



Everyday life of Roma in Croatia:

challenges and potentials
for transformation

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2014.



01

Summary of
main findings

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The position of Roma men and women in Croatian society is predominantly associated with their inability to exercise fundamental rights arising from Croatian citizenship proven by identification documents. Unresolved legal status, depending on different administrative reasons, divides Croatian inhabitants in seven broad categories. At the level of everyday life, being cast in these categories may cause a feeling of social isolation and lack of future prospects, which affects the position of entire families in society. Typical problems that members of the Roma minority without legal status encounter are associated with the following: I) inability to improve their economic condition in a significant way; II) inability to resolve the legal status of their children; III) health problems, a feeling of social isolation and lack of future prospects; IV) insufficient access to information; and V) lack of financial resources and inability to settle debts.

The authors of the chapter on **legal status** mention seven categories of unresolved legal status depending on specific causes and consequences:

- 01** Persons without legal identity;
- 02** Persons with legal identity who are illegally in the Republic of Croatia, without any resolution of their status in accordance with the Aliens Act;
 - a. Persons without citizenship
- 03** Persons without a temporary stay permit;
- 04** Persons who meet the requirements for permanent stay, but who have not resolved this issue;
- 05** Persons who meet the requirements for citizenship, but who have not resolved this issue;
- 06** Persons whose status has significantly deteriorated due to an administrative error;
- 07** Persons who are not able to obtain a passport.

Unresolved legal status affects all generations and hinders the exercise of rights in health insurance, education and participation in the labour market. It also obstructs access to a number of services which ensure a better quality of life. On the basis of the findings set out in the chapter on legal status, we can conclude that the Roma population in Croatia is facing the problem of "triple deprivation" as a result of I) ethnicity; II) unresolved legal status; and III) deprivation caused by an unresolved legal status. This creates double marginalisation of the Roma people as they are not only marginalised in relation to the majority of the population, but also in relation to the rest of the Roma who have resolved their legal status. Members of Roma families who have not resolved their legal status are in an extremely disadvantaged position because they typically maintain this status for a longer period of time or even for a lifetime, which then affects next generations as well. The survey shown in the chapter on legal status shows that among Roma respondents about 2% do not possess a birth certificate, around 5% do not possess an ID card and more than two thirds do not have a valid passport. If we use these data to generalise about the entire population of the Republic of Croatia, we can conclude that between 1,500 and 2,000 members of the Roma community face problems related to their legal status, i.e. they are either foreign nationals or stateless persons.

Unresolved legal status and the position of foreign nationals or stateless persons for the Roma ethnic minority often mean life in poverty, which in the case of Roma in Croatia was discussed in the chapter on **poverty and living standards**. As was stated in the chapter on **methodology**, all data on the Roma population were compared with the data on the non-Roma population living in the vicinity of Roma settlements to obtain more authentic data. The first data-

sets compared in this way were about the social position of Roma, namely the indicators presented in Chart 1. According to the results from the chart, all the indicators show the more disadvantaged economic situation of Roma, with the exception of the frequency of waste collection in which rates for Roma and non-Roma populations are similar. An indicator which specifically illustrates the disadvantaged position of Roma relative to other members of the population relates to the rate of absolute and relative poverty. According to these measures, absolute poverty, i.e. living on less than USD 4.30 a day affects up to 8.9% of Roma and 5.5% of the non-Roma population, while almost all Roma (92.3%) and 42.0% of the non-Roma population can be considered relatively poor (they live on less than 60% of the median national income). The chapter on poverty and living standards analysed the composition of households and household income. In this respect, we would like to highlight two facts that we find the most interesting – the share of child allowances in total household income, which is almost three times higher in Roma households than in non-Roma households (34.2 : 12.1%). Also, the share of social welfare in total household income shows that Roma households are over five times more socially disadvantaged than other households (38.3 : 7.2%). The next important indicator of the social position of Roma is unsettled financial obligations, which are almost twice as common in Roma than in other households (35.1 : 19.3%).

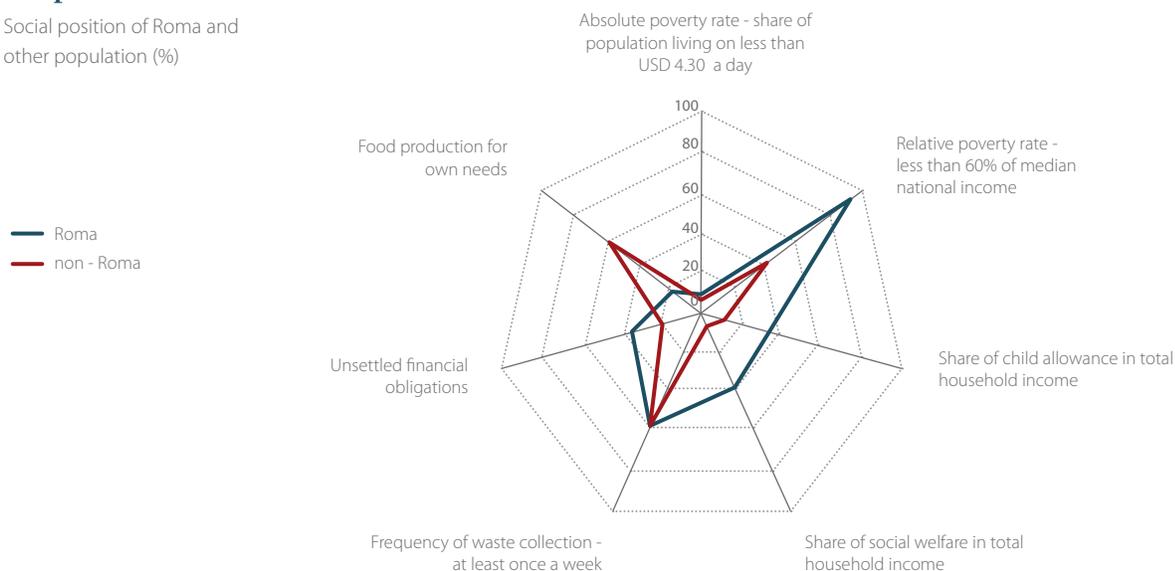
We have added to this list of indicators another which is not traditionally used as an indicator of social position, but which can be illustrative for conclusions to be drawn on a group's social position. This is food production and cultivation for own needs. Almost four times fewer Roma participate in food production for their own needs if compared to the rest of the population. This can probably be ascribed to the fact that a great number of Roma live in communities with shared households and to the fact that they less commonly than the rest of the population own their own land on which they could breed animals for their own needs.

In addition to the indicators in Chart 1, we can also analyse the data on income and consumption (Chart 2), according to which both Roma and non-Roma households report equal expenditure on food and everyday groceries, but the income of Roma households is HRK 2,000 lower. This is further confirmed by the already given finding on the higher incidence of unsettled financial obligations in Roma households, which shows that the income generated by Roma households does not suffice for basic life necessities.

The high incidence of poverty among the Roma population is accompanied by problems Roma face in the area of **education**. Roma in Croatia are still unable to fulfil their full educational potential, primarily due to poverty, ethnic discrimination

Graph 01

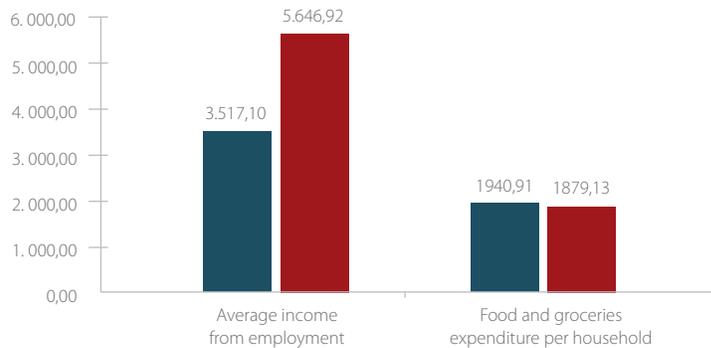
Social position of Roma and other population (%)



Graph 02

Income and consumption
(in HRK)

■ Roma
■ non - Roma



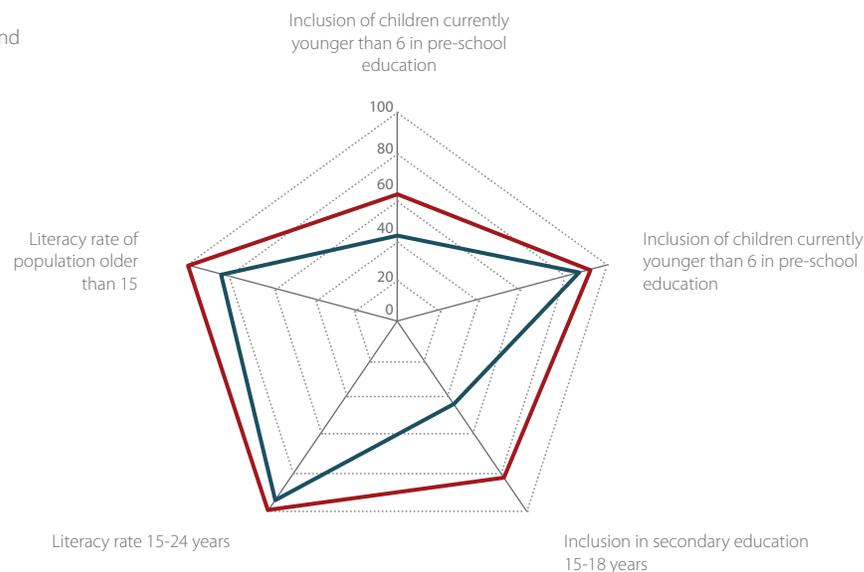
(and multiple discrimination of women), (self-)marginalisation, lack of self-confidence and the slowly changing patterns of the everyday functioning of Roma communities. The significance of the difference in education between Roma and the rest of the population can be seen in several indicators shown in Chart 3. It is clear that 44.1% of Roma (and more than 63% of non-Roma) children currently younger than 6 are included in pre-school education, which does not constitute solid foundations for the subsequent handling of the curricular content throughout primary education. The degree of inclusion in primary education in the age range from 7 to 14 does not differ greatly between Roma and the rest of the population (88.8 : 92.7%), but at the level of secondary education a sudden drop becomes visible, as the rates for young Roma in secondary

education are about half as much as in the rest of the population. This is best seen in the average years of education of the Roma and non-Roma population where figures for non-Roma older than 24, regardless of their age subgroup, indicate a total of 10.6 years of education. Roma in the age range from 15 to 24 show 6.8 years of education, while in the range from 25 to 64 this figure falls to a mere 4.5 years. The next indicator graphically shown – literacy rate – does not indicate great disparities between the younger Roma population (up to 24 years) and the rest of the population. However, almost 15% of all Roma are illiterate, while in the rest of the population this figure is below 1%. The differences within the Roma population are visible in lower educational outcomes and aspirations of Roma from rural areas, while in terms of gender differences, the youngest

Graph 03

Inclusion in formal education and educational achievement (%)

— Roma
— non - Roma



generation exhibits the smallest differences, which leads to the conclusion that the equality of educational opportunities and outcomes among Roma men and women has been rising.

In terms of their educational aspirations, Roma are not very different from the rest of the population in the sense that they aspire to higher levels of education than they actually achieve. However, the data show only 29 students of Roma ethnicity at Croatian universities. Lower rates of Roma inclusion in the educational system and their poorer educational outcomes are reflected in their disadvantaged position on the labour market, which is analysed in the chapter on **employment**. Chart 4 presents some indicators on the position of Roma and the rest of the population on the labour market, showing that Roma are in a comparatively more disadvantaged position as they have lower participation rates. The unemployment data are dramatic because 65.1% of young Roma are unemployed, which is three times higher than the rest of the population. These differences are even more expressed if we compare figures for the total Roma and non-Roma population.

However, more than twice as many Roma (35.2 : 15.6%) show entrepreneurial aspirations which they fulfil to a lesser extent than the rest of the population (1.6 : 4.0%). The last indicator from the chart also illustrates the difficult position

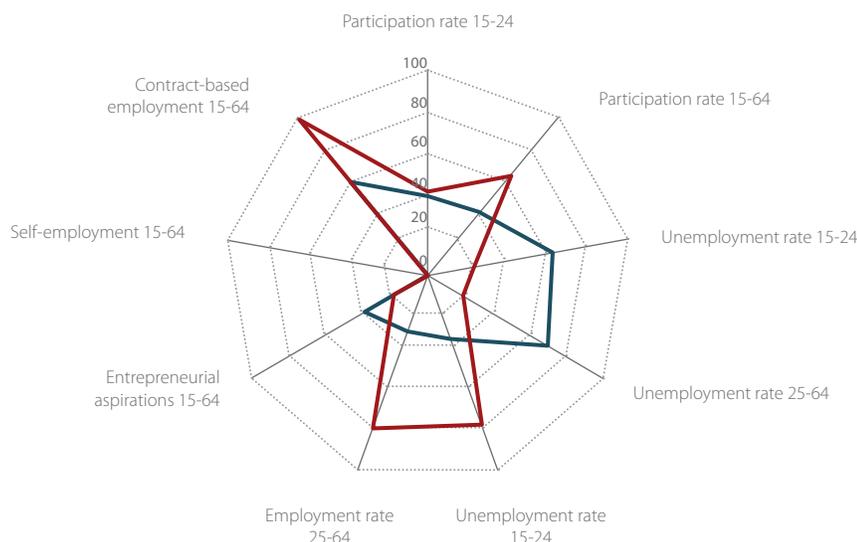
of Roma on the labour market because only 59.7% of Roma manage to work through an employment contract (as opposed to 94.2% of the rest of the population). It should be added that, as suggested by the report submitted to the Council of Europe in 2004,⁰¹ apart from low and irregular income payments based on contractual labour relations, Roma face another big problem and that is their limited capacity to keep a bank account due to irregular payments. This in turn may lead to usurious loans with unfavourable interest rates. Even when regular bank loans are granted to Roma, the amounts of these loans are 25% lower than for the non-Roma population.

The unemployment rate of Roma is very high in all age groups, more frequently affecting Roma from rural areas. Roma women face multiple marginalisation in this respect. Low levels of education also contribute to the marginalisation of Roma on the labour market because more than 70% of unemployed Roma have not completed compulsory education. This education status represents an obstacle to their further education or requalification and means only modest income in instances of regular employment. A great number of Roma work in the black economy or find short-term jobs. Around 60% of employed Roma have unskilled jobs such as cleaning, and menial jobs in construction, trade and agriculture.

Graph 04

Position on the labour market (%)

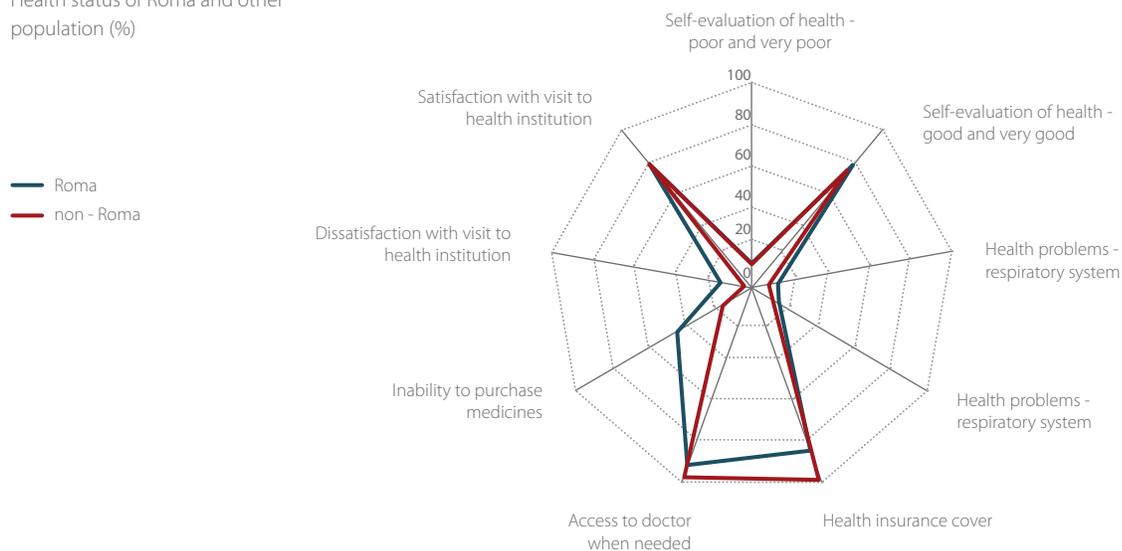
— Roma
— non - Roma



⁰¹ Second Report Submitted by the Croatia Pursuant to Article 25, paragraph 2 of the Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities, Council of Europe (2004).

Graph 05

Health status of Roma and other population (%)



The unfavourable position of Roma on the labour market and consequent poor economic conditions affect their health condition and access to health services (Chart 5).

The poor economic condition of Roma most directly affects their health because they are unable to purchase medicines, which affects three times more Roma than non-Roma (44.5 : 13.7%). The poor access of the Roma population to information and their unresolved legal status might be linked with up to 27.5% of Roma who do not have health insurance, which means that more than a quarter of Roma cannot enjoy healthcare. In addition, three times more Roma than the rest of the population (14.3 : 4.5%) report dissatisfaction with their visits to medical institutions, and more Roma members report an inability to reach medical doctors when needed. Despite this fact, there are more Roma who evaluate their health condition as good or very good (77.9 : 71.2%), even though more Roma than non-Roma report the problem of anxiety and depression (13.8 : 8.4%) and respiratory problems (14.0 : 5.8%).

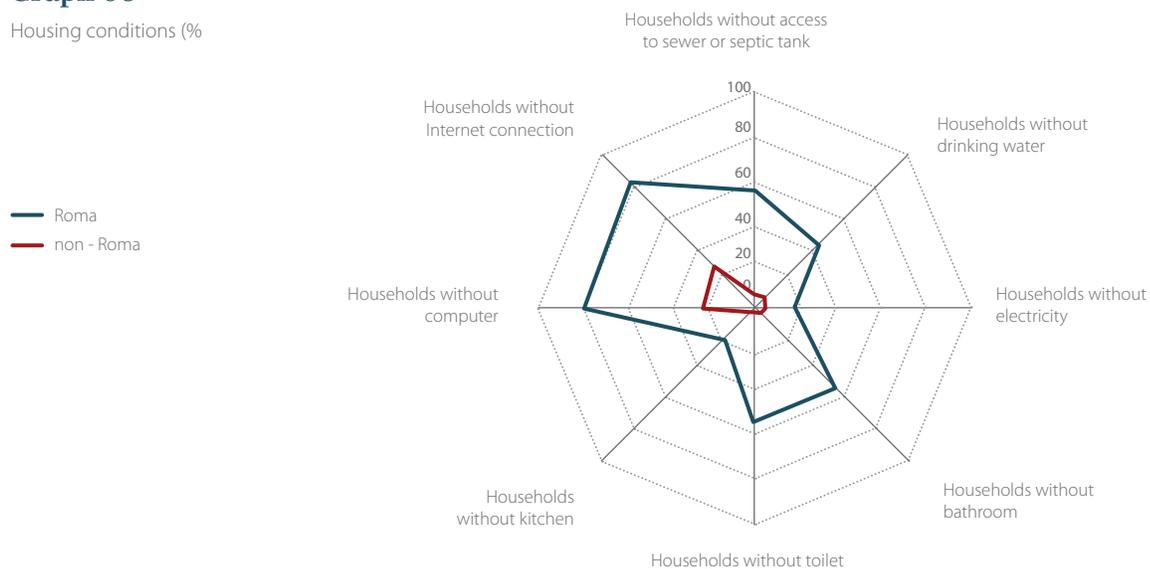
It is important to say that the survey results have not revealed any significant differences in the health condition between Roma men and women, with the exception of a greater number of respiratory problems in women as well as a higher percentage of specialist medical check-ups, and X-ray and ul-

trasound examinations for women. However, it is disconcerting that among Roma women with children, 10.34% have never had a gynaecological examination. Special attention should also be paid to families with no children because their members report significantly poorer health conditions. These families use healthcare services more often, even though they express dissatisfaction with them.

The last observed area – **housing** – has been analysed taking into account the available housing surface area and housing quality among the Roma and the non-Roma population near Roma settlements. Just like employment and education, housing is also a critical issue because it shows huge discrepancies between the Roma and non-Roma population, with data indicating a disadvantaged position of the Roma population in Croatia. Roma in Croatia mainly live in inadequate and overcrowded houses, and the first finding which points to this conclusion is the surface area per family member, which in Roma families is only 12.9 m² as opposed to 35.0 m² in non-Roma families. Other selected indicators of Roma housing conditions are presented in Chart 6. A disconcerting 53.8% of Roma households do not have access to sewers or septic tanks, 51.3% do not have a toilet, 50.0% do not have a bathroom and 46.5% do not have drinking water in their own house. Furthermore, 18.7% of households do not possess their own kitchen and 12.4%

Graph 06

Housing conditions (%)



Roma live without electricity. In addition, a very low number of Roma households possess computers – only 21.8%, while only 16.3% have an Internet connection.

It should also be said that housing conditions of the Roma population inhabiting rural areas are significantly more unfavourable across most selected indicators. Differences within the Roma population are also visible if families with

or without children are compared because families with children live in spatially less adequate facilities, but still better than families with no children. Finally, it is interesting to notice that in terms of their satisfaction with the neighbourhood, the Roma population reports a relatively high degree of satisfaction despite objective results showing significantly poorer housing quality.

02

Conclusions

Conclusions

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The key challenges in improving the social position of Roma in the Republic of Croatia and in their better integration in society can be divided into four groups:

- 01** Challenges related to the status of members of the Roma ethnic minority;
- 02** Challenges arising from administrative regulation;
- 03** Financial challenges;
- 04** Challenges related to monitoring and evaluating initiatives and actions aimed at improving the position of Roma.

The elements for the first group of challenges are thoroughly analysed in chapter five of this report, leading to the conclusion that all of the following six areas require further development: I) status-related issues; II) poverty and social status; III) education; IV) employment; V) health and VI) housing. Roma in the Republic of Croatia are still the victims of multiple marginalisation, not only because most of them have not resolved their legal status and because more than nine tenths of members of the Roma ethnic minority live in relative poverty, but also because the quality of their life and housing differs greatly from conditions in which the rest of the population live. Despite relatively high educational aspirations, only in rare cases are these aspirations realised, and the same goes for their labour market participation. Even when Roma do manage to find employment, it is often arranged with no signed contract, where pay is modest and irregular. That is why welfare benefits and collecting secondary raw material still represent the main source of finance for the Roma population, additionally contributing to their marginalisation. The same applies to health insurance and related rights since more than one quarter of Roma still do

not have any health insurance, while at the same time due to their comparatively disadvantaged social position, they have increased health risks. The disadvantaged condition of the entire Roma national minority is still more intense among the rural population, women, children and family members with no children. Since the social position of the Roma ethnic minority is complex and includes multiple deprivation, an integrated approach to this issue is required which, on the one hand, would respect the cultural specificities of the Roma ethnic minority in the Republic of Croatia, but which, on the other hand, would ensure their efficient integration in society.

The three challenges of administrative regulation, financial challenges and monitoring and evaluation can be grouped together because they require institutions and mechanisms to be organised at national, regional and local level which would in turn produce concrete action plans. The action plans are closely related to allocating financial resources which would not only help meet basic needs, but also enable the efficient and careful implementation of the action plans. Moreover, several sources have identified the need to provide training for professional staff who participate in implementing specific plans for the Roma whose minority status and multiple vulnerability require an approach that acknowledges and recognises their specific circumstances, and removes them or incorporates them successfully into the solution of the problems faced by the Roma population.

03

Recommendations

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Recommendations to improve the social position of Roma men and women and for their successful integration in society have been carefully drafted at the European and national (Croatian) levels alike. Most documents which deal with these recommendations also carefully set out the requirements and the stakeholders necessary for the recommendations to be put into practice. That is why this chapter does not bring any new recommendations in terms of quantity, but only highlights the main trends in the strategies which aim to improve the social position of Roma men and women. It should also be borne in mind that national policies, the European framework and databases are only the first requirement in an otherwise systematic approach to the Roma issue and that the successful implementation of strategies requires concrete plans, with clearly stated participants and outcomes. Building trust, enhancing social cohesion and combating prejudice and discrimination need to be the key elements of any future improvement of the Roma position in society. Since life conditions and the status of most Roma testify to their multiple deprivation and marginalisation, the improvement of their social position requires an integrated approach which would link all significant areas. In the process of developing Roma integration strategies, it is clear that efficient activities require substantial financial funds, as well as monitoring and evaluation of their effects on the adoption of agreed plans. These activities should be arranged, implemented and monitored in cooperation with civil society organisations as well as with regional and local authorities. We also need to take into account fast changes in data because the Roma population is very young and dynamic. This requires a system of continuous monitoring of Roma in all areas significant for their social position.

These efforts should specifically take into account the gender dimension of discrimination. Roma women are victims of multiple discrimination based on their minority and gender status. In addition, special attention needs to be paid to

difficulties in the access to education of the adult population, high-quality healthcare, and intense efforts to prevent family violence and exploitation in Roma communities. In accordance with the *Common Basic Principles on Roma Inclusion* of 2009, the stated problem can be addressed by meeting the special needs of Roma women by creating, implementing and evaluating policies and activities, and ensuring that Roma women are present in counselling and supervisory bodies.

Recommendations in the area of status-related issues

When we speak of their legal status, the Roma population in the Republic of Croatia can be divided into two groups: those with resolved status in the Republic of Croatia and those who have not resolved their legal status. The exact number of Roma who have not resolved their legal status has not yet been determined. UNHCR assesses that this number is approximately 2,700 persons. A survey on legal status issues has identified three main causes for the unresolved legal status of members of the Roma ethnic minority:

- 01** lack of information;
- 02** lack of financial resources;
- 03** fear of potential consequences of resolving the legal status, e.g. expulsion from a country and/or inability to re-enter a country.

The National Roma Inclusion Strategy from 2013 to 2020 (hereinafter: the Strategy), in section IV.4.7 titled Status resolution, combating discrimination and assistance in exercising rights for the Roma minority, states as its general objective full (100%) status resolution in accordance with the legal framework (citizenship or permanent residence) of Roma who have a firm connection with the Republic of Croatia (or with the former Socialist Republic of Croatia) before 2020, with significant support of the relevant bodies.

The *Strategy* also specifies the formation of mobile teams and the dissemination of information across the Roma population on the necessary steps in the status resolution process, which is in line with the results of the survey.

In order to successfully resolve their legal status, the *Strategy* lists the following recommendations:

- 01** more active involvement of civil society organisations regarding Roma legal status;
- 02** adequate financing of the civil society organisations dealing with Roma status;
- 03** involvement of Roma assistants in mobile teams;
- 04** reduction of administrative costs and/or complete exemption from financial charges arising from administrative procedures related to the resolution of legal status granted to the Roma who have not resolved their legal status;
- 05** training of persons who have direct contacts with members of the Roma minority.

The successful resolution of legal status, judging by the respondents' replies, is often carried out with the help of civil society organisations. Integrated action which would systematically resolve the legal status of the Roma national minority requires setting up and financing a network of civil society organisations which would provide administrative and legal assistance to the persons in need.

The problem of an integrated approach is also highlighted in the *Strategy* which mentions mobile teams to help identify persons who need assistance in resolving their legal status and which would then also provide such assistance. One of the requirements for the successful launch of these actions is building the trust of the Roma community, which includes Roma assistants in mobile teams. Additional assistance in identifying persons who need the help of mobile teams can be offered by the official representatives of Roma communities and institutions which provide social services, healthcare services, and education and employment services. Moreover, in order to establish the trust and efficient resolution of the Roma legal status in the Republic of Croatia, it is important to set up a system which should, under no circumstances, be used to persecute or punish the persons who have not resolved their legal status,

but should exclusively assist them in a positive way. In addition to gaining the trust of the Roma community, setting up a necessary administrative infrastructure and the functioning of organisations dealing with the resolution of Roma legal status, it is also necessary to ensure two more key requirements: I) abolish financial charges (administrative fees, etc.) in administrative procedures related to the status resolution of Roma who have not resolved their legal status and who earn no income; and II) provide additional training for persons in direct contact with members of the Roma ethnic minority. The latter element – professional training – must raise awareness of the need to use a specific approach to Roma who are resolving their legal status, so that all the help available can be given. In this way, lack of education or ignorance cannot stand in the way of pursuing the rights to which Roma are entitled by law. This specific approach to Roma is, after all, the obligation of all officials who have contacts with their clients⁰² because if they do not attempt to maintain a specific approach and manner with Roma clients, Roma will often give up trying to resolve their legal status. During the survey on Roma status, it became clear that in order to successfully resolve the legal status of Roma in the Republic of Croatia, it is necessary to establish cooperation with the relevant institutions from ex-Yugoslavia because in their migration from one ex-Yugoslav country to another, many Roma do not resolve their legal status because they no longer possess the documents from the former country or they do not know how to proceed in the resolution of their status in the new country. Finally, it should be emphasised that the *Strategy* sets out measures which are in line with these recommendations, which implies that it is necessary to implement, monitor and evaluate the existing measures more efficiently.

Recommendations in the area of suppressing poverty

The *Joint Memorandum on Social Inclusion* (2007) gives an extensive outline of the objectives and measures required for attenuating the social and economic disparities between socially vulnerable groups and the rest of society. Two areas are especially emphasised: I) the provision of available and adequate social services; and II) the provision of sufficient means of subsistence through paid employment and/or social services. These objectives are further elaborated in the *National Roma Inclusion Strategy from 2013 to 2020* (2012: 75 – 76) under the general objectives to reduce poverty of the Roma population and promote the quality of social and

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02 Article 7 Of the General Administrative Procedure Act, OG 47/09.

other services in the community. Three objectives are significant in this respect:

- 01** “To raise the quality, availability and timeliness of social services and services in the community with special emphasis on women, children, adolescents, the elderly and the disabled”;
- 02** “To raise the quality of life of Roma families with special emphasis and the well-being of children and adolescents”;
- 03** “To enhance the capacity of local Roma communities to recognize the risks of exposure to human trafficking, sexual exploitation and other forms of violence with an emphasis on women and children.”

This can be complemented by a recommendation to find long-term and sustainable solutions to the problem of poverty among old people, as set out in the *Report on the Implementation of the Joint Inclusion Memorandum (JIM) of the Republic of Croatia in 2011* (2012: 26). The improvement of the socio-economic position of Roma cannot be separated from the areas of education and employment, described in more detail in the following two sections.

Recommendations in the area of education

The measures aimed at improving the educational outcomes of Roma should, at the general level, include eight types of activity that are put into operation through action plans. These activities should also include details of responsible persons and the budget allocated as this would help in the implementation and monitoring of all planned activities (through clearly defined indicators):

- 01** measures to increase the participation of Roma children in preschool education (removing social and economic obstacles) to improve the quality of life of Roma families and to include parents in educational processes;
- 02** respecting the needs of children and building their active role in the family and community;
- 03** emphasising the importance of games in child development and the role of parents in stimulating their child to learn;
- 04** promoting the non-violent behaviour of children and young people at school and in the community;
- 05** measures to remove segregation and promote inclusion by respecting cultural differences and building trust to promote a safe, healthy and child-friendly school environment. In other words, curriculum development

should include education in the area of human rights – education for gender equality, peace, tolerance and respect of differences;

- 06** improving the quality of learning by means of additional training of teachers, pedagogic-psychological staff and Roma class assistants, as well as by including parents in monitoring and evaluating educational processes;
- 07** capacity building of all institutions and responsible persons in the education system by fostering an exchange of information and experience among the teaching and professional staff who work with Roma pupils, by providing financial aid and additional training to staff;
- 08** capacity building of Roma parents to be involved in the functioning of the school by organising adult literacy programmes, workshops and clubs to stimulate parents to become actively involved in education.

Furthermore, a system designed to monitor young people who have ended their education after compulsory (primary) education has not been developed, so that a significant share of young Roma remain outside the educational system and out of the labour market. In other words, it is difficult to monitor their status. Therefore, in order to set up an efficient system of monitoring Roma young people, it is necessary to keep track of their participation rates at different levels of education, their dropout rates, graduation rates and school performance. This raises the ethical issue of examining ethnically segregated data, so that it is necessary to establish strict rules about who has the right to use such data and which methods can be used with these data. In this way, minority rights would not be violated or data abused.

The participation of parents in the education of their own children is a key factor in ensuring children’s proactive attitude to education which would eventually lead to the development of competent and self-confident persons. The steps against gender discrimination should begin at an early phase, primarily including parents and teachers, and then the entire community. It is necessary to emphasise the importance of raising awareness of Roma inclusion in society and their successful employment, for girls and boys equally. Taking into account numerous economic and socially weighty circumstances in the active inclusion of Roma parents in the education of their children, it is important to invest additional effort to facilitate parents’ involvement in these processes. The mechanisms that schools and local authorities can apply to stimulate parent involvement in educational processes can be divided in the following way:

- 01** building partnership with parents and stimulating parents to be part of school boards and to design school activities;
- 02** organise activities in the area of adult education, especially for mothers because illiteracy or language barriers can represent barriers to involvement in the education of children;
- 03** organise counselling sessions for parents through parents' clubs and sessions organised by NGOs dealing with Roma issues;
- 04** gradual inclusion of Roma parents in preparing their children for preschool and school education, taking into account their cultural differences;
- 05** involvement of Roma assistants in bridging the gap between the everyday lives of Roma and the requirements of the educational system.

The last section which summarises recommendations in the area of education includes recommendations aimed at responsible persons in charge of implementing strategies – operative bodies and officials in various offices in charge of Roma issues. The document titled *The Right of Roma Children to Education* (2011) lists the following requirements for the successful implementation of action plans at the regional and local level:

- 01** capacity building of state, local and regional administration in charge of the position and rights of the Roma ethnic minority;
- 02** drafting clear guidelines for the implementation of action plans and strategies;
- 03** sufficient funds to allow the implemented plans to attain their objectives;
- 04** transparent reporting.

In conclusion, we can repeat that a high-quality system of recommendations already exists in the area of Roma education and that in order to allow Roma to fulfil their full potential in this area it is necessary to draft clear action plans, with clearly defined responsible persons in each particular activity, and sources of finance for these activities. The plan titled *Agenda for New Skills and Jobs*⁰³ describes, through its recommendations, a system which would have to be put in place in order for Europe to efficiently deal with the challenges of a rapidly changing and unstable economy. Roma should not be neglected in this respect,

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03 <http://ec.europa.eu/social/main.jsp?langId=en&catId=958>

meaning that multiple efforts should be invested for Roma to be able to first reach the educational average of their country and then to fulfil the requirements necessary for their equal participation in the competitive European labour market. It is therefore necessary to build a clear system of monitoring and evaluating of changes (with clear indicators) in the educational performance of Roma and the quality of tasks executed by certain stakeholders in the system. Finally, the present system which should include the Roma's primary, secondary and informal education in Croatia is still fragmented in terms of the low level of harmonisation between individual activities in different environments, and in terms of different degrees of performance in data collection dealing with the changes in the educational outcomes of Roma. Therefore, new measures are necessary to improve the coherence of the system, especially in the provision of equal educational opportunities for all Roma in Croatian regions, and in the application of equal standards in monitoring, evaluating and continual strengthening (improvement) of the educational system.

Recommendations in the area of employment

The National Roma Inclusion Strategy from 2013 to 2020 as well as the National Programme for the Roma both outline measures for Roma inclusion in the labour market, where the Croatian Employment Bureau acts as a body in charge of their implementation. However, these measures have only limited influence on changing the Roma status because, in addition to the reasons mentioned earlier, their implementation is affected by specific features of micro regions inhabited by Roma. Furthermore, successful implementation of Roma employment programmes and measures is hindered by great differences in the level of coordination between the bodies of state, regional and public administration, as well as by the understaffing of the bodies in charge of implementing the measures related to Roma.

As in the previous chapter, this chapter will not set out any new and comprehensive recommendations in terms of their quality because European policies and national policies and practice already constitute a well-established tradition of including Roma in the labour market by measures stimulating their employment and self-employment. The emphasis here will therefore be on a summary of measures from key documents which deal with the active inclusion of

Roma in the labour market, with an emphasis on the main trends and requirements in the area of stimulating the employment and self-employment of Roma.

An EU Framework for National Roma Integration Strategies up to 2020 (2011) specifies four major elements in improving the Roma situation on the labour market and their economic situation:

- 01** granting Roma people full access to vocational training in a non-discriminatory way;
- 02** stimulating self-employment;
- 03** employing qualified Roma civil servants;
- 04** removing all forms of discrimination on the labour market.

These recommendations should be complemented with family policy planning to support Roma parents' employment and self-employment. The data show lower employment rates of Roma parents (around 9% lower) than members of Roma families with no children, while the data on self-employment are dramatic as they indicate fifteen times higher self-employment rates among Roma with no children than among Roma with children. Policies which would facilitate the employment of Roma with children should focus on the more comprehensive and systematic inclusion of Roma children in preschool education (above the suggested 550 hours a year)⁰⁴ as well as on measures which would allow the children of working Roma parents to participate in school day-care programme (cjelodnevni boravak) throughout compulsory education.

The document titled *Empowerment through Employment: Capitalizing on the Economic Opportunities of Roma Inclusion* (2012) outlines measures which facilitate the self-employment of Roma and their employment in the public sector:

- 01** Micro-credit should be provided to stimulate Roma self-employment. This method of financial aid for Roma self-employment should be coupled with a comprehensive system of information dissemination campaigns across the Roma community and with the support of the institutions of local government, as well as of the wider social community;

- 02** Roma should be given the chance to build economic prosperity through employment in sustainable jobs in the private sector. The requirements for this measure include the suppression of employer discrimination of Roma and raising public awareness of the competences and skills that Roma possess and raising awareness among Roma of the need for the continuous enhancement of their knowledge and skills (lifelong learning).

Further, the resolution titled *The Social Situation of the Roma and their Improved Access to the Labour Market* of 2009 asks Member States to pay special attention to five elements in the social inclusion of Roma related to employment:

- 01** employment of Roma women should be encouraged by providing them with additional education and by facilitating their transition to the labour market or to self-employment, and by providing them with childcare;
- 02** repeated insistence is necessary regarding the fact that Roma children tend to leave school early, which permanently weakens the educational level of young Roma, their ability to integrate in society and their opportunities on the labour market;
- 03** young Roma women who leave school early often experience a deterioration in their physical health, psychological integrity and increased social isolation, which also affects the health and educational opportunities of their future children. This is why it is essential to continually work on combating the currently widespread multiple discrimination of Roma women (discrimination on the basis of their ethnicity and gender, and exposure to domestic violence and poverty). It is important to strengthen the self-confidence of Roma women by including them in counselling boards and supervisory bodies in the area of employment at the local, regional and national level;
- 04** it is necessary to pay attention to the fact that a great number of Roma who complete secondary or higher education do not return to their original communities after completing education and some are even banned from returning by the members of their own community;
- 05** national, regional and local authorities should cooperate closely with non-governmental organisations, Roma communities and representatives to develop acceptable strategies for the social inclusion of Roma.

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04 *Proposal of Preschool Education and Education Act* (2012) by the Ministry of Science, Education and Sport.

The creation of measures to stimulate Roma employment should be guided by the main objective to allow Roma to find “good” jobs which increase their competences and skills, as described in the document *Empowerment through Employment: Capitalizing on the Economic Opportunities of Roma Inclusion* (2012). This document recommends finding alternative ways for Roma employment, apart from the currently prevailing public works model. Public works are considered “artificial” and short-term employment, as they do not raise the level of competences and skills of Roma and they do not provide foundations for the more sustainable resolution of unemployment, social exclusion and the disadvantaged economic situation of Roma. Therefore, a framework is required which, together with guidelines from European policies for Roma, national policies and the building of a database for the continual monitoring and evaluation of the position of Roma, contain detailed plans with clearly stated participants and a budget. These will in turn enable the more successful implementation of the targeted objectives, build the trust of Roma in Croatian institutions, and increase their social inclusion.

Recommendations in the area of healthcare

The socio-economic inequality of the Roma population compared with the rest of the population represents a continuous challenge for healthcare programmes. Significant disparities which exist in the health status of Roma and the rest of the population are directly linked to their poor living conditions, lack of targeted information campaigns, limited access to quality healthcare and exposure to higher health risks. *An EU Framework for National Roma Integration Strategies up to 2020* (2011) states that it is important to reduce the gap in the health status between Roma and the rest of the population and improve basic indicators such as life expectancy and the infant mortality rate. Access to quality healthcare should be especially provided for women and children, with additional emphasis on preventive campaigns. Where possible, qualified Roma assistants should be involved in the implementation of healthcare campaigns targeting their communities. *Health and the Roma Community: Analysis of the situation in Europe* (2009: 78) speaks of the importance of the age factor in health campaigns by prioritising health campaigns for young Roma. Further, it is necessary to design special campaigns targeting the old population and families with no children because these families have been identified in surveys as the most dissatisfied with their health status and with the quality of healthcare services.

Preventive healthcare campaigns are also emphasised in the *Report on the Implementation of the Joint Inclusion Memorandum (JIM) of the Republic of Croatia in 2011* (2012: 23): “Preventive activities pertaining to the prevention of cardiovascular diseases, breast cancer preventions, cervical cancer prevention, vaccination of infants according to the prescribed vaccination calendar, preventive medical check-ups of persons above the age of 50, are in the scope of work of selected physicians of primary health care in activities of general/family medicine, health protection of women and health protection of pre-school children.”

The National Roma Inclusion Strategy for the period 2013 to 2020 (2012: 63 – 66) mentions seven specific objectives to improve the health of the Roma population and the quality and availability of healthcare:

- 01** “To increase the health insurance coverage of the Roma population”;
- 02** “To increase the availability of healthcare services for the Roma population with an emphasis on the elderly, the disabled and persons with physical impairments and special needs, and mobile Roma groups”;
- 03** “To raise the level of the Roma population’s awareness of responsibility for their own health”;
- 04** “To improve protection of women’s reproductive health, the health of pregnant women and children, and to reduce the pregnancy rate among minors”;
- 05** “To increase the sensitivity of healthcare professionals for work with the Roma population and improve the Roma population’s communication with family practitioners”;
- 06** “To reduce the instance of disease caused by poor sanitary standards and disease for which there are vaccinations”;
- 07** “To reduce the widespread consumption of all addictive substances among the Roma population, with an emphasis on children and adolescents, and to raise awareness of the harm caused by such addictive substances”.

However, in order for these objectives to be achieved, systematic data collection on the health status of Roma is needed and this might be problematic due to the lack of interest at the regional and local level, as well as due to rather rudimentary ways of defining objectives by most counties (The Government of the Republic of Croatia, 2012b: 62).

Recommendations in the area of housing

The main objective of the recommendation to increase the housing quality of the Roma population includes decreasing the differences between the living conditions of the Roma and non-Roma population and facilitating their access to housing facilities equipped with all the necessary infrastructure. The results of surveys conducted by UNDP, the European Commission and the World Bank show that priorities regarding the improvement of the quality of life of the Roma minority can be divided into three main areas:

- 01** Legalisation of Roma housing facilities;
- 02** Provision of basic utilities and access to the necessary infrastructure;
- 03** Increasing housing standards by ensuring multiple rooms in the household (e.g. bathrooms and kitchens).

The *Report on the Implementation of the Joint Inclusion Memorandum (JIM) of the Republic of Croatia in 2011* (2012: 75) mentions the improvement of housing conditions of the Roma population through legalisation, planning and equipping Roma settlements as one of the priorities. *The National Roma Inclusion Strategy from 2013 to 2020* (2012: 82 – 84) describes this area through five special objectives:

- 01** "To ensure physical planning documentation for Roma settlements in order to create the conditions to improve the Roma population's housing";
- 02** "To regulate and equip and also improve the quality of housing in legalised Roma settlements";
- 03** "To resolve property rights issues in Roma settlements";
- 04** "To improve the residential integration of Roma into communities";
- 05** "To secure housing under suitable conditions".

Since available housing funds in Roma households are insufficient, the improvement of the existing housing facilities for some families will probably not be possible or satisfactory. This means that alternative solutions must be found (such as providing housing through social housing projects). Two components need to be included in this process: I) accepting Roma cultural specificities; and II) raising the awareness of Roma men and women of using and maintaining housing facilities and their surroundings.

The area of housing requires an especially integrated approach because an isolated approach to solving the housing needs of the Roma ethnic minority cannot yield the desired effects. The areas of legal and social status are especially important in this sense because Roma often need additional financial assistance to adequately use and maintain housing funds and settle all the arising financial obligations. In other words, together with enhancing housing funds, it is necessary to additionally invest in the improvement of the socio-economic features of the community, especially when it comes to accessing educational, healthcare and other services, as well as ensuring steady sources of income. As suggested in *Housing Conditions of Roma and Travellers in the European Union: A Comparative Report* (2009), to implement these objectives, explicit but not exclusive targeting of the Roma population is necessary whereas actions targeting the Roma population should not be separated from broader initiatives aimed at the population with similar socio-economic features.



