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UN & CoE

January

24 February – European Commission against Racism and Intolerance (ECRI) publishes its fifth report on Greece and conclusions on the implementation of a number of priority recommendations made in its 2012 country reports on Italy and Latvia

February

March

April

7 May – United Nation (UN) Committee against Torture adopts its concluding observations for Romania

8–10 May – Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination (CERD) adopts concluding observations for France

13–15 May – CERD adopts concluding observations for Germany and Denmark, respectively

May

9 June – ECRI issues its fifth monitoring reports on Hungary and Poland

15 June – UN Special Rapporteur on minority issues presents the *Comprehensive study of the human rights situation of Roma worldwide, with a particular focus on the phenomenon of anti-Gypsyism*

22 June – CoE Commissioner for Human Rights issues his report following a visit to Bulgaria in February

June

9 July 2015 – CoE Ad hoc Committee of Experts on Roma Issues (CAHROM) releases a thematic report on pre-school education for Roma children

9 July – ECRI publishes its annual report 2014

16 July – CoE Commissioner for Human Rights publishes a human rights comment on Roma migrants in Europe

July

10 August – UN Committee against Torture adopts its concluding observations for Slovakia

17 August – UN Human Rights Committee adopts its concluding observations on France

24 August – CERD adopts concluding observations for Czech Republic

26–27 August – CERD adopts concluding observations for the Netherlands

August

September

1 October – CoE Commissioner for Human Rights issues a report following visits to Germany in April and May

13 October – ECRI issues its fifth monitoring reports on Austria, Czech Republic and Estonia

CoE Commissioner for Human Rights issues report following June visit to the Slovak Republic

20 October – In *Balázs v. Hungary* (No. 15529/12), the European Court of Human Rights (ECtHR) holds that the Hungarian authorities failed to effectively investigate a racist attack against a Roma man in 2011, violating Article 14 read in conjunction with Article 3 of the ECHR

October

November

7–8 December – CERD adopts concluding observations for Lithuania

9 December – CERD adopts concluding observations for Slovenia

December

EU

January

February

11 March – European Parliament adopts a resolution on the European Semester for economic policy coordination, focusing on employment and social aspects (2014/2222(INI))

March

15 April – European Parliament adopts a resolution on the occasion of International Roma Day, on anti-Gypsyism in Europe and EU recognition of the memorial day of the Roma genocide during World War II (2015/2615(RSP))

April

May

9 June – European Parliament adopts a resolution on the EU Strategy for equality between women and men post-2015 (2014/2152(INI))

17 June – European Commission issues a Communication on the implementation of the EU Framework for National Roma Integration Strategies 2015

June

16 July – In *CHEZ Razpredelenie Bulgaria AD v. Komisija za zashtita ot diskriminatsia* (C-83/14), the Court of Justice of the European Union (CJEU) applies the concept of ‘discrimination based on association’ to Directive 2000/43 and holds that the principle of equal treatment applies to persons who have suffered a particular disadvantage or less favourable treatment by association with a group

July

August

9 September – European Parliament adopts a resolution on investment for jobs and growth, focusing on promoting economic, social and territorial cohesion in the EU (2014/2245(INI))

9 September – European Parliament adopts a resolution on empowering girls through education in the EU (2014/2250(INI))

September

30 October – European Parliament adopts a resolution on cohesion policy and marginalised communities (2014/2247(INI))

October

November

December

4

Roma integration



Discrimination and anti-Gypsyism continue to affect the lives of many of the EU's estimated six million Roma. Fundamental rights violations hampering Roma integration made headlines in 2015. Several EU Member States thus strengthened the implementation of their national Roma integration strategies (NRISs) by focusing on local-level actions and developing monitoring mechanisms. Member States also increasingly acknowledged the distinct challenges Roma women face. Roma from central and eastern European countries residing in western EU Member States also received attention in 2015, as practices to improve local-level integration of different Roma groups were discussed regarding the right to freedom of movement and the transnational cooperation on integration measures.

4.1. Obstacles to strengthening Roma integration remain

Discrimination and anti-Gypsyism continued to pose challenges to effective Roma integration. The European Commission noted in its *Report on the implementation of the EU Framework for National Roma Integration Strategies 2015* that in many Member States, “especially those with the largest Roma communities and which have been strongly hit by the economic crisis, anti-Gypsyism, far right demonstrations, hate speech and hate crime have been on the rise”, adding that “[p]oliticians and public authorities often failed to publicly condemn such negative trends”.¹ Debates on free movement and social benefits exacerbated negative stereotyping.

The 2015 Eurobarometer survey on discrimination² shows that ethnic origin remains the most prevalent ground of discrimination. Results concerning Roma indicate that anti-Gypsyism is widespread: the percentage of respondents who would feel comfortable working with someone with a minority ethnic origin drops to 63 % for a Roma person, compared with 83 % for a “black” or “Asian” person and 94 % for a “white” person.³ The proportion of those comfortable with having a son or daughter in a relationship

with a Roma person is even lower (45 %).⁴ Although the data overall show that respondents’ social networks are increasingly diverse across the EU population, the proportion of respondents with Roma friends or acquaintances remains low (18 %)⁵ (see also ► [Chapter 3](#) for the Eurobarometer survey). Meanwhile, qualitative research conducted by the Roma Matrix project on policy and practice for Roma integration in 10 EU Member States shows that both Roma and non-Roma respondents see anti-Gypsyism as a persistent and pervasive common facet of everyday life

EU-MIDIS II: tracking trends

► In 2015, fieldwork activities began for the second wave of FRA’s European Union Minorities and Discrimination Survey (EU-MIDIS II) (see also [Chapter 3](#) for more general information on EU-MIDIS II). The survey incorporates the second wave of FRA’s Roma-targeted survey. It aims to analyse trends by comparing results with the first EU-MIDIS survey from 2008, as well as with FRA’s 2011 Roma survey. It will provide comparable data on four core areas – employment, education, health and housing – as well as on discrimination and criminal victimisation, rights awareness, and other issues. The results will show what progress has been achieved on the ground in the context of implementing the EU Framework for National Roma Integration Strategies in several EU Member States. Roma are surveyed in nine Member States, namely **Bulgaria, Croatia, the Czech Republic, Greece, Hungary, Portugal, Romania, Slovakia and Spain**. The first results are expected in the second half of 2016.

that inhibits the effective implementation of policy at national, regional and local levels.⁶

The European Parliament is playing an increasingly important role in promoting Roma integration. On International Roma Day, it issued a resolution recognising the Roma genocide during World War II and condemning “utterly and without equivocation all forms of racism and discrimination faced by the Roma”.⁷ In another resolution adopted in late 2015, the European Parliament drew attention to the need for more effective use of EU funds so that marginalised communities do not remain excluded but become a priority of Europe’s cohesion policy instruments. It also calls for action to tackle the social exclusion of Roma and to improve their living conditions.⁸

The European Parliament’s resolutions propose several measures to tackle intersectional discrimination. Building on FRA report’s on *Discrimination against and living conditions of Roma women in 11 EU Member States*, among other sources, the European Parliament Resolution on the EU Strategy for equality between women and men post-2015 refers explicitly to the particularly worrying situation of Roma women in the EU. The resolution calls for the adoption of a new strategy for women’s rights and gender equality in Europe to recognise “the multiple and intersectional forms of discrimination” that certain groups of women face, and for developing specific actions to strengthen the rights of these different groups of women, among them Roma women.⁹ The Resolution on empowering girls through education in the EU also calls on Member States “to develop specific programmes to ensure that Roma girls and young women remain in primary, secondary and higher education.”¹⁰ Furthermore, it invites Member States “to consider including a gender dimension in National Roma Integration Strategies (NRISs), propose concrete measures aiming at gender mainstreaming and ensure proper monitoring of their implementation.”¹¹

The European Parliament’s resolutions also distinctively recognise particular vulnerabilities that emerge from the intersection of age and ethnic origin. Noting the overrepresentation of Roma among young people not in education, employment or training, the parliament calls for measures to support high-quality job creation.¹² In this respect, children and young people should be prioritised in NRISs and relevant measures and actions to ensure equal access to healthcare, education, services and dignified living conditions.¹³



4.1.1. Housing, education and intra-EU migration pose particular challenges for Member States

Despite various efforts, challenges persist in respect to access to education and poor housing conditions. **France’s** intergovernmental circular on planning and supporting operations to evacuate illegal camps includes actions initiated at local level that are aimed at slum clearance. According to the French inter-ministerial delegation for housing (*Délégation interministérielle à l’hébergement et à l’accès au logement – DIHAL*), the 59 local actions financed in 2014 by the dedicated state fund for those actions enabled 2,109 persons living in illegal settlements to access housing or accommodation.¹⁴ At the same time, a study mapping evictions in living areas occupied mostly by Roma reveals that more than 11,000 people were evicted by authorities from over 100 living sites across various regions of France in 2015 – a decrease from 2014.¹⁵ These findings come in the wake of criticism expressed by international treaty bodies, including the UN Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination and the Human Rights Committee, over forced evictions in **France**. The UN High Commissioner for Human Rights expressed concern over an “increasingly apparent systematic national policy to forcibly evict the Roma” and urged Member States, including **France** and **Bulgaria**, to refrain from evictions without providing alternative housing.¹⁶ **France** responded by underlining that decisions to evacuate are made on a case-by-case basis and that solutions for accommodation and housing are proposed whenever possible, depending on local capacities.

ECRI noted that the **Czech Republic** has made little improvement in the areas of education and housing, particularly regarding housing segregation and eviction from town centres.¹⁷ The Council of Europe expressed concerns over deep-rooted anti-Gypsyism after neighbours prevented authorities from providing alternative accommodation to survivors of a fire that broke out in a site near Dublin, **Ireland**. The fire resulted in the death of 10 persons.¹⁸ ECRI also raised concerns about planned evictions of hundreds of Roma families in **Hungary**.¹⁹ The Hungarian authorities took steps to manage these concerns. For example, pursuant to a decision of the Equal Treatment Authority (*Egyenlő Bánásmód Hatóság*), the municipality of Miskolc will develop an action plan regarding evictions; it will also pay a fine because of its unlawful conduct.²⁰ Regarding **Italy**, ECRI urged full legal protection and the provision of decent accommodation in the case of any evictions.²¹ Forced evictions against Roma were also the subject of a European Parliament hearing on fighting racial discrimination in housing.²²

School segregation remains a persistent problem in certain Member States, triggering reactions at EU and international level. The European Commission opened

Figure 4.1: Evictions from living areas by local authorities across various regions of France in 2015

	Number of evictions by the authorities	Number of fires	Number of evacuated sites	Some other accommodation offered	Number of persons evicted by the authorities	Number of persons evicted because of fires or other causes	Number evicted
1st quarter 2014	27	9	36	17	2,904	524	3,428
2nd quarter 2014	38	2	40	18	3,756	51	3,807
3rd quarter 2014	41	2	43	21	3,693	74	3,767
4th quarter 2014	32	4	36	15	3,130	317	3,447
Total for 2014	138	17	155	71	13,483	966	14,449
1st quarter 2015	18	2	20	7	1,966	110	2,076
2nd quarter 2015	25	0	25	6	2,776	0	2,776
3rd quarter 2015	47	1	48	11	4,972	100	5,072
4th quarter 2015	21	2	23	5	1,414	200	1,614
Total for 2015	111	5	116	29	11,128	410	11,538

Source: European Roma Rights Centre and Ligue des droits de l'Homme, 2016

an infringement procedure in relation to **Slovakia** in 2015, alleging discrimination against Roma children in education, in breach of the Racial Equality Directive.²³ It launched a similar procedure against the **Czech Republic** in 2014²⁴ (see also Section 4.1.2. and Chapter 3 on racism, xenophobia and related intolerance). In other Member States, such as **Germany**, criticism targeted the placement of children whose mother tongue is not German into separate preparatory classes. CERD expressed concern that early selection for separate educational levels “leads to an overrepresentation of minority students in [the] lower school stratum” and, particularly for Sinti and Roma, “further creates segregation [...] with no real chances of enhancing their education and work.”²⁵

Roma EU citizens also face particular challenges when exercising the right to freedom of movement. These challenges, and solutions for integrating Roma migrants, were actively discussed in 2015, particularly at events on East-West cooperation in both municipalities of origin and municipalities of destination.²⁶ Such discussions build on the emphasis of the Council's 2013 Recommendation on effective Roma integration measures in the Member States, which highlights that:

“in the context of intra-Union mobility, it is necessary to respect the right to free movement of the citizens of the Union and the conditions for its exercise [...] while also seeking to improve the living conditions of Roma and pursuing measures to promote their economic and social integration in their Member States of origin as well as their Member States of residence.”²⁷

Although Roma EU citizens are entitled to specific rights, they often face exclusion and challenges similar to those of third-country nationals in accessing services, education, health care, housing and employment.

Promising practice

Promoting integration at schools

The organisation eduRoma started offering assistance in the process of desegregating a school in Šarišské Michalany, **Slovakia**, in 2013. The effort followed a regional court decision and was part of a project financed by the Open Society Foundations' Roma Initiative Office and Education Support Program and the EEA grants. The goal was finally accomplished in September 2015, following a wide range of activities at the local level, such as training and other extracurricular activities, with all key stakeholders – teachers, municipality representatives and parents of both Roma and non-Roma children. In parallel, eduRoma engaged in advocacy activities at the central level, especially with the State School Inspection (Štátna školská inšpekcia). The organisation has developed a model of desegregation that is sensitive to, and takes into consideration, the particular local context. The approach specifically involves engaging local stakeholders, developing tailor-made plans for a specific community, improving the capacity of teachers, supporting Roma children to achieve better academic performance, and improving interaction between Roma and non-Roma children. It is transferable to other settings in Slovakia and possibly to other Member States.

For more information, see: www.eduroma.sk

Nevertheless, some municipalities have implemented targeted efforts to support and promote the integration of Roma EU citizens from other Member States. This is being done, for example, through language and learning support aid in Vienna, **Austria**;²⁸ through drop-in day centres providing basic services and health

care in Helsinki, **Finland**;²⁹ and through information campaigns and training of neighbourhood stewards in Ghent, **Belgium**.³⁰ In Gothenburg, **Sweden**, support services are provided for vulnerable EU citizens through public partnerships with local NGOs.³¹

The government of **Romania** approved a protocol of cooperation between the National Agency for Roma (*Agenția Națională pentru Romi*) and the municipality of Milan, with a view to strengthening the social inclusion of Romanian citizens who belong to the Roma minority and live in Italy.³² The protocol's overall objective is to implement a pilot project aimed at improving the process of inclusion of Romanian citizens of Roma origin in Milan. However, there is limited evidence of effective and targeted activities or strategies in the municipalities of origin to promote reintegration in the case of return or to provide tailored support in cases of circular migration.

4.1.2. European Semester highlights persisting challenges

The European Semester is the EU's annual cycle of economic policy coordination. The Commission analyses Member States' plans for budgetary, macro-economic and structural reforms in detail and provides them with country-specific recommendations.

In 2015, the Commission referred to Roma integration measures in the country-specific recommendations for five Member States: **Bulgaria**, the **Czech Republic**, **Hungary**, **Romania** and **Slovakia**. It already did so in 2014, and referred to these measures again in 2015 because these countries continued to show insufficient or limited progress in the areas of education and employment for Roma. The recommendations address various measures in the field of education. These include increasing participation in education – for example, in **Bulgaria**,³³ the **Czech Republic**³⁴ and **Hungary**³⁵ – and providing adequate training for teachers (in **Hungary**). The recommendations for **Romania**³⁶ and **Slovakia**³⁷ include improving access to quality early-childhood education. They also mention the need to strengthen measures to facilitate transitions between different stages of education and to the labour market in **Hungary** (see also [Chapter 3](#)). The European Semester Alliance, a coalition of major EU networks, organisations and trade unions, welcomed references to inclusive education for Roma in the country-specific recommendations. However, it noted that “inclusive education is only specifically supported in Hungary, whilst other groups are often solely referred to as disadvantaged, which leaves significant room for interpretation at national level”.³⁸

The recommendations noted certain improvements (in **Romania** and **Hungary**) on active labour market policies and activation programmes mainly aimed at

young people. Nonetheless, they also deemed persistent various issues³⁹ – such as higher unemployment levels for certain “disadvantaged groups”; high numbers of Roma not in education, employment or training; and longer periods of unemployment among Roma. The Commission therefore called for measures to increase the employability of broader categories, among which Roma are implicitly included.

4.2. Going local: implementing national Roma integration strategies on the ground

Human rights are enforced by ‘duty bearers’; at the local level, these are mainly the local authorities. The EU Framework on NRISs and the Council’s 2013 recommendation on effective Roma integration measures⁴⁰ both stress the importance of the local level and the need to adapt Roma integration efforts to the specific circumstances and needs on the ground. The European Roma Summit in April 2014 paved the way for further focus on the local level; it placed particular emphasis on the role of local and regional authorities, as well as civil society, and argued that these bodies should be able to benefit more from EU funding, so that they have the means to actually transform policy commitments into concrete measures.⁴¹

The Commission’s 2015 report on the implementation of the EU Framework for NRISs⁴² recognised the key competences of local-level actors to address challenges – for example, in housing and education – but noted that “the involvement of local authorities in implementation varies widely.” The report also noted progress in drawing up, revising and planning local-level action plans in Member States, such as **Bulgaria**, the **Czech Republic**, **Greece**, **Hungary**, **Ireland**, **Italy**, **Poland**, **Romania**, **Slovenia**, **Spain** and **Sweden**. Furthermore, the report recognised that turning national strategies into concrete “action at local level is in an early phase and needs to be supported with sustainable funding, capacity building and full involvement of local authorities and civil society, and robust monitoring to bring about the much needed tangible impact at local level, where the challenges arise.”

International organisations continued to implement activities that focused on the potential of the local level. The Council of Europe/European Commission Joint Programme ROMACT⁴³ continued to be implemented in 2015 in five Member States (**Bulgaria**, **Hungary**, **Italy**, **Romania** and **Slovakia**), with the aim of building up the capacity of local authorities and improving their responsiveness and accountability towards marginalised Roma communities. The project

also complements the Council of Europe/European Commission's ROMED 2,⁴⁴ which ran in parallel with ROMACT in 2015; it focuses on mediation and participation of Roma citizens in decision-making processes at local level in their municipalities through the development of Community Action Groups.

"Local and regional authorities have a unique opportunity to coordinate the broad range of services provided to their residents in a rights-based and person-centred way. In fact, they can ensure that the residents' human rights are not only respected but also fulfilled. This means that human rights are brought home in people's everyday lives."

Nils Muiznieks, Council of Europe Commissioner for Human Rights, Speech at the International Implementation Forum for Local and Regional Authorities, 28 May 2015

FRA is aware of the significance of local-level action. Since 2012, its work on Roma integration has included qualitative research through the project [Local Engagement for Roma Inclusion \(LERI\)](#).⁴⁵ The project aims to identify, examine and develop ways

of improving the design, implementation and monitoring of Roma integration policies and other efforts at the local level, by identifying drivers and barriers and possible ways of overcoming the latter. Better understanding the dynamics of Roma integration efforts at the local level will help to design more effective interventions, make better use of resources, and contribute to more tangible realisation of fundamental rights for Roma. Following a preparatory phase in 2014, the implementation of the fieldwork started in 2015, covering 22 localities across 11 Member States (**Bulgaria, the Czech Republic, Finland, France, Greece, Hungary, Italy, Romania, Slovakia, Spain and the United Kingdom**; see [Figure 4.2](#)). Local authorities, Roma and non-Roma community members and civil society joined in carrying out participatory needs assessments. On the basis of the identified needs, local project plans outlining small-scale interventions and the design of participatory methodologies were adapted to the local context.

Figure 4.2: Localities covered by FRA's local engagement for Roma inclusion project



Note: In total, FRA's project covers 22 localities across the EU, namely in: Bulgaria (Pavlikeni; Stara Zagora); the Czech Republic (Brno; Sokolov); Finland (Helsinki; Jyväskylä); France (Lezennes and Lille Metropolitan Area; Strasbourg); Greece (Aghia Varvara; Megara); Hungary (Besence; Mátraverebély); Italy (Bologna; Mantova); Romania (Aiud; Cluj-Napoca); Slovakia (Rakytník; Hrabušice); Spain (Córdoba; Madrid); and the United Kingdom (Glasgow; Medway).

Source: FRA, 2015

4.2.1. Local-level action in national Roma integration strategies

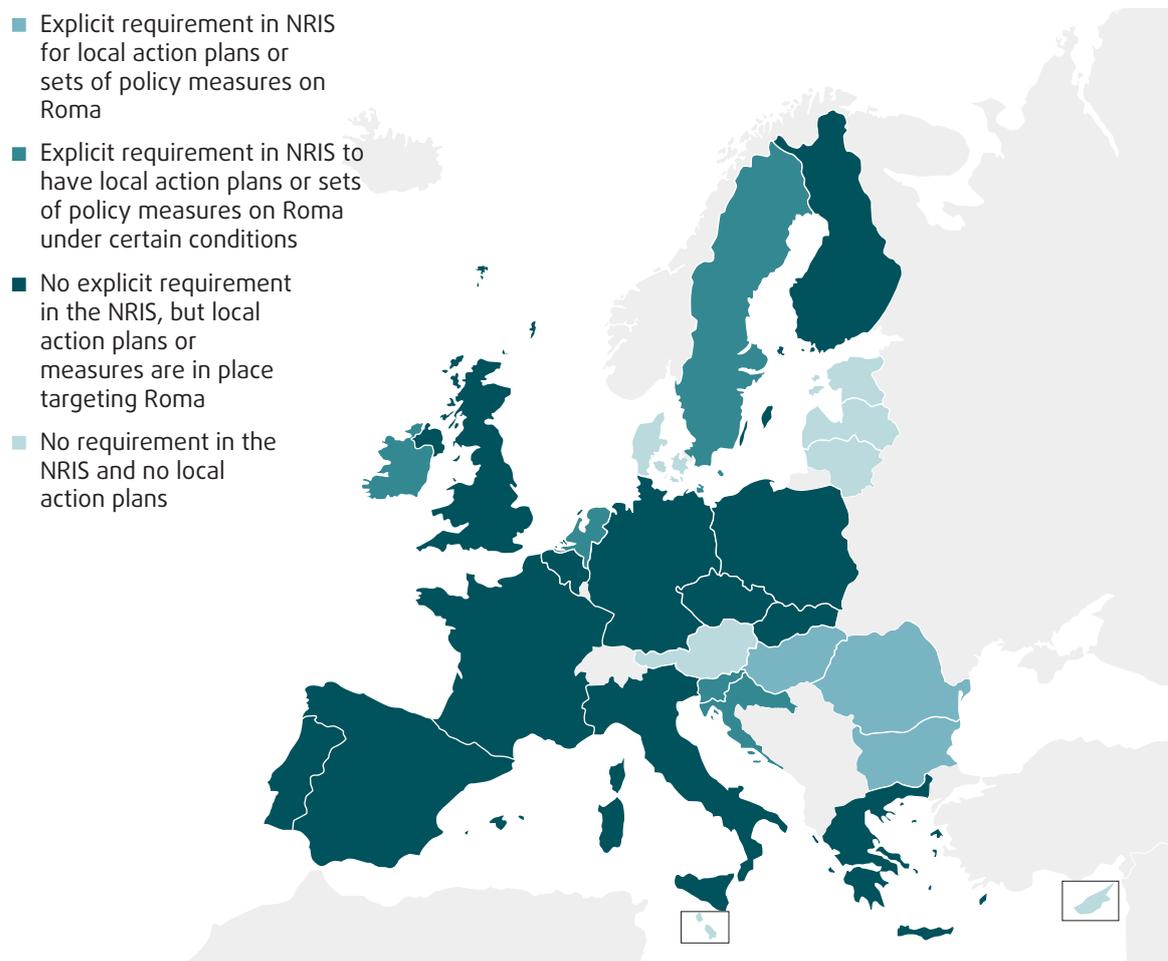
Member States adopted different approaches to implementing their NRISs at local level (Figure 4.3). Some of these include:

- a requirement in the NRIS to put in place local action plans or sets of policy measures at local level that target Roma (specifically, as well as those that address Roma explicitly but not exclusively, i.e. Roma among other groups within a local action plan);
- a requirement in the NRIS to put in place local action plans or sets of policy measures only under certain conditions (e.g. only for municipalities with known Roma populations, only for specific groups of Roma, or only in specific thematic areas);
- no such requirements in the NRIS, but local action plans or measures that target Roma explicitly are in place;
- no requirements in the NRIS and no local action plans.

Information collected by FRA corroborates the findings of the Commission’s 2015 report on the implementation of the EU Framework on NRISs, showing that the planning of actions and measures at local level is still at an early phase. As shown in Figure 4.3, several Member States have explicit requirements in their NRISs to put in place local action plans in all localities, targeting Roma exclusively – for example, **Bulgaria** and **Romania**. Nevertheless, not all municipalities across these Member States fulfil these requirements yet. **Hungary**’s NRIS obliges municipalities to have in place a “Local Equal Opportunity Programme” (*Helyi Esélyegyenlőségi Program*, HEP). This programme has a broader focus on vulnerable people and social groups, such as Roma, women, people living in extreme poverty, persons with disabilities, children, and the elderly. **Croatia** and **Slovenia** have the same requirement in their NRISs, but only for localities with Roma populations.

In several Member States, municipalities have put in place local action plans that target Roma specifically, but not exclusively, despite the absence of such

Figure 4.3: Overview of local action plans on Roma in place across EU Member States



Source: FRA, 2015

a provision in the NRIS – for example, in the **Czech Republic, Italy, Spain** and the **United Kingdom**. In the **Czech Republic**, the governmental Agency for Social Inclusion (*Agentura pro sociální začleňování*) is relied upon to cooperate with municipalities, support Roma communities and social inclusion activities, and give support in developing local action plans, even though the agency is not formally accountable for the NRIS.⁴⁶ **Italy** set up regional and local boards to implement the NRIS, as well as coordination bodies of regional and local authorities. Only half of the regions approved strategies and set up boards, whereas by 2015 most municipalities had developed local strategies, despite the lack of any formal obligation to do so.⁴⁷ In the **United Kingdom**, which has a broad set of mainstream social inclusion measures rather than an NRIS, a recent study showed that 21 local authorities had policies with specific mention of Roma or UK Gypsies and Travellers.⁴⁸ The presence of local action plans and strategies in many municipalities despite the lack of any explicit requirements for them shows the potential for further developing local-level actions that may include marginalised populations such as Roma and cater to the specific needs of these populations.

4.2.2. Local action plans: coverage, quality and status of implementation

Both the EU Framework on National Roma Integration Strategies and the Council's 2013 recommendation on effective Roma integration strategies place Roma integration firmly in a human rights context. They cite articles of the Treaty on the European Union, the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union and the Racial Equality Directive (2000/43/EC) that refer to the need to combat social exclusion and discrimination, and they lay down the frameworks for combating discrimination on the grounds of racial or ethnic origin. These articles extend to areas such as education, employment, access to healthcare and housing. Given this, the NRISs and relevant policy measures are expected to address these four key areas in which Member States as duty bearers should fulfil their obligations to ensure fundamental rights and combat discrimination in the context of Roma integration.

Local-level action plans on Roma integration vary in depth, level of detail, appropriateness of measures proposed, and relevance of indicators used to measure progress, according to information collected by FRA. There are differences in local authorities' capacity and familiarity with certain policy areas within the different regions, and between rural and urban local authorities.

In **Hungary**, municipalities must submit a Local Equal Opportunity Programme every five years based on an analysis of the local situation. A governmental body⁴⁹

supported the development of the programmes by providing training to the staff of each responsible municipality. In addition, an equal opportunity mentoring network was put in place to help municipality staff in the self-review process (due every second year, with the first review currently ongoing) and the preparation of successive programmes.⁵⁰

Raising awareness about the provisions of the NRIS among local authorities and local decisionmakers is an important factor that has the potential to enhance the measures and actions taken to support the Roma community. In **Portugal**, an increasing number of requests by local governments and partnership networks were submitted to the High Commission for Migrations (*Alto Comissariado para as Migrações, I. P., ACM*) in 2015, with the aim of improving the understanding and dissemination of the national strategy locally. As a result of these requests, the ACM drew up a set of guidelines.

In Member States where there are clear requirements to include strategies targeted at Roma, or where Roma are explicitly, but not exclusively, included in strategies and policy measures at the local level, there is still variation in how far these requirements have been fulfilled. In **Bulgaria**, all 28 districts had developed and adopted district strategies by 2014, and 184 out of 265 municipalities had adopted updated municipal action plans for 2014–2017.⁵¹ In **Croatia**, five regional self-government units adopted action plans, and one municipal level action plan had been adopted by 2015. In **Hungary**, almost all local municipalities (3,174 out of the total 3,178) had put in place their Local Equal Opportunity Programme.⁵²

An important element in the design and implementation of Roma integration measures is explicitly mentioned in the EU Framework on NRISs as well as the Council's 2013 recommendation on such measures. Both documents refer to two of the 2009 Common Basic Principles on Roma inclusion, namely the involvement of civil society and the active participation of Roma themselves. In this regard, despite some progress, the engagement of local communities in the design and monitoring of local-level interventions is still largely uncharted. In 22 municipalities included in FRA's LERI research project (see [Section 4.2](#)), the project used different approaches to local engagement in 2015 by applying participatory action research methodology.⁵³ In bringing together local stakeholders, including Roma, small-scale plans and actions are developed to cater to the real needs and specificities of the local communities. For example, in Besenec, **Hungary**, the project brings together relevant local stakeholders to mobilise and motivate community members to contribute to a micro-regional development strategy. In Bologna, **Italy**, the project strengthens the participation of Roma and Sinti groups in a local support group. In Cordoba, **Spain**, the project

supports a participatory process contributing to a strategic plan for Roma integration. In Cluj-Napoca, **Romania**, the project focuses on identifying obstacles and opportunities in local housing policies to make them accessible to socially excluded and marginalised residents, predominantly Roma.

Thematic focus of local action plans

Local action plans usually concern the four core thematic areas of the EU Framework on NRISs: education, employment, health and housing. Additionally, local action plans sometimes set out non-discrimination measures – for example, in **Bulgaria, Italy, Romania**, and **Slovenia**.

In some Member States, the extent to which local action plans actually cover the areas of the NRIS varies. For example, in **Croatia**, most local action plans cover four to eight areas. Some strategies elaborate particular areas in more detail than others – for example, through measurable objectives. In **Italy**, some local action plans include measurable objectives in terms of reducing school drop-outs, increasing Roma families' access to social services, developing school projects and eliminating a specific number of camps by certain deadlines. In addition, access to services is reported to be the focus of existing action plans targeting Roma specifically but not exclusively in **Slovakia** and **Sweden**, for example.

Housing continued to be an important issue across many Member States in 2015, as discussed in [Section 4.1.1](#). It was a focus in many local-level strategies and action plans, as well as an area of particular concern in implementing Roma integration on the ground.

Certain Member States increasingly acknowledged the particular problems facing many settlements and neighbourhoods where Roma communities live, and proposed immediate corresponding measures to help alleviate the situation. These efforts show a trend of moving beyond objectives of resolving housing issues towards more pragmatic approaches through concrete, achievable, and realistic measures. Measures undertaken in this direction included increasing access to infrastructure (bus stops, public lighting, and sewage); legalising settlements; and regulating property. Although they are not definitive overall solutions, such measures can be seen as examples of progress in implementing the objectives of the NRIS through small steps towards Roma integration and reintegration.

In **Slovenia**, the boundaries of Roma settlements and their legalisation must be worked out in municipal spatial plans. Nine municipalities made drafts in 2015, two municipalities were at the proposal phase, and 21 municipalities where Roma live have already accepted municipal spatial plans.⁵⁴ **Bulgaria's** district strategies

focus on de-ghettoisation, improving housing conditions, renovating and building new social housing, and improvements to infrastructure through specific planned activities.⁵⁵

Funding of local-level action plans

Lack of funding, as well as underspending, remains one of the essential challenges in supporting local-level implementation and monitoring, as mentioned in the Commission's 2015 report on implementing the EU Framework for NRISs.

"I know that in municipalities, many people are trying, on a daily basis, to bring practical solutions to practical problems. [...] Therefore, when I hear about budget constraints of municipalities that have no funding left to implement their Roma action plans, when I hear about civil society activists unable to reach decision-makers in government, I know what you mean. When I hear about National Roma Contact Points with no resources to coordinate Roma integration across ministries, I know what you mean. We need to address this. Together, we are mobilising all our available tools: policy, legal and financial."

Věra Jourová, European Commissioner for Justice, Consumers and Gender Equality, Speech at the European Roma Platform, 17 March 2015

Funding for implementing and monitoring local-level strategies and action plans varies greatly across Member States. In many cases, actions are funded through combinations of the national budget, municipal budgets and European Structural and Investment Funds (ESIF).

For example, in **Ireland**, where municipalities develop the Traveller Accommodation Programme, financed from government sources, funding for these programmes has been significantly reduced over the past few years, although a slight increase was registered in 2015.⁵⁶ In other Member States, such as **Denmark** and **Germany**, Roma integration has been incorporated into general sets of policy measures and, at the local level, assistance measures may include Roma among the beneficiary groups. The German federal programme 'Live Democracy! Active against Right-wing Extremism, Violence and Hate'⁵⁷, for instance, funds specific pilot projects dealing with anti-Gypsyism and supports the structural development of a nation-wide NGO, the Documentation and Cultural Centre of German Sinti and Roma (*Dokumentations- und Kulturzentrum Deutscher Sinti und Roma*).⁵⁸ In **Greece**, many national and regional programmes funded through ESIF focus on poverty, families with many children, domestic violence, and other areas where many of the beneficiaries are also Roma. In **Spain**, the majority of the regions have chosen in their European Social Fund Operational Programs the Thematic Objective 9.2., which allows them to allocate an important amount of resources in favour of Roma population inclusion at regional and local level.

4.2.3. Monitoring progress on Roma integration: indicators and tools

The EU Framework on NRISs and the Council's 2013 recommendation on effective Roma integration highlight the importance of regularly monitoring progress on Roma integration. The recommendation also explicitly encourages Member States to make use of indicators and monitoring tools with the support of FRA.

FRA assists the European Commission and Member States in developing and applying a robust system for monitoring progress on Roma integration. It consists of two pillars: a framework of rights-based indicators following the structure-process-outcome (SPO) indicator model; and an information collection tool for generating the data necessary for populating the process indicators (data for outcome indicators come from FRA's regular surveys and other sources).

In 2015, FRA – together with the Commission and Member States participating in FRA's Ad-Hoc Working Party on Roma integration – developed the information collection template that the Commission used for the first round of reporting from Member States on measures taken in implementing the Council's 2013 recommendation. The data generated allowed for populating the progress indicators elaborated by FRA. On the basis of the pilot application of this reporting framework (the data collection tool and the indicators), the Commission is developing a full-fledged online reporting tool that will be rolled out in 2016.

At the international level, different monitoring mechanisms are in place. For example, the European Committee of Social Rights – a Council of Europe independent monitoring body – is assessing the situation of CoE Member States with respect to the European Social Charter, adopting conclusions and decisions on state compliance. The latest conclusions (2015) were dedicated to the topic of “children, families and migrants”. On the basis of the collective complaints procedure, the committee adopted several decisions directly involving the situation of Roma in different member States. At present, the European Committee of Social Rights has adopted 13 decisions regarding Roma.⁵⁹

Some Member States have monitoring mechanisms at regional or local levels. For example, in **Bulgaria**, district monitoring and evaluation units monitor strategies according to instructions by the National Council for Cooperation on Ethnic and Integration Issues, and report annually on the implementation of municipal action plans within each district.⁶⁰ However, the link between regional- and local-level monitoring is not always clear. Where local action plans or strategies exist, they do not always include measurable objectives and indicators. Monitoring and evaluation units are in place in each municipality, but not all of the 265

municipal action plans have indicators, and those with indicators do not necessarily apply the same ones.⁶¹ In the **Czech Republic**, Roma advisors, local consultants and NGOs are involved in monitoring local and regional strategies and action plans.⁶² The City of York Council in the **United Kingdom** also developed a specific strategy and action plan for Roma, Gypsies and Travellers, with specific objectives, targets, timelines, responsibilities and progress reports.⁶³ Reporting on progress towards priorities set out in the strategy is overseen twice a year and through an annual progress report. Both in England and Wales and in Scotland, local authorities also carry out a caravan count twice a year.⁶⁴ **Greece** recently developed a mechanism for monitoring and evaluating NRIS implementation, structured on local, regional and national level.

Local plans are usually reviewed through self-assessments. The municipality itself reports on its achievements and elements that need to be revisited or amended, without any external evaluation or assessment. For example, in **Romania**, the members of local working groups (*grupul de acțiune local*, GLL) are responsible for implementing and monitoring measures corresponding to their specific area of activity, as included in the local action plan, and report on its implementation to the mayor and governmental bodies twice a year. Conversely, in **Sweden**, efforts towards Roma integration are included in the NRIS and implemented through five pilot projects in municipalities. The proposed strategic evaluation is contracted out to an independent entity, which assesses the five pilot cities over a three-year period and produces a learning evaluation. In addition, each municipality has a set of indicators and provides an annual follow-up report to the County Administrative Board of Stockholm (*Länsstyrelsen Stockholms län*).⁶⁵ Evaluations of other components of the NRIS are commissioned from external actors.⁶⁶

Most Member States have monitoring processes in place at national level, under the responsibility of central state institutions such as ministries. This is the case in **Croatia, Italy** and the **Netherlands**, for example. The **Netherlands** developed a Roma Inclusion Monitor, which was populated for the second time with qualitative data based on interviews with Roma and Sinti on areas including education, work, housing, health, security and safety, and contact with local government.⁶⁷ In **Croatia**, local action plans outline some specific activities, but there is a lack of data and indicators to monitor them. Following an external evaluation of the National Roma Inclusion Strategy and accompanying Action Plan implementation, **Croatia** has envisaged comprehensive research to determine the size of the Roma population at local/regional and national level, base-line data for monitoring the NRIS and subsequent action plan, as well as the Roma's needs and obstacles to their integration.

Even where national-level monitoring systems are established to evaluate progress in NRIS implementation, not all national-level monitoring bodies have developed procedures to monitor and evaluate the implementation of local action plans and strategies. For example, in **Latvia**, the Advisory Council on the Implementation of the Roma Integration Policy (*Romu integrācijas politikas īstenošanas konsultatīvā padome*), established under the Ministry of Culture, has not developed monitoring tools at the local level to facilitate the monitoring of the national strategy,⁶⁸ although local education boards and local branches of the state employment agency submit data on Roma to the relevant ministries. On the other hand, in **Spain**, the Local Strategy on the Roma population of Barcelona,⁶⁹ newly adopted in 2015, includes a monitoring mechanism that involves relevant stakeholders, including civil society organisations. It is composed of four bodies in charge of follow up and monitoring: a technical working group for planning, a technical working group for follow up, a municipal inter-sectoral group for coordination, and a political working group for follow up.

Although some national monitoring frameworks are in place, local policies targeting Roma are not yet being monitored and evaluated consistently and systematically. This implies that readjustments made to local policies to increase their responsiveness to local needs are not done in a manner that ensures full complementarity between needs and policies at the local level. Another challenge is the absence of disaggregated data that can identify Roma at national, regional and local levels – the type of data that could inform policy cycles.

Stakeholders' involvement in monitoring EU funding at the local level

Participation is one of the key principles of the Human Rights Approach to Poverty Reduction Strategies as outlined by the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights⁷⁰ and enshrined in the 10 Common Basic Principles on Roma Inclusion.⁷¹ The participation of local-level stakeholders, including civil society and communities themselves, in the whole cycle of an intervention – design, implementation, monitoring implementation, and assessing results – helps achieve tangible and sustainable results. Civil society and other regional and local stakeholders can play an essential role in the design and monitoring of the implementation of NRISs and of EU funds.

For the programming period 2014–2020, certain investment priorities under Thematic Objective 9 – promoting social inclusion, combating poverty and any discrimination – for the European Social Fund (ESF) and the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF) require recipients to already have in place a national Roma inclusion strategic policy framework.⁷² In most countries

that address Roma under Objective 9-2 (integration of marginalised Roma communities) for inclusion in the ESIF for the programming period 2014–2020, the operational programme monitoring committees are the main mechanisms for monitoring the use of EU funds. However, the extent and quality of participation, particularly in monitoring and evaluation, vary greatly between national and local levels and in the type of actions monitored.

Promising practice

Transferring local-level initiatives

The Roma Secretariat Foundation (*Fundación Secretariado Gitano*, FSG) (**Spain**) and *Conorzio Nova Onlus* (**Italy**) are implementing an ESF-funded project that aims to develop and adapt the model of the 'Acceder programme' to the Italian context. The Acceder programme, implemented by FSG since 2000, aims to help the Roma population integrate into the job market. It is present in 14 Spanish regions and involves 51 employment mechanisms. Transferring it to the Italian context involves several phases, such as carrying out feasibility studies for selecting a pilot locality, drafting an implementation plan for the selected locality, and implementing pilot projects. Involving various relevant stakeholders – including Roma associations – in the design, assessment and implementation of the programme in Italy is instrumental for creating an effective mechanism. The added value rests in the fact that the same scheme can also be replicated in other Member States, together with any necessary adaptations. Doing so would maximise resources and expertise, and reinforce transnational cooperation between Member States on common issues.

For more information, see FSG, 'Transferencia Acceder a Italia'

Local and regional authorities are often represented on national monitoring committees – for example, through national associations of municipalities. This is the case in **Bulgaria, Croatia, Ireland, Italy, the Netherlands and Romania**. Civil society organisations dealing with Roma issues, particularly Roma NGOs, are also involved in the monitoring process for EU funds in, for example, the **Czech Republic, Croatia, the Netherlands, Romania and Slovakia**. In the **Czech Republic**, local-level partnerships are established to support the monitoring of the use and implementation of ESIF funds. Roma experts, local consultants and civil society representatives participate in monitoring ESIF and in monitoring and evaluating various interventions and local action plans. At the regional level, regional coordinators for Roma affairs are also involved in monitoring. In the **Netherlands**, the Platform Roma Municipalities is involved in the formal monitoring of ESIF, and civil society is also included in the advisory committee to the Roma Inclusion Monitor at national level. In **Romania**,

civil society organisations that deal with Roma issues are represented at the level of the Management Coordination Committee of the Partnership Agreement (*Comitetul de Coordonare pentru Managementul Acordului de Parteneriat, CCMAP*), as well as on monitoring committees for relevant programmes, such as the Human Capital Operational Programme (*Programul Operațional Capital Uman, POCU*).⁷³ In **Slovakia**, four out of 15 members of the Commission of the Monitoring Committee for the Operational Programme Human Resources, priority axes 5 and 6 (*Komisia pri monitorovacom výbore pre Operačný program Ľudské zdroje pre prioritné osi 5.a 6.*) represent NGOs, two of which are Roma NGOs.⁷⁴

On the other hand, **Hungary** and **Sweden** opted for independent expert monitoring carried out by external actors without the involvement of local authorities or civil society.

The European Commission took action in 2015 to improve the capacity of Roma civil society, facilitating its involvement in monitoring NRISs by supporting the development of pilot projects for shadow monitoring and reporting on Roma integration.⁷⁵ In addition to providing data and information on the status of implementation in key thematic areas, the monitoring will focus on the local implementation of strategies and provide information on the involvement of civil society and the use of EU funds.

FRA opinions

Ethnic origin is considered the most prevalent ground of discrimination according to 2015 data. Non-discrimination is one of the rights in the EU Charter of Fundamental Rights, as well as of several general and specific European and international human rights instruments. Notably, Article 2 (1) (e) of the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination, to which all 28 EU Member States are party, emphasises the commitment to “pursue by all appropriate means and without delay” to “eliminat[e] barriers between races, and to discourage anything which tends to strengthen racial division”. In 2015, European institutions, including the European Parliament, called attention to the problems of intersectional discrimination and encouraged EU Member States to implement further measures to tackle anti-Gypsyism and intersectional discrimination, also addressing the particular situation of Roma women and girls.

FRA opinion

To tackle persisting discrimination against Roma and anti-Gypsyism, it is FRA's opinion that EU Member States should put in place specific measures to fight ethnic discrimination of Roma in line with the Racial Equality Directive provisions and anti-Gypsyism in line with the Framework Decision on Racism and Xenophobia provisions. To address the challenges Roma women and girls face, Member States could include specific measures for Roma women and girls in national Roma integration strategies (NRISs) or policy measures to tackle intersectional discrimination effectively. Member States should explicitly integrate an anti-discrimination approach in their NRISs implementation.

Living conditions of Roma EU citizens living in another Member State, and progress in their integration, further posed a challenge in 2015. FRA evidence shows that the respective NRISs or broader policy measures do not explicitly target these populations. As a result, few local strategies or action plans cater to the specific needs of these EU citizens.

FRA opinion

To address the challenges Roma EU citizens living in another Member State face, it is FRA's opinion that the EU's Committee of the Regions' and the European Commission's continued support would be beneficial for an exchange of promising practices between regions and municipalities in Member States of residence and Member States of origin.

Member States of origin and destination could consider developing specific integration measures for Roma EU citizens moving to and residing in another Member State in their national Roma

integration strategies (NRISs) or policy measures. Such measures should include cooperation and coordination between local administrations in the Member States of residence and the Member States of origin.

Participation is one of the key principles of the Human Rights Approach to Poverty Reduction Strategies, as outlined by the United Nations Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) and enshrined in the 10 Common Basic Principles on Roma Inclusion. FRA research shows that in 2015 efforts were made to actively engage local residents, Roma and non-Roma, in joint local-level activities together with local and regional authorities. There is, however, no systematic approach towards engaging with Roma across Member States; structures of cooperation vary greatly, particularly in monitoring NRISs and the use of EU funds.

FRA opinion

To enhance the active participation and engagement of Roma, it is FRA's opinion that public authorities, particularly at local level, should take measures to improve community cohesion and trust involving local residents, as well as civil society, through systematic engagement efforts. Such measures can contribute in improving the participation of Roma in local level integration processes, especially in identifying their own needs, in formulating responses and in mobilising resources.

Practices regarding the monitoring of the local action plans or local policy measures vary within EU Member States, as well as across the EU. In some Member States, the responsibility for monitoring the implementation of these local policies is at the central level, whereas in others it is with the local level actors who often face a lack of human capacity and financial resources. The extent to which Roma themselves and civil society organisations participate in monitoring processes also varies, as does the quality of the indicators developed.

FRA opinion

To address the challenges of monitoring the implementation of local action plans or local policy measures, it is FRA's opinion that EU Member States should implement the recommendations on effective Roma integration measures in the Member States, as adopted at the Employment, Social Policy, Health and Consumer Affairs Council on 9 and 10 December 2013. Any self-assessment through independent monitoring and evaluation, with the active participation of civil society organisations and Roma representatives, should complement the national Roma integration strategies (NRISs) and policy measures in that regard. Local level stakeholders would benefit from practice-oriented trainings on monitoring methods and indicators to capture progress in the targeted communities.

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