language and culture is needed to ensure that the elders receive a dignified and respectful reception in regard to their needs. In answers from municipalities it is evident that few offer staff within eldercare training on discrimination or the rights of national minorities.<sup>54</sup> The same goes for education on language and culture. Efforts within minority politics seem to have had little impact on discrimination within the field of eldercare. Romani (as well as Jiddish) has a weaker statutory protection than the three national minority languages that have certain territories assigned to them (Finnish, Sami and Mienkaeli).<sup>55</sup> Even so, the measures taken

<sup>50</sup> County Board of Stockholm, *Elder care in minority languages* 2016 <https://www.minoritet.se/4575>

<sup>51</sup> *A Coordinated and long-term Strategy for Roma Inclusion Skr. 2011/12:56*, 2012 Swedish Government <https://www.regeringen.se/49baf6/contentassets/4a3df6c115584782935d8d9efa7ab6e3/en-samordnad-och-langsigtig-strategi-for-romsk-inkludering-2012-2032-skr.-20111256>

<sup>52</sup> Focus group with 11 Roma elders age 66-87 (6 women and 5 men) and their families from West Sweden, 2019-10-22

<sup>53</sup> Ibid

<sup>54</sup> Inquiry with municipal eldercare leaders in 14 cities geographically spread out across Sweden, October 2019

<sup>55</sup> Information on administrative territories in Sweden: <https://www.minoritet.se/forvaltningsomraden-for-minoritetssprak>

to counteract discrimination of national minorities within elderly care are not sufficient inside or outside of these administrative territories.

To be an older Roma can in itself bring with it a certain vulnerability in society. Rough life experiences in combination with little access to healthcare earlier in life has brought with it a faster decline in overall health, dental status and life expectancy. Lifelong exclusion from majority society has led to lower levels of language proficiency and literacy which causes them to be dependent on younger family members for everyday dealings with society services. If the person also suffers from dementia which usually means losing other languages than the mother tongue, their vulnerable situation is increased. There are many witnesses of this situation, including eldercare staff, who experience that such elders become more isolated and confused in majority society elder care.<sup>56</sup>

Answers from interviewees emphasise the importance of being able to communicate in the persons' mother tongue and being in a culturally familiar environment, and that this poses a barrier within elder care today. Many of the elders also express that they miss a meeting place like a day centre where they could go during the day and receive service within their cultural and language needs, like other elders can.<sup>57</sup> Particularly elderly women who do not normally have a natural reason for leaving the home and meeting up with their "peers" as do many older Roma men, still being in demand by the community on councils and for decision making in the extended family.

On their part, many municipalities state that they offer services that match demand, but on a closer look they lack any systematic monitoring of how well they meet the needs of their Roma population.<sup>58</sup> It is important that municipalities map out the needs of their population to ensure that elderly Roma people have their rights to service and care in their own language met. There is a discrepancy in information given by the municipalities and the experience described by the Roma community on how well supply currently corresponds to demand today, where the municipalities claim that the Roma are not interested in public elder care but the Roma themselves express that they would be if the municipalities only listened to their needs and adapted the services to make them accessible for them. Some municipalities state that access to staff who know Romani poses a challenge.<sup>59</sup> It is important that they take active measures to alleviate this barrier to fulfilling the rights of their senior citizens.

The Swedish law regulates the responsibilities of the municipalities to inform national minorities on their rights and to give them the possibilities to participate and exercise influence on issues regarding service and care in their language. Municipalities have duty to inform about elderly care and statutory rights on national minority languages like Romani, both in materials, on the web and in meetings with administrative officials.<sup>60</sup> In the administrative territories most do, and also in some other municipalities, but no municipality informs on Romani. Interviews with Roma representatives reveal that knowledge on minority rights is low among personnel which means that they cannot inform

<sup>56</sup> Interviews with four nurse assistants in eldercare in different parts of Gothenburg, October 2019

<sup>57</sup> Focus group with 11 Roma elders age 66-87 (6 women and 5 men) and their families from West Sweden, 2019-10-22

<sup>58</sup> Inquiry with municipal eldercare leaders in 14 cities geographically spread out across Sweden, October 2019

<sup>59</sup> *Ibid*

<sup>60</sup> National Minority and Minority Language Act SÖ 2002:2, 2002:3, Regeringsformen, Lag (2009:600), Lag (2009:724) [https://www.riksdagen.se/sv/dokument-lagar/dokument/svensk-forfattningssamling/lag-2009724-om-nationella-minoriteter-och\\_sfs-2009-724](https://www.riksdagen.se/sv/dokument-lagar/dokument/svensk-forfattningssamling/lag-2009724-om-nationella-minoriteter-och_sfs-2009-724)

the families about their rights who in their turn cannot demand the service they are entitled to.<sup>61</sup>

Many Roma representatives on local councils witness that the municipalities do not deal with eldercare issues on joint consultations. The municipalities, on their part state that the possibility of individual influence is uncomplicated since their regular procedures involves sensitivity to individual needs and wishes. Here public services are missing the need for a more norm-critical approach to actually cover the needs and perspectives of a diverse population, instead of just adapting services for individual variation within their own majority perspective. There is also here a discrepancy between the views of the Roma representatives and the municipalities where Roma families and elders witness on lack of knowledge on the part of the personnel, regarding the Roma minority and their rights.<sup>62</sup> Since there is no consultation with Roma expertise there are no possibilities of influencing what services are provided and how they are executed.

No municipalities have special elder homes, sections in elder homes or home care service for the Roma minority. Yet, this is always brought forward as a wish from the Roma families but not favoured by the Swedish services who think a general service should be well adapted for "everyone", missing the special vulnerable situation of elder Roma, rooted in recent history, compared to other ethnic groups. Roma elders and their families express that they often feel excluded or misunderstood and lack the possibilities to continue life in eldercare within their own traditions, food etc. Many Roma from the older generations also feel scared of staff from majority society because of earlier life experiences of abuse at the hands of healthcare staff, in particular older women who may have experiences of forced sterilisation and compulsory examinations and custody of children. No municipality offer cultural activities for older Roma but instead view this as something for the Roma associations to deliver.

Many elder and families question laws and regulations since these are not implemented in concrete practical action.<sup>63</sup>

### Accurate national regulations without local implementation

In the governmental proposition 2008/09:158 *Från erkännande till egenmakt* it is mentioned that it is especially important to obtain needs and viewpoints of the national minorities on issues regarding elderly care.<sup>64</sup> The law on National Minorities and Minority Languages (2009:724) states in 5 § that authorities shall give national minorities the possibility to influence decisions that concern them and to have council with their representatives.<sup>65</sup> A condition for someone to be able to claim their lawful rights and thereby gain real influence, is that they receive correct and purposeful information. In 3 § it is expressed that authorities must inform national minorities on their rights according to Swedish law.<sup>66</sup> There is also a special mention about municipalities' duty to inform elder minority citizens on their right to elder care. According to chap. 5 § 6 in the Social Service

<sup>61</sup> Focus group via Skype meeting with Roma representatives on public councils, 5 NGO leaders from 4 regions, 3 men and 2 women, 2019-10-28

<sup>62</sup> Focus group with Roma representatives, 2019-10-28; Enquiry with municipal elder care, October 2019

<sup>63</sup> Focus group with 11 Roma elders age 66-87 (6 women and 5 men) and their families from West Sweden

<sup>64</sup> Governmental proposition. *From acknowledgement to empowerment* : <https://www.regeringen.se/contentassets/cb45420dc4fb44c1bb7214d3b065c5d1/prop-200809158-fran-erkannande-till-egenmakt---regeringens-strategi-for-de-nationella-minoriteterna>

<sup>65</sup> National Minority and Minority Language Act SÖ 2002:2, 2002:3, Regeringsformen, Lag (2009:600), Lag (2009:724) <https://www.riksdagen.se/sv/dokument-lagar/dokument/svensk-forfattningssamling/lag-2009724-om-nationella-minoriteter-och-sfs-2009-724>

<sup>66</sup> Ibid

Act (2001:453) it is the duty of the Social Welfare Board to gather knowledge on the living conditions of elder citizens in their municipality and inform the Social Services.<sup>67</sup>

The municipal responsibilities of eldercare are regulated in the Social Service Act. Chapter 5 § 4 stipulates that the aim of the social services is that elderly people live a dignified life and experience well-being.<sup>68</sup> The Social Welfare Board has the duty to implement that elderly people have the possibility to live under safe and meaningful conditions. The Health and Social Care Inspectorate (*Inspektionen för vård och omsorg, IVO*), is the authority responsible for supervising the social services.<sup>69</sup>

In the National Minority and Minority Languages Act (2009:724) there are certain provisions to protect and support national minority language and culture. There are a number of regulations within Swedish Law to counter act discrimination for national minorities, among others, the Language Act, *Språklagen*, (2009:600) and the Discrimination Act, *Diskrimineringslagen*, (2008:567).<sup>70</sup>

In § 18 in The National Minority and Minority Languages Act, it is stipulated that a municipality in an administrative territory, must offer anyone who demands it, their entire care in the language of Finnish, Sami or Mienkaeli. There is no equivalent right to eldercare or service in the two other minority languages Romani or Jiddish. In § 4, however, there are provisions that spells out the general responsibilities of all authorities to protect and support all five national minority languages and culture.<sup>71</sup> When in contact with representatives for the other national minorities it is clear that these strongly worded rights are not fulfilled in practise, and unfortunately even less so for the Roma minority, who, in addition to having weaker statutory protection, are in a historical position of much deeper separation and exclusion from the majority society welfare system.<sup>72</sup>

<sup>67</sup> Social Services Act (2001:453) [https://www.riksdagen.se/sv/dokument-lagar/dokument/svensk-forfattningssamling/socialtjanstlag-2001453\\_sfs-2001-453](https://www.riksdagen.se/sv/dokument-lagar/dokument/svensk-forfattningssamling/socialtjanstlag-2001453_sfs-2001-453)

<sup>68</sup> Ibid

<sup>69</sup> <https://www.ivo.se/om-ivo/other-languages/english/>

<sup>70</sup> Parliament, *Anti-discrimination law (2018:567)* [http://www.riksdagen.se/sv/dokument-lagar/dokument/svensk-forfattningssamling/diskrimineringslag-2008567\\_sfs-2008-567](http://www.riksdagen.se/sv/dokument-lagar/dokument/svensk-forfattningssamling/diskrimineringslag-2008567_sfs-2008-567)

<sup>71</sup> National Minority and Minority Language Act SÖ 2002:2, 2002:3, Regeringsformen, Lag (2009:600), Lag (2009:724) [https://www.riksdagen.se/sv/dokument-lagar/dokument/svensk-forfattningssamling/lag-2009724-om-nationella-minoriteter-och\\_sfs-2009-724](https://www.riksdagen.se/sv/dokument-lagar/dokument/svensk-forfattningssamling/lag-2009724-om-nationella-minoriteter-och_sfs-2009-724)

<sup>72</sup> Enquiry with National Minority representatives in Sweden, November 2019

## RECOMMENDATIONS

### Foster care and child protection services

1. A structure of external supervision of the social service and social welfare board should be developed and executed by the Parliamentary Ombudsman (JO), which is the authority that executes supervision of official authorities in Sweden.
2. The Swedish Higher Education Authority (UKÄ) should implement compulsory education on the history and specific statutory rights of the national Roma minority in the Social Worker Programme and at Law School.
3. The National Board of Health and Welfare should develop guidelines for social services to conduct internal monitoring in order to analyse the outcome of child custody cases concerning the Roma minority, and monitor its implementation.

### Adults with low education and no formal job experience

4. The Ministry of Labour should initiate programmes, within the government budget for 2021, that target Roma with internships and training jobs to help integrate into the labour market and earn experience, networks and references. Starting with the ten development and pilot municipalities for Roma inclusion, the programme should be tested, fine-tuned and expanded for 2022.
5. The Ministry of Labour should initiate programmes with start up support for establishing your own enterprise and cooperative enterprise specific to the strength of the young to middle aged Roma lacking formal job experience but with extensive informal entrepreneurial experience.
6. The Public Employment Service should apply the same measures to Roma as to refugees or new arrivals, with a time frame carrying intermediate goals: to have a certain level of language proficiency in a specific time frame, to have high school skills in another time frame; and that after 10 years to have permanent employment.
7. The Public Employment Service should conduct local councils with Roma to stocktake the need of directed measures to help more Roma enter education and the labour market.

### Domestic eldercare, education and work

8. The Health and Social Care Inspectorate (IVO) should establish a commission that spans over a time-frame of three years, to develop and test forms for influence on policies on elderly care in dialogue with Roma representatives, in accordance with § 5 in the National Minority and Minority Languages Act (2009:724).
9. The government should allocate resources to the Swedish National Board of Health and Welfare (SNBH) to develop and spread knowledge on the national minorities and their special rights. The SNBH should secure that the municipalities guarantee that personnel within social services and elderly care receive education on the Roma as a national minority.
10. The government should develop and perform a training programme for Romani speakers within eldercare. There is a lack of language proficiency, and today the Swedish Public Employment Service has a similar "fast track" commission for new coming refugees that could serve as a model for similar programmes for the Roma minority. Starting with the national budget for 2021 and the ten development and pilot municipalities, the programme should be tested, fine-tuned and expanded for 2022.
11. The Ministry of Education should introduce Romani as a subject option within secondary and adult health and social care education, to stimulate enrolment of Romani speaking

students and staff. The commission to develop the curriculum could, as a suggestion, be given to Södertörn University which has the capacity and is now responsible for the education of Romani mother tongue teachers.

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