

**STRATEGY OF THE ROMANIAN GOVERNMENT
ON INCLUSION
OF ROMANIAN CITIZENS BELONGING TO THE
ROMA MINORITY
FOR THE PERIOD 2022 TO 2027**

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Index of abbreviations

NAR — National Agency for Roma
BJR — County Roma Office
EC — European Commission
CMR — Ministerial Committee for Roma
CIIMES — Interministerial Monitoring and Evaluation Committee of the Strategy
CNCD — National Council for Combating Discrimination
CNCR-RK — National Centre for Roma Culture — Romano Kher
DRI — Department for Interethnic Relations
GLT — Thematic Working Group
MARD — Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development
MFA — Ministry of Foreign Affairs
MAI — Ministry of Internal Affairs
MAT — Ministry of Entrepreneurship and Tourism
MC — Ministry of Culture
MDLPA — Ministry of Development, Public Works and Administration
MEDU — Ministry of Education
MFTES — Ministry of Family, Youth and Equal Opportunities
MF — Ministry of Finance
MIPE — Ministry of Investment and European Projects
MJ — Ministry of Justice
MMSS — Ministry of Labour and Social Solidarity
MS — Ministry of Health
NGO — Non-Governmental Organisation (s)
NRCP — National Contact Point for Roma
SGG — General Secretariat of the Government
Strategy — Government strategy for the inclusion of Romanian citizens belonging to the Roma minority for the period 2022-2027
VMG — Guaranteed Minimum Income
ATU — Territorial Administrative Unit
EU — European Union
UIS — Social Inclusion Units

1. Introduction

Reaffirming the right of Romanian citizens belonging to the Roma minority to participate actively in the development, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of public policies at county and national level on improving the situation of members of vulnerable communities;

Pursuing compliance with the *10 Common Basic Principles*¹ on Roma Inclusion presented at the meeting of the European Platform for Roma Inclusion in Prague on 24 April 2009 and promoted by the Council of Ministers responsible for social affairs of the EU Member States;

Having regard to the provisions of the European Pillar of Social Rights (adopted by the Council of the EU, the European Parliament and the European Commission in November 2017),²

Taking into account the conclusions of the European Commission's Report on the 2019 European Semester on the assessment of progress in the implementation of structural reforms, the prevention and correction of macroeconomic imbalances, and the results of the in-depth reviews under Regulation (EU) No 1176/2011;³

Taking into account the conclusions⁴ of the European Commission's 2019 Report on the Implementation of National Roma Integration Strategies, which sets out the recommendations that Member States must take into account in the review of Roma policies in future National Roma Inclusion Strategies;

Supporting the conclusions of the High Level Conference on the EU Framework of National Roma Inclusion Strategies, organised in the margins of the Romanian Presidency of the Council of the EU in March 2019, conclusions presented to all Member States in the EPSCO Council⁵;

Taking into account that the Common Provisions Regulation (CPR) on EU Cohesion Policy 2021-2027 establishes a set of thematic and horizontal *enabling conditions*. In contrast to the *ex-ante* conditionalities specific to the Multiannual Financial Framework 2014-2020, the current *enabling conditions* need to be applied and monitored throughout the multiannual financial programming period. They will also depend on whether the European Commission will be able to reimburse the expenditure of the Member State, which falls under the specific objectives and is linked to the respective *enabling conditions*. Thus, one of the conditions is the *existence of a National Roma Integration Strategy* (NRIS). In order to fulfil this, the NRIS must contain or address the following four criteria, monitored by the European Commission:

1. measures aimed at accelerating Roma integration, preventing and eliminating segregation, taking into account the gender dimension and the situation of young Roma, and setting basic values as well as measurable milestones and targets;
2. arrangements for monitoring, evaluation and review of the Roma integration measures.
3. ways to take account of Roma inclusion issues at local and regional level;

¹<https://op.europa.eu/ro/publication-detail/-/publication/7573706d-e7c4-4ece-ae59-2b361246a7b0>

²https://ec.europa.eu/commission/priorities/deeper-and-fairer-economic-and-monetary-union/european-pillar-social-rights/european-pillar-social-rights-20-principles_ro

³https://ec.europa.eu/info/sites/info/files/file_import/2019-european-semester-country-report-România_ro.pdf

⁴ COM (2019) 406 final <https://ec.europa.eu/transparency/regdoc/rep/1/2019/RO/COM-2019-406-F1-RO-MAIN-PART-1.PDF>

⁵Employment, Social Policy, Health and Consumer Affairs Council. <https://data.consilium.europa.eu/doc/document/ST-7003-2019-INIT/en/pdf>

4. arrangements to ensure that the development, implementation, monitoring and review is carried out in close cooperation with Roma civil society and all other relevant stakeholders, including at regional and local level.

In this respect, in fulfilling this *enabling condition*, the Romanian Government has drawn up the *Government's Strategy on the Inclusion of Romanian citizens belonging to the Roma minority for the period 2022-2027* (hereinafter "*the Strategy*"), which must provide a convergent framework for action that is easy to understand and apply, both at national level, through the various relevant sectoral or horizontal policies and at subsidiary level — by integrating or taking over the relevant measures in the regional, county and local development strategies. Furthermore, in order to ensure a resilient implementation of the Strategy, the Romanian Government will review and update it annually or whenever necessary, in line with the *European Framework for Inclusion and Equality Strategies post-2020*, which entered into exercise in 2021, the *Council of the European Union Recommendation on Roma equality, inclusion and participation (2021/C93/01)* and the additional data to be provided by the Population and Housing Recensus to be carried out by the National Institute of Statistics in 2022;

Appreciating the importance of having a partnership framework, the National Agency for Roma (ANR), with active participation and in close cooperation with:

- National Contact Point for Roma, within the MIPE (NRCP)
- The relevant authorities involved at national/county/local level;
- Advisory Council of the National Agency for Roma;
- Civil society;
- Formal and informal leaders of Romanian Roma communities;

initiates this Romanian **Government's strategy for the inclusion of Romanian citizens belonging to the Roma minority for the period 2022-2027**.

2. Vision

This Strategy is a cross-sectoral one, linking to the main documents resulting from the 2020 European Semester⁶, namely the Annual Strategy on Sustainable Development⁷, the Country Report⁸ and Special Recommendations⁹, as well as the National Reform Programme 2019 (NRP)¹⁰ and the Governance Programme, February 2020¹¹.

The strategy meets the requirements of the following programmatic documents:

- The EU Framework of National Roma Inclusion Strategies 2021-2030;
- Recommendation of the Council of the European Union on Roma equality, inclusion and participation (2021/C93/01);
- Council conclusions on the recovery, resilience and sustainability of the cultural and creative sectors (2021/C 209/03);
- The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development (UN)¹²;
- Law No 2/2021 on certain measures to prevent and combat antigypsyism;
- Law No 292/2011 on social assistance, as amended;

⁶ <http://www.mae.ro/node/47936>

⁷ http://www.mae.ro/sites/default/files/file/anul_2020/pdf_2020/asgs_2020_ro.pdf

⁸ https://ec.europa.eu/info/sites/info/files/file_import/2019-european-semester-country-report-romania_ro.pdf

⁹ <http://www.mae.ro/node/48037>

¹⁰ https://ec.europa.eu/info/sites/info/files/2019-european-semester-national-reform-programme-romania_ro.pdf

¹¹ https://cmedia.romaniatv.net/other/202002/program-guvernare-pnl-2020_76339500.pdf

¹² <https://www.mae.ro/node/35919>

- Law No 282/2007 for the ratification of the European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages, adopted in Strasbourg on 5 November 1992;
- Law No 24/2000 on legislative technical rules for drawing up legislative acts, republished, as amended;
- Government Ordinance No 137/2000, republished in 2007, on the prevention and sanctioning of all forms of discrimination;
- Government Decision No 523/2016 amending and supplementing the Regulation on the procedures for drawing up, monitoring and evaluating public policies at central level, approved by Government Decision No 775/2005;
- Government Decision No 539/2021 approving the National Strategy for preventing and combating antisemitism, xenophobia, radicalisation and hate speech for the period 2021-2023;
- National Strategy for Sustainable Development (2013-2020-2030);
- National Employment Strategy 2021-2027 and Action Plan 2021-2027, approved by Government Decision No 558/2021;
- The National Strategy for Social Inclusion and Reduction of Poverty 2022-2027 and its accompanying Action Plan;
- The Institutional Strategic Plan 2018-2021 for the Ministry of Labour and Social Justice¹³;
- Institutional Strategic Plan 2018-2021 for the Ministry of National Education¹⁴.

This Strategy also takes into account the results achieved through the implementation of the following national strategies:

- The Strategy for Social Inclusion and Poverty Reduction 2015-2020, approved by Government Decision No 383/2015 and its accompanying Action Plan;
- National Employment Strategy 2014-2020;
- The vocational education and training strategy in Romania for the period 2016-2020;
- Strategy on reducing early school leaving 2014-2020;
- National Lifelong Learning Strategy 2015-2020;
- National Strategy for the Protection and Promotion of the Rights of the Child.

The Strategy is based on the 10 *Common Basic Principles on Roma Inclusion*, as set out by Roma civil society and promoted by the European Union institutions, namely:

1. **Constructive, pragmatic and non-discriminatory** policies — The strategy aims to promote sectoral and horizontal public policies based on the inclusive approach of Romanian citizens belonging to the Roma minority. Thus, by means of non-discriminatory measures geared towards respect for human dignity, public policies must lead to a constructive and sustainable framework for reducing the vulnerability of the target group;
2. Designing **policies and programmes for Roma inclusion on the basis of robust track records** — the design of the Strategy sought as much as possible to use realistic data collected, processed and analysed on the basis of appropriate methodologies specific to the monitoring and evaluation of public policies. The implementation of the Strategy will be based on the development and application of a robust, transparent and participatory monitoring and

¹³ Institutional Strategic Plan 2018-2021 for the Ministry of Labour and Social Justice (updated 2018) -

http://www.mmuncii.ro/j33/images/Documente/MMJS/Minister/11_09_2018_PSI_actualizat2018_aprobat.pdf

¹⁴ Institutional Strategic Plan 2018-2021 for the Ministry of National Education - <https://sgg.gov.ro/new/wp-content/uploads/2018/09/PSI-MEN-RO-30-aug.-2018.pdf>

evaluation mechanism. The implementation of this mechanism will lead to a strengthening of the resilience dimension of the strategy through the review of Roma inclusion measures;

3. **Explicit but not exclusive approach** — The strategy aims to allocate resources to members of the Roma community most in need of support to become active citizens, net contributors to the socio-economic and cultural development of Romania and the European Union. In this respect, the objectives and measures envisaged are ordered according to the current intervention priorities specific to Roma communities. However, the Strategy must not be interpreted as a single, exclusive strategy, but rather is intended to create a convergent framework for action at national, regional and local level. Thus, the measures provided for in the Strategy are complementary to the other sectoral or horizontal strategies by establishing guidelines for those at subsidiary level (county, local);
4. **Mainstreaming** — The Strategy is a commitment of the Government, designed and applicable to areas of sectoral responsibility in a horizontal and complementary manner, ensuring the involvement of stakeholders in the decision-making process and in the implementation of the measures contained in the Strategy;
5. **Use of European Union instruments** — In the development of applicant guides and in the implementation of operational programmes, the MIPE will highlight interventions dedicated to Roma communities and vulnerable Roma people in interventions targeting vulnerable people, in accordance with the provisions of the regulations governing European funds and in line with the specific nature and purpose of each call for funding.
6. **Involvement of regional and local authorities** — The implementation of the Strategy will aim to implement the subsidiarity principle. This will be done according to the division of specific competences between central and local public institutions and authorities and will aim to ensure that decisions are taken as closely as possible to the citizen. The aim will also be to develop objectives and measures for Roma inclusion in regional, county and local development strategies;
7. **Civil society involvement** — in order to achieve the objectives of the strategy, central, county and local authorities will involve civil society represented at national and local level, as well as other public and/or private partners. The aim will be to ensure both a high level of transparency and the stimulation/motivation of initiatives to strengthen rapid and complementary emergency response capacities;
8. **Active participation of Roma** — the design, implementation, monitoring, evaluation and review of public policies and programmes affecting Roma are carried out with the participation of representatives of Roma communities so as to respect the principle of “*nothing for Roma, no Roma participation*”;
9. **Intercultural approach** — The strategy aims to promote intercultural education, thereby encouraging knowledge of the specificity of Roma culture and fostering interaction between majority and Roma culture, as well as between the cultures of other minorities in Romania and that of the Roma minority;
10. **Gender Awareness** - The strategy emphasises that there is a central role for women in the Roma minority, by encouraging and ensuring the participation of Roma women and girls in higher education and qualifications, as well as improving their employment rate, in occupations that match their aspirations,

while enabling their direct involvement in children's education and other activities that improve the well-being of families, family cohesion and the development of future generations.

The vision underpinning the Strategy focuses on putting in place an approach geared towards achieving sustainable results over time on the inclusion of Romanian citizens belonging to the Roma minority, through the targeted, resilient adjustment of support, guidance and motivation measures.

Thus, the vision of this strategy pursues the following main strategic directions:

- 1) **Strengthening the active citizenship dimension** of the group of Romanian citizens belonging to the Roma minority, with a focus on those in a vulnerable situation, taking into account the diversity and specificities of the diversity of Roma neams, in order to harness their potential in terms of contributing to the public, social, economic and cultural life of the country;
- 2) **Identifying the causes of vulnerabilities** so that interventions are adequate, effective, multidisciplinary, integrated and complementary;
- 3) **Linking the measures and priorities of the Strategy to the measures proposed to achieve the specific objectives in all Sectoral Strategies, i.e. existing National Programmes**, or proposing new national programmes with specific focus, where appropriate, avoiding duplication of measures and double regulation;
- 4) **Empowering local public administration authorities** to develop and implement, in cooperation with devolved and decentralised institutions, separate measures for the social inclusion of Roma in local development strategies.
- 5) **European funds are seen as complementary/additional resources** to support national, county and local efforts. For relevant interventions on inclusion, education and employment, the corresponding specific objective "(j) promote the socio-economic integration of marginalised communities such as the Roma", with the exception of HOPs, where interventions are targeted at the whole population, will be selected. For the Priorities for which the above objective will be selected, the inclusion as a target group of Roma in a vulnerable situation from the preparation phase of the Operational Programmes will be carried out in order to keep open the possibility for the MIPE, in the development of the applicant's guides and in the implementation of the operational programmes, to highlight interventions dedicated to the inclusion of Roma communities, in accordance with the provisions of the regulations governing the European Funds and in line with the specific nature and purpose of each call for funding, by awarding an additional score to applications for funding that include the Roma population in the target group, as well as making the eligibility of applications conditional on the inclusion of the target group Roma population, for the relevant priorities.

This *strategic vision* puts **the vulnerable beneficiary, as a citizen, at the heart of the local authorities' concerns**. Thus, measures to develop and promote social inclusion for any Romanian citizen, including those belonging to the Roma minority, must be decided and implemented at local level, which is legally competent to identify and solve community problems, in accordance with the principles of subsidiarity and decentralisation.

For the period 2022-2027, the Romanian Government takes on the specific indicators for Romanian citizens belonging to the Roma minority, introduced and linked to the existing sectoral strategies and in the National Programmes already funded, thus ensuring that the supported development measures will also lead to the development of human resources within the Roma minority and thus to improve their quality of life. This Strategy, as an “umbrella” strategy, aims to ensure that the institutions responsible for implementing measures address the funding of inclusion policy measures, mainly through existing or forthcoming national programmes, as part of sectoral strategies and programmes to be supplemented by the complementary allocation of European funds, where State funding is insufficient.

Strategies developed at local level need to be supported financially. Given the complexity of the measures in the county/local action plans, County Councils and Local Councils should be financially involved in the implementation of the local action plans, by providing the financial resources necessary to implement concrete actions, as well as by ensuring co-financing of projects attracted and carried out with EU financial support or other national/international financial support mechanisms.

The Strategy also aims to strengthen and adapt the legal framework in the field of protection of the rights of citizens belonging to national minorities to the current situation and needs of the Roma minority by: promoting conditions enabling people belonging to the Roma to maintain and develop their culture, as well as to preserve the essential elements of their identity, namely language, traditions and cultural heritage; guaranteeing respect for the right of everyone belonging to the Roma to fundamental freedoms — freedom of peaceful assembly and freedom of association, freedom of expression, freedom of thought, conscience and religion or belief; facilitating access to the media for Roma people in order to promote cultural acceptance and pluralism; guaranteeing the right of everyone of Roma to freely use their mother tongue, both in private and in public.

3. Existing priorities, policies and legal framework.

The Romanian Government’s strategy for the inclusion of Romanian citizens belonging to the Roma minority for the period 2015-2020¹⁵, adopted by Government Decision No 18/2015, was based on the 2013 Recommendation of the Council of the EU on effective measures for Roma inclusion in the Member States, the document also setting out the directions for achieving the national social objectives of the Europe 2020 strategy, included in the National Reform Programme.

The 2015-2020 Strategy also took into account the EU recommendations on the inclusion of Romanian citizens belonging to the Roma minority contained in the EU Framework for National Strategies for Roma Inclusion up to 2020 concerning the Multiannual Financial Framework 2014-2020.

At the same time, the 2015-2020 Strategy was one of the 29 thematic *ex-ante* conditionalities under the Partnership Agreement with the European Commission for accessing the Structural and Investment (ESI) Funds.

The EU framework of National Roma Integration Strategies up¹⁶ to 2020 was the most ambitious EU initiative on the Roma minority. In this context, it should have been a key element in reforming cohesion policy, encouraging Member States to use available European funding to address the needs of Roma communities and raising awareness of national policies to meet the real needs of such disadvantaged communities.

¹⁵ Available at <http://legislatie.just.ro/Public/DetaliuDocument/164836>

¹⁶ <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/PDF/?uri=CELEX:52011DC0173&from=en>

4. Context analysis and problem definition

4.1 Analysis of the context

In the case of Romania, the evaluation reports drawn up both by representatives of civil society and by various international bodies and institutions show that the Romanian Government's strategy for the inclusion of Romanian citizens belonging to the Roma minority for the period 2015-2020 has only partially achieved its objectives. As regards Romania, at the level of 2018, the EU-MIDIS report¹⁷ states that:

- a. Romania was among the countries where 80 % of Roma lived below the at-risk-of-poverty threshold;
- b. one in three Roma lived in a dwelling without running water;
- c. one in 10 lived in a dwelling without electricity;
- d. one in four Roma and one in three Roma children lived in a household where a family member went to picking up at least once in the last month.

In addition, comparative data on monetary poverty reveal the persistence of disparities and places a good proportion of the Roma population at a significant distance from the national average.

The 2018 IRES study also¹⁸ showed that 52 % of Roma had an income below RON 1500, while only 24 % of the majority population declared to be below this threshold and only 15 % of Roma had an income above RON 2000, compared to 52 % of the majority population above this threshold. Compared to 2012, the gaps, while decreasing significantly in relation to lower and medium income tranches, increase significantly for higher income tranches. Although there is a noticeable increase — from 0 % to 7 % — in the share of Roma with income above RON 2000, the gap increases from 4 percentage points to 25. Thus, although the situation of Roma is somewhat improving, the income gap between the poor Roma population remains and is even widening in relation to both the wealthy and the majority population.

According to the FRA Fundamental Rights Report 2019¹⁹, Roma continue to face ethnically discrimination in access to education, employment, healthcare and housing. Cases of discrimination and hate crimes continued to be reported in 2018, confirming that anti-Roma hatred remains an important obstacle to their inclusion. According to FRA data, the social and economic situation of Roma across the EU has changed little, undermining national and EU efforts to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), in particular Goal 10 on reducing inequalities within countries and, more specifically, Target 10.3 on ensuring equal opportunities and reducing inequality of results.

4.1.1 Housing

ECRI notes in the 2019 Report on Romania that²⁰the housing situation for Roma remains a worrying issue: a significant proportion of the Roma population lived without running water (68 %) and without a bathroom or toilet inside their dwelling (79 %).

¹⁷ Second European Union Minorities and Discrimination Survey, October 2018, https://ec.europa.eu/knowledge4policy/dataset/ds00141_en

¹⁸ *Agency together and UNICEF — IRES study, 2018*

¹⁹ FRA Fundamental Rights Report 2019, https://fra.europa.eu/sites/default/files/fra_uploads/fra-2019-fundamental-rights-report-2019-opinions_ro.pdf

²⁰ ECRI Report on Romania — June 2019, <https://rm.coe.int/fifth-report-on-România-Românian-translation-/168094c9e7>

Moreover, the Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament and the Council No 406/2019²¹ stresses that housing policy has the least examples of promising approaches common to several countries. A long-term, integrated and comprehensive approach should therefore be a priority. This must include: complementing housing provision with accompanying support combining elements of employment, education, health and community development, and integrating interventions into national policies and legislation relating to land and social housing. According to the 2019 IRES survey²², Roma housing in Romania is far behind national housing standards and well below the average of all statistical indicators. As follows: 58 % of Roma report having personal housing with deeds, compared to 87 % for Romanians, although the average number of children is 3 times higher than for the majority population, 61 % of Roma live in 1-2 chambers, compared with 43 % for the majority population. 50 % of the majority population have 3-4 chambers, while for Roma the share is only 34 %.

On the other hand, according to Eurostat definitions, the share of Roma living in neighbourhoods where all or most of their neighbours are Roma is 67 %. The proportion of Roma families living in unhealthy households (with water-draining roofs, damp walls or rot into window frames or floors) is 32 % and the proportion of those who report pollution, dirt or other environmental problems is 25 %. More than 50 % live in overcrowded houses, 16.5 % live in buildings considered unsafe for habitation and 30.3 % in buildings that are in a state of visible deterioration²³.

The share of Roma living in overcrowded households is 78 %, with 45 % of Roma living in spaces below 50 m², compared to only 29 % of the majority population. What is worrying is that many of the poorest families find themselves in housing and even informal settlements²⁴, at any time likely to become subjects of forced eviction.

The spatial segregation of Roma occurs particularly in small, marginal communities: more than 52 % of communities are inhabited by less than 150 people; 50 % of them are located to the edge of the municipalities. There are 39 % Roma communities with primary school at a distance of more than 15 minutes walking and about 6.031 children live more than 30 minutes walking distance from school, according to Eurostat data²⁵.

Human rights organisations also mention that Roma living longer in informal settlements do not have stable housing security. Thus, they live in danger of being forcibly evicted by the authorities, often to remote areas. ECRI recommends that central public administration authorities issue more explicit guidelines for prefectural offices in order to review the legality of eviction orders issued by local public administration authorities.

Demolitions of informal settlements are not treated by law as evictions, so that previous judicial review is impossible and legal guarantees applicable to other evictions are ignored. As a result, in the event of forced eviction, provision is not always made for adequate alternative housing²⁶. It should be borne in mind that the

²¹ Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament and the Council No 406 of 5.02.2019 — Report on the implementation of national Roma integration strategies — 2019 <https://ec.europa.eu/transparency/regdoc/rep/1/2019/RO/COM-2019-406-F1-RO-MAIN-PART-1.PDF>

²² Study carried out by the Joint Community *Development* Agency and UNICEF by contracting IRES, 2019

²³ Civil society report monitoring the implementation of the National Roma Integration Strategy in Romania focusing on structural and horizontal preconditions for the successful implementation of the strategy <https://op.europa.eu/ro/publication-detail/-/publication/3106a14d-b1ac-11e9-9d01-01aa75ed71a1/language-ro/format-PDF/source-116311879>

²⁴ Study carried out by the Joint Community *Development* Agency and UNICEF by contracting IRES, 2019

²⁵ Idem 4

²⁶ Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament and the Council No 406 of 5.02.2019 — Report on the implementation of national Roma integration strategies — 2019 <https://ec.europa.eu/transparency/regdoc/rep/1/2019/RO/COM-2019-406-F1-RO-MAIN-PART-1.PDF>

types of intervention aimed at increasing the quality of life and reducing the risks faced by the population living in informal settlements, as well as the population of the administrative territorial units in which such settlements exist, in accordance with Order No 3494 of 27 July 2020 amending and supplementing the implementing rules for Law No 350/2021 on town and country planning and for drawing up and updating urban planning documents, approved by Order No 233/2016 of the Deputy Prime Minister, the Minister for Regional Development and Public Administration.

At present, there is no dimension to evictions that would allow clear proposals for intervention and public policy other than those required in crisis situations. This requires strong multi-stakeholder partnerships and a cross-sectoral, cross-sectoral and integrated approach to eliminate multiple discrimination and multi-dimensional exclusion, in line with the recommendations of the European Commission²⁷.

4.1.2 Infrastructure

According to the Fundamental Rights²⁸ Report 2018 of the European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights (FRA), among interviewees in Romania, 42 % of Roma and 12 % of non-Roma stated that they did not have access to electricity, running water or sewage. The need for electricity, water and sanitation remains unmet for 84 % of Roma interviewed in Romania, compared to 52 % of non-Roma people in the vicinity²⁹.

The proportion of dwellings connected to running water, gas, sewage, hot water, district heating is double for the majority of the Roma population. The access road close to the house is asphalted for 90 % of the majority population, while for Roma it is only 68 %. Only 24 % of Roma have a tremendous road near the house or out of the ground.

In the context of the SARS-COV-2 pandemic, the analysis³⁰ carried out by the NAR during the state of emergency revealed the vital recommendation that for Roma compact communities that do not have access to a tap/drinking water supply, the development of the local water and sanitation network should be prioritised by the competent local authorities and those managing the thematic funds. The involvement of local authorities in the strategic planning phase is very important. Based on the specific needs of Roma, local authorities have limited capacity to take action to draw up local action plans to leverage the financial resources needed for Community-wide infrastructure provision investments (water supply, electricity, roads). In the same context, a World Bank analysis carried out for NARs in the course of 2020 shows that in Romania almost half of the population lives in overcrowded conditions, with a much higher incidence in Roma communities. Overcrowding makes it all the more difficult to ensure social distancing and compliance with quarantine measures in their households in the context of the SARS-COV-2 pandemic.

This situation in rural areas and informal settlements in urban areas is strongly correlated with poor access to running water, sanitation and sanitation: 68 % of

²⁷ Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament and the Council No 406 of 5.02.2019 — Report on the implementation of national Roma integration strategies — 2019 <https://ec.europa.eu/transparency/regdoc/rep/1/2019/RO/COM-2019-406-F1-RO-MAIN-PART-1.PDF>

²⁸ European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights https://fra.europa.eu/sites/default/files/fra_uploads/fra-2018-fundamental-rights-report-2018-opinions_ro.pdf

²⁹ Idem

³⁰ Report of the National Agency for Roma on the need for intervention by the competent authorities for the benefit of members of vulnerable communities with Roma in the context of the implementation of measures to prevent the spread of the COVID-19 virus (16.04.2020) http://anr.gov.ro/images/Site2020/2020.05.25/Adresa-670_16.04.2020.pdf

Roma in Romania e.g. live in households without tap water inside the home and 78 % without toilets, showers or bathrooms inside the home.

4.1.3 — Education

In the field of education, there are still major discrepancies between Roma and majority children in terms of school participation, school performance and early school leaving, as well as regarding differential treatment, both in terms of teaching quality and discrimination and segregation.

Among the main obstacles identified by the Council of the European Union in respect of the right to education³¹ are school segregation, early school leaving and low participation of Roma children in early childhood education.

Most research still reveals the gap between Roma and the majority population by educational levels, as well as the low access of Roma children to early education compared to those in the majority population. Even if affirmative measures in the field of education (distinct places for Roma in high school and university), or second chance literacy programmes have been implemented for those who have exceeded the school class age by at least 4 years, the gap between Roma and the majority population in terms of educational accumulation can still be observed. The latest census in Romania (2011) indicated that the share of ethnic Romanians who did not complete any school was 1 % while the share of ethnic Roma was 14 %. Of the total number of people considered illiterate, 229.721, almost 30 % belong to the Roma minority (67.480). By contrast, while the share of the majority population with tertiary education was 15 %, the share of ethnic Roma with tertiary education was below 1 %.

More recent research shows that two thirds of Roma have either not completed any class or have completed the highest secondary education five times higher than that of the majority population³². The gap is also maintained in the case of completed upper secondary education, with the proportion of the majority population who completed secondary education three times higher than that of the Roma³³. The same study indicates that half of Roma people with no more than 8 completed classes either did not know to write or had great difficulties in writing.

Romania has not made progress in recent years in facilitating access to early education for Roma children. There has also been no progress in compulsory education, even though the gap between Roma and the majority population is smaller than for early childhood education. The share of Roma children attending compulsory education is 78 % (compared to 95 % for Romanian children in the neighbourhood). The gap is widening again for access to upper secondary education, where less than a quarter of Roma pupils are found (22 %), compared to the majority population where the share rises to 80 %³⁴.

4.1.4 Occupancy

Roma still face low access to the labour market. The EU-MIDIS II report³⁵ (2016) finds that only one in four Roma aged 16 and over “employed” or “self-employed” at

³¹ Recommendation of the Council of the European Union of 2013 and Article 28 of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child, also ratified by Romania

³² IRES (2018). Comparative study of the needs of Roma communities in the context of setting strategic intervention priorities for their social inclusion. Cluj-Napoca: IRES

³³ Idem

³⁴ EU-MIDIS II. (2016). Second European Union Minorities and Discrimination Survey. Roma — selected results. Luxembourg: European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights

³⁵ EU-MIDIS II collected by survey information about 33.785 Roma people living in the respondents' households.

the time of the survey. Roma women reported much lower employment rates than Roma men — 16 % compared with 34 %.

Overall, the survey shows that paid employment rates for Roma aged 20-64 are 43 %, which is well below the EU average of 70 % in 2015. The situation of young people is much worse: on average, 63 % of Roma aged 16-24 were neither in employment nor in education or training at the time of the survey, compared to an EU average of 12 % for the same age group. For this age group, the results also show a considerable gender gap, with 72 % of young Roma women not in employment, education or training, compared with 55 % of young Roma men.

The civil society report monitoring the implementation of the National Roma Integration Strategy in Romania, Assessment of progress in key areas of the strategy, carried out in 2018, presenting a comparative analysis for the period 2012-2018, reveals interesting developments in terms of the employment situation of Roma, in dynamic terms, but also in comparison with the situation of majority households, with a view to significantly increasing the share of employment in Roma households.

SGV is identified as a source of income in 1 % of households in the majority sample (up by 1 percentage points compared to 2012) and in 10 % of households in the Roma sample (here the increase is 8 percent).

In the case of own-account non-agricultural activities, the share of the income economy is increasing and the Romanian-Romanian-Romanian-Romania-difference is increasing significantly (from 3 to 5 percentage points).

Work abroad is identified as a significantly higher source of income in 2018 compared to 2012, with the increase from 1 to 2 % in the overall sample and from 3 to 5 % in the Roma sample. This is correlated with the share of households with out-migration — this share is 29 % for the Roma sample, compared to 18 % in the majority population sample.

For households with children whose parents are left for work abroad, this is 10 % for Roma and only 4 % for the general population sample. Even if there is some improvement in the employment situation of Roma people, in certain components, the share of occasional income sources increases in the two types of sample mentioned above and increases the share of jobless households and those in receipt of social support in the case of Roma households. It also significantly increases the importance of money received from abroad in the economy of sources of income of Roma households.

The share of Roma among the total working-age population is increasing, so Roma participation in the labour market is key to supporting the related increasing national costs, in particular those on pensions and health. This deficient situation represents an economic cost for society as a whole, through wasting precious human capital and loss of labour productivity. At the level of Romania, the World Bank estimates that EUR 887 million is lost each year as a result of the lack of opportunities to demonstrate the economic potential that the Roma population can provide, namely by insufficiently harnessing productivity and thus the associated tax contributions.

At present, the socio-economic dimension of Roma integration into the labour market is not addressed either in line with the specific needs of Roma in social communities and typologies³⁶, but also in relation to the skills and qualifications requirements required by the labour market.

In poor communities, not only the population is chronically poor, but also the economic potential — economic operators and means of production — of the

³⁶ Civil society report monitoring the implementation of the National Roma Integration Strategy in Romania, 2019

community and community infrastructure are weak. Around 60 % of all rural Roma communities are poor, compared to urban Roma communities, which have a relatively more educated but still low skilled workforce.³⁷

The combination of characteristics associated with employment risks leads to a visible decline in employment opportunities. Young Roma in rural areas and Roma women have a significantly lower chance of being employed in the formal economy.³⁸

4.1.5 Health

While health is an important pillar of Roma inclusion in all public policy documents, the studies and research analysed further highlight that Roma have difficulties accessing basic, preventive and curative, integrated and quality health services. Recent data show that a gap in the indicators of morbidity and mortality among Roma remains with the majority population in Romania.

The county progress reports by the BJR highlight that the main activities carried out in Roma communities are vaccination campaigns, health education campaigns to prevent disease, and other activities carried out by the PHD in accordance with the national health programmes managed by the Ministry of Health.

According to the IRES report (2018)³⁹, there are visible differences between the Roma and the majority population in terms of health status and access to health services:

- a. Lack of annual medical examination. If 71 % of the majority population carry out their annual health check, this is the case for only 39 % of Roma.
- b. Enrolment with the family doctor. Compared to 2012, there is a slight increase in the number of persons enrolled with the family doctor in 2018 for both samples, Roma and the majority population.
- c. The most common diseases mentioned as being present in the family are dental, cardiovascular, digestive and ophthalmic diseases. There is no major differentiation between Roma and the majority population.
- d. Access to health services among Roma. The number of Roma claiming not to have received specialist hospital care has decreased from 21 % in 2012 to 12 % in 2018.
- e. Large differences in the use of contraception. There are large differences (10 %) between the majority population and Roma in the use of contraceptive measures. In addition, 16 % of Roma women prefer to have abortion, while for the majority it is 1 %. There are no major changes since 2012.
- f. Medical surveillance during pregnancy is lower than in the majority population. 18 % of Roma women say they have never been a doctor during their pregnancy.

According to the Report Summary evaluation of the "First Priority: No invisible children "(ANPDCA, UNICEF Romania, 2017) when it⁴⁰ comes to the vaccination of children aged 1-5, in 2015, the proportion of Roma children not vaccinated was three times higher than that of the majority unvaccinated children, and the situation has not improved significantly.

With regard to the diseases faced by Roma citizens, the analysis carried out by the NAR revealed that the competent authorities do not collect ethnic data per type of disease. However, discussions with practitioners show that there are no significant

³⁷ ID 7

³⁸ Civil society report monitoring the implementation of the National Roma Integration Strategy in Romania (2019)

³⁹ IRES, 2018, Comparative study of the needs of Roma communities in the context of setting strategic intervention priorities for their social inclusion

⁴⁰ <https://www.unicef.org/romania/ro/rapoarte/evaluarea-sumativă-modelului-„prima-prioritate-niciun-copil-«invizibil»>

differences between Roma and the majority population on the incidence of illness. However, given that health status is also conditioned by socio-economic and cultural characteristics, practitioners recommend the implementation of health education campaigns in the field of disease prevention, adapted to the educational level and cultural/traditional system of members of communities with Roma.

Representatives of civil society report that the phenomenon of discrimination is present in the personal medical-patient relationship and takes various forms, namely: direct discrimination, when Roma are explicitly denied by health professionals, even if they fulfil all the conditions for receiving healthcare, but also indirect discrimination, manifested in the segregation of patients in hospital settings, based on ethnic and social status⁴¹.

4.1.6 Identity, traditions and cultural heritage of the Roma minority. Reconciliation with the past and recognition of Roma slavery, Holocaust and assimilation

4.1.6.1 Identity, traditions and cultural heritage of the Roma minority

After 1990, Roma were recognised as a national minority by the Romanian state, but they do not fully enjoy the cultural rights deriving from this status, against the background of stigmatisation of ethnicity and persistence of racism in society and social exclusion, being approached as a socially vulnerable or disadvantaged social group.

As a historical minority in Romania, the Roma have been living with the majority population for about five centuries, according to documentary evidence. However, the social distance between Roma and the majority population continues to persist, with stereotypes and prejudices remaining the main vectors describing Roma in the majority mindset. This is due to the lack of awareness and recognition of Roma history and culture in society as a whole, but especially in the education system, which continues to suffer from a lack of consistent and sufficient information in the compulsory curricula for all pupils and the lack of a school culture conducive to interculturality.

According to official data, Roman language is the mother tongue for 244.503 of the Roma re-enrolled in 2011. According to these data, Roman language is the mother tongue for 40 % of Roma living in Romania. In 2019, the IRES study shows that, of the national representative sample, 59 % of the responding Roma population speak Romanian, 31 % Romanian and around 10 % speak other languages such as Hungarian, Turkish, etc.

Studies and research mention that many Roma have a low ethnic self-esteem caused by internalised social stigma, as well as forced assimilation processes experienced by members of Roma communities in Romania. The scars of an exclusion history have had decisive effects in the Roma collective mentor. Depriving the individual of rights and access to social development resources leads to the loss of ethnic dignity and the establishment of self-culpability and ethnic self-shame. The ethnic self-esteem of Roma can be regained by expanding the learning of Roman language, history and culture in school, including, where the conditions allow them: Romanian-speaking Roma communities, the choice of Roma parents to study their mother tongue, the existence or assignment of qualified Roma teachers, the

⁴¹ idem

existence or publication of school textbooks in Romani, etc. through bilingual or monolingual Roman education.

The lack of cultural representational institutions — essential for the promotion of Roma culture — is another problem that hinders the affirmation and reconstruction of Roma identity.

One solution to regain Roma ethnic dignity would be the institutional reconstruction of identity by setting up viable and credible identity training and representation institutions (e.g.: Roman or Roman language, history and culture schools, cultural centres, community centres, museums, publishing houses, libraries, theatres, etc.). The preservation, development and promotion of Roma ethnic identity is currently threatened by the lack of an institutional framework to preserve ethnic cultural identity: the lack of a National Museum of Roma Culture and History, a State Rom Theatre, a Roma philharmony, a research institute on Roma history and culture.

It is also necessary to continue to preserve, research, develop and promote Roma cultural heritage and identity through Roma cultural production financed by central and local public institutions.

Thus, the Strategy aims to strengthen and adapt the legal framework in the field of protection of the rights of citizens belonging to national minorities to the current situation and needs of the Roma minority by: promoting conditions enabling people of Roma ethnicity to maintain and develop their culture⁴², as well as to preserve the essential elements of Roma identity, namely language, traditions and cultural heritage; guaranteeing respect for the right of everyone belonging to the Roma to fundamental freedoms — freedom of peaceful assembly and freedom of association, freedom of expression and freedom of thought, conscience and religion; appropriate measures to facilitate Roma access to the media, promote acceptance and foster cultural pluralism; guaranteeing the right of any person belonging to the Roma to freely use the Roman language in private or in public, orally and in writing.

4.1.6.2 Reconciliation with the past and recognition of slavery, Holocaust and Roma assimilation

The history of Roma in Romania is marked by racial exclusion and discrimination, starting from the five centuries of slavery, continuing with the genocide during the Holocaust, followed by the policy of forced assimilation during the Communist regime. The lack of knowledge in society, at all levels and in all age groups, of the historical facts that have led to generational trauma, human tragedies and social stigma, which are still having negative effects for Roma people in Romania, by perpetuating stereotypes and prejudices about the Roma minority, places Romania among the countries which still have a serious need to reconcile with and recognise the institution of slavery, the Holocaust and the assimilation of Roma during the Communist regime.

There is a need for an active debate and promotion in society and education in Romania on the need to know about: (I) Holocaust who suffered Jews and Roma during World War II, (ii) the time of Roma slavery and the current social implications, (iii) the policy of forced assimilation of Roma during the Communist regime.

These historical episodes ignored in the education system and not sufficiently known or even denied in society are causing social stigma, the perpetuation of hate speech

⁴² Council conclusions on the recovery, resilience and sustainability of the cultural and creative sectors (2021/C 209/03) inviting Member States to promote cultural awareness in societies by fostering active cultural participation and equal access to culture for all social groups, including the most marginalised and vulnerable (https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/RO/TXT/PDF/?uri=OJ:JOC_2021_209_R_0003&from=EN)

and hate crime by Roma minorities, regardless of their socio-educational status. In order to address these issues of public debate, it is necessary to:

- a. reviewing curricula and university courses in which these transgenerational historical trauma are researched, studied and taught to the new generation,
- b. continuous training of specialised teachers,
- c. the establishment and funding from the state budget of a scholarship system for Roma researchers and the Roma minority in areas such as history, archival and literary historical research, interdisciplinary social sciences, psycho-social sciences, education science, etc. to deepen these historical episodes and inform future public policies,
- d. complementing any anti-discrimination campaigns with actions, projects, programmes that bring to the public the three types of persecution of Roma in the Romanian area — slavery, Holocaust, cultural assimilation — with a wide range of actions such as historical research, thematic cultural actions, organising public debates among young people, thematic school camps, plastic artists camps, dramaturgy, visual arts, documentaries, scholarships.
- e. last but not least, actions are essential to raise awareness among the personalities among the Roma minority in Romania and beyond, in order to help increase the self-esteem of the Roma and raise awareness among the majority of the contribution of Roma, like the other recognised national minorities, to the Romanian and universal cultural heritage.

It is also necessary to ensure synergy with complementary measures and strategies, such as the Strategy for combating anti-Semitism, xenophobia, radicalisation and hate speech.

4.1.7 Fighting discrimination and anti-Gypsyism

With regard to the protection of the rights of the Roma, Romanian anti-discrimination legislation is sufficiently covered and in line with *Council Directive 2000/43/EC of 29 June 2000 implementing the principle of equal treatment between persons irrespective of racial or ethnic origin*, but does not reach virtually all areas of public and private life; in recent years there has been an increase in cases of discrimination registered with the National Council for Combating Discrimination (CNCD), or dealt with by the courts, showing an increase in knowledge or trust in national anti-discrimination protection mechanisms. From the analysis carried out by the NAR, major challenges persist in terms of the general public's awareness of the legislation protecting them in cases of discrimination and their rights, the exercise of their rights, the implementation of the law by law enforcement officers, in particular in related cases of discrimination, hate speech or hate crime, and the lack of specialised training of enforcement officers; or the lack of specific protocols, which result in a lack of investigation or disregard in the course of the investigation of issues of multiple or intersectional discrimination against some victims, for example ethnicity in relation to age, gender, disability, sexual orientation and gender identity or expression, age, etc. reasons which, according to the law, constitute aggravating circumstances.

In Romania and in the European area, anti-Roma attitudes are visible in the public space, in all spheres of everyday life, as also highlighted by recent civil society reports, which recommend that Romania and the other Member States take

measures to address multiple/intersectional discrimination and increase the dissuasiveness of sections applied in cases of discrimination, develop national training programmes to prevent and combat discrimination for representatives of public institutions and actively combat rewarding racism in existing anti-Roma institutions and attitudes in society. These objectives can be achieved through the cultivation, at all levels of public administration — local, county, central — of a culture of non-discrimination, in favour of equality, acceptance of difference and respect for diversity.

The lack of active fight against antigypsyism is reported by civil society monitoring the implementation of anti-discrimination legislation. This shows that combating anti-Gypsyism through existing anti-discrimination legislation is not sufficient and that all four sectoral areas of the Strategy — education, employment, housing and health — need to be accompanied by relevant measures addressing and making explicit reference to anti-Gypsyism. Furthermore, they recommend the creation of tools to combat racism and xenophobia through the means of criminal legislation, which would ensure that open discrimination, hate speech and hate crimes against Roma are no longer occurring; in this respect, *Council Framework Decision 2008/913/JAI of 28 November 2008 on combating certain forms and expressions of racism and xenophobia by means of criminal law* has been incorporated into Romanian law. Such issues are also supported and reported by the European Commission, which calls on EU Member States in their review of Roma inclusion measures to address these major challenges, in particular cross-sectoral, cross-sectoral and integrated approaches to eliminating multiple discrimination and multi-dimensional exclusion; planning based on analysis of the needs of Roma women and children and taking into account existing diversity among Roma and intersectional approach to exclusion and discrimination patterns faced by specific groups and subgroups among vulnerable communities with Roma.

The European Commission recommended in 2019 to all Member States to recognise antigypsyism in order to promote a strong non-discrimination approach in Roma inclusion interventions in all areas. This must include the recognition of the specificities of anti-Gypsyism, hate crime and anti-Roma rhetoric, as well as the challenges faced by Roma victims in accessing justice, protection and assistance (such as underreporting, including because of fear of discrimination, or retaliation by investigative authorities, risks of re-victimisation, the impact of authorities' biased attitudes towards criminal law measures in response to crime, etc.).

Anti-Gypsyism — antigypsyism *in* English — or anti-Roma racism, as used by human rights activists, are recognised in the European space as a specific form of racism directed against Roma, syntheses and Travellers, as well as other groups that are stigmatised, calling for the profound pejorative exonym “*Gypsyian*”, widespread in public space. Roma and pro-Roma organisations brought together at European level in the *Alliance against antigypsyism coalition* have proposed the working definition of the term *antigypsyism*, the equivalent of which is recommended by the NAR for use in Romanian in official documents is “*anti-Gypsyism*”, with the aim of avoiding the use of the term pejorative:

'Antigypsyism is a persistent, historically built complex of accepted racism against identified social groups with the discriminatory term 'Gypsyism' or other associated pejorative terms, and incorporates:

- a uniform perception that defines and describes these groups from the point of view of stereotypes and prejudices;*
- Assigning these specific characteristics to these groups;*
- Discriminatory social constructions and resulting violent practices, with marginalisation and degrading effects and reproducing structural disadvantages."*

Measures to combat anti-Gypsyism and strengthen anti-discrimination legislation:

Adopt the definition recommended by the European *Alliance against Anti-gypsyism in the Strategy* and operationalise it in existing anti-discrimination legislation; to update the provisions of criminal law penalising hate speech and hate crime with this definition, and to make the penalties applicable dissuasive by giving antigypsyism an aggravating role. Continuous training of law enforcement officers, prosecutors and judges in understanding the phenomenon and implications of antigypsyism in the handling of related cases.

Strengthen legislation to effectively address multiple/intersectional discrimination in the legal practice of the CNCD and increase dissuasiveness of sanctions in cases of multiple discrimination.

Develop national training programmes to prevent and combat discrimination for employees in public institutions.

Actively combating widely accepted institutional racism by adopting the Europe-wide definition of antigypsyism accepted by the Roma non-governmental sector and promoting its negative implications.

Development of effective information and awareness campaigns in public institutions providing public services in the fields of education, public health, employment, housing.

Information and awareness campaigns on the phenomenon and implications of antigypsyism in the private environment delivering services to the population.

The NAR recommends that the fight against antigypsyism should have a preventive and pro-active dimension, focusing on promoting a positive Roma narrative in the public space, educating the majority of the population in this regard and raising awareness of their negative consequences, on the model of societal knowledge and awareness of the phenomenon of anti-Semitism and the negative consequences of such manifestations of racial hatred.

According to the Report Summary evaluation of the "First Priority: No invisible child "(ANPDCA, UNICEF Romania, 2017) analysis of the incidence of child vulnerabilities by ethnicity shows an increased incidence of vulnerabilities among Roma children who are more at risk of violence, abuse or neglect.

4.1.8 Conclusions on the current context

The main reasons for the implementation of the 2015-2020 Strategy were the lack of an effective mechanism to monitor and assess in real time the state of play of the measures undertaken, as well as the misunderstanding of the regulatory framework. Consequently, local action plans merely replicated national measures, without adapting them either to the specific realities of communities or to the level of resources available. Moreover, the crucial reference to funding opportunities from European funds, without taking into account the different access technique compared

to the state budget, has led to a steady decline in the potential for resources that could be allocated to Roma inclusion.

In the light of the experience of the period 2014-2020, it becomes imperative for the Romanian Government to take a new paradigm for Roma policies in Romania. This new paradigm must be based on community realities and focus primarily on the development of national programmes in the fields of education, employment, health and housing, which remain the main pillars of intervention in disadvantaged communities, with a view to reducing disparities with the majority population. There is also a need to focus the new vision of the 2022-2027 strategy on promoting Roma culture and creating a culture of equal opportunities and non-discrimination in Romanian society.

4.2 Problem definition

The size of the Roma population remains one of the biggest challenges for the Romanian Government. According to the 2011 population census carried out by the National Institute of Statistics, there are 621.600 self-identified Roma minority persons in Romania, representing 3.3 % of Romania's general population. Unofficially, the number of Roma is much higher. Organisations working in the field, as well as local authorities, estimate 1,5-2 million Roma people.

Self-identified Roma make up around 27 % of all inhabitants in marginalised rural areas. As a result, Roma are overrepresented among residents in marginalised rural areas, and this proportion is almost 10 times higher than the national share of self-identified Roma in the total population.

The reasons why a very large number of Roma do not assume ethnicity are traditionally historical in nature, but more recently also in response to the anti-Gypsyism of mainstream society towards this minority.

Marginalised areas involve the existence of communities that are struggling to tap into the labour market their human capital potential, due to the cumulative lack of access to infrastructure, education, housing and health services. Localities comprising such areas are defined as marginalised.

The profile of marginalised communities with a Roma population is structured on the basis of, in particular, the vulnerabilities associated with belonging to the Roma population, as well as those that characterise the local and zonal socio-economic context. Studies show that the poverty rate of the Roma population has been on a negative trend over the past six years, but gaps with the general population remain high.

Moreover, the profile of marginalisation is different in the case of Roma communities than in the majority. While most marginalised rural areas are small, Roma communities tend to be larger, 86 % of Roma living in marginalised communities live in Roma communities with more than 250 inhabitants.⁴³

In addition, research provides contradictory data, often in contrast to the visibility of Roma in the Romanian public space, instead providing alarming data, qualitative indications of the below decency level of most of those identified as Roma in all possible aspects: standard of living, civilisation, level of education, access to health services, etc.

A particular element of the Romanian Roma minority is the great diversity of different passages, with a multitude of specificities regarding traditions, language, port and way of life. The European institutions are making considerable efforts to boost, support and guide Member States in the process of social inclusion of Roma.

⁴³ *Idem* 7

Decision-makers who develop policies for Roma at both European and national level have so far not taken into account these differentiations between Roma neams and the specificities of the communities in which they live. This affected the results achieved compared to those proposed in the programmatic documents.

At county/local level, there are no analyses showing the degree of vulnerability of the Roma population compared to the majority population, and the county action plans do not contain measurable indicators that take into account the cultural differences of Roma neams living in the same locality.

From the perspective of the Strategy, it is considered that the inclusion of Romanian Roma citizens in vulnerable situations must be ensured and guaranteed at the same time:

1. basic civil rights — housing, education, health, work, social assistance) — Roma, regardless of their willingness to take up ethnicity, must enjoy the rights deriving from citizenship;
2. cultural rights, the right to identity, so that ownership of ethnicity becomes an expression of self-esteem.

4.2.1 Ensuring and safeguarding civil rights

Ensuring and guaranteeing civil rights requires addressing the issues of vulnerability and poverty, which affect a large proportion of Romanian citizens belonging to the Roma minority.

Thus, priority areas for this Strategy are the following areas of intervention:

1. Infrastructure: residential isolation, lack of access to utilities and transport affect housing conditions, social and sanitary housing;
2. Housing: communities and/or housing that do not provide decent living conditions affect the state of health as well as the basic prerequisites for schooling for pupils;
3. Education: lack of access to quality education leads to drop-out or under-qualification and affects labour market integration;
4. Employment and vocational training: the lack of qualifications and opportunities to enter the labour market makes it impossible to cover the costs of utilities and maintenance of the dwelling and the inability to ensure daily living (food, clothes), with consequences for children's participation in school and the level of family health;
5. Health: lack of access to healthcare, but above all to prophylactic medicine services, affects both children's school participation and adults' participation in productive activities, with direct consequences for the situation of the whole family.

These issues highlight the problems faced by families in marginalised communities, rural or urban.

At the same time, this approach shows that one-way interventions, hitherto adopted by both national programmes and EU-funded interventions, have proved to be insufficient and incomplete.

The experience of implementing CLLD projects, as well as DLI (Local Development through Integrated Intervention) projects, has paved the way for effective and visible results in the fight against poverty, including among the Roma minority, and an integrated approach is needed, **with the challenge of making national programmes more flexible for complementary implementation, in line with the specific needs of each community.** Therefore, also for the period 2022-2027, it

remains a priority to address the challenges faced by vulnerable communities in the sensitive areas that form the vicious circle of poverty.

4.2.1.1. Housing

The main challenges facing marginalised communities in the area of housing are housing degradation, overcrowding, insufficient social and especially youth housing, as well as eviction from social housing from utilities, demolition of informal housing located on public or private land, leading to marginalisation and social exclusion for large vulnerable population groups, where Roma minorities account for a significant share. They are compounded by spatial segregation, barriers to access to housing in the private sector, as well as lack of public support and legislation on access to social housing⁴⁴.

One aspect of significance is the lack of information on the scale of forced evictions, which could enable preventive solutions to be developed to avoid improvisation and crisis situations. Local public administration authorities do not have a clear record of potentially evicted housing and, as a consequence, do not prepare variants

Addressing housing issues falls within the competence of local public administration authorities, therefore it is necessary to empower local public administration authorities, which has exclusive legal competence to address problems identified at local level, prioritise and resolve them. Local strategies must include the needs identified at the level of Roma communities. Given that it is currently impossible for MDLAP to quantify and report indicators in the field of Housing and Infrastructure disaggregated by ethnicity, it is necessary to identify the barriers that do not allow it and to make the necessary changes to the legal regulations, so that it is possible to disaggregate indicators by ethnicity and create the framework for local authorities to report these indicators.

4.2.1.2 Infrastructure

Ensuring decent living conditions through access to transport and utilities infrastructure, i.e. the state of the roads and the lack of infrastructure at Community level, is the main problem in this area; resolution is generally dependent on the goodwill and/or interest of local public administration authorities, but very often also on the legal status of the settlement.

As a result, stimulating local public administration authorities for the development of public utility infrastructure in such areas, as well as supporting the activity of cadastre and intabulation of real estate, should become objectives of utmost interest to the central authorities in charge of the field, which must provide management and financial assistance in this respect.

Although there is a national cadastral programme run by ANCPI (MLPDA), which envisages the establishment of the entire territory free of charge until 2023, there is a possibility of prioritising the municipalities and cadastral sectors on which informal settlements are located, given that the legally uncertain status of these communities has direct consequences for marginalisation, primarily by mitigating the effects of other interventions aimed at the inclusion of the Roma minority, including clarification of the legal status of access roads as well as utility networks.

⁴⁴ Idem

4.2.1.3 — Education

Ensuring the longest possible education path for Roma children is often seen as key to breaking the inter-generational cycle of poverty and their social inclusion. The EU strategic framework for European cooperation in education and training ('ET 2020') set out in its 2020 benchmarks that at least 95 % of children should be integrated into early childhood education⁴⁵.

This requires the continuation or adoption of both inclusive and targeted measures to reduce disparities, especially in marginalised rural/urban geographical areas⁴⁶. Coordinated national programmes to reduce early school leaving are therefore needed both by increasing the quality of education, including in schools with predominantly Roma children, and by improving the socio-economic situation of the household in issues that block school participation (food, clothes, housing conditions).

The school mediation programme is the main intervention in the field of education for Roma children, but there is no methodology for assessing the impact that school mediators have on children's education.

The programme of affirmative measures for young Roma — distinct places in secondary schools and universities — is insufficiently supported by associated facilities, so young Roma, especially those in rural areas, after the end of the 8 classes, cannot afford to continue their studies due to the lack of financial resources in the family.

On the other hand, there is a clear need for programmes to improve educational attainment and reduce illiteracy among people above school age (second chance), and the programmes should target the participation of a minimum of 15 % of Romanian citizens belonging to the Roma minority, in particular from rural areas and marginalised urban/rural communities.

Another factor affecting the education of Roma children is the superficiality with which devolved education institutions and a significant part of educational establishments deal with it. According to the monitoring report carried out by the NAR in 2018, in the field of education, the role of the inspector employed by the ISJ for the Roma minority is perceived differently from one county to another. In some counties there are Roma inspectors employed by the ISJ in charge of the education of Roma children, while in other counties minority inspectors took up the task through overlapping functions. For these officials too, a skills assessment and continuous training are needed in particular in the field of promoting diversity and non-discrimination.

An impediment to access to quality education is the trend towards segregation of Roma children in schools, which continues to persist despite recent government regulations, and in particular by the Ministry of Education, which prohibit this.

Qualitative and quantitative research has⁴⁷ shown that there are several shortcomings in ethnically segregated schools: as the proportion of Roma children in a school increases, the quality of the material equipment available to it — specialist laboratories, sports halls, libraries, computers — decreases. Also, schools with a high proportion of Roma have less qualified teachers (27.7 % of the majority Roma

⁴⁵ https://ec.europa.eu/education/policies/european-policy-cooperation/et2020-framework_ro, accessed on 28.01.2019

⁴⁶ Council of European Union (2013). Council comment on effective Roma integration measures in the member states. Brussels, pp. 5-6

⁴⁷ Laura Surdu, Eniko Vincze and Marius Wamsiedel, (2011). "Roma School Participation, Non-Attendance and Discrimination in Romania," Bucharest: UNICEF, Gelu Duminiuca and Ana Ivasiuc, (2010) "School for All? Access for Roma children to quality education," Bucharest: UNICEF, Cătălin Augustin Stoica and Marius Wamsiedel. (2012). "Inequity and Inequality. Teacher absenteeism, Romani Pupils and Primary Schools in Romania," Budapest: Rome Education Fund

teachers do not have a qualification compared to 16.5 % of non-Roma)⁴⁸, the ability to pass the capacity examination is lower in the case of Roma majority schools and participation in Olympic Market is also lower. Schools are often overcrowded, teachers' motivation to work with Roma children is low and teacher commutation is high due to the long distance to these schools.

An obstacle to the creation of an intercultural educational climate is also the lack of information on Roma history in school textbooks. Thus, there are history manuals omitting to provide information on Roma or Roma Holocaust, Roma slavery in the Romanian countries and Roma participation in the development of Romania's cultural heritage.⁴⁹

4.2.1.4 Occupancy

Integration into the labour market is one of the points in the vicious circle of poverty affected by the other links, especially as the Roma population has a significantly different age structure from that of the majority population; at national level, the Roma minority is a very young population, with around one third under the age of 15, compared to the majority population, where around one fifth is under 15 years old.

Therefore, the employment problems faced by the Roma minority do not only concern the basic right to work, but are an economic priority of harnessing long-term social and economic potential. The chronic lack of qualifications of young Roma seeking to enter the labour market leads them to move to 'lower' work in terms of their social prestige and, therefore, their pay, which cannot provide them with a decent living.

The European Pillar of Social Rights, reinforced by the policy objective *A more social Europe* specific to the MFF 2021-2027, sets out to address social rights as a matter of priority by supporting job quality⁵⁰, so as to increase the targeting of active inclusion measures, even among vulnerable groups that are difficult to place in the formal labour market.

Homogenous social capital within the same family group and inter-group social capital favour activities in the non-formal economy, entrepreneurship and the social economy, as the main difficulties are linked to differences between urban and rural areas, i.e. reduced access to market outlets.

In vulnerable communities with a Roma population there is a strong need for facilities for entrepreneurial initiatives and economic operators hiring Roma minorities, providing them with upskilling prospects, especially for women and young people, but also for some vulnerable people, such as young people leaving the child protection system or the prison system.

4.2.1.5 Health

In the field of health, the main issue to be addressed very seriously is the community health care programme in vulnerable communities with Roma. The analysis of the NAR showed that the role of the health ombudsman is very important at EU level in preventing the illness of members of vulnerable communities with Roma. Since 2017, the activity of Community healthcare has been governed by the following legislative acts: Government Emergency Order No 18/2017 on Community healthcare, approved by Law No 180/2017 and supplemented by Law No 119/2019 and Government Decision No 324/2019 approving the implementing rules for the

⁴⁸ Cătălin Augustin Stoica and Marius Wamsiedel. (2012). "Inequity and Inequality: Teacher absenteeism, Romani Pupils, and Primary Schools in Romania," Budapest: Rome Education Fund, p. 59

⁴⁹ Analysis of History Manuals for the Legal Resources Centre 2016

⁵⁰ Simplification Handbook, 80 simplification measures in Cohesion Policy 2021-2027

organisation, operation and financing of community health care activities, implementing their activities by the providers of community healthcare services (doctor, community nursing, midwife and health mediator). Community nursing services are provided to all vulnerable groups from a medico-socio-economic and educational point of view regardless of their ethnicity and regardless of the insured or uninsured status of the beneficiaries. The problems identified above have been addressed by the new legislation and have taken into account the tasks of the Health Ombudsman and the Community Medical Assistant, and the Territorial Administrative Units (ATUs) may be sanctioned for non-compliance with specific legislation. The existence of the position of health mediator in communities with a significant Roma population is of particular importance and can be filled by people from the community with ANC (National Authority for Qualifications) training in the profession of health mediator. For this reason, the central, county and local authorities must make every effort to ensure the training of the necessary staff and the presence of this position in the establishment plan at ATU level. In the case of vulnerable Roma communities, local authorities can work with non-governmental organisations and local representatives from the community to address socio-health problems in those communities; The Ministry of Health shall ensure technical and methodological coordination, monitoring, evaluation and control of the activity of the Community healthcare network, directly and through the county and Bucharest public health directorates. The Public Health Direction (PHD) coordinates technically and methodically, monitors, evaluates and controls community healthcare activity at county level and monitors the monthly input of community healthcare activity data and ensures that its own procedures and methodologies are put in place for the provision of ethnically disaggregated data, based on reports by health mediators at national level, in compliance with personal data protection regulations and ensuring that patients' identity cannot be traced.

At the same time, the problems with the implementation of the provisions of the specific legislation, Government Emergency Order No 18/2017 and Government Decision No 324/2019 referred to above, due to the lack of human resources and the lack of acts (methodologies, standards, guides, protocols) resulting from the legislation governing the organisation, operation and financing of Community health care, remain challenges that hinder the effective provision of health services at community level.

Another problem identified in the field of Roma health is the need to reduce the health gap between Roma and the rest of the population by including them in national public health programmes and interventions managed by the Ministry of Health and the National Health Insurance Fund.

Roma women and girls often experience racial or gender bias in access to health and other public services. Targeted services for women and girls with disabilities and other groups of women and girls in vulnerable situations are also missing.

4.2.2 Ensuring and guaranteeing the right to identity

Studies and research mention that many Roma have a low ethnic self-esteem caused by internalised social stigma, as well as forced assimilation processes experienced by members of Roma communities in Romania. Depriving the individual of rights and access to social development resources leads to the loss of ethnic dignity and the establishment of self-culpability and ethnic self-shame, as well as the

systemic discrimination to which Roma are subjected in society. Roma self-esteem can increase by expanding the learning of Romanian language, history and culture at school, including, where the conditions allow — Romanian-speaking Roma communities, the choice of Roma parents to study their mother tongue, the existence or classification of qualified Roma teachers, the existence or publication of school textbooks in Romani, etc. — through bilingual or monolingual Romani education.

Roman language is characterised by a diversity of dialects/graies, and Roma are currently in the process of promoting the language through the official education system. The traditional Roma culture is predominantly oral, so that the main problem facing the promotion of the Roman language in the bilingual education system is the lack of written literature in Roman language, with textbooks unfortunately calling for teaching texts translated from Romanian or other languages. Another element currently ignored, but which can significantly influence the promotion of Roma ethno-cultural identity, is society's awareness of the contribution that Roma have made to the development of Romanian society and European cultural heritage, with the result, on the one hand, of reducing negative perceptions of the Roma minority and, on the other hand, of increasing self-esteem among Roma minorities.⁵¹

At the same time, the lack of cultural representation institutions — essential for the promotion of Roma culture — is another problem that hinders the affirmation and reconstruction of Roma identity.

A second strand of action aims at developing an institutional culture that takes into account the principles of non-discrimination and equal opportunities between women and men, and educating society at all levels — not only in the education system but also at the level of public discourse, including the media — on these principles.

In the field of anti-discrimination and anti-Gypsyism, major challenges remain in terms of general public awareness of the legislation protecting individuals or communities against discrimination, in particular as regards the lack of awareness of existing remedies and the claim of fundamental rights.

Anti-Roma attitudes are visible in the public space, in all spheres of daily life, as also highlighted by recent civil society⁵² reports, which recommend that the competent authorities take action to address multiple, intersectional discrimination. It is also recommended to increase dissuasive approaches to sanctions in cases of discrimination and to develop national training programmes to prevent and combat discrimination for representatives of public institutions, as well as to combat institutional racism and antigypsyism that exist in society.

5. Objectives of the Strategy

The Government's strategy for the inclusion of Romanian citizens belonging to the Roma minority for the period 2022-2027 is based on the following premise:

- a) Socio-economic inclusion of Roma citizens is a necessary process not only to ensure social justice and protection, but also to harness, support and develop the potential of specific human capital;
- b) Intervention measures must be integrated, multidisciplinary and tailored in nature, taking into account differences within the community, i.e. intersectionality and the specificities of vulnerable people;

⁵¹ See the project 'Promoting Roma personalities in the public space' (www.ikultura.ro) and the brochure 'Romi for Romania' produced by the National Centre for Culture of Romani Kher

⁵² Civil society report monitoring the implementation of the National Roma Integration Strategy in Romania. Focus on structural and horizontal preconditions for successful implementation of the strategy. <https://op.europa.eu/en/publication-detail/-/publication/.../format-PDF>

- c) Ensuring partnership with civil society at all stages of implementation, monitoring, evaluation, review and updating of the Strategy.

On the basis of these considerations and on the basis of lessons learned from the previous period, the Strategy aims to achieve the **following general objective**: Improving the quality of life of Romanian citizens belonging to the Roma minority, based on active citizenship, socio-economic inclusion and the valorisation of Roma cultural heritage

It is supported by the following six **specific objectives**:

1. Improving living conditions for members of vulnerable communities with Roma
2. Ensuring access to quality inclusive education for Romanian Roma citizens
3. Increase the employment rate of Roma in line with market requirements in view of their professional development
4. Improving the health status of members of vulnerable communities with Roma
5. Supporting research, conservation and promotion of Roma cultural heritage and cultural identity
6. Combating discrimination, anti-Gypsyism and anti-Gypsyism generating hate speech or hate crime

The specific objectives shall be supported by the following **horizontal objectives**:

- Improving the existing legislative and regulatory framework in the policy areas proposed in the Strategy.
- Ensure a sustainable financial flow of Roma inclusion measures with a view to implementing local social inclusion plans as well as specific inclusion measures for vulnerable groups set out in the national sectoral strategies.
- Linking the measures and priorities of the Strategy with the measures proposed to achieve the specific objectives in all Sectoral Strategies and in the existing National Interests Programmes (NIPs).

6. Programmes — lines of action

The programmes and strands of action that will support the achievement of the objectives and the implementation of the strategy are to be found in the action plans corresponding to the six specific objectives (Annexes 1 to 6 of this Strategy).

It will seek to ensure that the measures adopted in the Strategy are consistent with the programmes included in the institutional strategic plans of the institutions responsible for the implementation of this Strategy.

7. Indicators

The basic indicators against which progress in the implementation of the strategy will be measured can be found in the action plans corresponding to the six specific objectives (Annexes 1 to 6 of this Strategy). The institutions responsible for implementing the measures of the Strategy will consider highlighting national indicators for sustainable development in the area of competence, insofar as the indicators associated with the measures in this Strategy are subsumed to the identified sustainable development indicators.

8. Expected results

This Strategy guides its interventions to help break the vicious chain described in Chapters 4.1 and 4.2. Thus, following the implementation of the Strategy, the following changes are expected in key sectoral policies:

Domain	Expected results at community level	Expected results at person/family level
Housing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - gradually increasing the quality of housing conditions. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - decent living conditions with adequate spaces for socialisation, learning and playing; - increased quality of life.
Infrastructure	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - the steady decline in the number of isolated communities without utilities; - constant financial allocations in the maintenance of infrastructure and the start of new investments; - increase community cohesion and decrease attitudes and behaviours of marginalisation and stigmatisation. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - easy access to basic utilities; - increasing the quality of life; - developing a sense of responsibility.
Education	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - access to quality and inclusive education; - reducing early school leaving; - active participation in lifelong learning programmes of all age groups. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - acquiring a sustainable portfolio of basic skills, including digital skills; - diversification of professional opportunities.
Occupancy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - high employment rate; - accessible framework for progression through the acquisition of professional skills and professional mobility 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - easy employment and job retention opportunities; - sufficient income to cover the costs of utilities and maintenance of the dwelling; - adopting a behaviour to save accrued income.
Health	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - easy access to quality healthcare services, in particular basic preventive and curative services; - the steady increase in health at community level. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - the constant decline in the incidence of illnesses associated with the mortality and morbidity patterns prevalent in the Roma population.

In view of the changes listed above, the annexes detail the lines of action, the measures, the expected results, the budget allocated, the correlation with the corresponding sectoral strategies, responsible institutions and the related set of indicators: baseline values, milestones and targets.

At the level of the county and local authorities, the implementation measures of this Strategy, covering the period 2022-2027, will be detailed and adapted to the specific conditions, set out in county and local action plans, which will take into account the

integrated correlation between the areas of intervention so as to meet the needs of both the community and each family belonging to it.

9. Implementation, monitoring and evaluation

9.1 Responsible institutions

The implementation of the Strategy is based on the sharing of institutional responsibilities, as follows:

- at local level, where the authorities implementing the Strategy are the mayor and the local council.
- at county level, where the authorities involved in the implementation of the Strategy are County Councils, as well as decentralised and devolved public services (education, health, work, public order, child protection, etc.), with methodological support from the County Roma Offices at the Prefect's institutions;
- at central level, where the institutions responsible for implementing the Strategy are the ministries, agencies and authorities that are members of the Interministerial Committee for the Implementation, Monitoring and Evaluation of the Strategy (CIIMES), with specialised methodological assistance from the National Agency for Roma;

9.2 Responsible institutions. Implementation mechanism

9.2.1. Coordinating the implementation of the Strategy

The mechanism for the implementation, monitoring and evaluation of the Strategy is coordinated from the central level by the Interministerial Committee for the Implementation, Monitoring and Evaluation of the Strategy, appointed by decision of the Prime Minister of the Government and co-chaired by a representative of the working apparatus of the Prime Minister and the President of the National Agency for Roma.

CIIMES is composed of representatives, at State Secretary level, of the NAR and all line ministries and central institutions with responsibility for the inclusion process of Romanian citizens belonging to the Roma minority.

The CIIMES meets every six months and the President presents a progress report on the implementation of the Strategy at the Government meeting. Between meetings, the functioning of the CIIMES is ensured by the technical secretariat, composed of the NAR and the designated representative of the working unit of the Prime Minister.

CIIMES is composed of representatives of the following central institutions, depending on the degree of involvement in the Roma inclusion process:

1. The central public administration institutions responsible for monitoring and evaluating the Strategy are: The General Secretariat of the Government (SGG), the National Roma Agency (NAR), the Ministry of Finance (MF), the Ministry of Investment and European Projects through the National Contact Point for Roma (MIPE-NRCP).
2. The central public administration institutions responsible for implementing and monitoring the Strategy are: Ministry of Development, Public Works and Administration (MDLPA), Ministry of Internal Affairs (MoIA), Ministry of Labour and Social Solidarity (MMSS), Ministry of Entrepreneurship and Tourism (MAT), Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development (MARD), Ministry of Health (MH), Ministry of Education (MEdu), Ministry of Culture (MC), Ministry

of Family, Youth and Equal Opportunities (MFTES), Department for Interethnic Relations (DRI), National Council for Combating Discrimination (NCPC).

3. In addition, they are also responsible for the implementation of this Strategy: The National Employment Agency (ANOFM), the National Agency for Gender Equality (ANES), the National Authority for the Protection of Children's Rights and Adoption (ANPDCA), the National Agency for Cadastre and Land Registration (ANCPI), the National Authority for Qualifications (ANC), the Ombudsman (AP), the Public Ministry (MP), the National Public Pensions Agency (CNPP), the National Prison Administration (ANP), the General Inspectorate of the Romanian Police (IGPR), the General Inspectorate of the Romanian Gendarmerie (IGJR), the National Centre for Culture of Roma-Kher (CNCR-RK) and the National Roma Agency (ANR).
4. Depending on the specific tasks or context, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MFA) and the Ministry of Justice (MJ) will be informed and consulted on the process of implementation, monitoring and evaluation of the Strategy, as well as on the process of reporting to the Government and external partners on the progress of its implementation. In addition, MFA will participate as an observer in CIIMES meetings.

CIIMES activities are carried out through the Thematic Working Groups (GLT), composed of the central institutions directly involved in the various aspects of the Roma inclusion process, in order to ensure an integrated approach to Roma issues.

At its first meeting, the CIIMES will adopt its Rules of Organisation and Functioning as well as the composition of the following GLTs:

1. Working Group on the Right to Residence
2. Working Group on the Right to Education and Cultural Identity
3. Working Group on the Right to Health
4. Working Group on the Rights of the Child
5. Work Group on Entrepreneurship and Jobs
6. Working Group on Intra-Community Mobility
7. Working Group on Combating Discrimination
8. Working Group on Promoting Legislative Amendments

9.2.2. Implementation of the Strategy at local level

At local level, the implementation of the measures of the Strategy is ensured by Primar, as executive authority, and the Local Council, as the deliberative authority at local level, both responsible for ensuring respect for citizens' fundamental rights and freedoms and implementing the legislation in force.

The specialised department of the Mayor, with the contribution of the Local Roma Expert, school mediators, health mediators and other Roma human resources, will implement the following activities:

- a. Identification of the needs of members of vulnerable communities with Roma,
- b. Develop and implement a Local Action Plan for the Inclusion of Roma Communities, including integrated measures to reduce the social exclusion of Roma and overcome the situation of vulnerability.
- c. Allocation of financial resources from the local budget and attracting off-budget financial resources to implement programmes/projects for the benefit of vulnerable communities with Roma, setting up and managing the work of the Local Initiative Group members.

- d. Develop local Roma community development projects in cooperation with ONG and other actors at local, county, regional or national level.
- e. Send the local action plan to the Prefect's Institution — BJR, with a view to its inclusion in the county action plan.
- f. Monitor the implementation of the local action plan measures and make proposals to improve them.
- g. Prepare regular progress monitoring reports on the implementation of the local action plan and report them to BJR and NAR.

In order to coordinate actions for Roma inclusion at local level, it is recommended that municipalities in municipalities with a significant number of Roma — self-declared or officially censored, or on the basis of the records of Roma representative organisations or other Roma human resources present in and recognised by the community — should employ a Local Expert on Roma issues. The role and importance of the local expert for Roma issues is mentioned in *Annex 7 The institutional framework for the implementation of the Strategy*. The local Roma expert is employed by the City Hall working in multidisciplinary teams providing specialised support services for Roma communities. This facilitates access to the public services offered by the Mayor's Office whenever requested, in particular in facilitating the use of the Roma minority language in relations with the authority, in accordance with the provisions of the Constitution, the Administrative Code and the international treaties to which Romania is a party. Good implementation of local activities within the local public authorities with a significant number of Roma also requires the employment of Roma community workers (health mediators, school mediators, counsellors in the mayor's office, etc.).

In the process of planning, implementing, monitoring and reporting local inclusion plans for vulnerable Roma communities, the Local Roma Expertise, together with the multidisciplinary team of the mayor's specialised office, will receive methodological assistance from the BJR and the NAR.

Municipalities will submit *the Local Action Plan for the inclusion of Roma communities* for analysis and adoption by decision of the Local Councils, including the allocation of financial resources from the local budget for the implementation of the measures stipulated in this plan.

Local Work Group (WG) and Local Initiative Group (GIL)

The local working group is composed of the local Roma expert, representatives of local public institutions, members of the local council, including elected councillors from the Roma minority, members of non-governmental organisations and a delegate of the local community of Romanian citizens belonging to the Roma minority in GIL.

The WG is the local consultation structure for the implementation and implementation of the Local Action Plan for the Inclusion of Roma Communities and its regular monitoring, and will be set up by decision of the Local Council.

The Local Initiative group is composed of Roma citizens belonging to vulnerable groups, at village/neighbourhood level, Roma community.

The main functions of the GIL are to identify the needs of the specific Roma community and to identify solutions and facilitate their implementation, as well as to consult on the measures that are necessary for the inclusion of a community and for reducing the state of vulnerability. One or more GIL may be formed at ATU level, depending on the number of Roma communities and how compact they are.

Local Roma experts play a key role in the community facilitation process and organise, at local level, the Local Initiative Group (GIL) and the Local Working Group (WG).

9.2.3 Implementation of the Strategy at County level

The authorities implementing the Strategy at county level are:

1. The Prefect's institution, through the County Offices for Roma (BJR — a body attached to the prefect and receiving technical and methodological assistance from the National Agency for Roma;
2. Specialised devolved and decentralised institutions of public administration.

At the level of the Prefect's institution, the County Roma Offices are organised, consisting of a minimum of 3 experts/officials from the executive and/or management, of whom at least one of the experts belongs to the Roma minority, is aware of the social and cultural characteristics of the communities with Roma at county level and is familiar with the Romanian language. If there is no such position in the organisation chart, it will be created specifically, once the legislative act has been published in the Official Gazette of Romania, Part I. The ethnic partner of the Roma expert or experts in the County Roma Office will strengthen the real participation of Roma in the structures of public administration, a recommendation⁵³ of the Council of the European Union also assumed by Romania (2021/C 93/01).

The main responsibilities of the Prefect's Institution, through the BJR, are to organise, plan, coordinate and monitor the activities carried out at county level by the devolved departments of line ministries and the social partners to fulfil the objectives and tasks of the Strategy.

The Prefect's institutions, through the Romanian County Offices, perform the following framework tasks:

- a. Drawing up the county plan of measures for the inclusion of Romanian citizens belonging to the Roma minority, by harmonising the main needs identified by the Community facilitation process or identified by the local public administration authorities, with the measures provided for in the Strategy;
- b. Monitoring the implementation of the measures in the area of activity of local public administration authorities and the devolved services of the relevant ministries to meet the indicators, objectives and measures of the Strategy;
- c. Supporting the implementation of the measures set out in the county plans by advising representatives of the devolved services and facilitating their access to the communities of Romanian citizens belonging to the Roma minority;
- d. Technical coordination of human resources working at local/community level in the process of identifying local needs, carrying out local action plans, monitoring and evaluating the measures in the local action plans;
- e. Drawing up periodic progress reports on the implementation of the county plan for measures concerning the inclusion of Romanian citizens belonging to the Roma minority and, after their adoption in the Joint Working Group, submitting them to the prefect and the NAR;
- f. The regular organisation of meetings of the Joint Working Group, established at county level, will continuously request data and will be in close contact with the ATUs and Roma organisations in order to have a good knowledge of the particularities and problems of communities with Roma at county level.

⁵³ [https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/RO/TXT/PDF/?uri=CELEX:32021H0319\(01\)&qid=1640184466697&from=RO](https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/RO/TXT/PDF/?uri=CELEX:32021H0319(01)&qid=1640184466697&from=RO)

It also intervenes both in the institutional framework and in the community at the level of ensuring the relationship with various specialised services: educational, housing, health, hygiene, medical, social care, etc.

BJR will provide expert methodological assistance to local Roma experts at ATU level in the process of developing working tools (studies/research methodologies, monitoring and evaluation methodologies, strategic planning methodologies at local level, etc.).

Specialised devolved and decentralised institutions

Each of the decentralised and specialised devolved institutions in the areas of intervention of this strategy at county level will draw up a Sectoral County Intervention Plan for the implementation of the Strategy. The plan will build on the measures proposed in this Strategy, adapted to the specificities and needs of Roma communities in each county. In order for sectoral county plans to be practically implemented, they will be budgeted and included in the annual budget by each institution.

The Joint Working Group (WG) is set up at county level, with partners of the Prefect's Institution, the County Roma Office, the devolved public services of the ministries as well as with the county/local public administration authorities and non-governmental organisations dealing with Roma minority issues.

The meetings of the Joint Working Group will be organised by the Prefect's institution, through the County Roma Office.

At the working meetings, each of the devolved public services will present the county sectoral intervention plan for the implementation of the 2022-2027 strategy. The local action plan for the inclusion of Roma communities carried out by ATUs with vulnerable Roma communities will also be presented during the GLM meetings. The sectoral county intervention plans, drawn up by the devolved and decentralised institutions, together with the local action plans, will be merged to carry out the county plan of measures for the inclusion of Romanian citizens belonging to the Roma minority.

9.2.4. Implementation at Central level

The task of implementation and monitoring, including the budgeting of the Strategy, is mainly the task of line ministries, either directly or through specific devolved public services, noting that there is a need for mature and coordinated involvement of ministries and government structures, separately or as far as possible integrated within their respective TGs. To this end, the ministries and government structures responsible shall forecast the budget needed to implement the measures undertaken for each stage of the implementation of the Strategy from the State budget, complementing the financial needs with their own revenues, mainly from the available European funds.

At the level of each ministry entrusted with the implementation of the Strategy, a **Ministerial Committee for Roma (CMR)** shall be established by ministerial order, comprising specialists from the specialised directorates or departments of the ministry, with tasks assigned by ministerial order, to monitor the implementation of sectoral measures under institutional responsibility, under the coordination of the Member State Secretary in CIIMES. The CMRs shall meet whenever necessary, but at least once every quarter. At the level of each ministry, a structure with an

administrative role in the monitoring and evaluation of the Strategy is designated. At the level of each ministry, a structure with an administrative role in the monitoring and evaluation of the Strategy is designated.

CMR is required to substantiate and support the prioritisation of funding priorities for projects and programmes explicitly or implicitly related to Roma inclusion, as well as to monitor their implementation and ensure regular reporting to the Secretary of State appointed to participate in CIIMES.

The National Agency for Roma will provide expert assistance on issues specific to Roma inclusion in order to monitor, evaluate and implement the measures of the Strategy, as the specialised body of the central public administration, attached to the Romanian Government.

Thus, NARs have the following responsibilities for collaboration at **central level**:

- a. Provides specialised technical assistance specific to the field of activity to experts delegated by the relevant ministries dealing with Roma inclusion;
- b. Develop working tools (methodologies, studies/research, monitoring and evaluation methodologies, strategic planning methodologies at local/county/national level, and.a) and submit them to the members of the Interministerial Committee for Monitoring and Evaluation of the Strategy, as well as within the Ministerial Committees or Thematic Working Groups. The NAR will be part of each GLT from CIIMES.
- c. Make public policy recommendations on sectoral areas based on the needs of Roma communities and forward them to line ministries.
- d. Draws up Monitoring Reports on the implementation of the Strategy, on the basis of the reports submitted by the CMR, at central level and the BJR at local level, which it sends to CIIMES for its opinion and then to the Prime Minister.

In relation to the Contact Point for Roma under the MIPE, the following joint actions will be implemented:

- a. Achieving annual institutional reviews of the capacity of the NAR and NRCP of the MIPE in formulating recommendations to improve the public policy and institutional frameworks for the social inclusion of Roma
- b. Implement a continuous training/training programme for the staff of the NAR and NRCP of the MIPE in the area of the public policy cycle.
- c. Organising thematic conferences at central/regional/county level to help deliver sectoral public policy recommendations for Roma inclusion;
- d. Preparing joint reports to the Romanian Government and the European Commission to communicate the progress of the implementation of the Strategy or the implementation of corrective measures.
- e. Coordinating mandates for joint participation in national or international conferences related to Roma inclusion (European Roma Inclusion Platform, or meetings of European or international institutions);

From the point of view of reporting, coordination between the NAR and the NRCP-MIPE, with a view to complementarity of activities, will take the form of:

- a. Internally, the progress/monitoring reports on the implementation of the Strategy will be prepared by the NAR, based on the information in the CMR, GLT and BJR;

- b. Externally, the status of fulfilment of enabling condition 14, will be reported upon request by the NRCP-MIPE whenever necessary, in accordance with the procedural rules established at the level of the MIPE, on the basis of the Progress/Monitoring Reports provided by the NAR.

In relation to the Roma County Offices within the Prefect's institutions, the NAR has the following responsibilities:

- a. Provide methodological support to the work of BJR experts in identifying the needs of members of local communities with Roma, carrying out county action plans, implementing county action plans, monitoring and evaluating the results achieved.
- b. Provides expert expertise specific to the field of activity to experts delegated by devolved institutions in the framework of the GLM in the field of Roma inclusion.
- c. It analyses the progress reports drawn up by the County Roma Offices and provides expert assistance.
- d. Provides expert assistance to GLM experts in the process of developing working tools (study/research methodologies, monitoring and evaluation methodologies, strategic planning methodologies at local/county level, and.a).
- e. Provides expert assistance to BJR experts in the process of monitoring and evaluating county action plans.

In relation to the county councils, the NAR will initiate proposals for collaboration at county level with a view to developing initiatives at county level for the benefit of members of vulnerable communities with Roma and will provide expert assistance to the county councils in the implementation and implementation of programmes/projects/actions supporting members of vulnerable communities with Roma.

In relation to local public administration (municipalities/local councils), NARs will initiate proposals for collaboration at local council level to develop initiatives at local level for the benefit of members of vulnerable communities with Roma and provide expert assistance to municipalities in the implementation and implementation of programmes/projects/actions supporting members of vulnerable communities with Roma.

At the level of the National Agency for Roma, the Advisory Council of the NAR operates as a consultation body, made up of specialists from Roma and pro-Roma NGOs, both traditional and non-traditional, with experience of intervention in Roma communities.

10. The procedures for monitoring and evaluating the implementation of the strategy. Reporting on implementation stages

This Strategy, covering the period 2022-2027, focuses on interventions at local level, taking into account the specificities of local conditions, but the assessment of results is carried out at national level, highlighting examples of good practice.

10.1 Monitoring of the Strategy

The monitoring mechanism of the Strategy is based, as a matter of priority, on obtaining credible records, based on robust data collection and processing methods, which underpin regular evaluations, i.e. progress reports, of the fulfilment of enabling

condition 14 for the specific objectives relating to operations targeting Roma inclusion measures.

The monitoring of the Strategy will be carried out on the basis of a monitoring plan. The monitoring plan will be drawn up by the NAR, in collaboration with the ministries responsible for implementing the Strategy, and will be subject to approval by the CIIMES at the first meeting.

At county level, monitoring of the implementation of the Strategy will be carried out through the Joint Working Group, set up by order of the Prefect. The GLM will meet on a monthly basis and will provide the BJR of the Prefect's Institution with information on the state of implementation of the Strategy, by area of intervention. Reports at county level will be sent to the NAR, in accordance with the Monitoring Plan.

At central level, the Ministerial Committees for Roma regularly centralise the information provided by the devolved public services for the area in question and are required to send annually to the NARs and the TGs to which the institution belongs information on the dynamics (progress/regression) resulting from the monitoring of the implementation of the Strategy for the specific area of activity.

Monitoring and reporting

The GLTs shall collect the information provided by the component CMRs and provide it, upon request or periodically (at least annually) to the CIIMES Technical Secretariat.

Each GLT shall designate a rapporteur who shall be able to present in real time the state of implementation of the Strategy in that area. The GLT shall meet whenever necessary, but at least on a quarterly basis, to analyse the field-specific information. Depending on the needs, the GLT may submit to the CIIMES proposals for legislative amendments necessary to speed up the implementation of the Strategy in that area.

The GLTs will follow the implementation of the strategy's action plan, including their financing, and make proposals to line ministries and central institutions to adapt financial resources, both during the consolidated budgeting phase and when amending the budget, depending on the stage of implementation of those measures.

CIIMES approves GLT reports for the previous period and, where appropriate, asks them to formulate additional measures to recover any delays. Depending on the evolution of the implementation of the Strategy and the identification of new priorities, the Technical Secretariat proposes to CIIMES the establishment of new GLTs.

The NAR draws up the annual progress reports on the implementation of the Strategy, on the basis of the reports submitted by the CMR, at central level and by the county BJR (ATUs, decentralised institutions and the CJs), which it sends to CIIMES for its opinion and then to the Prime Minister. Progress reports will also include information on the work of the GLT.

The status of fulfilment of enabling condition 14 will be reported upon request by the NRCP-MIPE whenever necessary, in accordance with the procedural rules established at the level of the MIPE, on the basis of the Progress/Monitoring Reports provided by the NAR.

10.2 Evaluation of the Strategy

The assessment of the Strategy will be based on indicators taken by central institutions and at local level those reported by ATUs to BJR and subsequently to NARs.

The assessment of progress in the inclusion process is done by the CIIMES, based on the progress reports prepared by the NAR, taking into account the status reports provided by the GLTs, the information submitted by the CMR and the BJR.

In order to have an objective perspective on the state of implementation of the Strategy, it is recommended to finance the mid-term and final external evaluations.

The evaluation plans for the operational programmes for the 2021-2027 programming period will include as a horizontal theme, including evaluation questions — where appropriate, the contribution of European funds to achieving the objectives of the 2022-2027 strategy. The MIPE(NRCP) will also seek to cooperate with the relevant management authorities with a view to carrying out ad hoc evaluations focused on specific Roma inclusion topics. These evaluations will focus on the effectiveness, efficiency, relevance, coherence and added value of EU funding in delivering on the Strategy. The conclusions and recommendations drawn from the evaluations will form the basis of the strategy review mechanism.

CIIMES may also request the institutions responsible for the implementation of the Strategy to carry out thematic evaluations on the implementation of Roma inclusion measures in the framework of national public programmes.

Evaluation reports will be presented publicly on the basis of transparency principles. The strategy, unlike previous strategies, will take account of public perception, which is why it is based on full transparency and, above all, permanent contact with civil society. Therefore, the MIPE, together with the NAR, will carry out analyses of the results drawn from the evaluation reports.

The CIIMES will review at least once a year the state of play of the recommendations drawn from the evaluation reports.

10.3 Reporting on the implementation status of the Strategy

The state of implementation of the Strategy is systematically reported to the European Commission by the NRCP-MIPE, based on the progress reports made by the NAR, taking into account the status reports provided by the GLTs, the information submitted by the CMR and the BJR.

The status of fulfilment of Enabling Condition 14 will be reported upon request by the NRCP-MIPE whenever necessary, in accordance with the procedural rules established at the level of the MIPE.

10.4 Review of the 2022-2027 Strategy

The strategy will be subject to at least a mid-term review. However, the strategy and thus the action plan can be revised whenever needed. Following monitoring processes, changes in the political context or the emergence of new relevant information on the general situation of the Roma population (e.g. the 2022 INS Population and Housing Census), as well as the conclusions and recommendations drawn from the evaluations undertaken, the GLTs will analyse how the Strategy needs to be reviewed.

Consultation of stakeholders as well as representatives of civil society will be sought in any of the review phases with a view to identifying suitable and accepted solutions to address dysfunctional situations or to put in place relevant innovative measures.

The review processes of the Strategy will also take into account the recommendations of the European Commission, other EU institutions or agencies (such as the European Parliament, the European Economic and Social Committee, the European Court of Auditors, the EU Agency for Fundamental Rights and others), or relevant international organisations (such as the Council of Europe or the OSCE).

11. Budgetary implications and sources of financing

In the development of the applicant's guides and in the implementation of the operational programmes, the MIPE will have the possibility to highlight the interventions dedicated to Roma communities and vulnerable Roma people in broader interventions targeting vulnerable people, in line with the provisions of the regulations governing European funds and in line with the specific nature and purpose of each call for funding. Thus, European funds will be allocated to the measures of the strategy within the limits of the amounts allocated and in compliance with their applicable provisions and eligibility rules.

Therefore, for the reference period, the focus will be on strengthening the framework for ensuring the sustainable financial flow of Roma inclusion measures in order to implement local social inclusion plans, as well as the separate Roma inclusion measures set out in local development strategies.

The budgetary implications for the period 2022-2027 will in principle remain at a similar level to the previous period. However, sustainable results justifying the respective budget allocations will be pursued. The monitoring and evaluation mechanism will also aim to highlight aggregate budgetary values for Roma inclusion measures.

12. Implications for the legal framework

The decisions on the revision of the Strategy will be based on the GLT for Promoting Legislative Amendments and will take the form of draft legislative acts issued by the Government, after they have been adopted by the CIIMES.

The GLT to Promote Legislative Amendments under CIIMES will also continuously follow the implementation status of the measures of the Strategy, identifying — in cooperation with the specialised GLT — critical stages where the achievement of these measures is imperative subject to changes to the legal framework.

In such cases, the GLT for Promoting Legislative Amendments will make the appropriate proposals and submit them, after acceptance by CIIMES, to the SGG, or, where appropriate, to the responsible ministries, to initiate the legislative amendment procedure in the area concerned.

In order to achieve the horizontal objective of ensuring a sustainable financial flow necessary to implement the measures set out in the local Roma social inclusion action plans of the local development strategies, it is necessary to revise the Local Public Finance Act, in order to make explicit provision for the authorising officers of ATUs to prioritise the financing of the measures contained in this Strategy.

13. ANNEXES

Annexes 1-6, corresponding to the strategic objectives of the Special Objectives OS1-OS6 and Annex 7 — Institutional framework for the implementation of the Strategy, form an integral part of the Romanian Government's Strategy on the Inclusion of Romanian citizens belonging to the Roma minority for the period 2022-2027:

Annex 1 — Specific Objective 1 Action Plan — Improving living conditions for members of vulnerable communities with Roma

Annex 2 — Plan of measures under Specific Objective 2 — Ensuring access for Romanian Roma citizens to quality inclusive education

Annex 3 — Specific Objective 3 Plan of Measures — Increasing the employment of Roma in line with market requirements in view of their professional development

Annex 4 — Specific Objective 4 Action Plan — Improving the health status of members of vulnerable communities with Roma

Annex 5 — Plan of Measures under Specific Objective 5 — Support for research, conservation and promotion of Roma cultural heritage and cultural identity

Annex 6 — Plan of Measures under Specific Objective 6 — Specific measures: Combating discrimination, anti-Gypsyism and anti-Gypsyism generating hate speech or hate crime

Annex 7 — Institutional framework for the implementation of the Strategy