

CROATIA

Country Fiche

Assessment of the progress in the NRSF implementation
between 1 June 2023 – 30 March 2025

APPROACH OF THE NATIONAL ROMA STRATEGIC FRAMEWORK (NRSF)	Croatia has two main documents that constitute its NRSF: the National Plan for the Inclusion of Roma for the period 2021–2027 and the accompanying Action Plan for the Implementation of the National Plan for the Inclusion of Roma. The first Action Plan covered the period 2021–2022, while the current Action Plan covers the period 2023–2025. The National Plan provides an overview of the general situation of the Roma community in Croatia and proposes overarching goals, measures, and activities. In contrast, the Action Plans outline specific measures and activities across defined priority areas. However, certain issues are not addressed in the Action Plans, such as the situation of specific subgroups within the Roma community (e.g., LGBTQ+ individuals), child social protection, and other areas. In addition to the above documents, there is also an Operational Programme for National Minorities, which includes specific measures targeting the Roma population.
ESTIMATED ROMA POPULATION	17.980 (according to the Census),¹ with an estimated 25,000 based on research conducted by the NRCP in 2018.² The European Commission (EU) and Council of Europe commonly cite an average estimate of 35,000 Roma for Croatia.³
National Roma Contact Point (NRCP)	Office for Human Rights and the Rights of National Minorities of the Government of the Republic of Croatia

HORIZONTAL OBJECTIVES

1. FIGHT AND PREVENT ANTIGYPSYISM AND DISCRIMINATION

PROGRESS MADE The NRCP published a public call in May 2025 for funding civil society organisations implementing activities combatting direct or indirect discrimination, harassment,	AREAS FOR IMPROVEMENT The 2023 Ombudswoman report states that Roma remains the most discriminated minority in Croatia.⁷
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¹ <https://judskaprava.gov.hr/nacionalne-manjine/nacionalne-manjine-u-republici-hrvatskoj/romi/371?utm>

² <https://pravamanjina.gov.hr/UserDocsImages/dokumenti/Uklju%C4%8Divanje%20Roma%20u%20hrvatsko%20dru%C5%A1tvo%20-%20istra%C5%BEivanje%20baznih%20podataka.pdf>

³ https://commission.europa.eu/strategy-and-policy/policies/justice-and-fundamental-rights/combating-discrimination/roma-eu/roma-equality-inclusion-and-participation-eu-country/croatia_en?utm

⁷ https://n1info.hr/english/news/human-rights-in-croatia-roma-is-the-most-discriminated-group/?utm_source=chatgpt.com

stereotyping, anti-Roma rhetoric, hate speech, hate crimes, and violence against Roma, as well as the incitement to any of these.⁴ • The Ministry of the Interior continues to implement targeted measures, with particularly effective results seen in the cooperation between the Ministry, the Roma Member of Parliament, and Roma representatives. An ongoing collaboration has started since 2017 between the Ministry of the Interior and Roma MPs to encourage Roma enrolling the Police Academy,⁵ with the goal of deploying them to work in Roma settlements. The number of Roma employed within the Ministry of the Interior has been increasing each year. This approach leads to Roma being accepted within the police as equals, and in this way, a reduction in misunderstandings between the police as an institution and the Roma community is expected. • Media coverage on Roma culture/history remains strong, (i.e. 8 April, 2 August, and 5 November).⁶	• Penalties for discrimination are very mild or entirely absent. For example, aside from warnings and condemnation by certain institutions and public bodies, hospitality establishments that publicly post on social media that they do not serve Roma face no meaningful sanctions. This lack of consequences emboldens perpetrators of discrimination and further erodes the Roma community's trust in institutions. Stricter measures should be implemented against those who engage in discriminatory practices. • Targeted investments are needed in legal professionals who would provide long-term and continuous legal assistance to members of the Roma community. On the one hand, court proceedings are lengthy, and on the other, Roma individuals often lose interest in pursuing such cases due to the lenient penalties imposed on perpetrators. Additionally, it frequently happens that NGOs providing legal aid undergo staff changes or their funded projects end during the prolonged legal processes, which creates further obstacles. Court cases involving discrimination should also be resolved more swiftly to ensure justice and maintain the victims' trust in the legal system.
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2. REDUCE POVERTY AND SOCIAL EXCLUSION

PROGRESS MADE	AREAS FOR IMPROVEMENT
• In this area, the Action Plan foresees activities aimed at publishing calls for funding opportunities for Roma civil society organisations, with the possibility of co-financing such projects through the Office for Cooperation with NGOs.⁸ These	• To monitor the impact of activities listed under other sectoral objectives of the NRSF i.e. housing, education and employment, especially those activities that have a direct effect on poverty reduction, in order to properly attribute progress and ensure a realistic evaluation of this goal.

4

[https://pravamanjina.gov.hr/?id=1267&pregled=1&datum=Fri%20Apr%2018%202025%2011:22:07%20GMT+0200%20\(srednjoeuropsko%20jetno%20vrijeme\)](https://pravamanjina.gov.hr/?id=1267&pregled=1&datum=Fri%20Apr%2018%202025%2011:22:07%20GMT+0200%20(srednjoeuropsko%20jetno%20vrijeme))

⁵ <https://policijska-akademija.gov.hr/print.aspx?id=876&url=print>

⁶ For each of the key dates important for Roma in the past two years numerous media articles were published. Below are two references for each date:

Commemoration of Roma victims of World War II: <https://vijesti.hrt.hr/hrvatska/ustica-11689616>

World Roma Day: https://www.jutarnji.hr/tag/Svjetski_dan_Roma

World Day of Romany Language: <https://min-kulture.gov.hr/vijesti-8/obiljezen-svjetski-dan-romskog-jezika-26773/26773>

⁸ Source: Action Plan for the Implementation of the National Plan for the Inclusion of Roma for the Period 2021–2027, for 2023–2025: <https://pravamanjina.gov.hr/UserDocsImages/NPUR%202021-2027/AP%20NPUR%202023-2025.pdf>

activities are implemented as part of the Office's regular operations. • Within the UNICEF project "Guarantee for Every Child" implemented in cooperation with ministries and local/regional authorities, four functional community centres were completed in 2024/2025. One of their main purposes is to provide social services within the community. The centres have been built in Roma settlements in Podturen, Orehovica, Mala Subotica, and Pribislavec.⁹ The one predicted in Osiječko-Baranjska County was not build, and this one needs to be done by the NRCP.	• Social exclusion of Roma is most pronounced among those living in segregated Roma settlements in rural areas.¹⁰ Their interaction with the non-Roma population is very limited, especially among children and youth. • The aspect of integration into broader society has been largely neglected, and desegregation of Roma settlements would be a key step toward achieving this. One of the proposals emerging from focus group discussions was to increase the frequency of public transportation connecting Roma settlements with village centres and nearby towns, as well as to reduce the cost of transportation. This would not only improve the mobility of Roma but also help reduce transportation-related expenses, contributing to their social inclusion.
3. PROMOTE PARTICIPATION THROUGH EMPOWERMENT, COOPERATION AND TRUST	
PROGRESS MADE • In this area, no significant progress can be identified over the past two years. However, it can be noted that the activities listed in the Action Plan 2023-2025 under this horizontal objective have been continuously implemented for several years.	AREAS FOR IMPROVEMENT • Trust in institutions in Croatia is generally very low,¹¹ and it is difficult to expect significant change solely through the implementation of the Action Plan. • When it comes to Roma-related councils and commissions where Roma representatives participate, there is a need for greater transparency. • On the one hand, the participation of Roma is commendable, but on the other, if we look at the Commission for Monitoring the National Roma Strategic Framework (NRSF), all appointed Roma members have been affiliated with or come from the umbrella Roma organisation Kali Sara. During the internal split within Kali Sara, some individuals who are part of this Commission publicly raised concerns on social media about irregularities.

⁹ Information available at: <https://medjimurska-zupanija.hr/2024/03/14/unicef-u-medimurskoj-zupaniji-stvorio-vrijednosti-i-stekao-dobre-prijatelje/>

¹⁰ Conclusion of the Roma Civil Monitoring Team based on their research, long-standing work within the Roma community, and the personal experience of many Roma collaborating with ROM HR.

¹¹ <https://eizg.hr/povjerenje-gradjana-u-institucije-i-percepcija-korupcije/6276>

- After parliamentary elections in Croatia, a new call for members of the commission is usually published. However, this announcement is currently delayed, as the parliamentary elections took place 15 months ago, and the call for commission members has still not been issued.

SECTORAL OBJECTIVES

4. INCREASE EFFECTIVE EQUAL ACCESS TO QUALITY INCLUSIVE MAINSTREAM EDUCATION

PROGRESS MADE

- The Ministry of Science, Education and Youth implements the largest number of activities with a Roma-specific approach, meaning they are directly targeted at Roma communities.¹² In 2023, a new Action Plan was adopted, within which two activities are particularly noteworthy due to their direct impact on desegregation in education.
- The first activity concerns covering transportation costs for children attending preschool or primary school in classrooms predominantly attended by Roma pupils, with the aim of reducing the number of Roma children in segregated educational settings.
- The second measure involves the development of a plan to reduce segregated educational departments, which is an important step toward ensuring more inclusive and integrated education for Roma children.

AREAS FOR IMPROVEMENT

- Roma segregation in education remains a significant challenge in Croatia. According to data from the Ministry of Science, Education and Youth, over 50% of Roma students attending primary school are enrolled in segregated classes¹³. However, according to the Office of the Ombudsperson, this figure reaches as high as 70%.¹⁴ The discrepancy arises because the Ministry reports based on ethnically homogeneous Roma classes, while the Ombudsperson's Office defines segregation as any class in which 70% or more of the students are Roma.
- Although there are measures in place for desegregation, they are not yet being effectively implemented due to the low level of awareness within the Roma community about the consequences of segregated education. Therefore, efforts must be made to raise awareness on this issue among Roma families.
- A Roma curriculum under Model C¹⁵ exists, but it is rarely used. One of the main reasons is the lack of human resources.

¹² Action Plan for the Implementation of the National Plan for the Inclusion of Roma for the Period 2021–2027, for 2023–2025: <https://pravamanjina.gov.hr/UserDocsImages/NPUR%202021-2027/AP%20NPUR%202023-2025.pdf>

¹³ The data from the e-Matica system, provided by the Ministry of Science, Education and Youth, are not publicly available but were shared for the purposes of drafting the RCM report.

¹⁴ The data was presented at a roundtable organised by ROM HR with the aim of collecting information for the RCM report and as part of ROM HR's advocacy project.

¹⁵ Model C allows Roma parents to choose for their children to receive 2 to 5 hours per week of education about the Roma language and/or in the Roma language—that is, in their mother tongue, which may be Bayash or Rromani Chib. Model C is available from the mandatory preschool year through the end of secondary education.

	Consequently, policies should be developed to encourage Roma students to enrol in and complete teacher education programmes, in order to strengthen long-term educational capacities. As for the transportation of Roma children to distant educational institutions, it is crucial to establish funding mechanisms—either through the Ministry or other channels—for civil society organisations to work directly with Roma families and raise awareness of the negative consequences of segregated education.
5. INCREASE EFFECTIVE EQUAL ACCESS TO QUALITY AND SUSTAINABLE EMPLOYMENT	
PROGRESS MADE - The activities under this sectoral objective are mainstream measures that have been in place for a longer period of time. Although the Croatian Employment Service has a dedicated budget for Roma, there are no specific employment measures tailored to Roma, and for years the public works scheme has remained the most commonly used measure, accounting for almost 90% of the allocated funds. - In the past two years, no significant progress can be reported in this area. However, the number of employed Roma has increased, not due to any targeted measures or specific interventions, but primarily as a result of the general labour shortage in the Croatian labour market.¹⁶	AREAS FOR IMPROVEMENT - Employment measures need to be specifically tailored to the needs of Roma women and NEET youth. The employment activity in the Action Plan targeting NEET group should be implemented as soon as possible - Targeted measure should be introduced to work directly with employers to reduce discrimination in employment, as Roma experience the highest levels of discrimination in the hiring process.¹⁷ Tailored employment measures should be reintroduced as it was implemented by the Croatian Employment Service during the Decade for Roma Inclusion.¹⁸
6. IMPROVE ROMA HEALTH AND EFFECTIVE EQUAL ACCESS TO QUALITY HEALTHCARE AND SOCIAL SERVICES	
PROGRESS MADE This sectoral objective has been entirely neglected, with no significant progress observed.	AREAS FOR IMPROVEMENT In this area, no disaggregated data on Roma are collected.

¹⁶ Conclusion of the Roma Civil Monitoring Team based on their research, long-standing work within the Roma community, and the personal experience of many Roma collaborating with ROM HR

¹⁷ Annual Report of the Croatian Ombudswoman; 2023: https://www.ombudsman.hr/en/ombudswoman-submits-report-2023-annual-report-to-the-croatian-parliament/?utm_source=chatgpt.com

¹⁸ <https://ljudskaprava.gov.hr/nacionalne-manjine/ostvarivanje-prava-romske-nacionalne-manjine/nacionalni-program-za-rome/zaposljavanje/393>

The only activities foreseen under this objective are those planned through EU-funded projects led by the NRCP, and even these activities are scheduled for implementation only in the last quarter of 2025.	However, according to baseline research conducted in 2018,¹⁹ the life expectancy of Roma is 10 years shorter than that of the majority population. It is necessary to broaden the scope of interventions in this sector. Very little attention is given to preventive activities related to addiction, and there are no specific activities addressing mental health, physical activity, nutrition, and similar aspects of well-being.
7. INCREASE EFFECTIVE EQUAL ACCESS TO ADEQUATE DESEGREGATED HOUSING AND ESSENTIAL SERVICES	
PROGRESS MADE - Croatia does not work on housing desegregation, but rather on investing in Roma settlements and improving the living conditions of Roma.²⁰ The activities listed under this sector reflect this approach and have been implemented for several years. - There have been no specific developments in the past two years that could be marked as new or particularly innovative. However, annual investments are being made in: - Cultural and multifunctional centres in Roma settlements, - Infrastructure improvements, - Sports facilities, - General communal development. - Additionally, through the Commission for Monitoring the Implementation of the NRSF, financial resources are allocated to support measures aimed at improving the living conditions of Roma in Croatia.	AREAS FOR IMPROVEMENT There is no work being done on the physical desegregation of Roma settlements in Croatia. No plan for desegregation exists — neither for smaller nor for larger Roma settlements.²¹ - The Croatian government, political representatives (both Roma and non-Roma), as well as decision-makers at all levels, are primarily focused on improving the living conditions within segregated Roma settlements. - However, no investments or policies are aimed at fostering physical integration of Roma with the majority population. The current approach reinforces residential segregation rather than addressing or reversing it.

¹⁹ Available at:

<https://pravamanjina.gov.hr/UserDocsImages/dokumenti/Uklju%C4%8Divanje%20Roma%20u%20hrvatsko%20dru%C5%A1tvo%20-%20istra%C5%BEivanje%20baznih%20podataka.pdf>

²⁰ Conclusion made according to the Source: Action Plan for the Implementation of the National Plan for the Inclusion of Roma for the Period 2021–2027, for 2023

²¹ Conclusion made according to the Source: Action Plan for the Implementation of the National Plan for the Inclusion of Roma for the Period 2021–2027, for 2023

PARTNERSHIPS AND INSTITUTIONAL CAPACITY

There is a Monitoring Committee for the implementation of the National Roma Strategic Framework (NRSF), chaired by one of the Deputy Prime Ministers, with the Vice-Chair being the Member of Parliament representing national minorities, currently Mr. Veljko Kajtazi, a Romani representative. The committee includes representatives of various ministries and public institutions, as well as Roma representatives selected through a public call.

However, since this committee is also responsible for the allocation of funds, there are concerns regarding conflicts of interest and transparency in the selection of Roma representatives. As noted in the Roma Civil Monitor (RCM) report, at the time of appointment, all Roma members of the Committee were either members of or closely associated with the umbrella Roma organisation Kali Sara.²²

Roma individuals and organisations are also involved in various coordination and supervisory bodies related to Roma-targeted projects. For instance, the public call for improving the living conditions of Roma featured a contact person who was an employee of Kali Sara, again raising questions about concentration of influence.

The Ombudsperson's office maintains advisory bodies in which at least one Romani person from civil society is always included. Additionally, some projects led by non-Roma NGOs involve the collection of discrimination cases against Roma, and these projects often employ Roma individuals on a part-time basis to collect field data. These individuals are frequently affiliated with the Roma Youth Organization of Croatia

PROMISING PRACTICES

Romani children are entitled to free access to early childhood education, including the mandatory pre-school year. From the start of compulsory pre-school to the end of secondary education, they can access Romani language and culture classes based on Model C, which allows several hours per week of instruction in and about their mother language (Bayash or Romani)s. The curriculum was developed by experts, including Roma professionals, under the auspices of the Ministry of Science and Education.

In some primary schools, Roma teaching assistants are available to support learning. The Ministry also funds summer schools implemented by Roma civil society organisations and co-finances school trips for Romani children.

When enrolling in secondary schools, Romani students receive additional points in the admission process, and the Ministry fully funds their accommodation in student dormitories. While this is not explicitly included in the NRSF, the Ministry ensures that almost every Romani child is granted a place in a dormitory or kindergarten, where needed.

All Romani students in secondary education receive scholarships, even those repeating a year (although at a reduced rate). In addition, there is a one-time financial incentive for completing secondary school, with the amount depending on whether it was a three- or four-year programme.

Romani students in higher education are also entitled to scholarships regardless of age or delay in their studies, with support continuing even if the student is up to two years behind schedule. The Ministry of Education holds disaggregated data on Roma throughout the educational system and has dedicated measures specifically targeting Roma.

²² Monitoring report on the implementation of The NRSF in Croatia, 2025 – NOT PUBLISHED YET

Importantly, it is the only institution actively engaged in addressing school segregation, although concrete outcomes are yet to be achieved. The Ministry also supports the celebration of significant dates, such as World Romani Language Day, and actively participates in numerous Roma-related projects. Its efforts have also inspired some local authorities, such as the City of Zagreb, to introduce local scholarship schemes for Romani students.