



Fourth Status Report

Implementation of the Action Plan on Improving the Situation of Roma and Sinti within the OSCE Area

*'For Roma, With Roma' — The collective pursuit
of equal rights, dignity, and opportunities*

Status Report 2023

osce
ODIHR

Published by the OSCE Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights (ODIHR)
Ul. Miodowa 10
00-251 Warsaw
Poland
www.osce.org/odihr

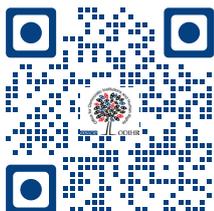
© OSCE/ODIHR 2023

All rights reserved. The contents of this publication may be freely used and copied for educational and other non-commercial purposes, provided that any such reproduction is accompanied by an acknowledgement of the OSCE/ODIHR as the source.

ISBN: 978-92-9271-135-1

Designed by Michael Lusaba

Cover photograph by Delfin Łakatosz



CONTENTS

Abbreviations and Acronyms	4
Foreword	5
Executive Summary	6
PART I: Introduction	12
PART II: Implementation of the Action Plan	15
1. For Roma, with Roma: comprehensive Roma strategies	15
2. Combating racism and discrimination	22
3. Addressing socio-economic issues	38
4. Improving access to education	50
5. Enhancing participation in public and political life	64
6. Crisis and post-crisis situations	75
Part III: The OSCE's role in implementing the Action Plan	83
Realizing its core tasks: assisting participating States in implementing OSCE commitments	83
Some of the Contact Point's key activities and initiatives	85
Appendices	88
Appendix 1: OSCE Action Plan	88
Appendix 2: ODIHR's Contact Point for Roma and Sinti Issues, Events and Activities, 2018 to 2022	100
Appendix 3: Responses to ODIHR's Questionnaire from OSCE participating States	107
Appendix 4: Questionnaire for OSCE participating States for the Fourth Status Report	108

ABBREVIATIONS AND ACRONYMS

ECRI	European Commission against Racism and Intolerance
ERRC	European Roma Rights Centre
EU	European Union
EC	European Commission
ECtHR	European Court of Human Rights
ERGO	European Roma Grassroots Organisations Network
FRA	European Union Fundamental Rights Agency
LAP	Local Action Plans
IDPs	Internally displaced people
NGO	Non-governmental Organization
NRCP	National Roma Contact Point within the EU National Roma Strategic Frameworks
NRISs	National Roma Integration Strategies
NRRP	National Recovery and Resilience Plans
NRSFs	National Roma Strategic Frameworks
NHRIs	National Human Rights Institutions
NEBs	National Equality Bodies
OSCE	Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe
ODIHR	OSCE Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights
UNHCR	United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization
UN CERD	United Nations Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination

FOREWORD

Two decades have passed since the OSCE Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights (ODIHR) embarked on its journey to catalyze positive change for Roma and Sinti communities within the OSCE region. Twenty years ago, OSCE participating States provided us a vital tool in the form of the OSCE Action Plan on Improving the Situation of Roma and Sinti. This momentous anniversary is marked by the release of our latest Status Report, a comprehensive account of both the progress achieved and the challenges that persist in our collective pursuit of equal rights, dignity, and opportunities for Roma and Sinti individuals.

In the intricate tapestry of humanity, diversity enriches our societies, and the Roma and Sinti people are an integral thread, weaving together a history that spans continents and centuries. Their resilience and contributions have left an indelible mark on the cultural, social and economic landscapes of the countries they call home. Yet, as this report reveals, the road to full equality remains a complex one, marked both by some achievements and daunting obstacles.

The OSCE Action Plan set forth a vision of inclusivity and empowerment. Over two decades, it has guided our efforts to dismantle the barriers to political representation and participation, education, employment, housing and health care and to addressing the racism and discrimination, all of which have impeded the flourishing of Roma and Sinti communities. Together with our partners, ODIHR continues to encourage policies that promote tolerance, combat discrimination and enhance the social fabric that binds us all.

The journey has not been without its challenges. As this report underlines, gaps still persist, particularly in the growing manifestations of racism and discrimination, the limited opportunities for equal participation in public and political life, and persistent problems with access to housing, employment and quality education. The impact of global events, such as the COVID-19 pandemic and the ongoing war in the OSCE region, casts shadows that loom large over the lives of many Roma and Sinti. Fuelled

by economic challenges, the rise of xenophobia and prejudice that can lead Roma and Sinti communities to be made scapegoats, highlights the need for steadfast commitment to the principles of justice and equality.

Nonetheless, the chapters of this report are also imbued with good practice and visible progress. Local and national initiatives, driven by the dedication of governments, civil society and international partners, have emerged as beacons of hope. The standardization of Roma policies across OSCE participating States, the steady engagement of local authorities and the continued funding and focus on Roma and Sinti-targeted programmes stand as pillars upon which we can build a more equitable future.

This report, like the dedicated efforts of countless individuals and institutions, reflects the intricate mosaic that is the Roma story. It calls us to take stock of our efforts, acknowledge our setbacks, and above all, recommit ourselves to the values that unite us in our shared pursuit of human rights for all. As we navigate the path forward, let us remember that the progress we seek is not simply a goal — it is a promise we make to each and every adult and child — a commitment to honour the inherent worth of every member of our diverse societies.

I extend my gratitude to all those who have contributed to this report, from the participating States and partners, to the dedicated civil society organizations that tirelessly champion the cause of Roma rights. I hope this Status Report will serve as a compass guiding us towards a future where the promise of equality and inclusion is fully realized for Roma and Sinti communities across the OSCE region.

Matteo Mecacci
Director, OSCE Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Since its founding some 30 years ago, ODIHR's mandate has centred on assisting participating States in fulfilling their human dimension commitments, including those of Roma and Sinti communities. The bedrock of these efforts has been the OSCE Action Plan on Enhancing the Situation of Roma and Sinti within the OSCE Region, which was adopted in 2003. This plan has served as the cornerstone for ODIHR's guidance to States towards effective implementation of these commitments.

The 2003 Action Plan stands as a comprehensive policy blueprint, addressing critical aspects and presenting recommendations for action by participating States. It focuses on countering racism and discrimination, ensuring equitable access and opportunities for Roma and Sinti individuals in health care, employment, housing and education. It outlines the need to promote increased participation of Roma in public life and to provide support during crisis and post-crisis scenarios. Additionally, the plan emphasizes the imperative of integrating Roma and Sinti women into pertinent policies and enabling their equal participation alongside men.

In 2008, ODIHR published its inaugural comprehensive evaluation of the Action Plan's implementation through its First Status Report. This landmark report spurred the adoption of two subsequent Ministerial Council Decisions, both recognizing the necessity for more work to support Roma and Sinti communities. In Helsinki in 2008, States underscored the importance of ensuring equal access to education, including early education, for Roma and Sinti children. Subsequently, in Athens in 2009, States were called to bolster their efforts in fostering tolerance and combating prejudices against Roma and Sinti to prevent their exclusion and marginalization.

Every five years, ODIHR provides a Status Report on progress on all commitments targeting Roma and Sinti issues. The Third Status Report in 2018 focused thematically on efforts to improve Roma and Sinti political participation.

Now, marking the 20th anniversary of the Action Plan, this Fourth Status Report takes comprehensive stock of the advances made over the past five years in realizing the Action Plan's commitments. It is published against the backdrop of the turmoil created by the global COVID-19 pandemic and the Russian Federation's military attack in Ukraine, both of which have had a significant impact on Roma communities.

Within this evaluation period, policies relating to Roma and Sinti have remained standardized across the OSCE participating States that are home to these communities, and local authorities are active in carrying out initiatives to improve Roma and Sinti lives. European Union (EU) funding and support for programmes benefiting Roma and Sinti continue to systematize and strengthen integration strategies and action plans for Member States and EU accession countries.

Despite much *visible progress* in plans and policies, this Status Report still finds deep disparities between the circumstances of Roma and Sinti communities and the general population. This is especially striking because there is now more data available than in previous Reports. In particular, discrimination and racism remain widespread and common in extreme right-wing political rhetoric. Likewise, Roma and Sinti women and men still lack real support in accessing health care, housing and employment, which are all prerequisites for closing gaps more broadly.

For this review, ODIHR received 35 responses from participating States to its questionnaire. Several States provided comprehensive information about all programmes and projects for their Roma and Sinti communities. ODIHR also drew upon information supplied by additional sources, including contributions from OSCE field offices, other relevant institutions and civil society organizations.

This report adheres to the structure of the Action Plan, as well as to the First and Second Status Reports. Part I provides background on the current context and developments in Roma policy since 2018. Part II contains a com-

prehensive analysis of the situation within the review period, predominantly built on the data provided to ODIHR by participating States. Each thematic chapter starts with an examination of persisting challenges and emerging trends, followed by a report of the actions taken by participating States. Each chapter concludes with priority areas for further attention and recommendations. Part III lays out the OSCE's continuing role in implementing the Action Plan and outlines ODIHR's activities targeting Roma and Sinti issues.

Throughout the report, progress in each aspect of the Action Plan is evaluated, using categories such as *positive change*, *observable progress*, *significant advancements*, *stagnation* and *adverse trends*. While instances of *visible progress* abound, *significant breakthroughs* still seem out of reach.

For Roma, with Roma: comprehensive Roma strategies

The 2008 Status Report noted progress in the design and adoption of national strategies for improving the situation of Roma, while stressing serious concerns related to effective implementation. The 2013 Status Report highlighted the standardization of Roma policy in participating States and the increased EU funding for implementation in EU Member States and candidate countries, while pointing to the lack of comprehensive data collection, monitoring and evaluation mechanisms.

In this review period, participating States have adopted Roma policy and regularly updating these has become the norm, particularly in EU Member States or candidate countries. In terms of the participation of Roma in policy processes that concern them, the 2018 Status Report pointed out that the mere existence of a formal consultation mechanism does not automatically lead to effective participation. Recent years have shown *visible progress* in this regard, particularly due to National Roma Strategic Frameworks (NRSFs). Until 2020, Roma policy fell short, most often because the intended goals and objectives differed from the actual implemented measures and impact.

However, new EU frameworks and communications have promoted a paradigm shift and acknowledge that anti-Roma racism is a critical barrier to effective inclusion. This new focus is welcome, as is the inclusion

across many States of specific indicators, targets, data collection methodologies and dedicated budgets. Creating monitoring and evaluation mechanisms is essential for policy frameworks to be implemented effectively. This groundwork has been laid and current policies should produce the data to show progress.

In the review period, Roma civil society organizations and activists reported facing challenges in their capacity to assist in Roma policy processes. The further empowerment of Roma and the creation of effective mechanisms for meaningful participation in all policies that impact them is the next step towards positive change.

Combating racism and discrimination

Anti-Roma racism and discrimination has persisted across the OSCE region within the reporting period. Hate crime, anti-Roma rhetoric, human rights violations and instances of racist and discriminatory behaviour and practices marginalize Roma and Sinti and continue to hamper their participation in all walks of life. Many OSCE participating States recognize the impact of racism and discrimination against Roma and Sinti and have developed a multitude of measures to combat 'antigypsyism', a specific type of structural and institutional racism against Roma and Sinti.

The 2008 Status Report recorded such occurrences during the EU enlargement processes, while the 2013 Status Report noted them against the backdrop of economic difficulties in many OSCE participating States at the time. During this reporting period, an increase in racist and discriminatory behaviours and practices amid the COVID-19 pandemic were reported to ODIHR. The ongoing war in Ukraine has also caused a rise in discrimination against Ukrainian Roma refugees, ranging from prejudiced attitudes and stereotyping, to being given shelter in ethnically segregated reception centres.

Legislation and law enforcement

Across the OSCE area, participating States have adopted legislation to combat racism and discrimination and national Roma mechanisms have become more responsive to preventing racist and discriminatory practices and behaviour. However, without adequate budgeting, the benefits of most frameworks and action plans aimed at combating racism and discrimination remain unharnessed. More

effort is also needed to enforce laws and implement European Court of Human Rights judgments.

Hate crimes and incidents against Roma and Sinti

Hate-motivated incidents and crimes against Roma and Sinti persist. During the review period, recorded hate incidents and crimes against Roma and Sinti rose in ODIHR's hate crime reporting. Between 2018 and 2021, a total of 304 incidents were reported. Nonetheless, hate incidents and crimes against Roma and Sinti are under-reported to ODIHR. The reported data gives only a fragment of the overall picture of hate crimes against Roma and Sinti. Furthermore, hate incidents and crimes are sometimes grouped under a cluster of ethnic bias crimes, which are not further disaggregated by ethnic groups.

States are implementing multi-tiered approaches to preventing hate incidents and crimes together with civil society. Roma and Sinti women and girls should be given additional attention, particularly in hate crime victim support. The participation and representation of Roma and Sinti within NHRIs and NEBs is a positive practice currently seen in a few participating States. It is key to continue involving Roma and Sinti as active members, recognizing their expertise and life experiences in addressing the issues they face.

Police and Roma

Due to longstanding experience of oppression and abuse of force by police and law enforcement authorities, Roma and Sinti have developed an attitude of distrust towards the police. Some of the main challenges that Roma and Sinti have experienced include ethnic profiling, disproportionate or excessive use of force, failure by the police to respond effectively to ensure the protection of Roma and Sinti victims of crime as well as racist violence and failure to investigate such cases properly.

Roma victims continue to be affected by a lack of effective access to justice and the means to challenge and obtain redress, including for police misconduct. Instances of police abuse are often improperly investigated, and perpetrators go unpunished. The European Court of Human Rights has found that State authorities have, at times, failed to carry out effective investigations of criminal acts against Roma and Sinti by law enforcement officials and/or non-state actors.

There has been progress in building the capacity of police officers. States are beginning to develop mandatory training for police cadets and police officers and commanders. However, enhancing mutual trust between Roma and the police remains a challenge. Some States have organized local security forums, deployed community liaison officers and recruited Roma and Sinti women and men to work in the police force in their communities.

There is room for broader accountability and oversight mechanisms to address instances of police impunity and misconduct. Independent, transparent and well-resourced mechanisms can conduct effective oversight, especially when Roma and Sinti people are involved. Likewise, community policing has shown success in improving relations and trust between minority groups and the police.

Mass media

Fair, responsive and ethical reporting involving Roma and Sinti can build a more balanced portrayal of them. Participating States have a way to go in helping to improve the public perception of Roma and Sinti communities. The visual representation of Roma and Sinti people on television is dominated by shots of clutter and poor-quality housing; very rarely are Roma and Sinti people shown as leaders or success stories.

ODIHR's own media monitoring during this period showed that hate speech was employed in about a third of news stories about Roma and Sinti. The media is clearly a key driver of racist and discriminatory attitudes in some States.

In a number of participating States, existing legislation offers minorities access to public media and provides support for minority-owned media. Some *positive change* can be noted in respect to how Roma and Sinti utilize media for furthering their own agenda; and there is a growing number of Roma and Sinti-owned media outlets.

Holistic representation requires the engagement of Roma and Sinti journalists on Roma-related programming and mainstreaming issues of concern. Some States do promote ethical reporting and provide training for journalists. Efforts to close the digital divide between Roma and Sinti and mainstream populations have also started in this reporting period and should continue.

Addressing socio-economic issues

Adequate housing and living conditions, equal access to labour markets and health care are key elements of social and economic prosperity and development within a society. Twenty years ago, in the Action Plan, States committed to guaranteeing that Roma and Sinti people enjoy social and economic rights on an equal footing with the rest of their societies.

In this review period, a significant number of Roma and Sinti continue to live in unsafe, overcrowded and illegal settings, with conditions that raise health concerns. At the same time, these groups have poor access to health-care services, mainly due to discrimination. In terms of economic well-being, disproportionate levels poverty and unemployment among Roma and Sinti remain. OSCE participating States have strengthened their efforts to meet these socio-economic needs with changes to legislation and policy frameworks, and with tailored programmes; and yet Roma and Sinti still do not fully enjoy their social and economic rights.

Housing

Within the current reporting period, ODIHR noted *positive developments* in laws and policies shaping housing matters which affect Roma and Sinti communities, as well as opportunities for individuals and communities to improve living conditions. Participating States passed legislative amendments, incorporated tailored measures into mainstream and Roma-oriented policies and allocated budgets to address housing conditions. These steps indicate *visible progress* by some participating States in improving housing in Roma and Sinti communities.

More efforts are needed to address the wide range and full extent of housing issues faced by Roma and Sinti communities — from unsafe and substandard housing premises to house deprivation, overcrowding and lack of access to water, electricity, public sewerage and waste collection. Discrimination and biased treatment add layers of inequality for Roma and Sinti in housing, and participating States should ensure that housing programmes and measures are implemented through non-discriminatory lenses.

Health care

Over this reporting period, there were notable efforts to ensure non-discriminatory access to healthcare services,

with new policies and programmes constituting *visible progress* in many participating States. A number of States developed and run tailored measures to address existing health inequalities among their Roma and Sinti communities. Several States have conducted training and awareness-raising to ensure more accessible services for these groups, including Roma women and children.

Despite this progress, the health of Roma and Sinti communities remains worse than the general population. Discrimination restricts access to health care. While legislative and policy initiatives exist, ensuring such provisions are implemented in practice is key.

The COVID-19 pandemic had a disproportionate impact on Roma and Sinti communities, bringing attention to the existing inequalities in health care and housing. The health consequences of the pandemic should be addressed through targeted activities, while taking into consideration housing-related restraints and a gender perspective.

Unemployment and economic problems

Challenges in housing and healthcare areas trigger the exclusion of Roma and Sinti people from the labour market and impose serious obstacles to employment. These obstacles are linked to discrimination faced by Roma and Sinti, but are also a reflection of some Roma and Sinti having limited skills to meet labour market needs.

The economic decline prior to this reporting period reduced opportunities and increased the poverty and unemployment levels among Roma and Sinti. Armed conflicts in the OSCE region and the prolonged COVID-19 pandemic affected the economic situation of Roma and Sinti, leaving many without sources of regular income.

Within the past five years, there has been *visible progress* in designing and implementing measures to address some dimensions of employment among Roma and Sinti communities, although these measures may not have benefited women and men equally. There are a growing number of tailored programmes and projects to solve certain challenges in employment, however it is difficult to assess progress without clear indicators.

Despite the growing number of policy changes and programmes in labour markets across the OSCE, Roma and Sinti communities remain largely excluded from economic

development. More efforts are needed at the national level to ensure policies are implemented and catalyze tangible progress in tackling unemployment.

Policy frameworks — both National Roma Integration Strategies and mainstream employment policies — exist, but do not yet fully incorporate intersectional perspectives to ensure that challenges faced by the most vulnerable and marginalized groups are solved, especially those of women and youth. More tailored measures are needed to increase the employment rate and combat poverty in Roma and Sinti communities, while ensuring these communities can participate on an equal basis.

Improving access to education

Unfortunately, throughout the OSCE, high-quality education often remains a privilege for those born into families that are wealthier, native-born, better educated and non-minority. Within the reporting period, some participating States have employed certain policies and some good practices for promoting the inclusion of Roma and Sinti in early education, along with affirmative action measures, such as quotas for Roma students at high schools and universities. These constitute *visible progress* in making education a priority area in improving the situation of Roma and Sinti.

However, Roma and Sinti children, are still often precluded from accessing early education. The discriminatory practice of systematically steering Roma and Sinti children to special schools or Roma-only classes remains a problem. There are some *positive trends* in the enrolment of Roma children in compulsory education, but most participating States are still behind in Roma and Sinti educational attainment.

Nevertheless, in the reporting period, governments — especially some local governments, intergovernmental organizations and civil society organizations — have designed and implemented initiatives that have equipped Roma and Sinti children with better access, equity, equality and opportunities in education. Across the OSCE area, to address issues related to education, often in partnership with local authorities, participating States have trained and hired Roma school mediators, school assistants or outreach/liaison staff to perform various tasks. This constitutes *visible progress*, as they usually have the power

to smooth obstacles and improve access to school for Roma children.

Also, several State authorities and civil society organizations provide direct or indirect support to Roma and Sinti children and families, ranging from scholarships to free transportation and provision of school supplies. This constitutes *visible progress*, judging by the number of participating States who have initiated these programmes. However, such support often excludes gender considerations and can be sporadic, as most projects have a limited timeframe and target a limited number of beneficiaries.

Some participating States are also implementing in-service and pre-service teacher training activities, enabling educators to create a better climate for Roma and Sinti students. A number of these training programmes include components of Roma and Sinti history and culture, which is a welcome *positive change*. ODIHR's research has shown that such activities should be strengthened and continued across the OSCE area, with particular focus on anti-racism, non-discrimination, diversity, and avoiding stereotypes and implicit biases.

The collection of data disaggregated by both ethnicity and sex is still an issue in several participating States. This makes it challenging to assess Roma and Sinti's access and participation in education. The next phase of progress will include assessments of mainstream and targeted Roma and Sinti educational policies and measures, as well as programmes like school mediators.

Enhancing participation in public and political life

Active participation in public and political life is essential for Roma and Sinti communities to voice their needs and influence decisions that impact their lives. In doing so, Roma and Sinti communities can counter racism and discrimination, advocate for their rights, and directly promote needs-based policies.

The same challenges of participation identified in the First Status Report were later observed in the 2013 and 2018 reports. Within this reporting period, some visible progress can be noted, particularly in enhancing public participation, but much remains the same. Where the 2018 Status Report indicated that mainstream political parties were starting to adopt rhetoric that was previously found

only on the extremes, this anti-Roma rhetoric has now increasingly been normalized. The rhetoric of radical populists, the increasing popularity of the far right, and the intensification of anti-Roma sentiment continue to hinder the participation of Roma and Sinti.

Anti-Roma racism remains a prominent approach for mobilizing constituencies driven by hate, resentment and prejudice, and discourages Roma and Sinti people from taking part in politics. Roma and Sinti remain under-represented across the political spectrum. While this reporting period has seen sporadic increases in Roma and Sinti representation in some participating States, it has also seen a decrease in others.

Participating States gave evidence of efforts to build the political capacity of Roma and Sinti, particularly women and youth, but more is still needed. Voter education programmes for Roma and Sinti communities and support for domestic election observation activities are good practices that should spread. More of the structures mandated to address Roma and Sinti issues are led by, or have a representative number of Roma and Sinti individuals employed within them, but still not enough.

Crisis and post-crisis situations

The OSCE commitments on Roma and Sinti also include recommended actions for participating States to ensure that the rights of refugees are secured without discrimination, including in crisis and post-crisis situations. Conflicts within the OSCE region have often led sizeable Roma and Sinti communities to flee their homes to seek secure shelter.

In its 2013 Status Report, ODIHR noted visible progress among OSCE participating States in terms of securing protection for displaced Roma and Sinti. Despite these positive changes, there are ongoing challenges, such as statelessness and the unresolved legal status of Roma, Egyptian and Ashkali groups in the SEE region (Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, Montenegro, North Macedonia and Serbia; also in Kosovo^{*}) as well as lack of documentation among Ukrainian Roma following the conflict in 2014. Developments since 24 February 2022 have caused a large number of Roma to flee conflict areas and seek refuge either in the western parts of Ukraine or in other OSCE participating States. These displaced communities, however, have often faced biased treatment and prejudice at various stages of their efforts to secure protection and state support.

In the current situation of Ukrainian Roma, States are working to ensure tailored measures to alleviate the specific difficulties faced by displaced Roma. More effort is needed to consider the multiple and intersecting forms of discrimination experienced by displaced Roma. It is also crucial that Roma integration and post-conflict recovery frameworks acknowledge the challenges faced by displaced Roma in access to documentation and information, housing, employment and education, and contain steps to address these difficulties. Accountability for human rights violations faced by displaced Roma and facilitated access to justice systems and redress measures is also key.

* There is no consensus among OSCE participating States on the status of Kosovo and, as such, the Organization does not have a position on this issue. All references to Kosovo in this publication, whether to the territory, institutions or population, in this text should be understood in full compliance with United Nations Security Council Resolution 1244.

PART I

Introduction

Background

In 2003, participating States of the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE) adopted the Action Plan on Improving the Situation of Roma and Sinti within the OSCE Area (the Action Plan)¹, within the framework of the Ministerial Council in Maastricht. The Action Plan defines the mandate of the OSCE, the Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights (ODIHR) and its Contact Point for Roma and Sinti Issues, as well as of other OSCE institutions and structures in addressing Roma and Sinti issues. At the same time, the Action Plan also defines key policy areas under which OSCE participating States have committed politically to improving the situation of Roma and Sinti across the OSCE area.²

Through its Contact Point for Roma and Sinti Issues, ODIHR is mandated to assist participating States in implementing the Action Plan, as well as to review its implementation periodically.³ In realizing this objective, ODIHR has published three Status Reports, in 2008,⁴ 2013⁵ and 2018,⁶ describing and analysing the progress undertaken in its implementation by OSCE participating States five, ten and

fifteen years after the OSCE Action Plan's adoption in 2003. The reports also analysed persistent challenges in realizing the objectives of the Action Plan within each thematic area it covers, using data and input provided by participating States, international organizations, civil society and academia.

It is worth noting that the first two Status Reports comprehensively covered commitments in all the thematic chapters of the Action Plan, while the Third Status Report primarily focused on the issue of enhancing public and political participation.

This is ODIHR's Fourth Status Report assessing the Action Plan's implementation and marks the 20th anniversary of its adoption. This report examines the progress made and challenges and trends that have surfaced or intensified during the past five years as they affect Roma and Sinti policy and its implementation by the participating States.

Roma and Sinti are one of the largest minorities in Europe, found throughout the OSCE region, but predominantly in Central and South-Eastern Europe.⁷ They have been subject to both widespread and overwhelming discrimination, racism and exclusion in all spheres of public life. This affects the ability of Roma and Sinti populations to gain access to state services on equal terms and to enjoy the same opportunities as others, creating disparate outcomes in most areas of their lives.

Aside from Roma and Sinti, there are other minority groups living within the OSCE area who face many of the same challenges related to discrimination and exclusion, such as Ljuli in Central Asia, Travellers in Ireland and the United Kingdom, or Ashkali and Egyptians in the SEE

1 OSCE Ministerial Council, Decision No. 3/03, "Action Plan on Improving the Situation of Roma and Sinti in the OSCE Area", Maastricht, 1-2 December 2003 (OSCE Action Plan).

2 The key areas include: designing and implementing policy for Roma and Sinti; combating racism and discrimination; ensuring equal access and opportunities for Roma and Sinti in education, employment, housing and health services; enhancing public participation; and assisting Roma and Sinti in crisis and post-crisis situations.

3 Under the Action Plan, ODIHR is tasked with reinforcing "the efforts of the participating States and relevant OSCE institutions and structures aimed at ensuring that Roma and Sinti people are able to play a full and equal part in our societies, and at eradicating discrimination against them," (Para. 1).

4 *Implementation of the Action Plan on Improving the Situation of Roma and Sinti Within the OSCE Area: Status Report 2008*, (Status Report 2008), OSCE/ODIHR, 24 September 2008.

5 *Implementation of the Action Plan on Improving the Situation of Roma and Sinti Within the OSCE Area: Status Report 2013*, (Status Report 2013), OSCE/ODIHR, 24 October 2013.

6 *Third Status Report: Implementation of the Action Plan on Improving the Situation of Roma and Sinti within the OSCE Area*, (Status Report 2018), OSCE/ODIHR, 11 December 2018.

7 The European Commission estimates 10 to 12 million Roma are living in Europe, of which approximately six million are citizens or residents of the European Union Member States. For more information see [Roma equality, inclusion and participation in the EU](#), European Commission, last accessed 13 August 2023.

region, to name a few.⁸ Based on these commonalities, ODIHR works to support the improvement of the situation of these groups as well.

Methodology

The methodology and structure of this Status Report follow those of the First and Second Status Reports, published in 2008 and 2013, with only a few modifications aimed at following the structure of the Action Plan more closely. This report does not attempt to review systematically the situation in particular countries in detail. It does, however, reflect on current developments and trends and on the implementation of commitments, providing examples from participating States. The qualitative categories of *breakthrough*, *visible progress*, *positive change*, *no change* and *negative trends* are used for this purpose, as they were in the First and Second Status Reports. The conclusions of the previous Status Reports form a reference point for this one, and developments are examined to assess the progress and achievements made by participating States over the last five years. The conclusions of the Third Status Report are primarily used for this purpose in the chapter on [Enhancing participation in public and political life](#).

As with the previously published Status Reports, this report draws upon replies from participating States to an ODIHR questionnaire sent to all 57 OSCE participating States.⁹ ODIHR received 35 replies to the questionnaire upon which this report is based.¹⁰ In their responses, participating States provided great detail about their programmes and projects targeting Roma and Sinti implemented within the review period from 2018 to 2022, as well as information about general programmes and projects impacting all citizens. This information has been

included in the body of the report to provide a better understanding of the focus and specific elements of efforts by participating States to implement the Action Plan.

While data provided by the participating States represents the primary source for the review and assessment presented here, this has been supplemented with information gathered from questionnaire replies from OSCE field operations, international organizations and international non-governmental organizations,¹¹ as well as Roma and pro-Roma civil society organizations.¹²

Information in this report is also supplemented by data from civil society representatives gathered during a consultation workshop organized by ODIHR in Warsaw on 28-29 June 2023 for the elaboration of the Status Report,¹³ input from civil society gathered through ODIHR-organized events during the review period and input from activities implemented by ODIHR. The content of this Status Report also includes secondary information published by relevant and reputable sources during the review period, whether by international organizations, civil society or academics, in reports, surveys or studies.¹⁴

Each section of Part II of this Status Report starts with a summary of the continuing challenges and emerging trends during the period covered, followed by analysis of the data provided by participating States, supplemented with information from the other sources listed above. Each chapter concludes with priority areas for action and recommendations.

8 *Ibid.* The European Commission uses the umbrella-term 'Roma' to encompass Roma, Sinti, Kale, Romanichels, Boyash/Rudari, Ashkali, Egyptians, Yenish, Dom, Lom, Rom and Abdal, as well as Traveller populations (gens du voyage, Gypsies, Camminanti, etc.).

9 In comparison, the First Status Report received 19 replies from the then 56 participating States, the Second Report received 40 replies from the 57 participating States, and the Third Status Report received 39 replies from the 57 participating States.

10 Responses were received from: Albania, Belgium, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Croatia, Cyprus, the Czech Republic, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, Georgia, Germany, Ireland, Italy, Latvia, Liechtenstein, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Moldova, Monaco, Montenegro, North Macedonia, Norway, Poland, Romania, the Russian Federation, Serbia, Slovakia, Slovenia, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, Türkiye, Ukraine and the United Kingdom.

11 These include the Council of Europe, the Equinet – European Network of Equality Bodies, and the Phiren Amenca International Network.

12 These include the Brentwood Gypsy Support Group, the Central Council of German Sinti and Roma, the DANROM Faurei Association, the Finnish Roma Association/Suomen Romaniyhdistys Ry, the Împreună Agency for Community Development, the Pavee Point Traveller & Roma Centre, the Roma Centre for Health Policies – SASTIPEN, and the Roma Veritas Albania organization.

13 Upon the conclusion of the consultation workshop, the European Roma Rights Centre submitted written input to ODIHR, as well as the Fundación Secretariado Gitano from Spain. The European Roma Rights Centre published their input, which can be accessed via the following link: [20 years of 'improving the situation of Roma': the OSCE Action Plan and the 'inexcusable failures' of Participating States](#), ERRC, 13 July 2023.

14 In particular, ODIHR uses data from the EU Fundamental Rights Agency (FRA); studies or reports commissioned by the European Union; communication from the European Commission; resources from the Council of Europe and its related bodies including European Court of Human Rights judgments on Roma related cases; civil society reports; academic studies, etc.

Context

Within the review period, Roma and Sinti communities across the OSCE area continued to face critical issues primarily stemming from racist and discriminatory behaviour and practice. In the last five years, various actors continued to step up efforts to address Roma and Sinti issues, particularly by developing and implementing policy, although much remains to be done to improve the situation on the ground, as envisioned in the Action Plan.

While the previous review periods were influenced by the EU enlargement processes and the global financial cri-

sis, this review period was significantly impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic, which had a considerable impact on the situation of Roma and Sinti, further exacerbating existing challenges and creating new ones. The past five years were also characterised by further economic instability and manifestations of anti-Roma sentiment. These have continued to mobilize populist parties and extreme right-wing movements, and impact upon the participation of Roma and Sinti in all walks of life.

PART II

Implementation of the Action Plan

1. FOR ROMA, WITH ROMA: COMPREHENSIVE ROMA STRATEGIES

The 2008 Status Report noted progress in the design and adoption of national strategies for improving the situation of Roma, while stressing serious concerns related to effective implementation. The 2013 Status Report highlighted the standardization of Roma policy in participating States and the increased EU funding for implementation in EU Member States and candidate countries, while, at the same time, pointing to a lack of comprehensive data collection monitoring and evaluation mechanisms.

In this review period, many participating States have adopted Roma policy and regularly updating these has become the norm, particularly in EU Member States or candidate countries. In terms of the participation of Roma in policy processes relating to them, the 2018 Status Report pointed out that the mere existence of a formal consultation mechanism is not automatically conducive to effective participation.¹⁵ Recent years have seen *visible progress* in this regard, particularly in relation to the development of National Roma Strategic Frameworks (NRSFs).¹⁶ Earlier policies linked to the 2011 to 2020 EU Framework for National Roma Integration Strategies (NRISs) had not led to the desired level of participation in overall policy processes and active citizenship.¹⁷ Until 2020, Roma policy fell short, most often because the

intended goals and objectives differed from the actual implemented measures and impact.¹⁸

At the same time, the new EU Roma Strategic Framework for Equality, Inclusion and Participation (EU Roma Strategic Framework) and the EU Council Recommendation on Roma equality, inclusion and participation have acknowledged the need for and endorsed, “a paradigm shift from socio-economic integration towards a more comprehensive approach to promoting equality, inclusion and the participation of Roma”¹⁹. This is also linked to acknowledgement of anti-Roma racism, or what many deem ‘antigypsyism’, as a crucial barrier to effective inclusion.²⁰ Roma civil society strongly advocated this focus and applauds efforts to raise awareness of ‘antigypsyism’.²¹ There is, likewise, progress on including specific indicators and targets, as well as more specific budgeting information, despite continuing to combine national and EU funding, as well as funding from other international donors.

15 Status Report 2018, p.55.

16 Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament, The Council, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions – Assessment report of the Member States’ national Roma strategic frameworks, European Commission, 9 January 2023, p.1.

17 Roma Civil Monitor - A synthesis of civil society’s reports on the quality of the national strategic frameworks for Roma equality, inclusion, and participation, CEU Democracy Institute and European Commission, Directorate-General for Justice and Consumers, June 2022, p.7.

18 *Ibid.*, p.7.

19 *Ibid.*, p.9.

20 While there is no consensus in the OSCE on the terminology ‘antigypsyism’, a large number of OSCE participating States and international organizations have recognized this term and are using it to elaborate on anti-Roma racism. For more information about this term see European Commission Against Racism and Intolerance, [ECRI General Policy Recommendation No 13](#), adopted on 24 June 2011 and amended on 1 December 2020; Council of Europe, [Antigypsyism / Discrimination - Roma and Travellers](#); European Commission, [Antigypsyism: Increasing its Recognition to Better Understand and Address its Manifestations](#), November 2018; International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance, [What is antigypsyism/anti-Roma discrimination?](#); Alliance against Antigypsyism, [Antigypsyism – a reference paper](#).

21 For example, please see [Combating antigypsyism in the post-2020 EU Roma Framework - Recommendations](#), Alliance against Antigypsyism, May 2019; and [Roma Civil Monitor - A synthesis of civil society’s reports on the quality of the national strategic frameworks for Roma equality, inclusion, and participation](#), p.9.

“Each national policy or implementation strategy should: (1) respond to the real problems, needs and priorities of Roma and Sinti communities; (2) be comprehensive; (3) introduce a balanced and sustainable approach to combining human rights goals with social policies; and (4) maximize Roma ownership of the policies that affect them. At the same time, national policies or implementation strategies should be adapted and implemented according to the specific needs of Roma and Sinti populations in particular situations in participating States. Implementation strategies should also include mechanisms to ensure that national policies are implemented at the local level.”

— OSCE Action Plan, Chapter II, Paragraph 4.

Continuing challenges and emerging trends

It is worth noting that the European Union and its institutions, and in particular the European Commission, have continued to be the main driver of adopting, updating and implementing Roma policies for many OSCE participating States. For EU Member States, certain conditions required to access core EU funding has likely been key.²² In candidate countries from the SEE region, the inclusion of the situation of the Roma minority as part of the requirement guaranteeing respect for and protection of minorities within their accession roadmaps plays a decisive role.²³ The breadth and ambition of proposed and implemented interventions are closely linked to the availability and level of EU funding, so progress in pre-accession countries is slower but steady.

The 2013 Status Report pointed to the need for comprehensive and reliable data collection. The Roma Civil Monitor noted that the lack of disaggregated data related to Roma policy implemented before 2020 is challenging for planning and evaluation processes.²⁴ The 2013 Status Report found that several participating States were limited in collecting ethnically disaggregated data, a trend that continued in this reporting period. Roma civil society also recommended that States change policies to allow more

robust mechanisms for collection of disaggregated data, in line with anti-discrimination and data privacy requirements.²⁵ The European Commission has acknowledged the key importance of adequate collection of data as a prerequisite for the effective implementation and tangible impact of the EU Roma Strategic Framework. It explicitly requests Member States to collect data “disaggregated by ethnicity and sex to support policy design, monitoring and review.”²⁶ It further encourages Member States to make use of support from the EU Agency for Fundamental Rights (FRA), including undertaking periodic surveys, which would provide “baseline, mid-term and end-term data” towards measuring impact.²⁷



In the context of collecting disaggregated data, an accurate process for estimating the number of Roma and understanding their needs is a fundamental prerequisite for effective implementation of policies. Slovakia’s Atlas of Roma Communities does this. It consists of a range of projects and activities, implemented by the Office of the Plenipotentiary of the Government of Slovakia for Roma Communities, as a tool to understand the structural inequalities between Roma and the majority population. It focuses on mapping living conditions and the availability of selected services and uses a specific methodology that forms the basis for programming, as well as for increasing the effectiveness of activities at local level.²⁸

22 [Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament and Council – A Union of Equality: EU Roma strategic framework for equality, inclusion and participation](#), European Commission, 7 October 2020, p.13.

23 For more information please see the accession criteria (Copenhagen criteria) laid out by the Treaty on the European Union for countries wishing to become members of the European Union.

24 [Roma Civil Monitor - A synthesis of civil society’s reports on the implementation of national Roma integration strategies in the European Union, Identifying blind spots in Roma inclusion policy](#), p.10.

25 [ERGO Network written feedback on the Roadmap published by DG Justice on 17 Feb 2020. An initiative setting out the EU post-2020 Roma equality and inclusion policy](#), European Roma Grassroots Organizations Network (ERGO), 27 March 2020.

26 [Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament and Council – A Union of Equality: EU Roma strategic framework for equality, inclusion and participation](#), European Commission, 7 October 2020, p.9.

27 *Ibid.*, p.11.

28 For more information, please see in Slovak: [Atlas rómskych komunit 2019 \(Atlas of Roma Communities 2019\)](#), Úrad splnomocnenca vlády SR pre rómske komunity (Office of the Plenipotentiary of the Government of Slovakia for Roma Communities).

On monitoring and evaluation, the 2013 Status Report highlighted that most participating States monitored spending and programme beneficiaries, yet did not collect data on programme outcomes.²⁹ Roma and Sinti civil society organizations have also strongly recommended creating data collection mechanisms and specific indicators to guarantee fundamental rights, while ensuring the participation of Roma and Sinti in these processes.³⁰ The Roma Civil Monitor found that many implementation reports covering Roma policies from participating States lacked SMART indicators.³¹

The European Commission, within the EU Roma Strategic Framework, has requested states to “create mechanisms for implementation, reporting, monitoring and evaluating progress”. At the same time, FRA’s Roma Survey 2020-2021 provided baseline data on the situation of Roma in eight EU Member States, as well as in North Macedonia and Serbia as candidate countries.³² Progress will be monitored against the collected data.³³ For the current review period, there has been *positive change*, as seven participating States have included information regarding specific indicators related to their Roma and Sinti policy in their responses to the ODIHR questionnaire.³⁴

The EU Roma Strategic Framework has laid the groundwork for further progress because a majority of EU Member States have setup monitoring and reporting mechanisms coordinated by their National Roma Contact Points (NRCPs).³⁵ The European Commission noted, however, the

limited capacity of such coordinating structures, insofar as additional financial and human resources are concerned. Despite their broad mandate, effective coordination is beyond reach without resources.³⁶

The 2013 Status Report covered diverse state structures, assigning different roles to the entire cycle of Roma policy, including advisory structures. In this reporting period, many participating States continued to make use of these structures. Most include Roma and non-Roma personnel, also within leadership.

States continue to use a mix of targeted and mainstream interventions. As noted in the 2013 Status Report, certain measures and earmarked budgets specifically target Roma, while many broadly target disadvantaged or socially excluded beneficiaries.³⁷ Unfortunately, participating States are generally unable to track and report outcomes and progress for Roma through mainstreamed interventions.

Regarding budget allocations, previous Status Reports noted progress in reporting data on funding. Likewise with the current report, 17 participating States indicated budget allocations and sources of funding for Roma policy.³⁸ Importantly, many EU Member States rely primarily on EU funding, while candidate countries’ main budgetary sources are EU pre-accession instruments, as well as other donor funding.

In terms of engaging Roma in consultation processes related to policies concerning them, the 2018 Status Report provided detailed signs of progress, particularly in setting up formal consultation mechanisms, including advisory bodies. There are, however, risks that these may not be fully conducive to effective participation.³⁹

29 Status Report 2013, p.10.

30 Recommendations for the national strategic frameworks under the new EU Roma Strategic Framework for Equality, Inclusion and Participation, ERGO Network, December 2020, p.10.

31 Roma Civil Monitor - A synthesis of civil society's reports on the implementation of national Roma integration strategies in the European Union, Identifying blind spots in Roma inclusion policy, p.13.

32 Please see Roma in 10 European Countries - Main results, European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights (FRA), Vienna, 2022.

33 Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament, The Council, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions – Assessment report of the Member States’ national Roma strategic frameworks, p.18.

34 Albania, Finland, Latvia, Lithuania, Slovakia, Slovenia and Spain.

35 Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament, The Council, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions – Assessment report of the Member States’ national Roma strategic frameworks, p.12.

36 Roma Civil Monitor - A synthesis of civil society's reports on the quality of the national strategic frameworks for Roma equality, inclusion, and participation, p.13.

37 Status Report 2013, p.20.

38 Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, Czech Republic, Finland, Ireland, Latvia, Lithuania, Moldova, Montenegro, Poland, the Russian Federation, Slovakia, Slovenia, Spain and Sweden.

39 Status Report 2018.

“The guiding principle in the efforts of participating States and relevant OSCE institutions should be that each policy and implementation strategy should be elaborated and implemented with the active participation of Roma and Sinti communities. It is essential to ensure real participation by Roma and Sinti people in all the decisions that affect their lives. Roma and Sinti people should work alongside local, national and international authorities in the development of these strategies. Equally, Roma communities should be equal partners and should share the responsibility for the betterment of their welfare.”

— OSCE Action Plan, Chapter II, Paragraph 5.

The Roma Civil Monitor highlighted “a generally positive trend” in Roma participation in the development of NRSFs after 2020, as compared with the period 2011-2020 when NRISs were first developed and implemented. At the same time, it expressed concern that, in many countries, Roma input was not incorporated into final documents.⁴⁰ A Council of Europe report also flags that the lack of funding and human resources for Roma civil society organizations has a significant impact on their involvement in policy processes, adding another structural obstacle.⁴¹ Roma civil society continues to raise awareness and provides specific recommendations to increase Roma participation in policymaking.⁴²

The OSCE Action Plan notes the essential role of implementing policies at the local level.⁴³ Within this reporting period, there was *visible progress* despite certain structural challenges that remain to be addressed. Local authorities are responsible for implementing Roma policy measures, whether within their mandates on minority policies or their core responsibilities of local governance. Some international initiatives have provided impetus for further coordination of activities at the local level. For example, the European Alliance of Cities and Regions for Roma Inclusion was set up by the Council of Europe’s Congress of

Local and Regional Authorities, and ROMACT⁴⁴ and ROMACT-ED⁴⁵ are joint programmes of the Council of Europe and the European Commission. The assistance and cooperation of these groups create incentives to increase political will for Roma integration.⁴⁶

In this regard, EU initiatives prompting Local Action Plans and the documentation necessary

for funding and implementation of specific measures are essential. A similar process unfolded in the SEE region and Türkiye with the Roma Integration 2020 initiative, implemented by the Regional Cooperation Council.⁴⁷ The initiative provided a framework for regional meetings and political declarations, as well as technical assistance to governments. It is also key to engage Roma in local development processes as active partners or promoters.⁴⁸ At the same time, for a number of the SEE participating States, the OSCE Field Operations have played an important role in facilitating updates to policy frameworks and action plans, and providing further technical assistance and support.⁴⁹

40 Roma Civil Monitor - A synthesis of civil society’s reports on the quality of the national strategic frameworks for Roma equality, inclusion, and participation, p.7.

41 Roma and Traveller Women’s Access to Justice And Rights Including Taking Stock of the Implementation of the Thematic Action Plan on the Inclusion of Roma and Travellers (2016-2019) and Pointing The Way Forward for the Post-2019 Strategic Policy Document on Roma and Traveller Inclusion, Council of Europe, 2019, p.2.

42 Strengthening Roma participation under the 2020 EU Strategic Framework for Roma Equality, Inclusion and participation and NRIS, ERGO Network, August 2021.

43 OSCE Action Plan, 2003.

44 For more information, please see Council of Europe and European Union Joint Programme ROMACT. From 2013 to 2017, it was implemented in Bulgaria, Czech Republic, Hungary, Italy, Romania and Slovakia, while since 2018, it has continued implementation in Bulgaria and Romania.

45 For more information, please see Council of Europe and European Union Joint Programme ROMACTED, implemented in the Western Balkan countries and Türkiye.

46 EU Award for Roma Integration in the Western Balkan region and Türkiye. More information on the initiative of Roma Active Albania, member of ERGO Network, and funded by the European Union, is available at <https://ergonetw.org/category/joint-initiative>.

47 The initiative was implemented with financial support from the European Union and the Open Society Foundation. More information is available at <https://www.rcc.int/romaintegration2020/home>.

48 For example, please see ERGO Network, *Community-Led Local Development (CLLD) for Roma Inclusion – Evaluation Report 2014-2020*, Brussels, December 2020.

49 Responses to ODIHR questionnaire from the OSCE Mission to Bosnia and Herzegovina, OSCE Mission in Kosovo, OSCE Mission to Serbia, OSCE Mission to Skopje and information received during the Meetings of the Focal Points on Roma in the OSCE Field Operations during the reporting period.



The adoption of the Declaration of Western Balkan Partners on Roma Integration within the EU Enlargement Process is a potential *breakthrough* towards progress. Signatory governments have reiterated their commitment to “continue and enhance efforts for full equality and integration of Roma”.⁵⁰ Nevertheless, concrete follow-up by signatory States will be key to its success.⁵¹

Unfortunately, local administrations continue to resist implementing Roma policy, with little political will toward progress. This sometimes manifests in anti-Roma sentiment voiced by elected representatives and decision makers, including abusively scapegoating Roma during the COVID-19 pandemic.⁵²

The global COVID-19 pandemic increased the challenges for groups at risk of social exclusion and discrimination, including Roma and Sinti. ODIHR has noted these challenges, and the failure of authorities to respond to some of them, as well as noting a number of good practices.⁵³ Responses to the ODIHR questionnaire indicated that 13 participating States undertook specific measures addressed to Roma during the COVID-19 pandemic.⁵⁴ Thirteen also provided direct support in areas specified by the OSCE Action Plan.⁵⁵ Six participating States specified they provided humanitarian assistance.⁵⁶ At the same time, many of the measures implemented by States to alleviate financial challenges did not address those faced by Roma who were engaged in informal economic activities.⁵⁷ A number of participating States reported on the critical role played by Roma mediators in awareness-raising activities, as well as in overall measures implemented to address challenges in Roma communities during the COVID-19 pandemic.

To respond to the challenges of the COVID-19 pandemic, EU Member States issued National Recovery and Resilience Plans (NRRPs). Unfortunately, in the responses to the ODIHR questionnaire, no participating State stated whether they had ensured that Roma and Sinti were included as beneficiaries within their NRRPs. Roma civil society advocated for this and also reviewed the extent to which such inclusion was undertaken in ten EU Member States.⁵⁸ Five refer to Roma in their NRRPs, eight made no link to the NRSFs, and none of the 11 reviewed NRRPs prioritized the social inclusion of vulnerable groups.⁵⁹

Action by participating States

As mentioned, there has been *visible progress* in Roma policy. Out of 35 responses, 29 participating States reported that they have implemented policy or programmes addressing Roma and Sinti. In terms of adopting or updating Roma policy frameworks during the review period, 22 participating States referred to such documents in their responses.⁶⁰ More efforts are needed in gender mainstreaming and undertaking targeted action to address the particular situation of Roma and Sinti women in policy and the thematic areas covered in this report. There has been a *positive change* in the participation of Roma and Sinti in policy processes affecting their lives. During the current reporting period, 28 participating States engaged Roma and Sinti in institutional policy processes, while 21 participating States reported that Roma and Sinti have participated in the design or update of their Roma policies or provided specific input into the process.⁶¹

50 Declaration of Western Balkan Partners on Roma Integration within the EU Enlargement Process, facilitated by Roma Integration 2020, Regional Cooperation Council, Poznan, 5 July 2019.

51 Participants of ODIHR's Status Report consultation workshop, 28-29 June 2023.

52 OSCE Human Dimension Commitments and State Responses to the Covid-19 Pandemic, OSCE/ODIHR, Warsaw, 17 July 2020, pp.144-145.

53 *Ibid.*, p.146.

54 Bulgaria, Croatia, Georgia, Ireland, Latvia, Lithuania, Montenegro, Romania, Slovakia, Slovenia, Spain, Sweden and the United Kingdom.

55 Albania, Bulgaria, Croatia, Czech Republic, Finland, Ireland, Latvia, Poland, Romania, Slovakia, Slovenia, Spain and Türkiye.

56 Albania, Bulgaria, Croatia, Georgia, Latvia and Slovenia.

57 OSCE Human Dimension Commitments and State Responses to the Covid-19 Pandemic, p.145.

58 Austria, Belgium, Czech Republic, France, Hungary, Ireland, Lithuania, Romania, Slovakia and Spain.

59 Member States submit National Recovery and Resilience Plans (NRRPs) – What's in it for Europe's Roma? ERGO Network, 23 September 2021.

60 Albania, Belgium, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Croatia, Czech Republic, Finland, Germany, Ireland, Latvia, Lithuania, Montenegro, North Macedonia, Moldova, Poland, Romania, the Russian Federation, Slovakia, Slovenia, Spain, Sweden and Türkiye.

61 Albania, Belgium, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Croatia, Czech Republic, Estonia, Germany, Ireland, Latvia, Lithuania, Moldova, Montenegro, North Macedonia, Poland, Romania, the Russian Federation, Slovakia, Slovenia, Spain and Sweden.

“The particular situation of Roma and Sinti women should be taken into account in the design and implementation of all policies and programmes. Where consultative and other mechanisms exist to facilitate Roma and Sinti people’s participation in such policy-making processes, women should be able to participate on an equal basis with men. Roma women’s issues should be systematically mainstreamed in all relevant policies designed for the population as a whole.”

— OSCE Action Plan, Chapter II, Paragraph 6.

In their responses to the ODIHR questionnaire, eight participating States included information pertaining to gender mainstreaming their Roma policies.⁶² Nine reported having targeted measures benefiting Roma women.⁶³ Eight participating States include targeted measures addressed to Roma youth in their Roma policies.⁶⁴ Moreover, seven States informed ODIHR about important changes in institutional arrangements related to the implementation of Roma policy, such as hiring Roma and Sinti staff and providing additional resources.⁶⁵ Eight participating States provided information detailing the transparency and openness of their consultation mechanisms and advisory structures for the participation of Roma.⁶⁶ Unfortunately, only three participating States noted the participation of Roma women in such consultation processes, and three participating States provided information about the participation of Roma youth.⁶⁷ Finally, there are a small number of participating States that do not have a comprehensive Roma strategy due to the limited number of Roma inhabitants, but which nevertheless reported a number of specific policy measures targeting Roma and Sinti issues.⁶⁸

In **Bulgaria**, an updated national Roma strategy was adopted in May 2022 for the 2021-2030 period, with a National Action Plan linked to the NRSF for 2022-2023. It focuses on four thematic priorities (education, health,

housing and employment) and sets three horizontal objectives related to equality, inclusion and participation. The NRSF sets out measures facilitating cooperation with, and the participation of Roma civil society and other stakeholders through advisory councils and civic monitoring, including Roma women and youth.

An encouraging development is the design and endorsement of 28 regional strategies and ongoing processes for the adoption of local action plans. Consultation processes were organized through the NRCP by online publication, as well as through the National Roma Platform with EU funding support. Roma civil society representatives are members of monitoring structures for the implementation of EU funds.⁶⁹

In the **Czech Republic**, the previous Strategy for Roma Integration 2015-2020 was updated with one for 2021-2030. Adopted in May 2021, it focuses on four thematic areas — education, health, housing and employment — and also aims at combating ‘antigypsyism’. Funding comes from the national budget, EU funds and other financial instruments. In terms of Roma participation, the Government Council for Roma Minority Affairs, an advisory body, requires at least half of its membership to be Roma, selected through open calls. The newly created position of Government Commissioner for Roma Minority Affairs acts as the vice-chair of the Council. In addition, a committee for monitoring the implementation of Roma policy was set up, with an appointed membership. The work of these groups and the appointed commissioner should be adequately supported, through adequate institutional powers, staffing and budget.⁷⁰

In **Ireland**, the National Traveller and Roma Inclusion Strategy 2017-2021, which will be updated at the start of 2024, is comprised of 149 actions grouped into ten

62 Albania, Croatia, Czech Republic, Finland, Ireland, Poland, Slovakia, Spain.

63 Albania, Bulgaria, Croatia, Finland, Ireland, Lithuania, Poland, Slovenia, Spain.

64 Albania, Croatia, Finland, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, Slovenia, Spain provided information on action addressing Roma youth in their Roma policies.

65 Czech Republic, Finland, Germany, Ireland, Latvia, Slovakia, Slovenia.

66 Croatia, Czech Republic, Estonia, Latvia, Poland, Slovenia, Spain, Sweden.

67 Women: Bosnia and Herzegovina, Slovenia, Sweden; Youth: Bosnia and Herzegovina, Slovenia, Spain.

68 Estonia, Georgia, Switzerland.

69 Response to the ODIHR questionnaire from the Permanent Mission of the Republic of Bulgaria to the UN, the OSCE and other International Organisations in Vienna, received 7 April 2023.

70 Response to the ODIHR questionnaire from the Unit of the Office of the Government Council for Roma Minority Affairs and Secretariat of the Government Council for National Minorities of the Office of the Government of the Czech Republic, received 16 March 2023.

thematic areas. Funding is included in the national budget, while monitoring and consultation is undertaken by a Steering Committee that includes Traveller and Roma representatives and civil society organizations. Other strategies, including those focused on migrant integration and women and girls, are considered to address intersectionality coherently and mainstream Traveller and Roma issues with gender equality, anti-racism and the participation of youth.⁷¹

In **Finland**, the second National Roma Policy was implemented between 2018 and 2022, in line with the EU Framework for National Roma Integration Strategies. Funding came from three sources: ministry budgets, EU funding and the Funding Centre for Social Welfare and Health Organizations. The strategy included measures to promote gender equality and targeted Roma women and youth. In terms of Roma participation in policy processes, there are one national and four regional Advisory Boards on Romani Affairs. There are also Roma working groups set up at the local level, appointed by municipal councils.⁷²

In **North Macedonia**, the Strategy for Roma Inclusion 2022-2030 was adopted in February 2022, focusing on six thematic areas. National Action Plans were developed for each thematic area in April 2023, including a specific National Action Plan for Roma women. Implementation happens within the Ministry of Labour and Social Policy, but more staff are needed. An advisory and coordination body, comprising representatives of relevant ministries and Roma civil society, holds quarterly meetings.⁷³

In **Romania**, the Strategy on Inclusion of Romanian Citizens Belonging to the Roma Minority for the Period 2022 to 2027 focuses on six specific objectives linked to key sectoral policies, as well as three horizontal objectives. It is important to note that “combating discrimination, anti-Gypsyism and anti-Gypsyism generating hate speech or hate crime” was included as a specific objective. At the same time, one of the horizontal objectives links the measures of the strategy with the specific objectives of mainstream thematic strategies and national programmes.

71 Response to the ODIHR questionnaire from the Permanent Mission of Ireland to the OSCE, received 23 March 2023.

72 Response to the ODIHR questionnaire from the Ministry for Foreign Affairs of Finland, received 15 March 2023.

73 Response to the ODIHR questionnaire from the Permanent Mission of the Republic of North Macedonia to the OSCE, received 13 April 2023.

In **Slovakia**, the Strategy for Equality, Inclusion and Participation of Roma by 2030 was adopted in April 2021. It sets baseline and measurable milestones and targets, and places focus on non-discrimination and combating anti-Roma racism, including an objective to end the segregation of Roma communities. Thematic action plans have been developed for a three-year period and will be updated periodically in line with monitoring outcomes. The monitoring process is linked to detailed indicators for which a methodological document has been drafted. The Office of the Plenipotentiary of the Government of Slovakia for Roma Communities coordinates work on the strategy and a Steering Group and Thematic Working Groups ensure implementation. Adoption of the strategy and action plans has been broad and inclusive, creating space for input from relevant authorities and Roma civil society and experts.⁷⁴

In **Türkiye**, under the coordination of the Ministry of Family and Social Services, local action plans that include specific indicators have been prepared together with other stakeholder institutions and organizations in provinces with a high Roma population. Monitoring and evaluation of these action plans will be carried out with the transfer of the prepared local action plans to the IT-based “Roma Action Plan Monitoring Platform”.

Priority areas and recommendations

For most participating States, adopting Roma policy has become the norm, while many have taken efforts a step further by including specific indicators, data collection methodologies and setting out monitoring and evaluation mechanisms. It is essential for such policy frameworks to be implemented effectively, including by continuing work at the local level towards tangible and sustainable improvements for Roma and Sinti. This is intrinsically linked to the political will to push forward political processes.

Another crucial aspect related to current Roma policy is the shift from social inclusion alone, towards equality, inclusion and participation as key pillars of progress. As described, participating States and relevant international organizations have acknowledged anti-Roma racism or ‘antigypsyism’ as a root cause of exclusion and discrimination. The further empowerment of Roma and Sinti, in-

74 Response to the ODIHR questionnaire from the Permanent Mission of Slovakia to the OSCE, received 20 April 2023.

cluding in particular women and youth, and the creation of effective mechanisms for meaningful participation in all policies that impact them is the next step towards positive change.

National governmental bodies that play key roles within the Roma policy cycle must be given appropriate mandates and resources, both human and financial. Likewise, governments should now build on 20 years of lessons and good practice in designing and implementing policy to improve the situation of Roma and Sinti. Within the overall shrinking space for civil society, Roma and Sinti organizations and activists have also been encountering challenges, further impeding their capacity to assist their communities or participate in Roma policy processes. Intergovernmental organizations, governments and other donors should systematically create opportunities and invest in strengthening the capacity of Roma and Sinti civil society.

2. COMBATING RACISM AND DISCRIMINATION

Anti-Roma racism and discrimination has persisted across the OSCE region within the reporting period. Hate incidents and crime, anti-Roma rhetoric, human rights violations and instances of racist and discriminatory behaviour and practices marginalize Roma and Sinti and continue to hamper their participation in all walks of life. Many OSCE participating States recognize the impact of racism and discrimination against Roma and Sinti and have developed a multitude of measures to combat what has been deemed ‘antigypsyism’, a specific type of structural and institutional racism against Roma and Sinti. The Council of Europe has stated that, “antigypsyism is constructed and enacted in different areas [...] and rigorous research is needed to provide a comprehensive understanding of the exclusion mechanisms that Roma face within society.”⁷⁵

The 2008 Status Report recorded such occurrences during the EU enlargement processes,⁷⁶ while the 2013 Status Report noted them against the backdrop of economic difficulties in many OSCE participating States at the time.

⁷⁵ *Antigypsyism: Causes, prevalence, consequences, possible responses* Committee of experts on Roma and Traveller issues (ADI-ROM), Council of Europe, 2021.

⁷⁶ Amid the EU enlargement and during the review period of the First Status Report (2003-2008), many Roma and Sinti individuals and families sought better conditions and opportunities through migration, which fuelled negative reactions in destination countries or areas.

During this reporting period, an increase in racist and discriminatory behaviours and practices amid the COVID-19 pandemic were reported to ODIHR.⁷⁷ The war in Ukraine has also caused a rise in discrimination against Ukrainian Roma refugees, ranging from prejudiced attitudes and stereotyping to being provided shelter in ethnically segregated reception centres.⁷⁸

Legislation and law enforcement

Effective legislation and law enforcement are fundamental to a society that respects diversity, promotes equality and upholds the dignity and rights of all its citizens. In the face of longstanding encounters with racist and discriminatory practices and behaviours, as well as human rights violations, legislation and law enforcement play a vital role in safeguarding Roma and Sinti communities across the OSCE region.

The 2008 Status Report noted *visible progress* in the area of legislation and law enforcement, which was sustained in the 2013 Status Report findings. Both noted the adoption of anti-discrimination legislation and its positive effect on the situation of Roma and Sinti. Between 2018 and 2022, 26 participating States noted the adoption or implementation of further policy measures, programmes, laws and/or legislative amendments related to combating racism and discrimination against Roma and Sinti in their reply to ODIHR’s questionnaire.⁷⁹

While the adoption of legislation and policy programmes continues to constitute *visible progress* made by participating States, many actors in this field have reported issues related to enforcement. Consequently, no significant change in the lives of Roma and Sinti has been seen.⁸⁰ These issues range from impunity for perpetrators of discriminatory or violent acts, to ineffective investigation of acts of violence

⁷⁷ *OSCE Human Dimension Commitments and State Responses to the Covid-19 Pandemic*.

⁷⁸ Response to the ODIHR questionnaire from the Central Council of German Sinti and Roma, received 26 April 2023.

⁷⁹ Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Croatia, Cyprus, Czech Republic, Finland, Georgia, Germany, Ireland, Italy, Latvia, Lithuania, Moldova, Montenegro, North Macedonia, Poland, Romania, Serbia, Slovakia, Slovenia, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, Türkiye and Ukraine.

⁸⁰ These include the European Commission, the Council of Europe, the Fundamental Rights Agency of the European Union, as well as international non-governmental organizations such as the European Network Against Racism, the European Roma Rights Centre, the European Roma Grassroots Organizations Network (ERGO) and the European Network of Equality Bodies: Equinet, among others.

against Roma and Sinti, as well as slow implementation of judgements by domestic courts and the European Court of Human Rights (ECtHR).

“The particular situation of Roma and Sinti women should be taken into account in the design and implementation of all policies and programmes. Where consultative and other mechanisms exist to facilitate Roma and Sinti people’s participation in such policy-making processes, women should be able to participate on an equal basis with men. Roma women’s issues should be systematically mainstreamed in all relevant policies designed for the population as a whole.”

— OSCE Action Plan, Chapter III, Paragraph 8.

Continuing challenges and emerging trends

According to the Eurobarometer survey conducted by the European Union in 2019, which looked into discrimination in EU Member States, attitudes towards Roma and Sinti have improved since the last barometer in 2015. However, there is still widespread discrimination.⁸¹ In a similar vein, the Regional Cooperation Council’s annual Balkan Barometer indicated that social exclusion remained a challenge in the region in 2022, particularly the prejudices faced by Roma and Sinti, which were higher than in previous years.⁸² Their results note that the persistence of prejudice towards Roma and Sinti communities in the region, as well as the widespread refusal to interact with them, remain central obstacles to integration and anti-discrimination policies.⁸³

According to a survey produced by FRA in 2021, a considerable proportion of Roma and Sinti across the EU continue to face high levels of ethnic discrimination in various areas of life. A quarter of Roma respondents felt discriminated against in the 12 months preceding the survey and, of those, most (75 per cent) believed that they were discriminated against because of their ‘Roma back-

ground’.⁸⁴ FRA’s Roma survey indicates that experiences of discrimination in employment doubled between 2016 and 2021. Every third Roma person older than 16 experienced anti-Roma discrimination when looking for work in the last 12 months.⁸⁵ The same report draws attention to the discrimination faced by Roma children, noting that one in five had experienced hate-motivated bullying or harassment while in school over the past 12 months according to their parents/guardians. In Italy, as many as half of Roma children were affected, while in the Czech Republic, Portugal and Serbia the share is almost a quarter.⁸⁶

The European Roma Grassroots Organisations Network (ERGO) also concluded that 41 per cent of Roma feel they have been discriminated against in everyday situations involving work, housing, health and education. Only 30 per cent of the Roma respondents knew that there are laws prohibiting discrimination based on skin colour, ethnic origin or religion.⁸⁷ This statistic reaffirms claims raised by civil society organizations that anti-discrimination legislation and related enforcement measures are slow to reach Roma and Sinti communities.⁸⁸

Likewise, civil society also stated that National Human Rights Institutions (NHRIs) and National Equality Bodies (NEBs) are rarely utilized by Roma and Sinti communities and civil society organizations.⁸⁹ In Finland, for example, civil society has noted that although the Roma population is increasingly active in seeking legal help in discrimination cases, not all cases are reported as the process is lengthy and takes great effort.⁹⁰ While in Albania, civil society noted that the Commissioner for Protection from Discrimination takes an active approach to supporting Roma communities.⁹¹

81 Eurobarometer – Discrimination in the European Union, European Union, May 2019.

82 The barometer depicts results from Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Montenegro, North Macedonia and Serbia. It also includes Kosovo.

83 Balkan Barometer 2022, Regional Cooperation Council, June 2022.

84 Roma in 10 European Countries – Main Results.

85 *Ibid.*

86 *Ibid.*

87 The Situation of Roma in Europe, ERGO Network, 2021.

88 Participants of ODIHR’s consultation workshop on the “Fourth Status Report: Implementation of the OSCE Action Plan on Improving the Situation of Roma and Sinti within the OSCE Area”, Warsaw, 28-29 June 2023 (ODIHR’s consultation workshop).

89 *Ibid.*

90 Response to the ODIHR questionnaire from the Finnish Roma Association/Suomen Romaniyhdistys Ry, received 20 April 2023.

91 Response to the ODIHR questionnaire from Roma Veritas Albania, received 30 April 2023.



During the reporting period in Moldova, a Roma woman became a member of the Council for Preventing and Eliminating Discrimination and Ensuring Equality. In North Macedonia, a Roma man first served as a member of the Commission for Prevention and Protection Against Discrimination and was later elected President of the Commission.

In 2021, ODIHR conducted needs assessment research mapping the capacity-building needs of NHRIs and NEBs to better address Roma and Sinti issues within their work.⁹² The results of this needs assessment indicated that Roma and Sinti activists are often not familiar with domestic and international human rights standards nor the procedures for filing complaints with NHRIs and NEBs. However, this does vary from country to country. Albanian civil society organizations, for example, are quite familiar with the relevant procedures and often file complaints.⁹³

The last decade has seen an overall shrinking of civil society space together with significantly diminished support and funding for organizations focusing on monitoring, assessing and reporting on human rights in a number of participating States. As a consequence, Roma and Sinti organizations that used to conduct this important work have either dissolved or shifted thematic focus due to lack of support.⁹⁴

Building the capacity of Roma and Sinti individuals and organizations remains critical to addressing racist and discriminatory practices and behaviour. To this end, the OSCE Mission to Bosnia and Herzegovina organized a number of training events for young Roma activists on anti-discrimination, stereotypes and prejudices.⁹⁵

Addressing racism and discrimination must also be woven through the frameworks and strategies for Roma and Sinti. A recent European Commission communication to the European Parliament stressed that, while most EU Member States have acknowledged the existence of racism and discrimination in their NRSFs, this awareness should be translated into stronger measures to respond more

adequately to the challenges faced by Roma.⁹⁶ It also highlights discrimination, stating that Roma in the EU are victims of prejudice and social exclusion, despite EU countries having banned discrimination.⁹⁷

The Council of Europe Committee of Experts on Combating Hate Speech drafted a new Committee of Ministers Recommendation on combating hate speech. The Recommendation was adopted by the Committee at its session in May 2022 and includes important provisions for combating, inter alia, hate speech targeting Roma and Traveller groups in Europe.⁹⁸

Moreover, the Roma Civil Monitor Synthesis Report claims that “racism continues to be a serious problem that blights the life of many Roma, [and] weak institutional protection and a lack of coherent legal frameworks have worsened the problem. Forms of institutional racism are also evident in key institutions, which impacts negatively on access to services by many Roma. In some public services there is a ‘culture of poverty’ mind-set on the part of service providers leading to discrimination and paternalism.”⁹⁹

One example of civil society engaging in monitoring racism and discrimination took place in Germany. There, the Central Council for German Sinti and Roma set up the Monitoring and Information Office on Antigypsyism with regional offices to monitor and register ‘antigypsyist’ incidents. The Documentation Centre also runs a ‘Competence Network against Antigypsyism’ and is funded by the federal programme, ‘Live Democracy!’¹⁰⁰

92 Given the limitations triggered by COVID response measures, this unpublished ODIHR report was based on desk-research, as well as on questionnaires sent to the European Network of National Human Rights Institutions, the European Network of Equality Bodies, as well as NHRIs and NEBs and Roma and Sinti NGOs in Albania, Greece, France, Romania and Spain.

93 Response from Roma Veritas Albania.

94 ODIHR’s consultation workshop.

95 Response to the ODIHR questionnaire from the OSCE Mission to Bosnia and Herzegovina, received 28 April 2023.

96 [Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament, The Council, The European Economic and Social Committee and The Committee of the Regions Assessment Report of the Member States’ National Roma Strategic Frameworks](#), European Commission, 2023.

97 [A New EU Roma Strategic Framework – Factsheet](#), European Commission, 2020.

98 Response to the ODIHR questionnaire from the Council of Europe, received 19 April 2023.

99 [A synthesis of civil society’s reports on the implementation of national Roma integration strategies in the European Union Identifying blind spots in Roma inclusion policy](#), Centre for Policy Studies, Central European University, 2020.

100 Response to the ODIHR questionnaire from the Central Council of German Sinti and Roma, received 26 April 2023.

In Ireland, the Pavee Point Traveller and Roma Centre focused on tackling anti-Traveller and anti-Roma racism,¹⁰¹ while in Austria, the Romano Centro organization held awareness-raising workshops for public officials in government administration, teachers and schoolchildren from public schools, and for students of the University of Applied Sciences in Vienna.¹⁰² In Romania, the Sastipen organization monitored Roma's access to public health services and hospitals. Based on the conclusions of their monitoring process, they advocate public policy to apply the rules of non-discrimination in health care.¹⁰³

The ERRC has published a number of reports on the racism and discrimination faced by Roma and Sinti, particularly from the perspective of legislation and law enforcement. One such report states that Roma face discrimination in criminal justice systems and, despite prosecutors' and judges' dissent, racial bias skews outcomes for Roma and Sinti.¹⁰⁴ The report found that professionals working within the criminal justice system openly voiced anti-Roma prejudices and racist stereotypes. It provides a stark illustration of how institutional discrimination in the policies, procedures, operations and culture of the criminal justice system reinforces individual prejudices. Roma are more likely to be ethnically profiled and drawn into the criminal justice system than non-Roma. Once inside, Roma are less likely to receive adequate legal representation, are more likely to be held in pre-trial detention and receive custodial sentences than their non-Roma counterparts. The lack of access to justice for Roma individuals undermines the prospect of institutions earning the trust of their communities.¹⁰⁵

To that end, the ECtHR has published a summary of measures involving nine Member States to protect and further strengthen the rights of Roma and Travellers. These are in response to 17 different judgments related to access to justice, forced sterilization of Roma women, protection from hate crimes, housing rights, protection of properly and the

right to education.¹⁰⁶ While there is progress in the implementation of these judgements, civil society activists claim that the road to justice for Roma and Sinti is often too long and that such victories seldom create adequate improvement in Roma and Sinti communities.¹⁰⁷

According to another ERRC report, the full implementation into domestic law of the Race Equality Directive has not translated into effective action against anti-Roma discrimination. Their research found that official bodies responsible for combating discrimination in countries with significant Roma and Sinti populations are constrained in terms of independence, resources and mandate. There remains a dearth of ethnically disaggregated data and a low level of rights-awareness among marginalized Roma and Sinti communities. This is compounded by widespread and well-founded scepticism concerning the enforcement of judgements and effective remedy to combat discrimination, calling into question the possibility of justice.¹⁰⁸

A significant number of participating States have adopted sound anti-racism and anti-discrimination legal frameworks. In Romania, civil society stated that its framework should, theoretically, contribute to reducing racism against Roma.

The ERRC reported discrimination against Roma and Sinti children in institutional systems, where they were over-represented compared to the population as a whole in Bulgaria, the Czech Republic, Hungary, Italy, Romania and Slovakia. The research found that institutionalized Roma and Sinti children experienced physical abuse, ill-treatment and ethnic discrimination. The vast majority of Roma and Sinti children in institutional care had little prospect of being returned to their biological families, and many spent their whole childhoods in an institutional setting.¹⁰⁹

101 Response to the ODIHR questionnaire from Pavee Point Traveller & Roma Centre, received 9 April 2023.

102 Response to the ODIHR questionnaire from Romano Centro, received 27 March 2023.

103 Response to the ODIHR questionnaire from the Roma Centre for Health Policies – SASTIPEN, received 19 April 2023.

104 Their research was conducted in the Czech Republic, North Macedonia, Slovakia and Serbia.

105 *Justice Denied: Roma in the Criminal Justice System*, European Roma Rights Centre, 2021.

106 *Roma and Travellers Thematic Factsheet*, Department for the Execution of Judgments of the European Court of Human Rights, 8 February 2022.

107 Participants of ODIHR's consultation workshop.

108 *Written Comments by the European Roma Rights Centre to the European Commission concerning the application of Directive 2000/43/EC on Racial Equality*, European Roma Rights Centre, 2020.

109 *Blighted Lives: Romani Children in State Care*, European Roma Rights Centre 2021.

Likewise, UNICEF also found that Roma and Sinti face higher rates of poverty and lower chances of attending school and participating in the labour market, while confronting intolerable discrimination and lack of access to social services and support.¹¹⁰

In the midst of the COVID-19 pandemic, a number of measures adopted by participating States disproportionately targeted Roma and Sinti communities in a discriminatory manner. This was coupled with reported surges in manifestations of prejudice and racism that were tied to biased measures against Roma and Sinti, as well as negative portrayals by public officials, the media and opinion leaders labelling Roma and Sinti as ‘hazards to public safety’, ‘undisciplined’ and ‘spreading the virus’.¹¹¹

The ERGO Network reported that, within Europe, most states did not design or implement measures addressing the vulnerability of Roma and Sinti during the pandemic. Across EU Member States and Enlargement and Neighbourhood Countries, they noted that the negative impact of both the pandemic and its response measures fell heavily and disproportionately on Roma communities, aggravated by long-term systemic racism and discrimination.¹¹²

The war in Ukraine has led large numbers of people, including Roma, to flee Ukraine and seek primary refuge in neighbouring participating States.¹¹³ Exceptional efforts have been made by the authorities of these participating States to manage the refugee influx and provide immediate humanitarian support to those in need. However, ODIHR has received worrying reports from civil society that Roma have faced prejudice and stereotyping at border crossing points. In some instances, they have been provided shelter in ethnically segregated reception centres. Also, they have faced racism and discrimination from authorities, municipalities and, in some cases, volunteers.¹¹⁴ Manifestations of racism, discrimination and hatred against Roma like these

have the potential to further increase the risks of ethnic tension and victimization of Roma communities.¹¹⁵

Action by participating States

An overwhelming majority of participating States who replied to ODIHR’s questionnaire reported that racism and discrimination against Roma and Sinti is addressed in their NRISs and/or NRSFs, particularly to address ‘antigypsyism’.¹¹⁶ This displays *visible progress* in policy-making and programming for Roma and Sinti, as racism and discrimination are the main issues preventing them from playing full and equal roles in societies.

In addition, a number of participating States have developed and adopted national action plans against racism and racial discrimination, following the EU Anti-racism Action Plan 2020-2025 published by the European Commission in September 2020.¹¹⁷ So a number of participating States have included the perspective of Roma and Sinti in their national plans,¹¹⁸ in addition to their NRSFs.

The recent European Commission communication on European Neighbourhood Policy and Enlargement Negotiations also noted the particular situation of Roma and Sinti, stating that the protection of minorities necessitates improved coordination. They also note that, in 2022, most governments committed politically to Roma and Sinti inclusion by adopting strategies and action plans aiming to align with the EU framework.¹¹⁹ This implies that legislative and institutional frameworks for upholding fundamental rights are broadly in place, including the ratification of most relevant international conventions.¹²⁰

Some participating States have also developed specific national projects and direct support for tackling racism and discrimination against Roma and Sinti. For example, the Federal Anti-Discrimination Agency of **Germany**

110 [Rights denied: The impact of discrimination on children](#), UNICEF, 2022.

111 [Roma Rights in the Time of Covid](#), European Roma Rights Centre, 9 September 2020.

112 [The effects of Covid-19 on Roma communities in EU Member States and Enlargement and Neighbourhood Countries](#), ERGO Network 29 April 2020; [The Impact of Covid-19 on Roma Communities in the European Union and the Western Balkans](#), ERGO Network, December 2020.

113 Hungary, Moldova, Poland, Romania and Slovakia.

114 [Roma Rights Under Siege: Monitoring reports from one year of war in Ukraine](#), European Roma Rights Centre, 28 February 2023.

115 For more information see the chapter on Roma in Crisis and Post-Crisis Situations.

116 The full list of OSCE participating States who replied to ODIHR’s questionnaire is available in Appendix 5 of this report.

117 See the [EU Anti-racism Action Plan 2020-2025](#).

118 See for example, the anti-racism programme [An Equal Finland: Government Action Plan for Combating Racism and Promoting Good Relations between Population Groups](#); or the Norwegian Government’s [Action Plan against Racism and Discrimination on the Grounds of Ethnicity and Religion](#).

119 [2022 Communication on EU Enlargement Policy](#), European Commission, DG NEAR, 12 October 2022.

120 *Ibid.*

plans to set up a participatory process with civil society organizations in which the possibilities and conditions for collecting quantitative data will be explored. The Agency has published a call for funding to investigate ‘antigypsyism’ with a focus on discrimination against Roma and Sinti.¹²¹ The Service for Combating Racism of Switzerland has also supported a number of projects aimed at combating racism and discrimination against Roma and Sinti.¹²² Montenegro has worked on the development of an accredited programme for the fight against ‘antigypsyism’.¹²³ The government of Sweden has, likewise, presented their “Action Programme Against Antigypsyism”, as a complement to the national plan against racism, other forms of hostility and hate crimes.¹²⁴



Within the reporting period, Romania and Spain have spearheaded the adoption of specific legislation on ‘antigypsyism’, which represents a *positive change*. The Parliament of Romania has adopted a Roma deputy’s legislative proposal for Preventing and Sanctioning Antigypsyism activities. This law’s dissuasive provisions introduce specific anti-Roma crimes, separate from those on the existing legislation sanctioning hate speech and hate crimes.¹²⁵ In Spain in 2022, the new Law of Equal Treatment and Non-Discrimination was approved, in which ‘antigypsyism’ is recognized for the first time as an aggravating factor in hate crimes, which prompted the modification of the Criminal Code classifying ‘antigypsyism’ as a hate crime.¹²⁶

Some caution is necessary when implementing these laws as high levels of burden of proof may create significant issues for Roma and Sinti.¹²⁷ For example, in Romania, since its adoption only one case invoking the law has been brought by a potential victim.

Montenegro’s Ministry of Human and Minority Rights, in cooperation with the Center for Training in the Judiciary and the State Prosecutor’s Office, organized two days of training for judges and state prosecutors on “Hate Crime and Hate Speech in the Fight Against Antigypsyism”. Judges and state prosecutors were presented with the situation of Roma and Egyptians in Montenegro and the challenges they face.¹²⁸ Similarly, The National Agency for Roma in Romania has designed a training course on Roma history, culture, anti-discrimination legislation and institutions, as well as recognizing anti-Roma attitudes.¹²⁹

Following the development of the Swedish Commission against Antigypsyism back in 2016,¹³⁰ Germany also established an Independent Commission on Antigypsyism. In 2021, this commission issued an 800-page report¹³¹ that assessed the historically rooted structural racism against Roma and Sinti in Germany, as well as the ongoing racism in various fields of society from knowledge production to law enforcement.¹³² The Commission recommended, among other things, the establishment of an independent commissioner against ‘antigypsyism’. Germany followed this recommendation and appointed a Federal Government Commissioner against Antigypsyism and for the Life of Sinti and Roma in Germany in 2022.

In their reply to ODIHR’s questionnaire, 26 participating States noted the adoption or implementation of policy measures, programmes, laws and/or legislative amendments related to combating racism and discrimination against Roma and Sinti.¹³³ Most new laws, protocols, and legislative amendments passed during the reporting period did not specifically target Roma and Sinti. Roma and Sinti were often placed on an equal footing with other citizens.

121 Response to the ODIHR questionnaire from the Federal Foreign Office of Germany, received 4 April 2023.
 122 Response to the ODIHR questionnaire from the Federal Office of Culture of Switzerland, received 5 April 2023.
 123 Response to the ODIHR questionnaire from the Permanent Mission of Montenegro to the UN, OSCE and Other International Organizations, received 30 March 2023.
 124 Response to the ODIHR questionnaire from the Permanent Delegation of Sweden to the OSCE, received 22 March 2023.
 125 Response to the ODIHR questionnaire from the Permanent Mission of Romania to the OSCE, 19 April 2023.
 126 Response to the ODIHR questionnaire from the Permanent Representation of Spain to the OSCE, received 11 April 2023.
 127 ODIHR’s consultation workshop.

128 Response from Montenegro.
 129 According to the Response from Romania, the National Agency for Roma developed inter-institutional partnerships with the University of Medicine and Pharmacy Carol Davila in Bucharest and the Police Academy in Bucharest for the implementation of the training, which may include a series of optional courses for students and teachers.
 130 *Kraftsamling mot antiziganism* (Joining forces against anti-Gypsyism), Stockholm, 2016.
 131 For more information see Gilda-Nancy Horvath, *Report details anti-Roma discrimination in Germany*, Deutsche Welle, 7 June 2021.
 132 For more information see *The Antigypsyism Commission in Germany: Lessons for Europe?*, CEPS, 12 November 2021.
 133 A total of 35 participating States replied to ODIHR’s questionnaire.

In contrast, for example, **Slovenia's** Advocate of the Principle of Equality assessed the anti-racism and anti-discrimination legal framework defining the rights and protection of rights of Roma and Sinti in Slovenia in both current and draft legislation. This assessment recommended amendments to legislation or adoption of new regulations by the competent institutions.¹³⁴

At the regional level, a 2018 European Parliament resolution on protection and non-discrimination of minorities in the EU Member States was also an important development in combating discrimination and protecting national and linguistic minorities, which has a de facto impact on Roma and Sinti.¹³⁵

State responses to cases of discrimination and hate crime against Roma

During the review period, recorded hate incidents and crimes against Roma and Sinti increased in ODIHR's hate crime reporting. Between 2018 and 2021, a total of 304 incidents were reported.¹³⁶ On top of this, hate incidents and crimes against Roma and Sinti are still under-reported to ODIHR. The reported data therefore provides only a piece of the overall picture of hate crimes against Roma and Sinti.¹³⁷ Also, hate incidents and crimes are sometimes grouped under a cluster of ethnic bias crimes, which are not further disaggregated by ethnic groups.

Data provided by NHRIs and NEBs are also often not adequately disaggregated. Nonetheless, a number of participating States replied to ODIHR's questionnaire listing relevant statistics. **Lithuania** noted that the Office of the Equal Opportunities Ombudsperson gets several complaints concerning Roma discrimination annually.¹³⁸ **Italy** noted that the number of complaints concerning 'antigypsyism' in the last few years offers a relevant snapshot of the discrimination and harassment faced by Roma and Sinti.¹³⁹

134 Response to the ODIHR questionnaire from the Permanent Representation of the Republic of Slovenia to the UN, OSCE and other International Organisations in Vienna, 21 April 2023.

135 [Fighting discrimination of EU citizens belonging to minorities in the EU Member States](#), European Parliament, 7 February 2018.

136 ODIHR's reporting includes a total of 57 incidents recorded in 2021, 84 in 2020, 96 in 2019, and 67 in 2018. For more information see [ODIHR Hate Crime Reporting - Anti-Roma hate crime](#).

137 *Ibid.*

138 Response from Lithuania.

139 Response to the ODIHR questionnaire from the Permanent Mission of Italy to the OSCE, received 20 March 2023.

Finland noted that, in recent years, most engagements with the Non-Discrimination Ombudsman by Roma have concerned housing. The Non-Discrimination Ombudsman also frequently receives claims related to ethnic discrimination and profiling by security guards, often from Roma people.¹⁴⁰ **Poland** reported that, for many years, the investigations conducted by the Ombudsman's Office have been dominated by cases concerning the protection of the rights of the Roma minority. Between 2020 and 2022 a total of 60 cases have been related to national and ethnic minorities, of which the majority concerned the Roma community.¹⁴¹

Bulgaria noted that the Commission against Discrimination published two annotated decisions in 2022.¹⁴² **Croatia** stated that their Ombudsman's report for 2021 indicates that, since the introduction of the Law on Suppression of Discrimination, the most common ground of discrimination on which citizens complain to the Ombudsman is racial or ethnic affiliation. Most often, the victims are either Serbs or members of the Roma national minority. According to data from 2021, the Ministry of Internal Affairs reported two hate crimes and two cases of hate speech against Roma, out of 101 criminal acts qualifying as hate crime or speech. Croatia concluded that this, however, might indicate under-reporting of similar crimes by Roma victims.¹⁴³

The Czech Republic noted that, within the reporting period, the Ombudsman (their NEB) had received 72 complaints alleging discrimination on the grounds of being Roma.¹⁴⁴ **Germany** reported that, in the period from 2018 to 2022, a total of 66 cases involving discrimination against Roma and Sinti were submitted to the Federal Anti-Discrimination Agency. In addition to these, two specific cases were brought before the courts.¹⁴⁵

140 Response to the ODIHR questionnaire from the Ministry for Foreign Affairs of Finland, received 15 March 2023.

141 Response to the ODIHR questionnaire from the Permanent Mission of the Republic of Poland to the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe, received 15 March 2023.

142 Response from Bulgaria.

143 Response to the ODIHR questionnaire from the Permanent Mission of the Republic of Croatia to the OSCE, UN and Other International Organizations, received 17 April 2023.

144 Response from the Czech Republic.

145 Response to the ODIHR questionnaire from the Central Council of German Sinti and Roma, received 26 April 2023.

Moldova reported 29 cases investigated for discrimination against Roma that were brought before the Council for Preventing and Eliminating Discrimination and Ensuring Equality during the reporting period. Among these, the Council found that Roma faced ethnic discrimination eight times. Of the remaining complaints submitted between 2018 and 2022, in eight cases the fact of discrimination was not established, while another 11 complaints were declared inadmissible. Based on the available information, 56 per cent of the complaints were brought before the Council by Roma women and 44 per cent by Roma men.¹⁴⁶

Montenegro reported that, in 2021, 164 cases of discrimination were admitted, while in 2020 there were six cases in which discrimination by members of the Roma and Egyptian population was pointed out.¹⁴⁷ **Romania** noted that their NEB, the National Council for Combating Discrimination, reported a total of 270 cases based on ethnicity filed over the entire five-year reporting period, as well as ten on racial grounds. The majority of these NEB decisions, which are contested in court, are maintained during the courts' proceedings.¹⁴⁸

In **Slovakia**, the Office of the Plenipotentiary of the Government of Slovakia for Roma Communities has initiated a series of administrative and criminal proceedings for the incorrect placement of Roma children in schools. In the criminal protection of Roma, the Plenipotentiary cooperates with the National Counter-Terrorist Unit with the aim of punishing all hate crimes against Roma.¹⁴⁹ In 2021, the Government of Slovakia apologized for the intervention of the Police Corps in Moldava nad Bodvou in 2013,¹⁵⁰ as well as for the unlawful sterilization of women. A working

group on the legislative proposal to compensate the victims of unlawful sterilizations was created and, in 2023 a legislative proposal is planned to be adopted.¹⁵¹ The Council of Europe Commissioner for Human Rights has stated that the government should deliver justice to victims of forced sterilization through a compensation mechanism.¹⁵²

Slovenia reported that its Advocate of the Principle of Equality investigated nine cases of discrimination over the reporting period, only two of which were confirmed as discrimination and, at this time, only one of which was provided effective redress.¹⁵³ Slovenia also reported on complaints received by the Human Rights Ombudsman of the Republic of Slovenia. Over the reporting period, 28 complaints of discrimination were submitted to this body; in some discrimination was confirmed.¹⁵⁴

Sweden stated that, in 2018, a total of 109 cases of 'anti-gypsyism' hate crimes were reported to the police. In 2020, 55 cases of 'antigypsyism' hate crimes were reported.¹⁵⁵ Women were complainants in 36 per cent of these cases, and men were complainants in 33 per cent of cases. An additional 13 per cent of cases contained multiple complain-

146 Response to the ODIHR questionnaire from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and European Integration, Multilateral Cooperation Directorate, OSCE and International Security Section of Moldova, received 2 May 2023. Annually, in 2018 – eight cases were brought and two proven; in 2019 – four cases and one proven; in 2020 – four cases and one proven; in 2021 – eight cases and three proven; in 2022 – five cases and one proven.

147 Response from Montenegro.

148 Response from Romania. In 2018, they reported a total of 35 cases based on ethnicity filed and one on racial grounds. In 2019 there were 69 cases filed based on ethnicity and three on racial grounds. In 2020 there were 71 cases filed based on ethnicity grounds and four on racial grounds. In 2021, there were 58 cases based on ethnicity grounds and in 2022 there were 37 cases based on ethnicity grounds and two on racial grounds.

149 Response to the ODIHR questionnaire from the Permanent Mission of Slovakia to the OSCE, received 20 April 2023.

150 For more information about this case, please see [Slovak Government to Pay Damages to Roma from Moldava Nad Bodvou Police Raid](#), ERRIC, 2 June 2022.

151 Response from Slovakia.

152 Council of Europe Commissioner for Human Rights, [Letter to the Prime Minister of Slovakia](#), 19 July 2021.

153 Response from Slovenia. In 2018 – no cases; in 2019 – one case reported by a man, discrimination was confirmed and effective redress was provided; in 2020, two cases, discrimination was not confirmed; in 2021 – five complaints from five men, no discrimination was confirmed; in 2022 – one complaint from three complainants, one man and two women, discrimination was confirmed, but no information yet on the effectiveness of the redress mechanism.

154 *Ibid.* In 2018, a total of eight cases were submitted by six women and two men; in 2019, eight complaints submitted by three women and five men, redress was deemed effective in all cases; in 2020, there were nine complaints received from two women and seven men; in 2021, two complaints from one woman and one man, discrimination was confirmed in both; and in 2022, one complaint was submitted by a woman and a man. Of these, in 2022, one was in violation of the right to access basic infrastructure, and the other was in violation of the right to adequate housing. In three cases, discrimination was not confirmed, in one case no decision was brought due to non-cooperation by the complainant, and in two cases, the Ombudsperson provided information on further legal remedies. Finally, in one case the Ombudsperson's intervention was successful in providing connection to the electricity grid for Roma residents of one settlement.

155 The Swedish National Council for Crime Prevention (BRÅ) has made significant changes to their methods between 2018 and 2020. It is therefore important to note that comparisons only between the hate crime data of 2018 and 2020 may not reflect an accurate picture or trend.

ants of different genders.¹⁵⁶ **Switzerland** reported a 2019 ruling finding a racist slogan violated the human dignity of the Roma targeted and incited hatred.¹⁵⁷

The OSCE Mission to Skopje reported that, in 2022, the Commission for Prevention and Protection against Discrimination in **North Macedonia** found a total nine cases of discrimination against Roma. Three cases of direct discrimination by city authorities, and two cases of segregation of Roma children in public schools. The Commission also determined intersectional discrimination by the Ministry of Health due to unequal access to health care for Roma women, one case of discrimination in access to services at a catering facility, one case of unequal treatment of a secondary school student, and one case of disturbing hate speech on social networks.¹⁵⁸

In **Serbia**, the OSCE Mission there reported that, in 2021 and 2022, the Serbian Commissioner for the Protection of Equality received a total of 295 complaints of discrimination on the grounds of national and ethnic background, of which 217 referred to members of the Roma minority.¹⁵⁹

Priority areas and recommendations

Across the OSCE area, participating States have adopted fair legislation to combat racism and discrimination. Moreover, NRISs and NRSFs have become more responsive to preventing racist and discriminatory practices and behaviour, particularly to combating ‘antigypsyism’. However, civil society warns that, without adequate budgeting, most frameworks and action plans aimed at combating racism and discrimination will remain unharnessed. More effort is also needed to enforce laws and implement ECtHR judgments. Further promotion of community engagement and consultation activities with Roma and Sinti women and men is also key, as well as establishing mechanisms for reporting incidents of discrimination and providing accessible avenues for individuals and communities to seek redress.

156 Response from Sweden.

157 Response from Switzerland.

158 Response to the ODIHR questionnaire from the OSCE Mission to Skopje, received 27 April 2023.

159 Response to the ODIHR questionnaire from the OSCE Mission to Serbia, received 19 April 2023. In 2021 – 96 complaints of discrimination on the grounds of national and ethnic background, 74 referred to Roma; in 2022 – 163 complaints of discrimination, 143 referred to Roma.

In view of the overall shrinking space for human rights work, it remains critical to provide support and funding for civil society organizations to conduct human rights monitoring to assess and report on the human rights situation of Roma and Sinti, including women and youth, and to provide support to potential victims. Human rights-based capacity-building of Roma and Sinti civil society organizations, particularly those addressing women’s and youth issues is also needed to address violations of rights, as well as racist and discriminatory practice and behaviour.

Hate-motivated incidents and crimes against Roma and Sinti continue to persist. It is essential that reporting mechanisms allow for adequate disaggregation and classification of hate incidents and crimes. Hate-motivated incidents and crimes are message crimes that can create a climate of impunity and may encourage further acts of violence, they should therefore be properly investigated, prosecuted, and sentenced leaving no room for impunity. Preventing these hate incidents and crimes requires a multi-tiered approach and response from state authorities and civil society. In addition, ample attention should be given to Roma and Sinti women, particularly with hate crime victim support.

The participation and representation of Roma and Sinti in NHRIs and NEBs is a positive practice currently seen in a few participating States. It is vital to continue involving them as active members, as well as to recognize their expertise and life experiences in addressing the issues they face. Advisory groups could be set up to shape more effective strategies that are responsive to the needs of Roma and Sinti communities. In doing so, particular attention to intersectionality should be given, including giving a platform and voice to Roma and Sinti youth. Similarly, outreach and awareness-raising campaigns could also potentially increase the cooperation between these bodies and Roma and Sinti communities.

Police and Roma

Historically, the police were usually the first representatives of the state to interact with Roma and Sinti. During their long history in Europe, majority populations often perceived Roma and Sinti as criminal groups, and the police treated them as such. Such stereotyped perceptions about Roma and Sinti escalated to such an extent that the Nazi regime declared them ‘asocial’ and targeted them for racial extermination.

Due to their longstanding experience of oppression and abuse of force by police and law enforcement authorities, Roma and Sinti have developed an attitude of distrust towards the police. Thus, cooperation with the police and attempts by Roma and Sinti individuals to join police forces have often been rejected. Some of the main challenges that Roma and Sinti have experienced and still experience include ethnic profiling, disproportionate or excessive use of force, failure by the police to respond effectively to ensure the protection of Roma and Sinti victims of crime and racist violence, as well as failure to investigate such cases properly.

Roma and Sinti victims continue to be affected by a lack of effective access to justice and the means to challenge and obtain redress, including for police misconduct. Instances of police abuse are often improperly investigated, and perpetrators go unpunished. The ECtHR, in a number of cases brought against different States, found that state authorities failed to carry out effective investigations of criminal acts against Roma by law enforcement officials and/or non-state actors.

Roma and Sinti women are particularly vulnerable to multiple forms discrimination as victims of crime. Examples include reported cases of domestic violence with no response or intervention by the police; and Roma and Sinti women victims of human trafficking being left without protection or labelled as illegal migrants.

The Action Plan recommends the development of “policies: (1) to improve relations between Roma and Sinti communities and the police, so as to prevent police abuse and violence against Roma and Sinti people; and (2) to improve trust and confidence in the police among Roma and Sinti people.”

— OSCE Action Plan, Chapter III, Paragraph 28.

Continuing challenges and emerging trends

According to a survey conducted by FRA, the share of Roma respondents who tend to trust the police overall has

not changed over time, nor shown considerable variation across countries. Roma tend to trust the police less than the general population in all countries surveyed.¹⁶⁰

ERRC research on police violence against Roma conducted in six EU Member States suggests that all too often there is impunity for law enforcement officials when they are involved in crimes against Roma. This demonstrates the extent to which anti-Roma racism is endemic and systemic within the ranks of police officers. The report suggests that issues around access to justice and anti-Roma racism run deeper than discrete incidents of police brutality.¹⁶¹

Different research conducted by the ERRC and Fair Trials across eight European countries suggests that Roma communities are not only often targeted, but are also harassed and provoked by the police. The sheer volume of complaints, cases and evidence of police misconduct collected by the ERRC over recent years leaves little doubt that anti-Roma racism and discrimination is systemic within law enforcement agencies in many European states.¹⁶²

The Roma Civil Monitor also reports that Roma experience ethnic profiling, stop-and-search and encounters with police officers that further hinder trust in law enforcement. A lack of accountability, verging on impunity in some countries, means that police officers often deploy excessive force and remain cavalier about the human rights and dignity of Roma detainees.¹⁶³

Some civil society organizations work to actively improve relations between Roma and Sinti communities and the police. In one such example, Ireland’s Pavee Point organization is regularly consulted by, or meets with senior Gardai (Irish police), including the Commissioner (chief of police), to address Traveller and Roma issues and experiences. They are represented in both local and national advisory and consultative groups, including the Garda Traveller Advisory Group, where they highlight the issue

160 Roma in 10 European Countries - Main results. In 2016, 37 per cent trusted the police while in 2021 the figure was 39 per cent.

161 Brutal and Bigoted: Policing Roma in the EU, European Roma Rights Centre, 2022.

162 Justice Denied: Roma in the Criminal Justice System.

163 A synthesis of civil society’s reports on the implementation of national Roma integration strategies in the European Union Identifying blind spots in Roma inclusion policy.

of Travellers and Roma being over-policed and under-protected.¹⁶⁴ The use of complaint mechanisms by Travellers and Roma in relation to policing malpractice remains extremely low despite experiencing discrimination and ethnic profiling by members of the police service. Both United Nations Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination, UNCERD and European Commission against Racism and Intolerance (ECRI) have urged the state to clearly define and prohibit ethnic profiling by the police with legislative measures and Pavee Point continues to advocate for this measure.¹⁶⁵

Police training is taking place across the OSCE. In Romania, the civil society organization Sastipen implemented a training programme for police officers on “Methods and techniques for working in vulnerable communities”. The course was attended by 42 police officers.¹⁶⁶ The Finnish Roma Association trains Helsinki police officers and has conducted four training events.¹⁶⁷ While in Germany, the Documentation and Culture Centre of German Sinti and Roma runs training for the police at federal and regional levels.

OSCE’s Field Operations have also provided active support in this area. For example, during the reporting period, the OSCE Mission to Bosnia and Herzegovina facilitated meetings between Roma communities and the police in all ten municipalities. These meetings provided an opportunity for the Roma community to raise issues of concern, as well as for police officers to inform Roma about their work. The positive outcome of these meetings is that the security situation in the Brčko and Čapljina settlements improved, as the police undertook measures to address Roma community concerns in a more systematic manner. In addition, these meetings built trust between police and Roma communities in both municipalities.¹⁶⁸

The OSCE Mission to Kosovo has also addressed issues related to under-representation of Roma and Ashkali communities in law enforcement.¹⁶⁹ Likewise, the OSCE Mission to Skopje cooperated with ODIHR in implement-

ing ODIHR’s training-of-trainers programme “Effective and Human Rights-Compliant *Policing in Roma and Sinti Communities*”.¹⁷⁰

Within the reporting period, the Council of Europe’s Roma and Travellers Team has been quite active in supporting their Member States in addressing issues between Roma and the police. In 2020, they published their *Toolkit for Police Officers*, which includes standards on racially motivated crimes and non-discrimination and relevant ECtHR case law, with the aim of supporting police officers to better understand, investigate and prosecute human rights violations.¹⁷¹ The Council of Europe also provides training to police trainers based on this toolkit. With ODIHR they have established a common initiative to strengthen the capacity of law enforcement by developing a joint training curriculum based on the Toolkit and ODIHR’s training curriculum on effective and human rights-compliant policing in Roma and Sinti communities. The training development began in 2019 and a test training course took place in 2021. The Council of Europe and ODIHR will offer and deliver the training to state authorities.¹⁷²

Action by participating States

There has been little change since the publication of the 2008 Status Report or the 2013 Status Report in terms of issues between the police and Roma and Sinti. Within the reporting timeframe, 15 participating States noted the adoption or implementation of policies or programmes aimed at improving relations between Roma and Sinti communities and the police.¹⁷³ This represents *visible progress* in terms of efforts to establish change on matters of policing. However, the frequent reports by civil society of harsh treatment demonstrate no significant change in Roma and Sinti communities.

The **Albanian** state police have taken measures to guarantee the freedoms and fundamental rights of people de-

164 Response from the Pavee Point Traveller & Roma Centre.

165 *Ibid.*

166 Response from the Roma Centre for Health Policies – SASTIPEN.

167 Response from the Finnish Roma Association/Suomen Romaniyhdistys Ry.

168 Response from the OSCE Mission to Bosnia and Herzegovina.

169 Response to the ODIHR questionnaire from the OSCE Mission in Kosovo, received 2 May 2023.

170 Response from the OSCE Mission to Skopje.

171 For more information see *Toolkit for Police Officers: Council of Europe standards on racially motivated crimes and non-discrimination*, Council of Europe, 19 February 2020.

172 Response from the Council of Europe.

173 Albania, Bulgaria, Czech Republic, Finland, Germany, Ireland, Italy, Moldova, Montenegro, Poland, Romania, Slovakia, Slovenia, Sweden, and Türkiye from a total of 35 participating States that replied to ODIHR’s questionnaire.

prived of liberty within Local Police Directorates, Police Stations, including those belonging to vulnerable communities, such as Roma and Egyptians, by ensuring that their legal rights are guaranteed and respected equally, without discrimination.¹⁷⁴

Bulgaria noted that additional training is organized within the framework of the National Strategy of the Republic of Bulgaria for Equality, Inclusion and Participation of Roma (2021-2030) and the National Action Plan 2022-2023. The main themes are human rights and skills for working with representatives of Roma communities and identifying public order and security problems in local Roma communities. In 2022, a total of 9,672 police officers of the Sofia Directorate of Interior and the Regional Directorate of the Ministry of Interior were trained.¹⁷⁵ Under the Norwegian Financial Mechanism 2014-2021, Bulgaria has been implementing the project “Improving Coordination and Dialogue between the Police and Roma Society”.¹⁷⁶ As part of the project, the Academy of the Ministry of Interior cooperated with ODIHR to implement the training-of-trainers course, “Police and Roma — Effective and Human Rights-Compliant Policing”.

In **Croatia**, professional training was provided to police officers under the “Protocol on Hate Crimes”, which sensitized participants for work with the Roma community. In addition, in 2021 and 2022, the Medimurje Police Department adopted the “Implementation Program of Preventive Measures” aimed at increasing safety and strengthening the social inclusion of Roma in Medimurje.¹⁷⁷

The **Czech Republic** noted their “Strategy for the Work of the Police of the Czech Republic in Relation to Minorities until 2020”, the implementation of which is managed by the Ministry of the Interior. They also noted the role of liaison officers for minorities, who work to build mutual trust between police and minorities. The liaison officers for minorities work at regional directorates of the Police of the Czech Republic.¹⁷⁸

174 Response to the ODIHR questionnaire from the Directorate of Social Inclusion and Gender Equality of the Republic of Albania, received 15 March 2023.

175 Response from Bulgaria.

176 *Ibid.*

177 Response from Croatia.

178 Response from the Czech Republic.

The National Police Board of **Finland** and the Finnish Roma Association, in 2021, developed non-discrimination practices for the police and published educational material focused on equality and cooperation for the Police University College.¹⁷⁹ **Germany** noted cooperation between the regional civil society organization Verband Deutscher Sinti und Roma Baden-Württemberg and Police to further integrate education modules on ‘antigypsyism’ into police training. In addition, the Federal Ministry of Justice funded the “Racism, Antisemitism, Right-Wing Extremism — Strengthening Law Enforcement and Victim Protection” project of the German Institute for Human Rights.¹⁸⁰

Ireland established the Garda Traveller Advisory Group in 2020. The Group consists of representatives from national and regional Travellers organizations and projects, including Pavee Point. The aim is to build trust, identify policing needs, strengthen relations, enhance positive engagement and encourage recruitment, thereby making Garda services more accessible to the Traveller and Roma community.¹⁸¹

In their reply to ODIHR’s questionnaire, **Italy** stated that, in October 2021, the Observatory for Security against Acts of Discrimination carried out a training-of-trainers course in cooperation with ODIHR. The training raised awareness among police officers of human rights-compliant policing approaches to Roma and Sinti, as well as increasing the trust of people belonging to these communities among the Police Force, in order to combat under-reporting.¹⁸² In addition, the Observatory took part in a training-of-trainers course organized by the Council of Europe from 22 November to 2 December 2022. This was focused on providing law enforcement practitioners with a useful guide to improving their knowledge of Roma and Sinti communities in order to ensure an operational response and approach that is respectful of human rights and key European standards.¹⁸³ **Norway** reported that the police established a contact person for Roma.¹⁸⁴

179 Response from Finland. The training tool: [Poliisi ja romanit – yhdenvertaisuuden ja yhteistyön kysymyksiä](#) (Police and Roma – issues of equality and cooperation), is available online in Finnish.

180 Response from Germany.

181 Response from Ireland.

182 Response from Italy.

183 *Ibid.*

184 Response to the ODIHR questionnaire from the Norwegian Ministry of Local Government and Regional Development, Department of Indigenous and National Minority Affairs, received 15 March 2023.

Poland continues to use ODIHR's training programme for police — "Training Against Hate Crimes for Law Enforcement" (TAHCLE).¹⁸⁵ In 2020 and 2021, Poland reported that 18,815 police officers and law enforcement personnel took part in their TAHCLE Programme to better prevent and combat hate crimes.¹⁸⁶ As part of the project on Anti-Discrimination Education for Professional Groups, in cooperation with the POLIN Museum of the History of Polish Jews, in 2018 a guidebook entitled *Roma: A guide for the Police* was published for heads of police units to use during professional development courses for police officers.¹⁸⁷

The National Agency for Roma in Romania designed a training course on Roma history, culture, anti-discrimination legislation and institutions, as well as recognizing anti-Roma attitudes. This course is expected to launch in 2023 at the Police Academy. This approach is aimed at reducing the distance between the Roma and non-Roma public service deliverers, to reduce discrimination against Roma in accessing public services, while addressing the lack of knowledge, specialised training and exposure to diversity. In addition, police officers and magistrates received training during the reporting period, with the support of ODIHR and the Council of Europe.¹⁸⁸

In the context of raising awareness and combating discrimination in Slovenia, police officers are trained to deal with Roma community members within the framework of their responsibilities. Over five years, 299 public employees took part in training courses to counter discrimination. The programme, "Recognizing Stereotypes, Control of Prejudices and Prevention of Discrimination in a Multicultural Community", also trains police officers. During the reporting period, eighteen training events were carried out within this programme for police officers, involving 446 police officers and 150 police candidates.¹⁸⁹

The Ministry of Family and Social Services of Türkiye provided social inclusion training to civil servants including

the police, who are actively involved in the provision of public services on social inclusion, in order to raise their awareness about the integration and protection of diversity.¹⁹⁰

Priority areas and recommendations

There has been progress in building the capacity of police officers. However, greater efforts could be made to develop and instrumentalize mandatory pre-service training for police cadets, as well as in-service training for police officers and commanders. Enhancing mutual trust between Roma and Sinti and the police remains a challenge that could also be tackled through the organization of local security forums, further deployment of community liaison officers and, in particular, through recruiting Roma and Sinti women and men to work in the police force.

Accountability and oversight mechanisms should be more robust in addressing instances of police impunity and misconduct. Efforts must be made to ensure these mechanisms are independent, transparent and have the resources to carry out effective inquiries. Involving Roma and Sinti in such mechanisms is also key to minimizing potential bias.

Community policing has shown success in improving relations and trust between minority groups and the police. However, such efforts need regular evaluation and feedback mechanisms, gathering input from the community. This is essential in assessing the effectiveness of community policing, fostering further cooperation, and providing prompt problem-solving, thus building stronger, safer and more inclusive communities.

Mass media

Fair, responsive and ethical reporting of stories involving Roma and Sinti in a positive manner can build a more balanced portrayal of Roma and Sinti. Changing the narrative could improve the public perception of Roma and Sinti communities. To maintain credibility, mass media outlets and social media platforms need to respond rapidly to hateful content and misinformation aimed at Roma and Sinti.

185 Visit ODIHR's website for more information about ODIHR's TAHCLE programme.

186 Response from Poland.

187 *Ibid.*

188 Response from Romania.

189 Response from Slovenia. The training courses were attended by a total of 142 police officers in 2018, 151 in 2019, 23 in 2020, 80 in 2021 and 50 in 2022 and 150 police candidates.

190 Response from Türkiye.

“Encourage the media to show positive aspects and present a balanced portrayal of Roma life, refrain from stereotyping Roma and Sinti people and avoid inciting tension between various ethnic groups.”

— OSCE Action Plan, Chapter III, Paragraph 38.

Continuing challenges and emerging trends

According to the Roma Civil Monitor Synthesis report, the media, including social media, play a major role in fueling forms of ‘antigypsyism’ and in creating a public sphere where misinformation and racist tropes are rife. The report notes growing hostility and hate speech in the media and on social media, which seems to have entered everyday language, becoming acceptable and commonplace.¹⁹¹

The ERGO Network and PECAO’s Synthesis report found that the most common forms of hate-filled messages targeted Roma, and the virtual public space was full of racist and discriminatory messages, with the most ‘innocent’ types of messages being those considered ironic ‘jokes’. The report notes that racist discourse and hate speech against Roma online is a consequence of deeply rooted racist perceptions and attitudes towards Roma. The report documents ‘antigypsyist’ sentiments throughout the online environment, through multichannel digital communication that interlinks text with images and video on every social media network, websites and other media.¹⁹²

According to the European Roma Institute for Arts and Culture (ERAC), hate speech remains a global phenomenon that disproportionately affects Roma and Sinti in Europe. Both in the traditional media outlets as well as online, in particular on social media, Roma and Sinti are victims of discriminatory and hateful discourse, misinformation, misrepresentation and fake news, all of which are manifestations of ‘antigypsyism’.¹⁹³

191 A synthesis of civil society’s reports on the implementation of national Roma integration strategies in the European Union Identifying blind spots in Roma inclusion policy.

192 PECAO Synthesis Report on Antigypsyist Online Hate Speech, ERGO Network and PECAO, 2022.

193 International Conference, Hate speech and Antigypsyism in the Media - Concept, European Roma Institute for Arts and Culture, 2021.

Research conducted by ERRC between November 2020 and August 2021¹⁹⁴ found online hate speech and content belittling Roma ranging from comedy and ridiculing routines, to unswerving and explicit appeals to acts of racist violence against

Roma. They found that online commentary often accuses Roma of participating in petty theft and organized crime, of welfare abuse and fraud, and of being work-shy and unworthy recipients of affirmative action programmes.¹⁹⁵

Visual representation of Roma and Sinti on television news is dominated by images of groups, children and young adults and curated shots of where they live, including clutter and poor-quality housing. Representation of Roma and Sinti as authorities is missing. Analysis in 2021 revealed longstanding, repeated themes of Roma otherness. Visual signs used in reports connote negative meanings and stereotypes.¹⁹⁶ The media landscape also includes anti-Roma political rhetoric and discourse. This has been the case in a number of participating States, where anti-Roma rhetoric has been prevalent, and Roma and Sinti continue to be scapegoated for political gains.¹⁹⁷ However, beyond anti-Roma rhetoric by political figures, during the COVID-19 pandemic a variety of media outlets disseminated accounts blaming Roma for spreading illness.¹⁹⁸ Such reporting significantly reinforces negative stereotypes about Roma and Sinti.

ODIHR conducted media monitoring activities with Roma and Sinti journalists in 2020 and 2021.¹⁹⁹ From January to November 2020, a total of 436 news items were monitored. Of these, 33 per cent contained hate

194 The research focused on Albania, Serbia, Türkiye and Ukraine.

195 Challenging Digital Antigypsyism, ERRC, 17 May 2023.

196 Renáta Sedláková, Media construction of deviance – othering of Roma minority in television news discourse, Social Pathology and Prevention, July 2021, Issue 2, pp. 11-34.

197 See for example: Zeljko Jovanovic, European leaders’ silence over Orbán’s anti-Roma rhetoric shames the EU, euronews.com, 17 June 2020; Miroslava German Sirotnikova, Anti-Roma Rhetoric Under Scrutiny Before Slovak Election, balkaninsight.com, 3 January 2020; Jonathan Lee, Under Meloni, the plight of Italy’s Roma will only get worse, aljazeera.com, 6 November 2022.

198 Margareta Matache and Jacqueline Bhabha, Anti-Roma Racism is Spiraling during COVID-19 Pandemic, Health and Human Rights, June 2020, 22(1), pp. 379-382.

199 The monitoring was conducted in Albania, Bulgaria, the Czech Republic, Hungary, North Macedonia, Romania, Slovakia, Spain, Ukraine and the United Kingdom.

speech, 32 per cent contained information on good practices concerning Roma and Sinti, 21 per cent covered incidents, five per cent covered misinformation, four per cent covered general information, four per cent covered the disproportionate effects of COVID-19 measures and one per cent covered fake news. The monitoring in 2021 covered a total of 800 news items, of which 33 per cent covered good practice concerning Roma and Sinti, 26 per cent contained hate speech, 17 per cent incidents, 12 per cent general information, seven per cent COVID-19 related reporting, and five per cent fake news.

The fact that hate speech made up about a third of news stories shows an ongoing issue with the media being a key driver of racist and discriminatory depictions. That these are almost balanced by good practice shows the growing prevalence of a human rights agenda being applied in newsrooms across Europe.

The OSCE Mission to Kosovo has long supported Roma journalists and, in 2020, Roma journalists from Gračanica/Gračanice and Gjakova/Đakovica produced radio and TV programmes in Romani language, financially supported by, and under the leadership of the Mission. Some of the topics covered included combating racism and discrimination against Roma, Ashkali and Egyptian communities.²⁰⁰

An OSCE-wide event on countering hate speech, held on 12 December 2022 in Vienna, was organized by the Office of the OSCE Representative on Freedom of the Media, ODIHR and the Office of the OSCE High Commissioner on National Minorities. Participants discussed possible mechanisms for countering hate speech in line with international standards and OSCE commitments on freedom of expression and freedom of the media.²⁰¹

Action by participating States

In a number of participating States, existing legislation contains provisions on the need to offer minorities' access to public media and/or to provide support for minority-owned media. Some *positive change* can be noted in how

200 Response from the OSCE Mission to Kosovo.

201 For more information, please see [OSCE-wide event on countering hate speech](#).

Roma and Sinti use the media to further their own agenda, particularly in light of the growing number of Roma and Sinti-owned media outlets. That being said, public service media have traditionally been home to content produced by Roma and Sinti journalists in a number of participating States, including in Romani language.²⁰²

In **Bulgaria**, in 2022, a complaint — harassment based on ethnicity, as well as incitement to discrimination — was filed against a local TV channel to the Commission Against Discrimination, which imposed a sanction. Another complaint citing harassment was filed against a TV programme titled “No more cases — gypsies beat a policeman”. The Commission Against Discrimination imposed the minimum pecuniary sanction on the defendant and recommended the defendant refrain from committing such violations in the future.²⁰³

In their reply to ODIHR's questionnaire, **Italy** reported significant cases of discrimination recorded against Roma and Sinti people on social media and social networks, making them disproportionately exposed to online hate speech. In 2019, during one month of hate speech content analysis and monitoring carried out by the National Office against Racial Discrimination (UNAR), within the “hate topic” on Roma and Sinti people, 779 conversations/posts with potentially discriminatory content were detected on the main social media platforms (Twitter, Facebook, YouTube, Instagram). The most frequently used word of hatred to address Roma and Sinti people in posts was ‘gypsy’, coupled with the persistence of negatively stereotyped imagery linking them to crime, especially theft (the most common keyword in nearly 7,000 conversations referring to Roma and Sinti people). The Italian independent regulator for communications and media, AGCOM, also plays a role in protecting the Roma community against discrimination and hate speech in traditional media and social networks. Both towards traditional media service providers and Video Sharing Platforms (VSP), its enforce-

202 Some of the media outlets that are either Roma and Sinti-owned or often produce relevant reporting are: Romea CZ from the Czech Republic, Tuke TV from the Czech Republic, Roma Press Centre from Hungary, Dikh TV from Hungary, Radio Patrín from The Netherlands, Roma Radio Chiriklo from Ukraine, Romano Lav from Ukraine, The Travellers' Times from the United Kingdom, 24 Vakti from North Macedonia, Roma News from North Macedonia, and many others which are not named here.

203 Response from Bulgaria.

ment powers and tools have been recently strengthened by Legislative Decree no. 208/2021 and now also include a sanctioning mechanism.²⁰⁴

Montenegro noted that the Ministry of Justice, Human and Minority Rights – Directorate for Inclusion of Roma and Egyptians, organized a two-day educational seminar on the topic “Reporting on Roma — The Contribution of the Media in the Fight Against Antigypsyism.”²⁰⁵

In **Romania**, the Department for Interethnic Relations has implemented a project on monitoring attitudes of exclusion, intolerance and extremism towards ethnic minorities in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic. This included media monitoring, resulting in an analysis of understanding hate speech against minorities and its incidence in society. The analysis provided a number of conclusions, including relating to continued hate speech against Roma during the COVID-19 pandemic, and listed a number of recommendations.²⁰⁶

Slovenia reported that they carried out a public call to co-finance radio programmes created by members of the Roma community. They provided co-financing for broadcasts of minimum 60-minute radio shows on Roma-related subjects, which could be broadcast on a daily, weekly or monthly basis. In 2020, there were two eligible co-financing recipients. Several other media programmes were co-financed in Slovenia under public tenders between 2018 and 2022. National radio and television ensures adequate space in public media programmes in the Romani language.²⁰⁷

204 Response from Italy.

205 Response from Montenegro.

206 Departamentul pentru Relații Interetnice (Romanian Government’s Department for Interethnic Relations), *Înțelegerea fenomenului de hate speech față de minorități și a incidentelor acestuia de la nivelul societății, în contextul SARS CoV-2* [Understanding hate speech against minorities and its occurrences in society, in the context of COVID-19 pandemic], 16 November 2020.

207 Response from Slovenia.

Priority areas and recommendations

More balanced media representation of Roma and Sinti women and men would be beneficial in combating the racism and discrimination faced by Roma and Sinti communities. Holistic representation requires the engagement of Roma and Sinti journalists on Roma-related programming and mainstream issues of concern. Further efforts to support the professional development and visibility of Roma and Sinti journalists, particularly women and youth, would also be beneficial.

Facilitating access to media platforms to represent their own narratives and perspectives would be welcome to amplify Roma and Sinti voices, challenge misconceptions and counter negative stereotypes and prejudice. Moreover, building collaboration between mainstream media and Roma and Sinti-owned media would improve their situation. Promoting ethical reporting and providing capacity-building to journalists and journalists’ associations are other examples of good practice. It remains critical to promote further the inclusion of Roma and Sinti media professionals, particularly women and youth, on media regulatory boards, on the boards of public broadcasters, in the daily operational management of public broadcasters and as public broadcasting personalities.

Closing the digital divide between Roma and Sinti and mainstream populations is also needed. Equal access to new technologies can give community members a space to actively formulate public discourse. Encouraging and supporting positive digital storytelling and content creation can empower Roma and Sinti communities to shape and voice their own narratives, experiences and perspectives.

Across the media landscape, concentrated efforts are needed to prohibit and sanction anti-Roma rhetoric, particularly from government officials and political and thought leaders. Participating States must show the political will to denounce such rhetoric. Online social media platforms should also quickly recognize and remove hate content and misinformation concerning Roma and Sinti communities, particularly that against Roma and Sinti women and girls.

3. ADDRESSING SOCIO-ECONOMIC ISSUES

Adequate housing and living conditions, equal access to labour markets and health care are key elements of social and economic prosperity and development within a society. Twenty years ago, OSCE participating States committed to guaranteeing that Roma and Sinti people enjoy social and economic rights on an equal footing with the rest of their societies in the Action Plan.

The first assessment of this commitment in 2008 found that a significant number of Roma and Sinti lived in substandard housing, that there was a gap in health between Roma and non-Roma, and poor opportunities for advancement in labour markets. The Second Status Report noted positive changes to the living conditions of Roma and Sinti and raised levels of employment across the region, but limited progress in health care.

In the current reference period, a significant number of Roma and Sinti were still living in unsafe, overcrowded and illegal settings with conditions that cause health concerns. At the same time, these groups face obstructed and poor access to healthcare services, mainly due to discrimination. In terms of economic well-being, higher levels of poverty and unemployment remain among Roma and Sinti, as compared with the general population. OSCE participating States have strengthened their efforts to meet these socio-economic needs with changes to legislation and policy frameworks and with tailored programmes. However, Roma and Sinti still do not fully enjoy their social and economic rights.

Housing and living conditions

Access to adequate housing is a precondition for human dignity and is directly connected to the full realization of fundamental human rights. Decent living conditions are of paramount importance to breaking the vicious cycle of poverty and socio-economic marginalization. In the Action Plan, OSCE participating States made commitments to ensure institutional mechanisms for solving property and legal ownership issues among Roma and Sinti communities, as well as to engage these groups in the development of housing policies.

Within the current reporting period, ODIHR noted *positive developments* in law and policy shaping housing matters impacting on Roma and Sinti communities, as well as opportunities for individuals and communities to improve their living conditions. Participating States passed legislative amendments, incorporated tailored measures into mainstream and Roma-oriented policies, and allocated budgets to address housing conditions. These steps indicate *visible progress* by some participating States in improving housing in Roma and Sinti communities.

“Put in place mechanisms and institutional procedures to clarify property rights, resolve questions of ownership and regularize the legal status of Roma and Sinti people living in circumstances of unsettled legality (e.g., Roma neighbourhoods lacking land rights or which are not included in the urban plans of the main locality; families and houses without legal residence status in settlements where the people have been living *de facto* for decades).”

— OSCE Action Plan, Chapter IV, Paragraph 43.

Continuing challenges and emerging trends

According to the European Parliament, in 2022, a significant number of Roma communities were still living in unsafe and informal housing with conditions that cause health concerns.²⁰⁸ The Council of Europe also expressed concerns over substandard and inadequate housing, which in turn leads to significant labour market and health challenges. In addition, Roma remain subject to discrimination in housing, despite the binding provisions of the European Union’s Racial Equality Directive of 2000.²⁰⁹

FRA’s Roma Survey 2021 identified four main housing concerns in several EU Member and candidate States — house deprivation, overcrowding, impoverished access to water, and discrimination when seeking housing. It found that 52 per cent of Roma households experienced housing deprivation and 82 per cent of Roma lived on overcrowded premises. Access to water is also problematic, given that one fifth of surveyed Roma households did not have in-

²⁰⁸ Resolution on the situation of Roma people living in settlements in the EU, European Parliament, 5 October 2022.

²⁰⁹ Council Directive 2000/43/EC implementing the principle of equal treatment between persons irrespective of racial or ethnic origin, Council of the European Union, 29 June 2000; response to the ODIHR questionnaire from the Council of Europe, received 19 April 2023.

door tap water.²¹⁰ Overcrowding and poor access to tap water created additional challenges and health risks during the COVID-19 pandemic.²¹¹

FRA's report suggested discriminatory attitudes towards Roma also impacts on housing. Twenty-four per cent of Roma surveyed were subjected to prejudice when looking for housing.²¹² Similar concerns were emphasised by the European Network of Equality Bodies (Equinet) in its 2022 report. It noted discrimination in the private rental sector, forced evictions from illegal settlements without being offered sustainable housing alternatives, segregation in living quarters, and poor living conditions and facilities.²¹³

There were also cases claiming violation of the right to housing, in conjunction with the right to equality and non-discrimination, brought to the European Committee of Social Rights. The first case — *European Roma Rights Centre v. Belgium* — concerned a police operation on two sites of Traveller people that was conducted without consideration of proportionality, and without offering alternative accommodation, access to water, sanitation, electricity, food and medical services, as well as exposing the affected families to hardship and health risks associated with COVID-19.²¹⁴ The second case was brought by Amnesty International against the Italian authorities, concerning forced evictions, segregated and substandard living conditions and the use of discriminatory criteria for the allocation of social housing.²¹⁵

Roma Civil Society Monitor reported a large gap in the quality of housing and accommodation between Roma

groups and general populations across the EU. They found several factors that shape the existing situation, including austerity policies in housing provision, a reduction in public funding for welfare and social housing, the growth of private ownership and private renting (exposing Roma to bias treatment) and residential segregation. In addition, for a significant number of Roma, spatial, environmental and socio-economic exclusion and discrimination impede adequate living conditions, including access to housing infrastructure.²¹⁶

The *EU Roma Strategic Framework for Equality, Inclusion and Participation for 2020-2030* identified housing as one of seven key areas of focus. More specifically, it seeks to reduce the gap in housing deprivation by at least one third, to cut the gap in overcrowding by at least half, and to ensure that at least 95 per cent of Roma have access to tap water by 2030.²¹⁷ The European Commission also welcomed domestic measures on housing in NRSFs, yet suggested that these measures are not enough to tackle the full extent of the issue.²¹⁸

In the SEE region, the World Bank noted that Roma, Egyptian and Ashkali groups often live in slums or informal settlements and experience severe overcrowding. Despite efforts to increase access to electricity, indoor mains water, public sewerage and waste collection, these housing services were out of reach for many marginalized Roma, Egyptian and Ashkali people. Around 23 per cent of Roma households who were surveyed were not connected to mains water, 30 per cent did not have sanitary facilities and 30 per cent were not connected to sewerage. Moreover, a large percentage of these people (around 90 per cent) were not given opportunities by the authorities to change their housing situation.²¹⁹ Actions taken to improve the housing of Roma, Egyptian and Ashkali groups seemed disconnected from overall socio-economic integration efforts at

210 The survey covers the following list of EU Member States: Bulgaria, Croatia, the Czech Republic, Greece, Hungary, Italy, North Macedonia, Portugal, Romania, Serbia, Slovakia and Spain, [Roma Survey 2021](#). The highest index of housing deprivation was recorded in Romania (70 per cent), Greece (68 per cent), Portugal and Bulgaria (66 per cent) while the lowest in the Czech Republic (seven per cent) and Slovakia (26 per cent).

211 [OSCE Human Dimension Commitments and State Responses to the Covid-19 Pandemic](#).

212 [Roma Survey 2021](#).

213 [Roma and Traveller Inclusion: Towards a new EU Framework learning from the work of Equality Bodies](#), European Network of Equality Bodies, 2020.

214 Response from the Council of Europe.

215 *Amnesty International v. Italy*, No. 178/2019, European Committee of Social Rights; Amnesty International frequently points out longstanding issues faced by Roma people in housing in Italy e.g., residential segregation, promoting the concepts of camps as an alternative to adequate housing for this group. See more: [Submission to the UN Special Rapporteur on Adequate Housing](#), Amnesty International, 2018.

216 [A synthesis of civil society's reports on the implementation of national Roma integration strategies in the European Union](#), Directorate-General for Justice and Consumers, 2020.

217 [Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament and the Council Brussels – EU Roma strategic framework for equality, inclusion and participation](#), COM(2020) 620 final, 7 October 2020.

218 [Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions – Assessment report of the Member States' national Roma strategic frameworks](#).

219 Monica Robayo-Abril, Natalia Millán, [Breaking the Cycle of Roma Exclusion in the Western Balkans](#), World Bank Group, 2019.

both domestic and regional levels. The legalization of settlements and individual housing should remain a priority for local governments in the region.²²⁰

Substandard housing has a negative impact on the socio-economic well-being of Roma and Sinti groups across the OSCE region. However, there are certain groups, such as women and migrants, who are disproportionately affected by obstructed access to decent housing.²²¹ FRA flagged that Roma women and men share deprived housing conditions equally, yet the consequences are particularly critical for women. This is due to gender norms and expectations, particularly in traditional Roma communities. More specifically, women maintain households and play a crucial role in raising children. As a consequence, poor access to housing and amenities poses risks to their health, education and employment, as well as perpetuating their marginalization in society.²²² This was exacerbated during the restrictions imposed in response to the COVID-19 pandemic.²²³

Due to the war in Ukraine, Ukrainian Roma refugees also face impoverished access to temporary accommodation facilities, where segregation, discriminatory treatment from refugee reception centres' administrations and volunteers, and provision of inadequate living conditions have been reported.²²⁴ Civil society reports indicate that Dom refugees in Türkiye also faced significant barriers to accessing housing, with discrimination from other residents and camp administrations reported, often leading them to sleep outdoors.²²⁵

Civil society also raised concerns about housing conditions in Roma and Sinti communities across OSCE participating States.²²⁶ For instance in Ireland, several Traveller communities live in poor-quality accommodation, without access to electricity, running water, or sewerage. They are also subjected to discrimination in access to accommodation and social housing, and face overcrowding and unsafe living conditions.²²⁷ In Finland, civil society noted lower access to housing among Roma compared to the majority population.²²⁸

The OSCE Mission in Kosovo noted severe housing issues faced by Roma, Ashkali and Egyptian returnees from North Macedonia due to lack of investment in improving the socio-economic situation to ensure decent living conditions and sustainable housing, employment and other forms of social security.²²⁹

In 2021, a Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe resolution highlighted that Roma often live in segregated and isolated settings, which has a threefold impact on these communities. First, it leads to the segregation of Roma children in schools. Second, it compounds existing difficulties in labour and health care. Third, it exacerbates the risk of violent racist and hate crime attacks faced by these communities.²³⁰ Civil society plays a crucial role in documenting and reporting instances of forced eviction. To that end, ODIHR developed *Guidelines for Activists Addressing Roma and Sinti Evictions* that provide an accessible overview of the relevant international and regional human rights standards on forced evictions.²³¹

Action by participating States

The previous Status Report documented several countries achieving *visible progress* in improving housing for Roma and Sinti, while others with substantial Roma and Sinti populations showed little tangible change. Between 2018 and 2022, 25 OSCE participating States reported

220 ODIHR's consultation workshop; and *Targeting Roma in Housing Policies of the Western Balkans: A legal overview*, Regional Cooperation Council, 2018.

221 *Ibid.*

222 *Roma survey – Data in focus. Discrimination against and living conditions of Roma women in 11 EU Member States*, European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights, 2016.

223 *OSCE Human Dimension Commitments and State Responses to the Covid-19 Pandemic*.

224 ODIHR human rights monitoring efforts in Ukraine, the Czech Republic, Hungary, Moldova, Poland, Romania, and Slovakia, May 2022-June 2023; *Monitoring the human rights situation of Ukrainian Roma refugees in the Czech Republic, Hungary, Moldova, Poland, Romania and Slovakia*, OSCE/ODIHR website, 25 August 2022; *Monitoring and addressing the human rights challenges faced by Roma fleeing Ukraine discussed at ODIHR event*, OSCE/ODIHR website, 3 October 2022.

225 *The Dom. The "Other" Asylum Seekers from Syria. Discrimination, Isolation and Social Exclusion: Syrian Dom Asylum Seekers in the Crossfire*, Kırkayak Kültür, 2020; participants of ODIHR's consultation workshop and the European Roma Rights Centre also raised concern about the experiences of the Dom.

226 ODIHR's consultation workshop.

227 Response to the ODIHR questionnaire from the Pavee Point Traveller & Roma Centre, received 9 April 2023.

228 Response to the ODIHR questionnaire from the Finnish Roma Association/Suomen Romaniyhdistys Ry, received 20 April 2023.

229 Response from the OSCE Mission to Kosovo.

230 *Discrimination against Roma and Travellers in the field of housing*, Resolution 2413, Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe, adopted in 2021.

231 *Guidelines for Activists Addressing Roma and Sinti Evictions*, OSCE/ODIHR, 21 December 2022.

having national policies and programmes to address the housing conditions of Roma and Sinti,²³² while five participating States had no such measures.²³³ Despite tangible action taken by OSCE participating States, many Roma and Sinti housing issues remain unaddressed. There has been *visible progress* in those States that passed legislative and policy changes, allotted funding and put in place mainstream and tailored measures to meet the housing needs of Roma and Sinti communities. However, many Roma and Sinti continue to face specific difficulties in accessing adequate housing.

The housing situation of Roma and Sinti was the focus of legislative amendments and policy frameworks by a number of participating States. For instance, **Albania** passed amendments to its Law on Social Housing, which now states that Roma will make up a minimum of five per cent of the beneficiaries of all social housing programmes.²³⁴ **Bulgaria** also made determined efforts to reflect the specific housing issues of Roma people in their mainstream policies. To that end, the “Regions in Growth” 2014-2020 paper ensures measures for social inclusion and the integration of marginalized groups, including Roma.²³⁵

Some States reported national social programmes targeting housing matters, among other things, that include Roma and Sinti populations. **Belgium** reported that its Fourth Federal plan to Fight Against Poverty addresses the housing needs of people in vulnerable situations.²³⁶ The **German** authorities put in place the “EhAP Plus” programme for 2021-2027, which aims to support newly arrived EU citizens with housing assistance.²³⁷

Ireland’s government recognizes the need to ensure tailored housing measures for Irish Travellers within the National Planning Framework, its strategic policy for growth and development until 2040.²³⁸ In **Montenegro**, the authorities incorporated targeted action to provide housing units for Roma and Egyptian communities into the Regional Housing Program. One of their key achievements was the closure of Konik camp, the largest camp for displaced persons in Montenegro, which was mostly populated by Roma and Egyptian people.²³⁹

Six participating States reported that their NRSFs contain steps to ensure better housing opportunities for Roma and Sinti populations. For example, **Poland** identified housing as one of the key areas of the Roma Integration Strategy 2021-2030. In this regard, the government allocated funding in 2021 for 33 housing projects, benefiting 553 people in 121 Roma households (302 women and 251 men) as a result.²⁴⁰ **Finland** reported that, within the framework of the Second National Roma Policy, housing matters were considered and emergency accommodation for homeless Roma was secured.²⁴¹ The **Czech** Strategy for Roma Integration 2021-2030 contains provisions that support non-discriminatory approaches in housing for Roma people and the systematic elimination of substandard living conditions by ensuring permanent housing.²⁴²

In **Türkiye**, housing issues were addressed as Phase-II of the Action Plan 2018-2022 of the Strategy Document for Roma citizens. Among its results are renovated infrastructure in densely populated Roma areas, as well as the launch of a pilot project, in cooperation with municipalities and the Housing Development Administration.²⁴³ **North Macedonia** also ensured that housing is one of six key areas in the Strategy for Roma Inclusion 2022-2030.²⁴⁴

The **Slovak** executive power implemented the Operation Program Human Resources 2014-2020, which entailed housing facilities for municipalities with marginalized Roma communities and aims to grow the number of Roma households with access to improved housing conditions.²⁴⁵

232 Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, Cyprus, the Czech Republic, Finland, Georgia, Germany, Ireland, Italy, Latvia, Lithuania, Moldova, Montenegro, North Macedonia, Poland, Romania, the Russian Federation, Serbia, Slovakia, Slovenia, Sweden, Türkiye, Ukraine and the United Kingdom.

233 Bulgaria, Denmark, Estonia, Liechtenstein and Switzerland. Twenty-seven participating States did not answer this question on housing policy, including: Andorra, Armenia, Austria, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Belgium, Canada, France, Greece, Holy See, Hungary, Iceland, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Luxembourg, Malta, Monaco, Mongolia, Netherlands, Norway, Portugal, San Marino, Spain, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, the United States and Uzbekistan.

234 Response from Albania.

235 Response from Bulgaria.

236 Response to the ODIHR questionnaire from the Federal Public Planning Service for Social Integration, anti-Poverty Policy, Social Economy and Federal Urban Policy (PPS SI) of Belgium, received 15 March 2023.

237 Response from Germany.

238 Response from Ireland.

239 Response from Montenegro.

240 Response from Poland.

241 Response from Finland.

242 Response from the Czech Republic.

243 Response to the ODIHR questionnaire from the Permanent Mission of Türkiye to the OSCE, received 6 April 2023.

244 Response from North Macedonia.

245 Response from Slovakia.

The **Slovenian** authorities kept housing as a priority within both the National Programme of Measures for Roma for 2017-2021 and 2021-2030. More specifically, the latter intends to improve living conditions, ensure access to public goods, eliminate spatial separation, and prevent housing isolation and the segregation of Roma populations.²⁴⁶ Likewise, the **Ukrainian** central authorities incorporated tailored measures on improving living conditions into its Strategy for the Protection and Integration into Ukrainian Society of the Roma National Minority for the Period Until 2020.²⁴⁷

Several OSCE participating States allocated funding for housing issues in Roma and Sinti communities or even built dwellings for marginalized Roma. The Ministry of Human Rights and Refugees of **Bosnia and Herzegovina** secured 61 housing units for 581 Roma in 2018 and 2020.²⁴⁸ **Croatia** invested in projects guaranteeing access to public utilities and housing infrastructure and the State Office for Housing Care provided household appliances and furniture for 2,880 Roma households between 2019 and 2023.²⁴⁹ In **Lithuania**, 65 Roma received rent reimbursements.²⁵⁰ The **Slovak** authorities built 1,294 affordable dwellings for marginalized Roma communities between 2012 and 2021.²⁵¹

In **Slovenia**, the Ministry of Economic Development and Technology announced a public call for tenders for co-financing infrastructure projects for basic utilities in Roma populated areas.²⁵² The **United Kingdom's** Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities launched a significant capital funding project for 2022 and 2023 to support local authorities in building new and refurbished permanent sites for Gypsy, Roma and Traveller communities.²⁵³ The **Italian** central authorities, in cooperation with capital municipalities, implemented tailored measures to overcome marginalization of Roma living in substandard

246 Response from Slovenia.

247 Response to the ODIHR questionnaire from the Permanent Mission of Ukraine to the OSCE, received 28 April 2023.

248 Response to the ODIHR questionnaire from the Ministry of Human Rights and Refugees in Bosnia and Herzegovina, received 17 March 2023.

249 Response from Croatia.

250 Response from Lithuania.

251 Response from Slovakia.

252 Response from Slovenia.

253 Response to the ODIHR questionnaire from the United Kingdom Delegation to the OSCE, received 31 May 2023.

conditions and segregated premises through funds under the National Multi-Fund Program.²⁵⁴

To feed into more efficient implementation of the Roma Action Plans on Housing, the OSCE Mission to **Bosnia and Herzegovina** provided a venue for discussions on concerns related to the plans and proposed recommendations. The Mission specifically flagged the need to resolve the legal ownership of Roma dwellings, as well as to improve connection to the electric power grid in some communities. These recommendations came in light of the Mission's survey to assess the living conditions of Roma families in Bosnia and Herzegovina, which identified a significant number of Roma households without access to power or sewerage and living in illegally built units.²⁵⁵

As outlined above, a substantial number of participating States reviewed and adapted domestic policy frameworks to address the housing needs of Roma and Sinti and ensured funding. However, there were no reported initiatives to tackle housing issues taking into account a gender perspective, leaving the specific issues of Roma and Sinti women outside policy frameworks.

Priority areas and recommendations

More effort is needed to address the wide range and full extent of housing issues faced by Roma and Sinti communities, from unsafe and substandard housing premises to house deprivation, overcrowding, and lack of access to water, electricity, public sewerage, and waste collection. Discrimination and biased treatment add layers of inequality for Roma and Sinti in housing, and participating States should ensure that relevant housing programmes and measures are implemented through non-discriminatory lenses.

Given the spatial, environmental and socio-economic exclusion and segregation of Roma and Sinti communities, participating States should invest in improving housing infrastructure and facilities within Roma and Sinti communities. Solving the legal status of Roma and Sinti households should remain a priority for States, where relevant.

254 Response from Italy.

255 Response to the ODIHR questionnaire from the OSCE Mission to Bosnia and Herzegovina, received 28 April 2023.

All these efforts should be informed by a gender perspective and take into consideration the very specific needs of various groups of Roma and Sinti. Addressing housing conditions would significantly help tackle issues linked to access to labour markets, health care and education.

Health care

The right to health covers a variety of entitlements, from access to medicines, prevention and treatment of diseases, to maternal, child and reproductive health, as well as access to health-related education, information and participation in health-linked policymaking.²⁵⁶ The Action Plan contains provisions recommending that OSCE participating States facilitate equal access to healthcare systems for Roma and Sinti populations.

The 2013 Status Report flagged *limited progress* in countering negative trends among Roma and Sinti communities in the health area. There were concerns about instances of discrimination in access to health systems, in particular towards immigrants, women and children. Over the current reporting period, there were notable efforts at national levels at ensuring non-discriminatory access to healthcare services with new policies and programmes constituting *visible progress*. A number of participating States developed and are running tailored measures to address existing health inequalities among Roma and Sinti communities. Several States have carried out training and awareness-raising to ensure more accessible services for these groups, including for Roma women and children.

“Ensure that Roma and Sinti people have access to health care services on a non-discriminatory basis.”

— OSCE Action Plan, Chapter IV, Paragraph 58.

Continuing challenges and emerging trends

Health inequalities generally reflect the socio-economic discrepancies in a society. Inadequate housing and substandard living conditions among Roma and Sinti communities significantly impacts their health status. This,

²⁵⁶ *The Right to Health, Fact Sheet No. 31*, Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights and World Health Organization, June 2008.

coupled with longstanding discrimination, increases their vulnerability to infectious diseases, which was particularly documented during the COVID-19 pandemic.²⁵⁷

The European Public Health Alliance, in a report from 2018, uncovered four factors that influenced the health of Roma and Sinti people. First, most discriminatory incidents experienced by Roma and Sinti took place within institutional structures; exclusion was a consequence of systemic shortcomings in the health system. Second, Roma women faced poorer quality healthcare coverage and elderly Roma women reported worse health conditions than their non-Roma peers. Third, Roma and Sinti populations were at a higher risk of infectious diseases. Finally, available data on immunization uptake suggested that Roma and Sinti did not meet the level required for herd immunity.²⁵⁸

FRA's published survey of six countries in 2020 raised awareness about a variety of issues in relation to Roma and Sinti health in the EU. These communities have lower life expectancies, worse health conditions and lower medical coverage, at the same time as experiencing biased attitudes from healthcare providers.²⁵⁹ Further FRA research published in 2022, again found lower life expectancy — Roma women typically live 11 years less than women in general, and Roma men live nine years less than other men.²⁶⁰ The survey showed that 16 per cent of Roma women and 13 per cent of men had experienced discrimination in accessing health care, while only 75 per cent of those surveyed possessed health coverage.²⁶¹

²⁵⁷ Participants of ODIHR civil society consultation and *OSCE Human Dimension Commitments and State Responses to the Covid-19 Pandemic*.

²⁵⁸ *Roma Health and Early Childhood Development Study*, European Public Health Alliance, December 2018.

²⁵⁹ *Roma and Travellers in Six Countries*, European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights, 2020. The six countries surveyed were Belgium, France, Ireland, the Netherlands, Sweden and the United Kingdom.

²⁶⁰ Research was conducted in Croatia, the Czech Republic, Greece, Hungary, Italy, Portugal, Romania and Spain, and in EU accession countries - North Macedonia and Serbia.

²⁶¹ *Roma Survey 2021*, European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights, 2022.

The Roma Civil Monitor also pointed to health inequalities, in particular: obstructed access to health care, including vaccinations; lack of trust in institutions; poor awareness about healthcare issues; and segregated services. Specific concerns were flagged in relation to Roma and Sinti women, children and the elderly.²⁶² Intersectional discrimination causes Roma women to record even worse health statuses and face more difficulties accessing health care.²⁶³ Roma children, youth and the elderly are also highly vulnerable to major health issues.²⁶⁴ Roma people with disabilities face additional layers of inequality and remain excluded from health care and services.²⁶⁵

The ERGO Network recently investigated health in Roma and Sinti communities in several states and noted poor health services and infrastructure, lack of awareness and, consequently, differential treatment, unaffordable costs for examinations, as well as mistrust in institutions and personnel. Challenges linked to reproductive health raise specific concerns. Roma women often face biased treatment and intolerance when seeking gynaecological services. This results in low levels of awareness related to reproductive rights, early, unwanted pregnancies and unsafe abortions, all while fostering internal stigma.²⁶⁶ Women who have been subjected to coercive sterilization still face challenges in accessing redress and compensation.²⁶⁷

In the SEE region, the World Bank recorded poorer health among Roma, Egyptian and Ashkali compared to

the general population, as well as obstructed access to services and unmet medical needs, and less likelihood to have health insurance.²⁶⁸ Poor insurance coverage is linked to lack of personal documentation.²⁶⁹ More than 40 per cent of Roma, Egyptian and Ashkali in the region are unable to afford medicines. The use of preventive healthcare services is also much lower among Roma, Egyptian and Ashkali people.²⁷⁰

The Council of Europe informed ODIHR about two cases concerning the right to health care pending before the European Committee of Social Rights. The first case, against Greece, alleges a violation of the right to protection of health and non-discrimination due to the declining accessibility and affordability of health care and its disproportionate impact on certain marginalized groups. The second case, brought by the European Roma Rights Centre against Belgium, involves rights to social security and medical assistance for Roma.²⁷¹

During the COVID-19 pandemic, Roma and Sinti were subjected to additional stigma, being labelled as “a hazard to public safety”, “undisciplined” and “spreading the virus”.²⁷² Discrimination and hate incidents significantly limited their access to health care.²⁷³ At the same time, the pandemic exacerbated already existing issues. Many Roma and Sinti face poor living conditions with lack of access to water and infrastructure and live in overcrowded settings. These circumstances kept Roma and Sinti from following prevention measures, such as hand washing and social distancing.²⁷⁴ Communities living in segregated and re-

262 A synthesis of civil society's reports on the implementation of national Roma integration strategies in the European Union, Directorate-General for Justice and Consumers, 2020.

263 Carmen Gheorghe and Cristina Mocanu, *Challenging intersectionality: Roma women's voices and experiences*, Bucharest, March 2021.

264 A synthesis of civil society's reports on the implementation of national Roma integration strategies in the European Union, Directorate-General for Justice and Consumers, 2020; and *Roma Access to Adequate Healthcare and Long-term Care in Bulgaria, the Czech Republic, Hungary, Romania, Slovakia, and Spain*, ERGO Network, November 2022; and participants of ODIHR's consultation workshop.

265 Haydn Hammersley and Marine Uldry, *Briefing on discrimination and social exclusion of Roma with disabilities*, ERGO Network and European Disability Forum, 2022.

266 *Roma Access to Adequate Healthcare and Long-term Care in Bulgaria, the Czech Republic, Hungary, Romania, Slovakia, and Spain*, ERGO Network, November 2022. The countries studied were Bulgaria, the Czech Republic, Hungary, Romania, Slovakia, and Spain.

267 *Solutions to multiple challenges faced by Roma women urgently needed*, OSCE human rights head news, OSCE/ODIHR, 6 April 2023.

268 Monica Robayo-Abril, Natalia Millán, *Breaking the Cycle of Roma Exclusion in the Western Balkans*, World Bank Group, 2019. The highest index of insurance coverage was in North Macedonia and Serbia (more than 90 per cent), followed by Montenegro and Bosnia and Herzegovina (70-80 per cent). The lowest was Albania with less than 30 per cent. Kosovo also had less than 30 per cent of Roma covered by health insurance.

269 *The Wall of Anti-gypsyism. Roma in the Western Balkans*, Civil Rights Defenders, November 2017.

270 *Breaking the Cycle of Roma Exclusion in the Western Balkans*.

271 Response from the Council of Europe.

272 *OSCE Human Dimension Commitments and State Responses to the Covid-19 Pandemic*.

273 *Reflection Paper on Union of Equality: EU Roma Strategic Framework on Equality, Inclusion and Participation*, European Public Health Alliance, October 2020.

274 Participants of ODIHR's consultation; *Alarming situation of Roma communities in the Western Balkans and Turkey through the COVID-19 pandemic*, Central Council of German Sinti and Roma, April 2020; and *The Impact of COVID-19 on Roma communities in the European Union and the Western Balkans*, ERGO Network, December 2020.

remote areas met major barriers in accessing health services. There were recorded instances when several communities with dense populations of Roma were placed in quarantine without being provided with basic hygienic supplies. In addition, more than 40 per cent of Roma suffer from health conditions, such as asthma, bronchitis, pneumonia, heart problems and diabetes, all of which increase the risk of infection.²⁷⁵

An Open Society Roma Initiatives Office survey covering six EU countries concluded that the national authorities were familiar with the housing situations of Roma and Sinti communities yet did not apply tailored protection measures during the COVID-19 pandemic. Lack of health insurance coverage affected a significant number of Roma and Sinti along with growing intolerance from medical personnel.²⁷⁶

The European Council's 2021 Recommendation on Roma equality, inclusion, and participation includes provisions on access to quality healthcare and social services. The Recommendation acknowledges that, during the pandemic, marginalized Roma communities were heavily affected, compounding existing inequalities. It proposed guaranteed equal access to health care services for Roma, in particular for communities in remote areas.²⁷⁷

The European Commission has also noted that the health status of Roma generally improved over the reporting period, yet there are persisting issues linked to medical coverage. The EU Roma Strategic Framework for Equality, Inclusion and Participation for 2020-2030 maintained previous health-oriented goals, namely, to improve the health status of Roma and to guarantee equal access to quality health care. The Framework includes significant goals relating to decreasing the gap in Roma life expectancy.²⁷⁸

Civil society have emphasised that the existing framework does not include comprehensive health protection

²⁷⁵ *Ibid.*

²⁷⁶ Neda Korunovska and Zeljko Jovanovic, *Roma in the COVID-19 crisis: An early warning from six EU Member States*, Open Society Roma Initiatives Office, April 2020. The countries surveyed were Bulgaria, Hungary, Italy, Romania, Slovakia and Spain.

²⁷⁷ *Council Recommendation on Roma equality, inclusion and participation (2021/C 93/01)*, European Commission, 12 March 2021.

²⁷⁸ *Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament and the Council Brussels – EU Roma strategic framework for equality, inclusion and participation.*

for people facing intersectional discrimination.²⁷⁹ Domestically, NRSFs contain no comprehensive indicators to measure progress on health and do not collect disaggregated data.²⁸⁰

Action by participating States

In response to the ODIHR questionnaire about the current reference period, 24 participating States indicated they had national policies and programmes in place to provide access to healthcare services to Roma and Sinti, on a non-discriminatory basis, two more than in the previous reporting period.²⁸¹ Most States emphasised domestic legal and policy provisions that guarantee non-discriminatory approaches in health care and/or contain tailored measures on addressing the existing inequalities faced by Roma and Sinti communities.

The national legal frameworks of **Estonia, Denmark, Latvia, Moldova, North Macedonia and Slovenia** ensure equal protection for their citizens in this area.²⁸² The **Spanish** legislature amended the National Health System Law in 2018 to guarantee that all legally-residing individuals are entitled to health protection and care.²⁸³ **Albania, Ireland and Germany** included some measures in their mainstream health and social strategies.²⁸⁴ **Belgium** reported no specific action to combat negative health trends in Roma communities.²⁸⁵

Ten countries reported that their existing national frameworks ensure inclusion of Roma and Sinti communities' health issues. In **Albania**, the National Plan for Equality,

²⁷⁹ Haydn Hammersley and Marine Uldry, *Briefing on discrimination and social exclusion of Roma with disabilities*, ERGO Network and European Disability Forum, 2022.

²⁸⁰ *Roma Health and Housing: Filling in the Gaps. A Policy Paper by the Roma Health Network*, European Public Health Alliance, 2022.

²⁸¹ Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Croatia, the Czech Republic, Finland, Germany, Ireland, Italy, Latvia, Lithuania, Moldova, Montenegro, North Macedonia, Poland, Romania, Slovakia, Slovenia, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, Türkiye, Ukraine and the United Kingdom.

²⁸² Responses to the ODIHR questionnaire from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Estonia, received 28 March 2023; from the Ministry of Immigration and Integration of Denmark, received 3 April 2023; from Moldova and North Macedonia; from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Latvia, received 14 March 2023.

²⁸³ Response from Spain.

²⁸⁴ Responses from Albania, Ireland and Germany.

²⁸⁵ Response from Belgium.

Inclusion and Participation for Roma and Egyptians 2021-2025 incorporates measures that provide social and health standards at the grassroots level and seeks to improve the access to quality health care of marginalized groups, including children.²⁸⁶ The **Czech Republic** reported that the new Strategy for Roma Integration 2021-2030 tackles health discrepancies among the Roma population. More specifically, it seeks to improve and ensure equal access to social and health services.²⁸⁷ The authorities in **North Macedonia** kept health care as one of the priority areas in the National Action Plan on implementing the Strategy for Roma Inclusion 2022-2030.²⁸⁸

The **Slovak** Action Plan 2022-2024 clearly defines equal access to health care as a major area of intervention.²⁸⁹ The National Programme of Measures for Roma 2021-2030 in **Slovenia** aims to improve the health status of the Roma population.²⁹⁰ The government of the **Republic of Moldova** similarly focused on the amelioration of the health of Roma individuals in its Action Plan for the support of the Roma population 2016-2020.²⁹¹ In **Ukraine**, the authorities intend to improve the access of Roma to health care through tailored action in accordance with their Roma Strategy.²⁹²

Poland has specific actions on health in its new integration programme for 2021-2030.²⁹³ The **Finnish** government used data from a study of the health and welfare of Finnish Roma to inform its National Roma Policy 2023-2030. In this way, the framework contains appropriate measures for addressing the present-day needs of the Roma population.²⁹⁴

Two participating States highlighted their Roma health mediators' programmes. The **Bulgarian** government passed legislative amendments to the Health Act in 2020 under which health mediators have been appointed and financed via municipal budgets.²⁹⁵ **North Macedonia** reported that its Ministry of Health has joined up with civil society to

implement their Roma Health Mediators Project. This is currently running in ten municipalities engaging 32 Roma health mediators.²⁹⁶



Several participating States, such as Bulgaria, the Czech Republic, Slovakia, Romania²⁹⁷ and Serbia²⁹⁸, use Roma health mediators. Their role is to bridge the gap between the public authorities and local Roma residents on health issues. Roma health mediators are often residents of local Roma communities and easily gain the trust of their community. They provide support and guidance in accessing the health system, while taking into account the specific needs of local Roma.

Other participating States noted coordinated efforts with various institutions, also at the local level, including: training and education measures, raising awareness about health issues and accessible services, and tailored projects targeting Roma and Sinti communities.²⁹⁹ The Ministry for Human Rights and Refugees of **Bosnia and Herzegovina** teamed up with the federal public health institutes and provided funding to improve access to health services for their Roma population.³⁰⁰

The **Croatian** government launched awareness-raising campaigns on preventive health issues in areas that are densely populated by Roma.³⁰¹ In **Ireland**, each Community Healthcare Organisation (CHO) has instigated programmes of work with Roma to inform and assist around pathways to health care, and an intercultural guide about the Roma community was also published for use by health-care personnel.³⁰² **Montenegro** carried out awareness-raising initiatives about reproductive health targeting Roma and Egyptian women.³⁰³ The **Swedish** authorities have training programmes on social and health aspects for mediators with Romani language skills.³⁰⁴ **Slovakia** developed a manual for Roma on how to recognize discriminatory behaviour in healthcare services.³⁰⁵ In **Türkiye** activities

286 Response from Albania.

287 Response from the Czech Republic.

288 Response from North Macedonia.

289 Response from Slovakia.

290 Response from Slovenia.

291 Response from Moldova.

292 Response from Ukraine.

293 Response from Poland.

294 Response from Finland.

295 Response from Bulgaria.

296 Response from North Macedonia.

297 [Roma Access to Adequate Healthcare and Long-term Care in Bulgaria, the Czech Republic, Hungary, Romania, Slovakia, and Spain](#), ERGO Network, November 2022.

298 Jelena Terzic, [Roma health mediators – empowering communities](#), UNICEF, January 2018.

299 Response from Italy.

300 Response from Bosnia and Herzegovina.

301 Response from Croatia.

302 Response from Ireland.

303 Response from Montenegro.

304 Response from Sweden.

305 Response from Slovakia.

have been conducted to enhance the capacities of service providers to increase the health literacy of Roma, under the framework of the Strategy Document for Roma Citizens 2016-2021. The Turkish Ministry of Family and Social Services conducts training for healthcare professionals to combat their prejudices against disadvantaged groups, including Roma.³⁰⁶

Issues linked to reproductive health among Roma and Sinti women were tackled through tailored interventions by some participating States, including **Albania, Croatia, Greece, Ireland, Italy, Lithuania, and Norway**. Several states, including **Bulgaria, Hungary, Ireland, Portugal, Slovenia, Spain, Sweden and Ukraine**, implemented wider gender-sensitive programmes and initiatives targeting Roma and Sinti women. There were also specific measures implemented to address the needs of Roma and Sinti children, for example childhood interventions in Roma communities, vaccination drives and paediatric care in **Albania, Bulgaria, Croatia, Greece, Hungary, Ireland, Italy, Poland, Portugal, Slovenia, Spain and Ukraine**. Finally, in terms of COVID-related measures, eleven participating States, **Albania, Bulgaria, Greece, Hungary, Ireland, Italy, Portugal, Slovenia, Spain, Türkiye and Ukraine**, reported prioritizing Roma and Sinti groups within their national vaccination schemes.

The OSCE Mission in **Kosovo** indicated that the authorities passed the Action Plan for the implementation of the Strategy for Advancing the Rights of Roma and Ashkali Communities for the period 2022-2026 which includes better access to healthcare services on a non-discriminatory basis.³⁰⁷

Priority areas and recommendations

The health condition of Roma and Sinti communities remains challenging despite visible progress achieved by some participating States. Authorities must invest greater efforts in health care to ensure that the legal and policy frameworks are properly informed by current needs and embrace gender and intersectional approaches to leave no group behind. At the same time, authorities should consider providing budget allocation for the implementation of such frameworks.

³⁰⁶ Response from Türkiye.

³⁰⁷ Response to the ODIHR questionnaire from the OSCE Mission to Kosovo, received 2 May 2023.

Intolerance and discrimination restrict the realization of the right to health on an equal basis and remain issues of concern. Authorities should ensure that unequal treatment is addressed at the legislative and policy levels and that the provisions are implemented in practice. It is also crucial that States keep in place and or/develop tailored programmes to address the needs of Roma and Sinti women and children.

The COVID-19 pandemic had a disproportionate impact on Roma and Sinti communities, highlighting the existing inequalities in health care and housing. The health consequences of the pandemic should be addressed through targeted activities while taking into consideration housing-related restraints and a gender perspective.

Unemployment and economic problems

Economic welfare is comprised of a variety of factors, ranging from access to the labour market and employability status, to levels of income and health. The economic well-being of individuals and groups is directly connected to their housing situation and education levels. Challenges in housing and health care trigger the exclusion of Roma and Sinti people from the labour market and impose critical obstacles to employment. These obstacles are mainly linked to the discrimination faced by Roma and Sinti, as well as their limited skills to meet labour market needs.³⁰⁸

Tightening economic conditions increase the inequalities Roma and Sinti people face in the labour market. The economic decline that took place prior to this reporting period reduced opportunities and inflated poverty and unemployment levels among Roma and Sinti.³⁰⁹ The prolonged COVID-19 pandemic and other global and regional developments affected the economic situation of Roma and Sinti, leaving many without sources of daily income.³¹⁰

Within the past five years, there has been *visible progress* in designing and implementing measures to address some dimensions of employment among Roma and Sinti communities, although these measures may not have benefited women and men equally. There are a growing number of tailored programmes and projects to solve certain challenges in employment, however it is difficult to assess progress without clear indicators.

³⁰⁸ Status Report 2008.

³⁰⁹ Status Report 2013.

³¹⁰ OSCE Human Dimension Commitments and State Responses to the Covid-19 Pandemic.

“Promote increased representation of qualified Roma and Sinti people in public employment.” (Paragraph 48) “Develop training programmes to prepare under-represented groups such as Roma and Sinti for employment in local public administration and other areas, and develop policies to encourage employment of the graduates of these programmes as civil servants.” (Paragraph 49) “Develop policies and programmes, including vocational training, to improve the marketable skills and employability of Roma and Sinti people, particularly young people and women (Paragraph 51) “Adopt social policies that strengthen incentives to seek employment, as a sustainable way to avoid dependency on social benefits.”

— OSCE Action Plan, Chapter IV, Paragraph 52.

Continuing challenges and emerging trends

The Second Status Report flagged several areas of concern, such as limited job opportunities, temporary labour restrictions for Roma and Sinti immigrants, lack of training, and discrimination. In the current reporting period, high rates of unemployment and poverty, poor sources of income, especially during COVID-19 pandemic restrictions, and discriminatory treatment of Roma and Sinti in hiring persisted. There was limited disaggregated information collected between 2018 and 2022 about Roma and Sinti participation in economies across the OSCE, making a full assessment of their socio-economic attainment challenging.

FRA’s survey examined Roma involvement in labour markets and found that around 43 per cent of working-aged Roma were engaged in paid work of some kind. Thirty-three per cent of the Roma surveyed had experienced biased treatment in seeking job opportunities. As many as 56 per cent of Roma youth aged 16 to 24 were not engaged in education, employment or training.³¹¹

Discrimination based on ethnicity remains a matter of concern in the OSCE region. The European Network of Equality Bodies highlighted that discriminatory experiences faced by Roma and Sinti remain under-reported. These communities should be made aware of the full extent of their labour rights and encouraged to bring bias treatment to the attention of the authorities.³¹² The European Commission also found persistent discrimination against Roma

311 *Roma Survey 2021*, European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights, 2022.

312 *Roma and Traveller Inclusion: Towards a new EU Framework learning from the work of Equality Bodies*, European Network of Equality Bodies, 2020.

in access to employment and housing, despite an overall decline in intolerance in access to public services.³¹³

There is also a gender gap within Roma and Sinti communities; only 28 per cent of Roma women are in the labour market, compared to 58 per cent of Roma men.³¹⁴ Gender

roles feed this gap; 28 per cent of Roma women are employed as domestic workers compared to only six per cent of men. Differences were also found between Roma women and women in general, with the caregiver roles of Roma women more likely to keep them out of the labour force.³¹⁵

Unemployment and informal work increase the risk of poverty among Roma and Sinti. In addition, it is important to stress that self-employment, which gained traction among these communities due to the prevalence of discrimination in the formal economy, is not extensively regulated by domestic legislative frameworks for social security and pensions. Furthermore, a shift away from traditional Roma crafts has also affected economic and social inclusion.³¹⁶ Exclusion from the labour market affects not only Roma and Sinti’s economic well-being but also the realization of their social and education rights.

These issues persist in many countries within the OSCE. In Serbia, the socio-economic status of the Roma community is characterized by extreme poverty and high unemployment.³¹⁷ The high rate of poverty in Romania generally, where a third of country’s population is at risk of poverty and social exclusion, exacerbates barriers for Roma.³¹⁸ The situation of Roma in the labour market improved in

313 *Mid-term evaluation of the EU Framework for National Roma Integration Strategies up to 2020*, European Commission, 2018.

314 *Roma Survey 2021*.

315 *Roma women in nine EU Member States*, European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights, 2019.

316 *A synthesis of civil society’s reports on the implementation of national Roma integration strategies in the European Union*, Directorate-General for Justice and Consumers, 2020.

317 Boris Sijerković, *Discrimination against Roma in the labour market*, Minority Rights Group website, 2022.

318 *Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament, the European Council, the Council, the European Central Bank and the Eurogroup*, COM(2019) 150 final, 27 February 2019.

Hungary over the reporting period, but the COVID-19 pandemic disrupted progress.³¹⁹ In Slovakia, the majority of Roma are at risk of poverty and suffer from exclusion from quality housing.³²⁰ In the SEE region only one-fifth of Roma are employed and two-thirds of those are engaged in the informal economy.³²¹

The European Commission set promising and ambitious objectives aiming to narrow employment and gender gaps by half and to lower the rate of Roma not engaged in education, employment or training by half also.³²² The Council of Europe called attention to its Strasbourg Declaration on Roma, which provides recommendations on effective implementation of anti-discrimination legislation in labour markets and equal access to employment and vocational education.³²³ To support the process, it provides assistance for policy development and engages with authorities at the local level to address difficulties in access to employment.³²⁴

Action by participating States

During the reporting period for the Second Status Report, 16 participating States put in place measures that raised employment levels among Roma and Sinti communities and created income opportunities. Twenty three States did so for this reporting period.³²⁵ This indicates *visible progress* in States' focus on the employment conditions of Roma and Sinti communities and the steps taken to address barriers to work.

Changes were made at both legislative and policy levels. **Albania** amended its Law on employment promotion that

provides measures for vulnerable categories of the population, including Roma and Egyptians, through education and vocational training.³²⁶ **Cyprus and Denmark** both indicated that equal treatment of all citizens in the labour market is guaranteed in national legislation.³²⁷ **North Macedonia's** Annual Operational Plan for Active Employment Programs and Measures and Labour Market Services will introduce a five per cent quota for Roma. With this, the government aims to improve the participation of Roma in active employment.³²⁸

Some participating States reported that tailored measures to address obstacles faced by Roma and Sinti were included in their National Roma Integration Strategies. In **Belgium**, some federated entities have designed specific measures for Roma in the labour market in accordance with the national integration strategy.³²⁹ The **Czech** Strategy for Roma Integration 2021-2030 entails provisions on equal access of Roma to employment.³³⁰ The **Finnish** National Roma Policy 2018-2022 supports activities promoting professional skills, employment and entrepreneurship.³³¹ The National Traveller and Roma Inclusion Strategy 2017-2021 in **Ireland** has defined 17 employment-oriented initiatives with funding for training and employment, advocacy initiatives in this area, and support to local initiatives.³³² **Slovakia** and **Slovenia** featured employment as a key area for action as they address Roma issues.³³³

Another group of countries reported tailored programmes and projects to solve certain challenges in employment.³³⁴ **Bulgaria** noted that the National Action Plan on Employment provides annual state funds to employ 100 Roma mediators in the Labour Office Directorates.³³⁵ The **Finnish** local administration implemented the Marta project in 2021 and 2022, which supported the employment of Roma in the region of South Savo.³³⁶ **Poland** reported that 381 Roma

319 [Employment Figures Among the Romani Population Show Mixed Results](#), *Hungary Today*, 28 March 2023.
 320 [OECD Economic Surveys: Slovak Republic 2019](#), Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development, 2019.
 321 [Vesna Dzuteska Bisheva, Home \(not so\) sweet home for vulnerable Roma returnees in the Western Balkans](#), United Nations Development Programme website, 7 April 2022.
 322 [Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament and the Council Brussels – EU Roma strategic framework for equality, inclusion and participation](#).
 323 [Council of Europe High Level Meeting on Roma “The Strasbourg Declaration on Roma”](#), CM(2010)133-final, Strasbourg, 20 October 2010.
 324 Response from the Council of Europe.
 325 Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Croatia, the Czech Republic, Finland, Germany, Ireland, Italy, Latvia, Lithuania, Moldova, Montenegro, North Macedonia, Poland, Romania, Slovakia, Slovenia, Spain, Sweden, Türkiye, Ukraine and the United Kingdom. Denmark, Estonia, Georgia, Liechtenstein and Switzerland reported taking no action on this measure.

326 Response from Albania.
 327 Response to the ODIHR questionnaire from the Permanent Mission of the Republic of Cyprus in the OSCE, received 2 May 2023; and Denmark.
 328 Response from North Macedonia.
 329 Response from Belgium.
 330 Response from the Czech Republic.
 331 Response from Finland.
 332 Response from Ireland.
 333 Responses from Slovakia and Slovenia.
 334 Bulgaria, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Ireland, Latvia, Finland, Poland, Montenegro, Türkiye, Sweden and the United Kingdom.
 335 Response from Bulgaria.
 336 Response from Finland.

benefited from tailored measures in the labour market.³³⁷ In Türkiye in 2022, Job Clubs helped more than 35,000 people from 22 provinces including dense Roma populations to gain specific skills on searching for jobs, writing CVs and preparing for interviews.³³⁸ Similar efforts were observed in Sweden, where a programme supports job-seeking registration, job applications and interviews.³³⁹

Priority areas and recommendations

Despite the growing number of policy changes and programmes in labour markets across the OSCE, Roma and Sinti communities remain largely excluded from economic developments. More effort is needed at national level to ensure policies are implemented and mobilize tangible progress in tackling unemployment and other issues in this field.

Tangible action is also needed to address the needs of women and youth. Policy frameworks — both National Roma Integration Strategies and mainstream employment policies — should incorporate intersectional perspectives to ensure that challenges faced by the most vulnerable and marginalized groups are solved. Given these labour market concerns, more tailored measures are essential to increase the employment rate of Roma and Sinti, to combat poverty in Roma and Sinti communities and to invest in traditional employment initiatives, while ensuring these communities can participate on an equal basis.

The realization of social and economic rights on an equal footing will ensure not only the sustainable inclusion of Roma and Sinti in society but also help to guarantee the realization of other rights. Measures that aim to provide adequate housing and living conditions, and equal access to labour market and health care should be designed taking into consideration the needs of Roma and Sinti communities and engaging them in the consultation process.

4. IMPROVING ACCESS TO EDUCATION

There are several critical factors underlying inequity in education, including, in particular, social and economic status, as well as the level of parents' education, immigrant

background and gender.³⁴⁰ Overall, although all children are guaranteed the right to education in both theory and law, the practical reality is very different; high-quality education remains a privilege for those born into families that are wealthier, native-born, better educated and non-minority.

Within the reporting period, some participating States employed certain policies and some good practices for promoting the inclusion of Roma and Sinti in early education, along with affirmative action measures, such as quotas for Roma students at high schools and universities. These constitute *visible progress* in making education a priority area in improving the situation of Roma and Sinti. At the same time, the key challenges precluding Roma and Sinti children from accessing education from early stages continue to exist, as there has been slow progress overall in this regard. The continued discriminatory practice of systematically routing Roma and Sinti children to special schools remains a problem, along with many situations of educational segregation where Roma children are taught in Roma-only schools or separate classes.

Although studies show some positive trends in the enrolment of Roma and Sinti children in compulsory education, several participating States still lag, and most participating States are still behind in Roma and Sinti educational attainment. For generations, Roma and Sinti families have struggled to overcome obstacles to ensure their children a good education. Structural racism, social and economic obstacles and other intersectional factors have stood in their way. Lack of kindergartens or day-care facilities or adequate access to them, enrolment in segregated and inferior quality schools and poverty are all examples of such hindrances. Nevertheless, in the reporting period, governments — especially some local governments, intergovernmental organizations and civil society organizations — have challenged the status quo by designing and implementing initiatives that equipped Roma and Sinti children with better access, equity, equality, and opportunities in education. While civil society's efforts have focused more on families and social and economic conditions, institutional initiatives have engaged more with schools and inclusive education tools.

337 Response from Poland.

338 Response from Türkiye.

339 Response from Sweden.

340 *Education at a Glance 2018: OECD Indicators*, OECD, 2018.

“Educational policies should aim to integrate Roma and Sinti people into mainstream education by providing full and equal access at all levels, while remaining sensitive to cultural differences.”

“Include Roma history and culture in educational texts, with particular consideration given to the experience of Roma and Sinti people during the Holocaust.” (Paragraph 71) “Develop and implement comprehensive school desegregation programmes aiming at: (1) discontinuing the practice of systematically routing Roma children to special schools or classes (e.g., schools for mentally disabled persons, schools and classes exclusively designed for Roma and Sinti children); and (2) transferring Roma children from special schools to mainstream schools.”

— OSCE Action Plan, Chapter V, Paragraph 73.

Continuing challenges and emerging trends

According to the Roma Education Fund, the segregation of Roma children in schools in Central and Eastern Europe remains a major violation of human rights and EU principles. In a 2013 resolution, the European Parliament urged Member States to eliminate segregation in the field of education and to halt the illicit placement of Roma children in special schools. States were also urged to create the necessary infrastructure and mechanisms to facilitate access to quality education for all Roma children. However, there is still a lack of political understanding and institutional accountability in governments within Central and Eastern Europe to comply with this ruling to improve the situation.³⁴¹

The Roma Civil Monitor synthesis report draws attention to the fact that segregation in education appears to be a persistent and growing problem for too many young Roma people. Laws banning segregation are ineffective or not properly enforced. The report identifies some states and other institutions that are active agents in maintaining segregation. The report also provides insights into transitions from school to work, which are often impeded by poverty, lack of skills and discrimination.³⁴²

A recent European Commission communication to the European Parliament noted that all EU Member States with larger Roma populations, in line with the more ambitious commitments proposed by the EU Roma Strategic Framework, include measures to prevent segregation and

engage in transitioning Roma pupils from segregated schools into mainstream educational settings.³⁴³ However, in some cases, the proposed measures are not always systematically developed from a well-defined baseline and are accompanied by indicators and targets that are insufficient to match the scale of the challenges. Most NRSFs have not set out sufficient measures to increase the social mobility of students and to help them advance successfully from

upper-secondary to tertiary education. The NRSFs generally do not adequately address how to remove obstacles to the participation of Roma children in kindergartens, including children living in remote, rural or segregated areas. Nor do they propose adequate measures to support the employment of Roma teachers, assistants and mediators. Measures to prevent students from leaving school early are noted to be insufficiently complemented by adequate measures to re-integrate into formal education those Roma pupils who have dropped out.³⁴⁴

UNICEF also found that children in Roma settlements fall behind in education and learning. They note that, in comparison to national averages, Roma children are less likely to attend school and more likely to be over-age and, thus, at higher risk of dropping out. They also note that Roma are less likely to complete primary and secondary education and have a lower chance of acquiring foundational skills across education levels.³⁴⁵

Council of Europe research shows a considerable gap between Roma and non-Roma children attending school and confirms that Roma children are behind in educational achievements. Despite efforts to increase school enrolment, as many as 50 per cent of Roma children in Europe fail to complete primary education, while only 25 per cent

341 Position Paper on EU Funds in the Area of Cohesion, Roma Education Fund, 2018.

342 A synthesis of civil society’s reports on the implementation of national Roma integration strategies in the European Union Identifying blind spots in Roma inclusion policy.

343 Assessment report of the Member States’ national Roma strategic frameworks, Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament, The Council, The European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions, European Commission, 2023.

344 *Ibid*

345 Education Pathways in Roma Settlements: Understanding Inequality in Education and Learning, Findings from MICS6 in Kosovo, Montenegro, North Macedonia and Serbia, UNICEF, 2022; and Rights denied the impact of discrimination on children, UNICEF, 2022.

complete secondary education. Low educational outcomes are particularly alarming since education has a direct and decisive impact on an individual's opportunities in life. Poor education correlates with poor health, unemployment, poverty and social exclusion.³⁴⁶

Currently, segregation affects more than half of Roma children aged between six and 15 across EU countries. Survey results from 2021 show that segregation in education was particularly pronounced in Bulgaria, Croatia, Romania and Slovakia. More than half of Roma children in Bulgaria and Slovakia attend a school where all or the majority of children are Roma.³⁴⁷

One report from the Council of Europe referred to data gathered by FRA through its Roma survey.³⁴⁸ It notes that on average 17 per cent of Roma children were never in education.³⁴⁹ A further 27 per cent of Roma children did not complete primary education,³⁵⁰ while 47 per cent only completed primary school.³⁵¹ That left just 10 per cent of Roma children and youth who had completed secondary and higher education.³⁵² About a quarter (27 per cent) of Roma had finished school after the age of 16 or were still in education.³⁵³

Lastly, the Council of Europe report found a little more than half of Roma children left school before the age of 16, averaging 56 per cent.³⁵⁴

According to FRA, the share of Roma children in early childhood education would need to increase by approximately 50 per cent to attain the target of 70 per cent across all survey countries. The largest differences between Roma and the general population are found in Croatia and Serbia (where the share of children in early childhood education is generally low), as well as Italy and Portugal.³⁵⁵

The same survey found that 27 per cent of 20-to-24-year-old Roma and Sinti have attained at least upper secondary education across all surveyed countries.³⁵⁶ At the same time, between 76 and 97 per cent of the general population completed secondary education. In the EU countries surveyed, 71 per cent of Roma aged between the ages of 18 and 24 leave the education system early (before reaching upper secondary level) and are not in further education or training. The difference between the general population and Roma is significant, as only one in ten young people from the general population drops out of education and training early.³⁵⁷

FRA found that Roma girls are more likely to drop out early than boys, particularly in Bulgaria, Croatia and Slovakia.³⁵⁸ Not only are Roma girls increasingly excluded from educational systems, but they are also excluded from employment or training.³⁵⁹

Roma and Sinti, civil society and education experts articulated that ensuring equal access to early childhood education and removing all administrative, economic, social and racial barriers, including segregation, remains an issue. They also stated that the quality of education could

346 *Strategic Action Plan for Roma and Traveller Inclusion (2020-2025)*, Council of Europe, 2020.

347 *Roma in 10 European Countries – Main Results*.

348 *Ad Hoc Committee of Experts on Roma and Traveller Issues (Cahrom), Cahrom Thematic Visit on Enhancing the Effective Realization of Roma Children's Compulsory School Education and Added Value of Ensuring Access to Vocational Education for Roma Youth, Final Thematic Report*, Council of Europe 2018.

349 The highest rates were found in Greece (44 per cent), Portugal (32 per cent), France and Romania (24 per cent) and the lowest rates in Hungary (3 per cent), the Czech Republic and Slovakia (1 per cent).

350 The highest rates were found in France (44 per cent), Spain (43 per cent), Romania (35 per cent) and Bulgaria (31 per cent) and the lowest rates in Slovakia (17 per cent) and the Czech Republic (10 per cent).

351 The highest rates were found in Slovakia (67 per cent), the Czech Republic (66 per cent) and Hungary (63 per cent) and the lowest rates in France (30 per cent) and Greece (29 per cent).

352 The highest rates were found in the Czech Republic and Poland (20 per cent) Slovakia (15 per cent) and Hungary (13 per cent) and the lowest rates in France (4 per cent), Spain (3 per cent), Greece (2 per cent) and Portugal (1 per cent).

353 The highest rates were found in the Czech Republic (47 per cent), Hungary (44 per cent), Poland and Slovakia (41 per cent) and the lowest rates in Spain (18 per cent), Italy (16 per cent), Portugal (10 per cent) and Greece (4 per cent).

354 The highest rates were found in Bulgaria (67 per cent), Spain (66 per cent) and Italy (63 per cent) and the lowest rates in Hungary (53 per cent), the Czech Republic, Greece and Romania (52 per cent), France (49 per cent) and Poland (45 per cent).

355 *Roma in 10 European Countries – Main Results*.

356 Educational attainment is highest in Serbia, Hungary, North Macedonia and Croatia (between 46 per cent and 39 per cent) and lowest in Portugal, Greece, the Czech Republic and Romania (between 10 and 22 per cent). Greece and Portugal have the largest differences between Roma and the general population.

357 *Roma in 10 European Countries – Main Results*.

358 *Fundamental Rights Report 2018*, Fundamental Rights Agency, (Luxembourg: Publications Office of the European Union, 2018).

359 *Ibid*.

be strengthened by ensuring diversity and non-discrimination policies at the local, regional and national levels. Finally, they argued that the authorities should ensure that Roma and Sinti education experts participate in education-related policymaking, as well as ensuring policy implementation, accountability and transparency in all processes.³⁶⁰ These views and opinions were also expressed by civil society at ODIHR's consultation workshop organized to elaborate this report.³⁶¹

The role of teachers in improving educational outcomes for Roma and Sinti children remains essential. UNESCO has noted that, "inclusion cannot be realized unless teachers are empowered agents of change, with values, knowledge, and attitudes that permit every student to succeed."³⁶² Supportive student-student and teacher-student relationships positively affect student achievement, both directly and indirectly, through a greater sense of belonging at school. A more favourable learning climate and more student cooperation would benefit disadvantaged Roma and Sinti students in particular, thus contributing to more equitable and resilient education systems.

In 2021, ODIHR conducted an assessment of the training needs of teachers in compulsory education, in particular, the need for human rights education, multicultural education and training on diversity. This process involved reviewing school policies and practices and the availability of teacher training to help them avoid stereotypes and implicit biases against Roma children in education.³⁶³ The results of the research confirmed the need for skills-based, inclusive teaching practices favouring the principles and practices of non-discriminatory, multicultural education, and that adequate teacher training and capacity-building is critically important.³⁶⁴

Education of Roma and Sinti children during COVID-19

The COVID-19 pandemic created further barriers for Roma and Sinti children in education. Most participating States imposed lockdowns, which meant that all levels of education were closed to in-person learning for several months. At the end of March 2020, school closures had been implemented in the majority of participating States.³⁶⁵ Nationwide school closures lasted for at least ten weeks across the OSCE area.³⁶⁶ In response, the majority of participating States introduced online learning and, as time went on, introduced different hybrid solutions depending on local epidemiological conditions.

The European Commission highlighted that, "children who lack resources and support were already lower performers before the crisis and they are likely to have lost further ground during the COVID-19 school closures. This will increase overall European educational inequalities."³⁶⁷ According to UNICEF data, schoolchildren around the world have lost an estimated 1.8 trillion hours of in-person learning since the onset of the pandemic.³⁶⁸ The European Commission also found that teachers who have classes with high concentrations of students from socio-economically disadvantaged backgrounds were more likely to report that they themselves need professional development in IT skills for teaching.³⁶⁹

These conditions seriously impacted Roma and Sinti children. They were disadvantaged in more than one way by the pandemic and suffered significant learning loss during school lockdowns. Some findings from focus groups and surveys conducted for an unpublished report by ODIHR confirm this.³⁷⁰ For example, the Open Society Foundations stated that the high dropout rate of 68 per

360 Participants of ODIHR's regional seminar "Promoting Equal Access to Quality Early Childhood Education and Care services for Roma and Sinti Children", Warsaw, 28-29 November 2019; For more information see OSCE/ODIHR's [Promoting Equal Access to Quality Early Childhood Education for Roma and Sinti Children](#).

361 Participants at ODIHR's consultation workshop.

362 [Inclusive teaching: Preparing all teachers to teach all students](#) UNESCO, Policy Paper 43, International Task Force on Teachers for Education 2030, Global Education Monitoring Report, October 2020, p.1.

363 This unpublished needs assessment report researched the needs of teachers in Bulgaria, Hungary, North Macedonia, Romania and Slovakia.

364 Unpublished OSCE/ODIHR needs assessment research on the capacity-building needs for teacher training.

365 Andreas Schleicher, [The Impact of Covid-19 on Education: Insights from Education at a Glance 2020](#), 8 September 2020.

366 *Ibid.*

367 [Educational inequalities in Europe and physical school closures during Covid-19](#), European Commission, April 2020.

368 [Education Disrupted. The second year of the COVID-19 pandemic and school closure](#), UNICEF, 9 September 2021.

369 Giorgio Di Pietro et al., [The likely impact of COVID-19 on education: Reflections based on the existing literature and recent international datasets](#), European Commission, JRC technical report, 24 June 2020.

370 In 2021, ODIHR commissioned an unpublished report assessing the impact of COVID-19 on education for Roma and Sinti children. This report looked into Hungary, Italy, North Macedonia, Romania and Slovakia.

cent among Roma schoolchildren would rise further due to circumstances that preclude Roma and Sinti children from participating in distance learning.³⁷¹ Without participating in distance learning, many Roma and Sinti children were forced to discontinue their education amid lockdowns.³⁷² ODIHR's research found that disadvantaged educational environments further widened the educational gap between Roma and non-Roma children during the pandemic. The three main areas identified by this report include caregivers' inability to provide adequate educational support to Roma and Sinti children, material aspects of their poor home learning environments, and a lack of ICT equipment and computer proficiency. None of these educational obstacles are new for Roma and Sinti children. However, home-based learning increased the negative impact of these obstacles on their educational results.³⁷³

Another FRA report similarly suggests that COVID-19 seriously impacted Roma students, as they did not have access to electronic devices or the Internet.³⁷⁴ Roma education mediators and assistants played an important role during the pandemic by ensuring communication between families and schools, visiting vulnerable children and providing printed study materials to those without Internet access.³⁷⁵

Roma and Sinti history and culture in educational texts and curricula

The incorporation of Roma and Sinti history and culture, with due consideration to their experiences during the Holocaust, in educational texts and curricula is seen as a pivotal measure for combating racism and discrimination, as well as in establishing inclusive societies that recognize their cultural heritage struggles.³⁷⁶

371 Zeljko Jovanovic, Neda Koronovska, *Roma in the COVID-19 Crisis: An early warning from six EU Member States*, Open Society Foundations, April 2020.

372 Thomas Hackl, Stephan Müller, *Without access to online teaching, Roma children's education has been put on hold by COVID-19*, 27 October 2020.

373 ODIHR 2021 report assessing the impact of COVID-19 on education for Roma and Sinti children.

374 *Covid-19 sorely impacted Roma and Travellers*, FRA, 6 October 2020.

375 *Fundamental Rights Report 2021*.

376 The OSCE Action Plan, in its chapter on Improving Access to Education, recommended participating States to "Include Roma history and culture in educational texts, with particular consideration given to the experience of Roma and Sinti people during the Holocaust" and to "Consider measures to ensure the respect, protection and promotion of the Romani language and its teaching, and of Roma culture as an integral part of the Roma and Sinti cultural heritage", paragraphs 71 and 72.

In this respect, during the reporting period, an important development was the adoption, in 2020, by the Council of Europe Committee of Ministers, of a recommendation on the inclusion of the history of Roma and/or Travellers in school curricula and teaching materials.³⁷⁷ In 2022, the Committee also adopted a recommendation on the remembrance of the Holocaust and preventing crimes against humanity, which references Roma and Sinti.³⁷⁸

One Council of Europe commissioned report by the Georg Eckert Institute for International Textbook Research, in partnership with the Roma Education Fund, researched twenty-one states and identified eight that referred to Roma and Sinti in their curricula.³⁷⁹ While all these countries included Roma in textbooks, most have done so by describing demographics and portraying them as victims or in a stereotypical way.³⁸⁰

ODIHR's 2022 publication *Holocaust Memorial Days: An overview of remembrance and education in the OSCE region* notes that 35 participating States commemorate the Roma and Sinti genocide. Further to this, 23 participating States noted that research is conducted about Roma and Sinti.³⁸¹ A good number of participating States also teach about the Roma and Sinti genocide. In particular, 17 teach it in primary education, 28 in secondary and upper-secondary education, and 24 in college and university. Teacher training about the Roma and Sinti genocide is also available in 26 participating States and information about the Roma and Sinti genocide is included in the textbooks of 25 participating States.³⁸²

377 For more information see *Recommendation CM/Rec(2020)2 of the Committee of Ministers to Member States on the inclusion of the history of Roma and/or Travellers in school curricula and teaching materials*, Council of Europe, 1 July 2020.

378 For more information see *Recommendation CM/Rec(2022)5 of the Committee of Ministers to Member States on passing on remembrance of the Holocaust and preventing crimes against humanity*, Council of Europe, 17 March 2022.

379 *The Representation of Roma in European Curricula and Textbooks*, Council of Europe, Georg Eckert Institute for International Textbook Research, Roma Education Fund, (Analytical Report), February 2020.

380 These were Albania, Austria, Belgium, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Croatia, the Czech Republic, Finland, France, Germany, Hungary, Italy, Moldova, Montenegro, Poland, Romania, Serbia, Slovakia, Spain, North Macedonia and the United Kingdom. Kosovo was also included.

381 These are Austria, Belgium, Bulgaria, Canada, Cyprus, Denmark, Germany, Hungary, Ireland, Italy, Latvia, Luxembourg, Montenegro, Netherlands, Norway, Poland, Romania, Serbia, Slovakia, Spain, Switzerland, Ukraine and the United States.

382 For more information please see *Holocaust Memorial Days: An overview of remembrance and education in the OSCE region*, OSCE/ODIHR, 27 January 2022.

For example, in their reply to ODIHR's questionnaire, **Italy** reported promoting a project on understanding Roma culture and language, including educational activities on the history and culture of Roma, Sinti and Travellers. It has a specific focus on 'antigypsyism' and the experience of Roma and Sinti people during the Holocaust.³⁸³ **Montenegro** stated that their Ministry of Justice, Human and Minority Rights, in cooperation with the Montenegrin National Theatre, marks 2 August, the International Day of Remembrance of Roma Victims of the Holocaust.³⁸⁴ **Romania** also marks 2 August as the International Day of Roma Victims of the Holocaust through public ceremonies with the participation of high level officials.³⁸⁵

Within the reporting timeframe, ODIHR has also supported research into the experience of Roma and Sinti people during the Holocaust and has supported the translation of an Auschwitz guide on Roma and Sinti. ODIHR also regularly attends IHRA proceedings of the Committee on the Roma Genocide as an observer. In addition, ODIHR and the Permanent Mission of Austria to the OSCE and the Federal Ministry of Education, Science and Research of Austria facilitated a study visit on "Teaching and Educational Materials about the Roma and Sinti Genocide" in Vienna, Austria in December 2019.³⁸⁶ The purpose was to facilitate an exchange of experiences, knowledge, know-how, good practices and relevant policies on the creation of teaching and educational materials about the Roma and Sinti Genocide.³⁸⁷

Action by participating States

Policies and programmes to improve the education of Roma and Sinti

Both of the previous Status Reports highlighted a positive practice from participating States in adopting and implementing policies and programmes aimed at improving educational outcomes for Roma and Sinti children. In the current reporting period, and in their replies to ODIHR's questionnaire, 29 participating States indicated that they have initiated, adopted and/or implemented specific pol-

icies/programmes to improve the education of Roma and Sinti children.³⁸⁸ Most of the responses indicated that this was done under the framework of their NRISs and/or NRSFs, which displays *visible progress* in formulating policy programming.

In **Albania**, the role of education mediator was created in a special decision for improving communication and cooperation between vulnerable groups and institutions of pre-university education, directly impacting Roma.³⁸⁹ **Bosnia and Herzegovina** reported that they have introduced education in their recently adopted Action Plan for Roma.³⁹⁰ The framework calls for developing content on Roma history and culture in existing curricula and textbooks and the introduction of Romani language in schools as an optional subject. Bosnia and Herzegovina also reported a slight increase in the enrolment of Roma children in preschool, primary and secondary education between 2018 and 2019.³⁹¹ **Bulgaria** has taken measures to close gaps in learning content to create a lasting impact on students at risk of dropping out of the education system. They have also supported 946 educational mediators and, since 2019, they have been implementing a national programme entitled "Supporting Municipalities for Educational Desegregation".³⁹²

Croatia reports that it is co-funding parent participation in integrated preschool education and learning programmes for Roma minority members. They also train and

388 Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Croatia, Cyprus, the Czech Republic, Estonia, Finland, Georgia, Germany, Ireland, Italy, Latvia, Lithuania, Montenegro, North Macedonia, Norway, Poland, Romania, the Russian Federation, Serbia, Slovakia, Slovenia, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, Türkiye, Ukraine and the United Kingdom.

389 Response from Albania.

390 In 2018, the 3rd AP on Education, the Framework Action Plan on Educational Needs of Roma 2018-2022 (FRAPBiH) was adopted, which was later incorporated into the comprehensive Action Plan of BiH for Social Inclusion of Roma 2021-2025 (APIRBiH) adopted in 2022.

391 *Bosne i Hercegovine o Zakonodavnim i Drugim Mjerama na Provođenju Načela Utvrđenih u Okvirnoj Konvenciji za Zaštitu Nacionalnih Manjina* [Bosnia and Herzegovina on Legislative and other Measures on the Implementation of the Principles Established in the Framework Convention for Protection of National Minorities], Bosnia and Herzegovina, Ministry of Human Rights and Refugees, Sarajevo, December 2020, page 48. In preschool it went from 31 children in 2018/2019 to 69 children in 2019/2020; in primary education – from 1,393 children in 2018/2019 to 1,479 children in 2019/2020; and in secondary education – from 99 children in 2018/2019 to 108 children in 2019/2020.

392 Response from Bulgaria.

383 Response from Italy.

384 Response from Montenegro.

385 Response from Romania.

386 The visit involved various stakeholders from Austria, the Czech Republic, Romania and Slovakia.

387 For more information see [Study Visit on Teaching and Educational Materials about the Roma and Sinti Genocide](#), OSCE/ODIHR.

deploy Roma School Assistants, as well as programming that addresses elementary school enrolment for Roma children and support for their primary education. They also provide scholarships to secondary school students, ensure school dormitory accommodation for Roma students, and provide adult literacy and training programmes for Roma.³⁹³ Cyprus highlighted general educational measures that also target Roma children, such as allocation of vacant places in preschool education and measures to reduce school dropout.³⁹⁴

The Czech Republic has continued to reform its educational system in light of the ECtHR judgment *D.H. and Others v. the Czech Republic*.³⁹⁵ This requires the Czech Republic to ensure that Roma pupils are no longer excessively educated outside the mainstream educational system. The implementation of the judgment is being monitored by the Council of Europe Committee of Ministers, which, in its decision of 25 September 2019, praised the education reform, the increased funding for inclusive education and the increased capacity in nursery schools. At the same time, while noting certain progress, the Council of Europe Commissioner for Human Rights noted there are certain challenges to be addressed, including the fact that the number of Roma pupils educated in special education programmes is not decreasing as originally expected. They also made a series of recommendations on systemic actions.³⁹⁶ Also, the Czech NRSFs contains a strategic objective to ensure conditions for quality inclusive education for Roma, including by eliminating discrimination and segregation. The authorities regularly collect data on Roma education on the ground, focusing on special schools and classes with an over-representation of Roma pupils. The Czech Republic also reported supporting access to preschool for Roma children and the provision of scholarships and subsidy schemes for Roma in secondary and higher education.³⁹⁷

393 Response from Croatia.

394 Response from Cyprus.

395 For more information about this judgment please see *D.H. and Others v. the Czech Republic*, European, European Court of Human Rights, 13 November 2007.

396 Council of Europe Commissioner for Human Rights, Submission under Rule 9.4 of the Rules of the Committee of Ministers for the supervision of the execution of judgments and of the terms of friendly settlements in the case of *D.H. and Others v. the Czech Republic* (application no. 57325/00), judgment of 13 November 2007, 22 October 2020.

397 Response from the Czech Republic.

In Estonia, there is a language and culture weekend school for Roma children, and funding is provided for two professional Roma mediators in the municipality of Valga.³⁹⁸ In Finland, the National Agency for Education is preparing digital learning materials on Finnish Roma that will be used for teacher education.³⁹⁹ They are also preparing a guide on general upper secondary education for Roma aimed at teachers and guidance counsellors.⁴⁰⁰ The Finnish National Agency for Education also published a National Roma Language Revitalisation Programme in 2022.⁴⁰¹

Germany informed ODIHR that a Joint Declaration on Teaching about the Past and Present of Roma and Sinti has been adopted by all educational ministers of federal states, the Central Council of German Sinti and Roma and the Alliance for Solidarity with the Sinti and Roma of Europe, with the goal of including set recommendations in their curricula in history, politics, religion and ethics. It also raises awareness of ‘antigypsyism’ through teacher training and by including Roma and Sinti in the organization of information events.⁴⁰²

In Ireland there is joint governmental funding related to attendance, participation and retention/school completion in specific Traveller and Roma communities. Activities are undertaken by dedicated Education Community Development Workers, in cooperation with local Traveller and Roma communities, primary and post-primary schools and other service providers.⁴⁰³ Latvia noted that they have municipal mediators who work with Roma children, and that they support projects aimed at reducing school dropout rates.⁴⁰⁴

In Moldova, the authorities are working to update the policy of inclusive education. The goal of the current inclusive development policy is to promote the creation of a discrimination-free educational environment. The Na-

398 Response from Estonia.

399 Response from Finland. For more information see *Lessons on Roma Culture*, Finnish National Agency for Education, in Finnish language.

400 *Ibid.*, for more information see *Do I think I'm a high school student? High school guide for Roma*, Finnish National Agency for Education, 2018, in Finnish language.

401 *Ibid.*, for more information see *Finland's Romani language revitalization program with proposed measures*, Finnish National Agency for Education, in Finnish language.

402 Response from Germany.

403 Response from Ireland.

404 Response from Latvia.

tional Centre for Teacher Professional Development created a training module entitled “Discrimination, Racism, Modern Challenges and Approaches in Education”. The aim of the course, from the Roma perspective, is to help participants learn about contemporary discrimination, racism and the Roma Genocide.⁴⁰⁵

Montenegro reported that it employs 20 associates that are similar to educational mediators and assistants in other participating States. It also has scholarships for Roma and Egyptian high school and university students, a designated dormitory capacity for Roma and Egyptian students, and an increased percentage of children attending early childhood education.⁴⁰⁶

North Macedonia stated that they are continuing to ensure Roma children’s access to preschool education by exempting parents from paying tuition fees and through engaging 20 mediators in 20 municipalities. For primary education, they hired 35 Roma education mediators in 26 municipalities. They also continue to award scholarships to Roma high school and university students.⁴⁰⁷

Poland noted that all Roma pupils of primary schools were equipped with school textbooks and that 90 Roma were hired as Roma School Assistants/Mediators by local governments. They have also ensured preschool education for Roma children and have offered scholarships to Roma in primary, secondary and tertiary education. In 2021 Roma women were the predominant beneficiaries of their programming in relation to education (55 per cent women and 45 per cent men).⁴⁰⁸

The **Romanian** Ministry of Education in 2019 adopted a dedicated methodology to identify and combat segregation in education, and their NRIS 2022-2027 has a dedicated Action Plan to ensure access for Roma to quality inclusive education. The plan includes measures to reduce school dropout rates, to increase the number of Roma in formal education, to ensure the quality of education in schools, with a focus on residential segregated schools and schools in isolated communities, as well as creating inclusive school environments and preserving the cultural

identity and self-esteem of Roma pupils.⁴⁰⁹

The **Russian Federation** informed ODIHR of their updated Comprehensive Action Plan for the socio-cultural development of the Roma in the Russian Federation. The action plan provides for monitoring the transition of Roma children to subsequent levels of education, which will allow the executive bodies in the field of education to quickly respond to negative processes and ensure the right to education for Roma children.⁴¹⁰

Serbia informed about positive legislation and systemic support measures that resulted in 80 per cent more Roma students attending the Preparatory Preschool Programme compared to 2015. The percentage of Roma children enrolling in primary school rose by 15 per cent and now amounts to 85.4 per cent of all Roma children that age. In addition, attrition from the system was reduced by seven per cent. An example of good practice is the affirmative measure of enrolling Roma in secondary schools under more favourable conditions. More than 65 per cent of those enrolled through affirmative action, who are beneficiaries of scholarships, also have mentoring support and finish secondary school education more easily. The percentage of Roma girls attending secondary school is increasing — currently 27 per cent, an increase of 12 per cent compared to 2015. For the last seven school years, 6,533 scholarships in pre-university education were awarded to Roma students, of whom 65 per cent were girls. Serbia deploys pedagogical assistants providing support to Roma children and measures to prevent dropouts. In the last three years, 43 professional development programmes have been accredited for teachers to counter dropouts.⁴¹¹

Slovakia is taking measures to increase access to preschool education, providing free school lunches and tutoring for Roma.⁴¹² **Slovenia** reported measures aimed at improving educational outcomes for Roma children. These include efforts to improve Roma attendance and enrolment in preschool, employing Roma assistants in kindergartens and primary schools, co-financing activities in the field of preschool and primary education, support for

405 Response from Moldova.

406 Response from Montenegro.

407 Response from North Macedonia.

408 Response from Poland.

409 Response from Romania.

410 Response to the ODIHR questionnaire from the Permanent Mission of the Russian Federation to the OSCE, received 21 March 2023.

411 Response to the ODIHR questionnaire from the Ministry of Education of the Republic of Serbia, received 14 March 2023.

412 Response from Slovakia.

learning of Romani as a mother tongue, learning Slovenian and preventing early school leaving and adequate training of expert workers working with Roma. They have also prepared quality teaching material to help Roma students in the learning process (also in the Romani language) and promoted the production of children's and youth literature in Romani.⁴¹³

Spain has undertaken efforts to include the history and culture of Roma in the school curriculum, in line with their education law, which requires study and respect of cultures, particularly that of Roma. They are also engaged in preparing materials against 'antigypsyism' in collaboration with the State Council of the Roma People.⁴¹⁴ In cooperation with the Roma associations of the Education Group of the Roma State Council, the course "Educational care for the Roma school population" has been prepared and implemented to train teachers.⁴¹⁵

In **Sweden**, since 2017 and to date, the Stockholm County Administrative Board, a government authority that is, among other things, tasked with coordinating the implementation of Sweden's policy for Roma inclusion, distributes a schoolbook related to 'antigypsyism' in Sweden, based on the violations and abuse experienced by Roma people in Sweden during the 20th Century. The Swedish National Agency for Education is also tasked with producing and disseminating an appropriate training programme for mediators with Romani language skills and cultural competences. They also support the production and development of learning materials for all schools, including preschools, in national minority languages and Romani language.⁴¹⁶

Switzerland reports supporting cantonal projects that intend to include the history of Roma and Sinti in their curriculum, and the creation of policies addressing teacher training in inclusive education.⁴¹⁷ **Türkiye** reported

planned actions to help children continue their education and raise awareness among Roma families of the importance of education. In addition, in regions where there is a larger population of Roma, scholarships and other announcements about opportunities concerning them are made through governorships, school management and guidance services. Projects were also carried out to increase the participation of Roma women in formal employment through vocational education, and scholarships are given to 8th grade students who attend the Support and Training Courses. In addition, training courses for women were conducted through the Social Assistance and Solidarity Foundations to ensure their psychosocial, socio-cultural, vocational, artistic and personal development in areas where Roma citizens live in dense populations.⁴¹⁸

Ukraine noted the implementation of measures to reduce the number of Roma who do not complete their studies, as well as career guidance work to encourage Roma to obtain vocational, technical and higher education. They also informed ODIHR about organizing workshops for teaching staff of general educational institutions where Roma study, the publication of teaching aids, providing Roma students with free transport to school, and increasing preschool education, among other measures.⁴¹⁹

The **United Kingdom** informed ODIHR of investing in targeted educational support in some local authority areas for Gypsy, Roma and Traveller children and young people. This included support for preschool education, pupils in primary school and those transitioning to secondary school thereby reducing dropout rates.⁴²⁰

Addressing school and class segregation, and over-representation in special schools

The previous Status Reports showed signs of some positive practices in respect of addressing the segregation of Roma and Sinti in education. In the current reporting period, and in their replies to ODIHR's questionnaire, 15 participating States indicated that they had taken policy measures to tackle Roma and Sinti school and class segre-

413 Response from Slovenia.

414 In these processes, they have prepared the following publications "Guidance protocol for the inclusion of Roma History and Culture in the school curriculum"; "Didactic materials on the Roma people for Primary Education"; and "Materials on the History and Culture of the Roma People for Secondary Education".

415 Response from Spain.

416 Response from Sweden.

417 Response from Switzerland.

418 Response from Türkiye.

419 Response from Ukraine.

420 Response to the ODIHR questionnaire from the United Kingdom Delegation to the OSCE, received 31 May 2023.

gation, including over-representation in special schools.⁴²¹ This again displays *visible progress*, although desk research and input from civil society organizations cautions that much remains to be done.

Albania noted planned measures on the elimination of segregation for Roma.⁴²² **Bulgaria** reported that, since 2019, they have had in place the National Programme “Supporting Municipalities for Educational Desegregation”, which focuses on educational desegregation, prevention of secondary segregation and promotion of inclusive educational environments.⁴²³

Croatia informed ODIHR that they are conducting numerous activities to eliminate school segregation, particularly in the areas of increasing the access to and quality of early childhood education and care, as well as encouraging greater parental involvement.⁴²⁴ **Cyprus** noted that the right of education for all children is constitutionally safeguarded, and that the equality of all the children enrolled in schools is also guaranteed by legislation.⁴²⁵

The **Czech Republic** informed ODIHR that their NRSF and NRIS contain strategic objectives aimed at ensuring conditions for quality inclusive education for Roma and reducing educational gaps. The Action Plan for Inclusive Education 2019-2020 contains measures on improving and unifying educational counselling services and enhancing special pedagogy skills in undergraduate training and further professional development of teachers. In primary education, the priority continues to be including pupils with various special needs to the highest possible extent in mainstream education, based on their health conditions, cultural or social backgrounds, and with adequate support measures. In 2019, the separate education of pupils with mild intellectual disabilities was terminated in an annexe to the Framework Education Programme for Primary Education. Since 2016, the authorities have produced estimates of the number of Roma pupils in all primary schools in order to monitor the implementation of this change in practice. The Ombudsperson also monitors progress in inclusive education annually. The inclusion of Roma pu-

pils in mainstream education continues to grow and now stands around 90 per cent.

The Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports, together with the National Pedagogical Institute, organizes training for teachers on inclusive education and supports the professional development of pedagogical counsellors in including Roma pupils in mainstream education. It also supports new diagnostic tools for assessing their educational needs. The same support will exist for teacher assistants and the staff of pedagogical and psychological counselling centres. The position of teacher assistants, social pedagogues and social workers in education will be specified in legislation and methodologies, standardized and supported with systemic financing within the education system.⁴²⁶

Germany informed ODIHR that the right to education and non-discriminatory access to education also applies to all Roma and Sinti, also for those who immigrated to Germany from an EU member state or third-party state, as children are taught in mixed cohorts and given tailored support. The Länder (federal states) have adopted comprehensive measures to support language promotion, which Roma and Sinti children can avail themselves of as needed, so that they do not encounter any disadvantages or structural obstacles in the course of their education.⁴²⁷

Georgia informed ODIHR that social workers from the Office of Resource Officers of Educational Institutions have assessed the challenges related to the inclusion and academic performance of Roma children in schools with a larger number of Roma.⁴²⁸

Latvia stated that it has included in relevant policy documents the goal to incorporate Roma students from special schools into general education programmes. Previously, 30 per cent of Roma children studied in special schools. Now more are included in regular schools. Children in special schools can opt to attend regular schools with special education specialists.⁴²⁹ **Montenegro** stated that there are no schools exclusively for Roma children. Around 600 elementary school Roma and Egyptian students are giv-

421 Albania, Bulgaria, Croatia, Cyprus, the Czech Republic, Georgia, Germany, Latvia, Montenegro, Poland, the Russian Federation, Serbia, Slovakia, Spain, and Türkiye.

422 Response from Albania.

423 Response from Bulgaria.

424 Response from Croatia.

425 Response from Cyprus.

426 Response from the Czech Republic.

427 Response from Germany.

428 Response to the ODIHR questionnaire from the Permanent Representation of Georgia to the OSCE and other International Organizations in Vienna, received 24 March 2023.

429 Response from Latvia.

en free transport and are now included in several schools with mixed cohorts.⁴³⁰

Poland noted the significant educational problems faced by the Roma community, including the relatively high percentage of pupils in the special education system. To address this, Roma school mediators may attend the certification panel meetings in an advisory capacity, with the consent of the child's parents. The measures taken made it possible to reduce this phenomenon from about 17 per cent (data from 2010) to around 10 per cent. Nevertheless, curtailing this phenomenon and bringing the percentage of Roma children in line with the general population (about 3.5 per cent) is still among Poland's key Roma strategy objectives.⁴³¹

The **Russian Federation** reported that the existence of separate classes for Roma is a rather rare practice of individual schools, and that education in such classes occurs only when initiated by the parents.⁴³²

Serbia has relevant legislation that prohibits discrimination in education. They also informed ODIHR about two rulebooks aimed at recognizing and preventing discrimination, including particularly severe forms of discrimination, such as segregation.⁴³³ Both documents define segregation as a severe form of discrimination, and propose preventive activities at the level of local government and institutions to prevent segregation. The rulebooks outline interventions and desegregation measures that can be applied to individual children and students during the desegregation process. Serbia also informed ODIHR about various projects and measures aimed at tackling discrimination in education and segregation.⁴³⁴

Slovakia stated that, in 2021-2022, a working group was established under the Ministry of Education, Science, Research and Sport with the aim of creating methodological material for the desegregation of schools, entitled Spolu v

jednej lavici (Together behind a desk). They have prepared a Strategy of Inclusive Approach in Education which also includes a desegregation section with specified activities. Their NRSF also contains activities for desegregation. Slovakia is also preparing a draft project that will serve as a pilot for desegregation projects in selected schools. In recent years, the introduction of a definition of school segregation, which should be adopted in the latest amendment to the law, has also been discussed.⁴³⁵

In **Spain**, the available data on schooling and the educational situation of Roma students comes from social research. In 2022, the Ministry of Education published research regarding the school segregation of Roma students.⁴³⁶ **Türkiye** stated in their response to ODIHR that various courses and studies are carried out in schools and Public Education Centres where Roma pupils are present, in line with a rights-based approach. They are working to bring down barriers to children's education to address the issues that create inequalities and maintain the chain of poverty.⁴³⁷

Responses to the COVID-19 pandemic and ensuring full and equal access to quality education for Roma and Sinti children

The COVID-19 pandemic brought unprecedented challenges for governments across the OSCE, including in the provision of equal access to education. COVID-19 protective measures led to widespread learning gaps, exposed digital inequalities and unpreparedness, as well as challenges in adapting remote and hybrid learning models. For Roma and Sinti children these challenges were greater and exacerbated existing educational disparities. In their reply to ODIHR's questionnaire, 17 participating States indicated that, in the context of the pandemic, they devised and implemented programming to ensure full and equal access to quality education for Roma and Sinti children.⁴³⁸ These constitute *visible progress* in formulating needs-based programming, although the majority of actions imple-

430 Response from Montenegro.

431 Response from Poland.

432 Response from the Russian Federation.

433 These include the rulebook on the institution's actions in case of suspected or established discriminatory behaviour and insult to the reputation, honour or dignity of a person, *Official Gazette of RS, No. 65/2018*; and the rulebook on detailed criteria for recognizing forms of discrimination by an employee, child, student or third party in an educational institution, *Official Gazette of RS No. 22, 4 March 2016*.

434 Response from the Ministry of Education of the Republic of Serbia.

435 Response from Slovakia.

436 Response from Spain. For more information and full details concerning results of the research please see [Exploratory pilot study on school segregation of Roma students](#), Fundación Secretariado Gitano, 2022.

437 Response from Türkiye.

438 Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Czech Republic, Estonia, Finland, Georgia, Germany, Latvia, Lithuania, Montenegro, Serbia, Slovakia, Slovenia, Spain, Sweden and Türkiye.

mented across the OSCE region were general and applicable to all students. States only organized sporadic actions targeted at Roma and Sinti, with others coming from civil society organizations. In addition, the lasting issues caused by the pandemic requires some continuing programming to alleviate hardships experienced by Roma and Sinti families.

Albania supported distance learning during the pandemic, which brought challenges for children and youth living in vulnerable conditions. Initiatives aimed at providing quality and inclusive education, especially for the most vulnerable and marginalized Albanian children, as well as developing resilient capacities for an effective response to the COVID-19 pandemic, sought to improve digital competences and digital learning in Albanian schools. This is now an objective of the National Strategy for Education 2021-2026. Child Protection Units in municipalities also addressed and referred children's cases to local authorities.⁴³⁹

Belgium noted no targeted policy for Roma.⁴⁴⁰ In **Bosnia and Herzegovina** Roma communities were recognized as one of the most vulnerable categories of residents affected by the crisis caused by the pandemic, and international and domestic non-governmental organizations carried out various activities to provide full access to education for Roma children.⁴⁴¹ **Bulgaria** informed ODIHR about the project "Equal access to school education in times of crisis," which enabled the procurement of portable technical devices and trained students, including from vulnerable groups, in e-learning skills. In addition, educational mediators and parents were trained to acquire skills for working in an electronic environment.⁴⁴²

Croatia reported that Roma assistants visited students during distance learning and physically brought them teaching materials. Teachers used various alternative forms of communication with students and parents, and made great efforts to establish dialogue with parents in order to constantly encourage them to support their children and enable them to watch classes on TV.⁴⁴³ The Roma

Child Support Network, with the support of the Ministry of Science and Education, conducted a survey on the involvement of Roma students in distance learning activities with the aim of detecting difficulties. Furthermore, 100 tablets and 500 SIM cards for Internet access were distributed; a donation from UNICEF.⁴⁴⁴

Cyprus reported that distance learning was offered while schools were closed during the pandemic. To ensure full and equal access to quality education for Roma children, computers or tablets and home Internet were provided to children who did not have it at home.⁴⁴⁵ The **Czech Republic** prepared a plan of compensatory activities towards the end of the 2020/2021 school year in order to reduce the negative impact of the pandemic on education. Compensatory measures included summer camps or tutoring. The National Pedagogical Institute prepared one programme to support disadvantaged schools and another to support tutoring, dedicated to schools working with a higher number of pupils from socially disadvantaged environments.⁴⁴⁶

Estonia informed ODIHR that additional learning support was provided to all pupils with learning difficulties, regardless of their national or ethnic background.⁴⁴⁷ **Finland** responded to the ODIHR questionnaire with a concrete example of measures to support Roma during the pandemic. One municipality supported young Roma school attendance with the "Elämää varten" ["For Life"] project, which involved cooperation between educational institutions. Specifically, young Roma people were supported and assisted in their remote studies during the COVID-19 pandemic in the spring of 2020.⁴⁴⁸

Germany stated that the measures they adopted to support children in catching up on learning gaps resulting from the COVID-19 pandemic were accessible to all children, including Sinti and Roma children.⁴⁴⁹ **Italy** called for a specific in-depth study of the short- and medium-term effects of the COVID-19 pandemic on Roma and Sinti families. A survey conducted by the Community of Sant' Egidio in May 2020, involving about 800 children from 44 schools in 27 neighbourhoods of the capital, found that,

439 Response from Albania.

440 Response from Belgium.

441 Response from the OSCE Mission to Bosnia and Herzegovina.

442 Response from Bulgaria.

443 Some educational material was broadcast on public television channels.

444 Response from Croatia.

445 Response from Cyprus.

446 Response from the Czech Republic.

447 Response from Estonia.

448 Response from Finland.

449 Response from Germany.

“61 per cent of 6-10 year olds in Rome did not take part in online lessons”. These children, including Roma and Sinti pupils, were already subject to high levels of pre-pandemic school dropout.⁴⁵⁰

Latvia stated that educational institutions provided help to access quality education and assist with practical matters. For instance, social educators continued to cooperate actively with families and inter-institutional cooperation team members during the pandemic. Together they searched for solutions to prevent the premature termination of education processes of Roma youth. Roma children are offered additional lessons, and additional local government support was provided in the Latvian language and other subjects.⁴⁵¹ **Lithuania** stated that, during the COVID-19 lockdown, social workers and mediators equipped Roma children with distance learning tools.⁴⁵²

Montenegro, in cooperation with the Red Cross, UNICEF and HELP, launched an action for all vulnerable Roma and Egyptian children without Internet, television and mobile applications, to receive school materials once a week. Roma and Egyptian community leaders and school mediators were tasked with ensuring appropriate delivery. Help was provided to procure school materials, mobile ‘phones, food and hygiene products. The Ministry of Education, also with support from international donors and in cooperation with the Mladi Romi organization, facilitated access to tablets for a number of students. Also, the Ministry of Education prepared a special video application and Public Call to the Roma and Egyptian population, which was available on social networks for enrolment in kindergartens, primary and secondary schools. It made the enrolment procedure significantly easier and harmonized with the epidemiological situation.⁴⁵³

Norway stated that the school guidance programme maintained some of their work during the pandemic and helped Roma pupils and students through video and phone.⁴⁵⁴ **Poland** noted that Roma who did not possess ICT equipment received school materials from Roma school assistants, who then transferred the work to teachers and schools. Certain solutions were adjusted to individual cir-

cumstances, for instance in the case of children without unlimited access to the Internet. Considering some shortages in electronic equipment required for distance learning in Roma households, local municipalities asked the Ministry of Digitalization for additional financial resources to purchase laptops/tablets for those children who do not possess them, including Roma children.⁴⁵⁵

Serbia stated that, in response to the COVID-19 crisis, during distance learning, support was provided through individualized measures and the purchase of equipment in cooperation with various donors. With the support of the Roma Education Fund, UNICEF and the Open Society Foundation, IT devices were purchased and distributed to Roma students who did not have the necessary IT equipment to follow distance learning. In Serbia, 30 per cent of Roma students did not have access to the Internet and 20 per cent did not have a suitable device (TV, smartphone, tablet, computer). For those students, printed teaching materials were prepared and distributed. Pedagogical assistants also provided adequate support for distance learning through a series of activities with Roma children and their families.⁴⁵⁶

In **Slovakia** Roma students had difficulty accessing education because of the pandemic. Many did not have access to any instruction, and some were only offered paper worksheets, distributed door to door by teachers and school staff. In response, the Wiser Together project was put in place to soften the effects of the pandemic on all students.⁴⁵⁷ **Slovenia** prioritized support for Roma children and parents during distance learning. Key efforts included providing access to equipment, with schools renting out computers. The Centre for School and Extracurricular Activities played a central role, with project staff, including Roma assistants, supporting Roma families. They also assisted primary schools in ensuring that Roma children could participate in distance learning. Additionally, efforts were made to engage preschool children and encourage activities in their home environments.⁴⁵⁸ In **Sweden**, the government introduced a state grant called the “school billion” directed towards education providers to mitigate the effects of the pandemic, under which no application

450 Response from Italy.

451 Response from Latvia.

452 Response from Lithuania.

453 Response from Montenegro.

454 Response from Norway.

455 Response from Poland.

456 Response from the Ministry of Education of the Republic of Serbia.

457 Response from Slovakia.

458 Response from Slovenia.

was necessary for the providers⁴⁵⁹.

Türkiye informed ODIHR that, in the context of students' access to education and support, the equipment demands were met in the İbrahimce Neighbourhood of the city of Balıkesir, where many Roma reside, as well as in other regions with sizable Roma populations.⁴⁶⁰ The United Kingdom noted that they invested during the first wave of the pandemic into Gypsy, Roma and Traveller Education in Bradford, Central Bedfordshire, Essex, Hillingdon and Surrey. They also supported Open Doors Education and Training to work with over 100 Gypsy, Roma and Traveller children to improve their attendance and performance at school. In addition, they are supporting programmes for Gypsy, Roma and Traveller children and young people to receive extra tuition to catch up on lost learning during the pandemic.⁴⁶¹

Priority areas and recommendations

Assessments of mainstream and targeted Roma and Sinti educational policies and measures are equally important. Governments across the OSCE area need to conduct regular monitoring and evaluation studies to assess Roma and Sinti's access to education, attendance and attainment, as well as anti-racist and desegregation measures. All of these should pay particular attention to the situation of Roma and Sinti girls. In this view, Roma and Sinti, including civil society organizations, should participate in the design and execution of such assessments.

Across the OSCE area, to address issues related to education, often in partnership with local authorities, participating States have trained and hired Roma school mediators, school assistants, or outreach/liaison staff to perform various tasks. This constitutes *visible progress*, as they usually have the power to smooth obstacles and improve access to school for Roma children. However, one challenge that remains is how to expand and sustain a network of community resources that can pass on skills and practices and stay active in educational processes. Moreover, civil society noted that mediator programmes are seldom assessed for impact and, without this, it is difficult to improve them.⁴⁶²

Several State authorities and civil society organizations provide direct or indirect support to Roma and Sinti children and families, ranging from scholarships to free transport and provision of school supplies. This constitutes *visible progress*, judging by the number of participating States who have initiated these programmes. However, such support often excludes gender considerations and can be sporadic, as most projects have a limited timeframe and target a limited number of beneficiaries.⁴⁶³ Therefore, the continuity and sustainability of such support should be assessed and addressed in the interim.

Teachers play a critical role in ensuring the attendance and attainment of Roma and Sinti children in schools. Some participating States are also implementing in-service and pre-service teacher training activities enabling educators to create a better climate for Roma and Sinti students. A number of these training programmes include components of Roma and Sinti history and culture, which is a welcome *positive change*. ODIHR's research showed that such activities should be strengthened and continued across the OSCE area, particularly focused on anti-racism, non-discrimination, diversity and avoiding stereotypes and implicit biases.⁴⁶⁴ Moreover, teacher training should include methods to improve teacher interaction with communities and parents and bilingual education. In some participating States there is also an increase of Roma and Sinti individuals taking on teaching positions across all levels of educational institutions. Further training of Roma and Sinti staff, particularly Roma and Sinti teachers, to join school personnel should become a priority for state institutions.

Implementing anti-discrimination policies in schools is important for putting laws into action and should be strengthened. While legislation in most participating States prohibits discrimination in educational environments, instances of discrimination, bias and bullying against Roma and Sinti children occur. Teachers must not disregard or minimize the impact on Roma and Sinti children and the class environment. Promoting a zero-tolerance discrimination policy, as some participating States have, can create a safe and welcoming environment for Roma and Sinti children. Schools need to develop such policies, with

459 Response from Sweden.

460 Response from Türkiye.

461 Response from the United Kingdom.

462 Participants of ODIHR's consultation workshop.

463 *Ibid.*

464 This unpublished needs assessment report researched the needs of teachers in Bulgaria, Hungary, North Macedonia, Romania and Slovakia.

training and sanctions for those who discriminate, including teachers, as well as psychological support.

Collection of data disaggregated by both ethnicity and gender is still an issue in several participating States. This makes it challenging to assess Roma and Sinti's access to, and participation in education. Data disaggregation by gender and ethnicity could better inform educational policies in many participating States for mainstream and Roma and Sinti-specific programmes.

Civil society needs more support to monitor education independently in Roma and Sinti communities and build community capacities to advocate for quality education from early childhood onwards. Donors should support civil society in tackling segregation, including through community organizing, which could help parents to mobilize to keep local authorities accountable.

5. ENHANCING PARTICIPATION IN PUBLIC AND POLITICAL LIFE

The right to participate in public and political life is a core function of democracy and is pivotal to enhancing democratic governance, strengthening the rule of law and promoting social inclusion. Active participation in public and political life is essential for Roma and Sinti communities to voice their needs and influence decisions that impact their lives. In doing so, Roma and Sinti communities can counter racism and discrimination, advocate for their rights and directly promote needs-based policies.⁴⁶⁵ Nearly 25 years after their articulation, the OSCE's "Lund Recommendations on the Effective Participation of National Minorities in Public Life" remain critical in defining effective participation.⁴⁶⁶

⁴⁶⁵ For more information on international standards for the participation of minorities please see *Status Report 2018*, pp. 15-19.

⁴⁶⁶ For more information please see *The Lund Recommendations on the Effective Participation of National Minorities in Public Life*, OSCE High Commissioner on National Minorities (HCNM), 1 September 1999.

The same challenges of participation identified in the 2008 Status Report were later observed in the 2013 Report, as well as in the Third Status Report of 2018, with little variation other than the different geo-political trends impacting societies during the respective reporting periods. Within this reporting period, some visible progress can be noted, particularly in enhancing public participation. However, much of the situation remains similar to that identified in previous Status Reports. If the 2018 Status Report indicated that mainstream political parties adopted rhetoric that was previously found only on the extremes of the political spectrum, this anti-Roma rhetoric has now been normalized. The rhetoric of radical populists, the ever-growing far right, and the intensification of anti-Roma sentiment continue to be the main drivers in hindering the participation of Roma and Sinti.⁴⁶⁷

"Roma and Sinti people have an equal right to participate in public affairs. This includes the rights to vote, stand for election, participate in public affairs and form political parties without discrimination.

"Participating States are encouraged to take into account the following basic conditions for ensuring effective participation by Roma and Sinti people in public and political life:

- *Early involvement*: Any initiative relating to Roma and Sinti people should involve them at the earliest stages in the development, implementation and evaluation phases;
- *Inclusiveness*: Roma and Sinti people should be included in formal consultative processes, and the effectiveness of mechanisms established for their participation in shaping major policy initiatives should be ensured by involving them in a broadly representative process;
- *Transparency*: Programmes and proposals should be circulated sufficiently in advance of decision-making deadlines to allow for meaningful analysis and input from representatives of Roma and Sinti communities;
- *Meaningful participation by Roma and Sinti people at all levels of government*: Participation by Roma and Sinti people in local government is essential for the effective implementation of policies affecting them;
- *Ownership*: Roma and Sinti people play an essential and irreplaceable role in ensuring that the right to participate in the political process is observed in practice."

— OSCE Action Plan, Chapter VI.

⁴⁶⁷ Participants of ODIHR's consultation workshop.

Continuing challenges and emerging trends

Within this reporting period, a worrying rise of the far right has been evident across the OSCE area, particularly in Europe.⁴⁶⁸ Far right actors frequently endorse racist and discriminatory ideologies and xenophobia, undermining key principles of equality, social cohesion, diversity and human rights, as well as the pluralistic building blocks of democracy and democratic principles. Such trends have already impacted Roma and Sinti communities in multiple ways, which can impede their ability to actively participate in public and political life.⁴⁶⁹ Racist and discriminatory ideologies often translate into scapegoating Roma and Sinti, using anti-Roma rhetoric that then exacerbates discrimination and marginalization. This, in turn, makes it challenging for them to have their voices heard or their concerns addressed, particularly in decision-making processes.⁴⁷⁰

According to the Council of Europe, the participation of Roma in public and political life does not adequately reflect their demographic weight, particularly at the local level. Evidence has shown that Roma, particularly women and youth, encounter various social barriers and prejudic-

468 The following sources are not exclusive and are indicative of the issues related to the rise in far-right politics. See Pietro Castelli Gattinara, Caterina Froio, Andrea P. Pirro, *Far-right protest mobilisation in Europe: Grievances, opportunities and resources*, European Journal of Political Research, 4 October 2021; also see cases from Austria, Estonia, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Italy, Poland, Slovenia, Spain and Sweden, in *Europe and right-wing nationalism: A country-by-country guide*, BBC.com, 13 November 2019; Anthony J. Constantini, *Understanding Europe's shift to the right*, politico.eu, 30 September 2022; *The Observer view on the dangerous rise of the far right in Europe*, *The Guardian*, 18 September 2022; and Zachary B. Wolf, *How the far right is surging in Europe*, cnn.com, 26 September 2022.

469 The following sources are not exclusive and are representation of the issues concerning Roma and Sinti in the current climate: Andrea Carlo, *We need to talk about the rising wave of anti-Roma attacks in Europe*, *The Independent*, 29 July 2019; Angela Giuffrida, *'Vote for us to never see her again': fury after Italy politician's video with Roma woman*, *The Guardian*, 6 September 2022; Benjamin Ignac, *Resisting Hate Ahead of the European Elections*, European Roma Rights Centre, 16 May 2019; Christopher Miller, *With Axes and Hammers, Far-Right Vigilantes Destroy Another Romany Camp In Kyiv*, Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty, 8 June 2018; Jacqueline Bhabha and Margareta Matache, *Anti-Roma hatred on streets of Budapest*, *EU Observer*, 2 June 2020; Patrick Strickland, *Far-right calls to register Roma 'echoes' Europe's dark history*, Al Jazeera, 9 July 2018; *Portugal's flourishing far right target Roma ahead of vote*, EURactive.com, 25 January 2022; Stephanie Kirchaessner, *Far-right Italy minister vows 'action' to expel thousands of Roma*, *The Guardian*, 19 June 2018.

470 Participants of ODIHR's consultation workshop.

es that severely impede their capacity to participate effectively in public and political life. They are, consequently, largely absent from the local or national political arenas and the decision-making processes affecting them.⁴⁷¹ In addition, the generational shift, which includes a growing number of Roma with solid educational qualifications, an emerging consciousness and renewed vision of community leadership and organizational skills, has not yet translated into Roma presence in the political sphere.⁴⁷²

The Roma Civil Monitor synthesis report claims that Roma political representation is often confined to local government in segregated communities. Roma civil society organizations are weak because of lack of capacity, funding and hostility from potential funders such as local governments. Funding is sometimes attached to strict conditions that turn Roma civil society into narrow service providers or lead to political manipulation and control.⁴⁷³ A recent communication from the European Commission to the European Parliament states that Roma participation in consultative mechanisms, policy and decision-making processes in many Member States is primarily their contributions to developing NRSFs, including participation in National Roma Platforms. However, the assessment of Roma civil society, conducted through the Roma Civil Monitoring initiative, indicates that closer involvement and cooperation are both possible and necessary.⁴⁷⁴

The European Commission's recent communication indicates that even the strengthened involvement of Roma and pro-Roma civil society, specifically in developing NRSF documents, does not typically lead to the systemic improvement of their participation in public policy and active citizenship.⁴⁷⁵

471 *Strategic Action Plan for Roma and Traveller Inclusion (2020-2025)*, Council of Europe, 2020.

472 *Roma Political Schools Promoting Roma Political Participation and Civic Engagement*, Council of Europe, 2021.

473 *A synthesis of civil society's reports on the implementation of national Roma integration strategies in the European Union Identifying blind spots in Roma inclusion policy*.

474 *Communication From the Commission to the European Parliament, The Council, The European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions Assessment report of the Member States' national Roma strategic frameworks*.

475 *Commission Staff Working Document Accompanying the Document Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions Assessment Report of the Member States' National Roma Strategic Frameworks*, European Commission, 2023.

One study from the European Parliament found that there are barriers to the political representation and electoral participation of Roma communities, which leads to them being one of the most under-represented groups across the EU. In this area, Roma and Sinti civil society organizations have been actively advocating for their rights across EU Member States and at the EU level, and civil society constitute a unique forum for non-electoral participation by the community.

Within this reporting period, in some participating States the number of Roma and Sinti in elected functions has shrunk, while in others Roma and Sinti have experienced historic wins. For example, in Spain, two Roma women and two Roma men were elected to the national legislature as members of the Chamber of Deputies in 2019 in the early parliamentary elections.⁴⁷⁶

In the 2022 elections in Slovakia, 52 Roma mayors were elected.⁴⁷⁷ Nonetheless, the former plenipotentiary of Slovakia for Roma communities stated, “According to the 2019 Atlas of Romani Communities survey, we know that there are as many as 171 communities in Slovakia where Romani people make up more than half of the population and another 134 communities where they are at least one-third of the population. Compared to those numbers, 52 elected mayors remains rather low. However, we can assess the growing tendency of Romani candidates getting elected since 2018 as positive.”⁴⁷⁸

Within the reporting period, a number of ODIHR’s election observation mission reports have indicated various electoral process issues experienced by Roma and Sinti. These range from being subject to derogatory comments during electoral campaigning, to being subject to intimidation, pressure and vote buying, as well as exclusion from

voting due to lack of identification documents.⁴⁷⁹ Unfortunately, such instances do not differ to those that were reported in the 2018 Status Report. In addition, the legal and administrative barriers experienced by Roma and Sinti registering as candidates remain largely unchanged, including the lack of consistent programming aimed at encouraging Roma and Sinti to stand as candidates for elected positions at local and/or national levels.⁴⁸⁰

In the case of the 2022 elections in Bosnia and Herzegovina, a pre-election survey with Roma respondents indicated that 74 per cent of Roma stated that their locality had not been visited by candidates, and 95 per cent noted that, in their view, no politician or political party stood for their interests. Interestingly, 89 per cent of respondents believed the elections would not create change for Roma and 85 per cent intended to vote.⁴⁸¹

The shrinking space for civil society organizations and lack of funding has also hindered their ability to run programming aimed at enhancing the participation of Roma and Sinti in public and political life.⁴⁸² However, the Open Society Foundation and its Roma Initiatives Office have supported a transnational network of Roma movements, which have encouraged public participation at the local and national levels. For example, the Avaja⁴⁸³ civic movement from North Macedonia organized a campaign event during the Presidential Elections in 2019, bringing pres-

476 For more information please see Miroslav Klempár and Zdeněk Ryšavý, *Spain: Two Romani men and two Romani women elected to national legislature, an historic success*, Romea.CZ, 4 May 2019.

477 These included 19 Roma mayors elected in the Banská Bystrica region, 15 in the Prešov Region and 14 in Košice and, at district level, the largest number of Roma elected as mayors was in Rimavská Sobota. For more information please see Zdeněk Ryšavý and Gwendolyn Albert, *Elections in Slovakia return record-high number of Romani mayors*, Romea.CZ, 31 October 2022.

478 *Ibid.*

479 For some examples see *Hungary Parliamentary Elections, 8 April 2018*, OSCE/ODIHR, Limited Election Observation Mission Final Report, OSCE/ODIHR, 27 June 2018; *Bosnia and Herzegovina, 7 October 2018* OSCE/ODIHR, Election Observation Mission Final Report, 29 January 2019; *Slovak Republic, Presidential Election, 16 and 30 March 2019*, OSCE/ODIHR, Election Assessment Mission Final Report, 19 July 2019; *Republic of Albania, Local Elections 30 June 2019*, OSCE/ODIHR, Election Observation Mission Final Report, 5 September 2019; *OSCE/ODIHR, 5 September 2019*; *Republic of North Macedonia, Early Parliamentary Elections 15 July 2020*, OSCE/ODIHR, Special Election Assessment Mission Final Report; 2 October 2020; *Ukraine, Local Elections, 25 October 2020*, OSCE/ODIHR, Limited Elections Observation Mission Final Report; 29 January 2021; *Republic of Albania, Parliamentary Election 25 April 2021*; OSCE/ODIHR, Limited Election Observation Mission Final Report, 26 July 2021.

480 *Status Report 2018*, pp. 27-34.

481 Nadja Greku, *What do the Bosnian & Herzegovinian Elections Mean for Roma?*, European Roma Rights Centre, 2 December 2022.

482 Participants of ODIHR’s consultation workshop.

483 The civic movement AVAJA is composed of three organizations: Romalítico, Romaversitas and Romano Avazi. AVAJA was founded in 2019 with the aim of influencing public policies, building the capacity of the Roma community and mobilizing the community for collective action.

idential candidates to the Roma constituency and promoting the participation of Roma voters.⁴⁸⁴ In Romania, the Aresel platform reached over 60,000 Roma with their programmes aimed at encouraging Roma public participation.⁴⁸⁵ During the 2022 elections in Bulgaria, among other things the Roma Standing Conference was active in election observation, as well as in working with Roma communities.⁴⁸⁶ In Serbia, Opre Roma have been effective advocates at initiating the Barvalipe programme — Roma in the Public Administration of Serbia — which aims to increase the number of Roma in public administration.⁴⁸⁷

In **Albania**, the Roma Versitas civil society organization, supported by the Council of Europe, created the Roma Political School, which aims to develop a group of Roma politicians who can effectively participate in decision-making processes and in political life.⁴⁸⁸ In **Finland**, the Finnish Roma Association is working to increase the political participation of Roma people by providing training for Roma youth in cooperation with its partners (the Finnish League for Human Rights, the Committee of 100 in Finland, and others). They have also encouraged Roma youth to establish their own networks, such as the Council of Roma youth and the National Network of Roma youth. In 2022, Roma youth wrote a successful blog series on political participation on the Association’s website.⁴⁸⁹

In **Ireland**, the Pavee Point Traveller and Roma Centre works to promote the political participation of Travellers and Roma, including by providing information and

support on voter registration, and participation in government elections and significant referendums.⁴⁹⁰ In the **United Kingdom**, the Brentwood Gypsy Support Group has authored the Traveller Movement’s Operation Romani Vote, and was encouraged by its success in raising voter registration.⁴⁹¹ In **Romania**, the ‘Împreună’ Agency for Community Development has continued implementing community development programmes aimed at empowering communities through local initiative groups, training and advocacy campaigns.⁴⁹²

At the international level, the Phiren Amenca network organizes training to build the political skills of young Roma and Sinti through National Roma Youth Platforms where Roma youth voices are taken into account when designing national and EU Roma Strategies.⁴⁹³

The Council of Europe has developed their Roma Political Schools to support Roma citizens in standing for election at the local level, to bring Roma closer to local decision-making bodies and to promote their active participation in local administration. A particular focus was put on the participation of Roma women since they are victims of multiple forms of discrimination and face the negative consequences of marginalization and exclusion every day. The Roma Political Schools prioritize the political participation of Roma women and Roma youth, which is reflected in both the selection of participants and the composition and expertise of the resource teams who deliver training (mentors, trainers, public figures, party leaders, academics, etc.).⁴⁹⁴ This is in line with the conclusions, priorities or recommendations of a number of relevant documents.⁴⁹⁵

The Council of Europe’s ROMACT in Romania and Bulgaria establishes Community or Citizens’ Action Groups

484 [Inicijativa AVAJA ikerga i havlardi tribina maškar ko Pendarovski thaj Siljanovska](#), [Initiative AVAJA organized a debate forum between Pendarovski and Siljanovska], Roma Press, 3 May 2019.

485 The Aresel platform is a politically-neutral civic initiative launched in 2018. Their objective is to combat racism and social, political and economic inequalities between Roma and the rest of the population. The Aresel platform supports the participation and public involvement of Roma communities in Romania. For more information see [Aresel – Platforma Aresel. Putere romilor!](#), Aresel.

486 The Roma Standing Conference is a civil movement of Roma, pro-Roma activists and organizations from Bulgaria that works for social justice and prosperity of the Roma community. For more information see [Roma Standing Conference](#).

487 The movement Opre Roma Srbija was founded in 2019 as a response to the challenges of social inequality faced by the Roma community. [President Vučić hosted the first generation of participants of the program “Barvalipe – Roma in the Public Administration of Serbia”](#), Roma Centre for Women and Children, 5 July 2022.

488 Response to the ODIHR questionnaire from Roma Versitas Albania, received 30 April 2023.

489 Response from the Finnish Roma Association/Suomen Romaniyhdistys Ry.

490 Response from the Pavee Point Traveller & Roma Centre.

491 Response to the ODIHR questionnaire from the Brentwood Gypsy Support Group, received 3 March 2023.

492 Response to the ODIHR questionnaire from the Împreună Agency for Community Development, received 20 April 2023.

493 Response to the ODIHR questionnaire from Phiren Amenca International Network, received 4 April 2023.

494 Response from the Council of Europe.

495 For detailed information, please see the [6th International Roma Women’s Conference on Women and Political Representation: the case of Roma and Traveller Women](#), November 2017; the [Council of Europe’s 5th Dialogue with Roma and Traveller Civil Society](#), June 2018; the [Study on the active political participation of national minority youth in the Council of Europe Member States](#), adopted (in June 2021) by the CDADI – Steering Committee on Anti-discrimination Diversity and Inclusion.

to facilitate the participation of Roma citizens in the local democratic and development processes. The Roma citizens participating in the Action Groups are supported to work in partnership with representatives of local administrations for the benefit of their communities. In practice, between 2018 and 2022, 1001 Community Action Group meetings were held in 122 municipalities with a total of 10,990 participants (6,683 men and 4,307 women). The joint work between the Community Action Groups and the Municipal Task Force Groups at the local level resulted in the development of a total of 70 Joint Action Plans for Roma Inclusion that were adopted by Local Councils and addressed issues such as housing, education, employment, health, and infrastructure. Within ROMACT, capacity-building for national and local stakeholders, including for representatives of local administration, civil society and local communities was implemented alongside advocacy for policy revision and local mechanisms to rectify personal identification and address registration issues.⁴⁹⁶

Action by participating States

Programmes or legislation for the participation of Roma and Sinti

In their replies to ODIHR's questionnaire about the current reporting period, 18 participating States indicated that specific national policies, programmes and/or legislation were adopted, updated and/or implemented in relation to participation in public and political life that may impact Roma and Sinti.⁴⁹⁷ Most of the responses indicated that this was done in of the framework of their NRISs and/or NRSFs, which displays *visible progress* in formulating policy and programming aimed at enhancing the public participation of Roma.

Albania indicated that civil registration has improved since legal amendments to the national law on civil registration were approved in 2018. The aim of these amendments was to remove any barriers in the registration of births and to reduce the risk of statelessness, especially for children of Albanian parents born abroad and for children of Roma and Egyptian minorities.⁴⁹⁸

⁴⁹⁶ *Ibid.*

⁴⁹⁷ Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Czech Republic, Estonia, Finland, Georgia, Germany, Ireland, Latvia, Moldova, Montenegro, Romania, the Russian Federation, Slovakia, Sweden, Switzerland, Türkiye and Ukraine.

⁴⁹⁸ Response from Albania.

Bosnia and Herzegovina informed ODIHR about building political will and sustainable engagement with local authorities on the political level for the promotion of democratic local administration and strengthening local Roma communities. Capacity-building events for Roma women and men were held in 12 localities benefiting 718 Roma as part of the ROMACTED joint programme with EU and the Council of Europe.⁴⁹⁹ In addition, in the last general elections held in 2018, six Roma were elected to city/municipal councils, one of whom was a Roma woman.⁵⁰⁰

In **Bulgaria**, representatives of ethnic minorities are members of many major political parties and take part in their management bodies. They participate in the presidential, parliamentary and municipal elections and subsequently contribute to public policymaking. At the local level, individuals belonging to minorities have been elected as mayors and municipal councillors.⁵⁰¹

Croatia stated that Amendments to the Law on Local Elections made changes related to ensuring adequate representation of members of national minorities in the representative body of local and regional self-government units. The Government of Croatia will call for by-elections for representatives of national minorities within 90 days from the constitution of the representative body so the number of members of the representative body may be even.⁵⁰² These changes were applied in the regular local elections held in May 2021.⁵⁰³

The **Czech Republic** noted that their NRIS contained the thematic objective of supporting the participation of Roma by monitoring representation in legislative, executive and advisory functions. The county supports capacity-building to engage in dialogue and participation within the Roma integration process. They informed ODIHR that Roma are

⁴⁹⁹ For more information see ROMACTED.

⁵⁰⁰ Response from Bosnia and Herzegovina.

⁵⁰¹ Response from Bulgaria.

⁵⁰² Croatia's 2021 census results have shown a steady increase of declared members of the Roma national minority, against an overall population decrease, including most other minorities. Thus, in 2021 there were 17,980 Roma out of a total population of 3,871,833, i.e., 0.46 per cent, while 15,269 (0.39 per cent) declared Romani as their mother tongue. According to the 2011 census, there were 16,975 Roma (total population 4,284,889) and in 2001 there were 9,463 (total population 4,437,460). This increase is best interpreted because of positive national measures and a decrease of ethnic mimicry.

⁵⁰³ Response from Croatia.

not represented in the Chamber of Deputies nor the Senate; although in 2018, 13 Roma were elected in the municipal elections and in 2020 one Roma was elected in regional elections.⁵⁰⁴

In its response to the ODIHR questionnaire, **Estonia** stated that to strengthen Roma civil society and empower stakeholders, the Ministry of Culture created a network of development projects (Roma Platform projects) supporting the integration of Roma between 2018 and 2023 with the support of the EU's Rights, Equality and Citizenship Programme. The project focused on empowering Roma civil society to protect their interests and participate more widely in social life.⁵⁰⁵

Finland described their National Democracy Programme that has tested and developed a number of methods for civic participation and consultation, in particular, for increasing the inclusion of young people. Measures outlined in the Government Action Plan for Combating Racism and Promoting Good Relations between Population Groups have been implemented to reduce racism, tackle hate speech and increase inclusion.⁵⁰⁶

Germany reported on the consultative committee established at the Federal Ministry of the Interior on issues concerning the German Roma and Sinti, which is chaired by the Federal Government Commissioner for Matters Related to Ethnic German Resettlers and National Minorities.⁵⁰⁷

Ireland provides funding to the National Traveller Women's Forum, which is working to empower Traveller Women in leadership and political roles. As for youth participation, Ireland's Department of Children, Equality, Disability and Youth also provides funding to a range of projects that support Traveller and Roma youth. In addition, the Youth Services Grant Scheme provides funding to Involve, a national Traveller youth organization, which directly manages seven youth projects in the counties of Galway, Mayo, Donegal and Meath. The Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage provides funding to a number of organizations for activities that support the participation of women, including Roma and Sinti women.⁵⁰⁸

Latvia, informed ODIHR that they deploy support measures to promote the participation of the Advisory Council for the Promotion of Roma Participation, which operates under their Ministry of Culture.⁵⁰⁹ **Moldova** outlined strong commitments made to ensure the equal participation of minorities, including Roma, in political and social life. This happens primarily through the adoption of the Strategy on the Consolidation of Interethnic Relations in the Republic of Moldova for 2017-2027. They also noted that the 2019 "Roma Women in Politics" programme trained 38 Roma women who received mentoring and guidance. The project was aimed at increasing the number of Roma women in local decision-making processes. They noted that, through collective efforts of the Government in partnership with development agencies, in 2019 seven Roma women were registered on the electoral lists of political parties and as independent candidates in local elections for mayors and local councillors for the first time. In the 2019 local elections, 12 Roma local councillors were elected, half of whom were women (in comparison, in 2015 only two Roma women obtained local councillor mandates). In addition, after the parliamentary elections, one Roma deputy was elected to the Moldovan Parliament. From 2019 to 2021, the Moldovan Government was advised by two Roma activists who served as members of the cabinet of the Prime Minister.⁵¹⁰

Montenegro informed ODIHR about its efforts to improve responsible budgeting for Roma and Egyptians as an approach that includes the needs and priorities of Roma communities in the decision-making process of budget allocation, according to the guidelines for responsible budgeting for Roma. The guidelines resulted from the work of an Intergovernmental Working Group for Budgeting for Roma with the support of the Council for Regional Cooperation – Action Team for Roma Integration, with the participation of the Ministries of Finance and National Contact Points for Roma. They were officially adopted at the Summit of Western Balkan Leaders in Sofia in November 2020. They also reported local activities under the ROMACTED programme.⁵¹¹

504 Response from the Czech Republic.

505 Response from Estonia.

506 Response from Finland.

507 Response from Germany.

508 Response from Ireland.

509 Response from Latvia.

510 Response from Moldova.

511 Response from Montenegro. See [ROMACTED, Council of Europe](#).

Norway reported that they are developing a comprehensive policy for national minorities in dialogue with national minority organizations.⁵¹²

Romania reported that their electoral system is designed to ensure the parliamentary political representation of all 19 national minorities officially recognized by the Romanian Constitution. Smaller minority groups are guaranteed at least one seat in the lower chamber of the Parliament, regardless of the voting threshold. The Roma minority is represented by one Member of the Chamber of Deputies, who is affiliated with the Group of National Minorities. In the previous legislature other MPs also represented the Roma. The Roma Political Participation programme, implemented by the National Democratic Institute for International Affairs with funding from the US State Department, National Endowment for Democracy and Open Society Foundation, has also had an impact. As a result of this programme, a number of Roma MPs, State Secretaries, members of County Councils and Local Councils were elected. Likewise, some Romanian Roma alumni are active civically and politically abroad.⁵¹³

Slovakia's NRIS and NRSF support the participation of Roma and, apart from the legal regulations governing elections and suffrage, a special programme focused on Roma has not been introduced. However, as part of the aforementioned strategies, the Office of the Plenipotentiary of the Government of Slovakia for Roma Communities has had their Roma platform programme since 2019 (Citizens, Equality, Rights and Values Programme). Its goal is to increase the participation of young Roma in public and social life. The result of the platform was also the Joint Declaration of the Congress of Young Roma and Roma in 2022 in Bratislava.⁵¹⁴

In Slovenia, a consultative process involving the national and local levels, and the Roma community has long been established. Since 1993, a government working group has been monitoring Roma affairs, mandated by law since 2007. This group includes Roma representatives. The Roma Community Act mandates an umbrella organization, funded by the national budget, with a say in Roma-related regulations. At the local level, Roma elect representatives in 20 municipalities where they reside and working

bodies monitor their situation. National efforts aim to involve Roma in relevant consultations and matters.⁵¹⁵

Sweden reported that the National Minorities Act has been amended to strengthen and clarify municipalities' and regions' obligations to organize consultations with representatives of minorities regarding issues that affect them. Between 2016 and 2019, the Swedish Agency for Youth and Civil Society was tasked with implementing initiatives intended to help improve the conditions for Roma engagement in civil society and for Roma organizations to participate in civic life, including measures to promote Roma inclusion.⁵¹⁶

Switzerland noted a programme supported by the Federal Migration Commission aimed at exploring new avenues of participation in public and political life for marginalized groups, including Roma, Sinti and Yenish.⁵¹⁷ Türkiye stated that, during the reporting period, both the ruling party and the main opposition party had Roma MPs in the Grand National Assembly. MPs play an important role in representing Roma communities living in Türkiye and being the voice of Roma in the public/political sphere.⁵¹⁸

Ukraine informed ODIHR about efforts to involve representatives of Roma public associations to participate in solving public issues, such as the development and discussion of relevant draft acts and decisions affecting the situation of the Roma national minority. They also noted provisions aimed at enhancing the public participation of Roma in the Decree of the Cabinet of Ministers of Ukraine "On the Approval of the Strategy for Promoting the Realization of the Rights and Opportunities of Persons Belonging to the Roma National Minority in Ukrainian Society for the Period Until 2030".⁵¹⁹

Provisions and mechanisms ensuring the participation of Roma and Sinti

Seventeen participating States indicated that they have provisions and mechanisms ensuring the participation of Roma and Sinti in public and political life, including in consultative/advisory bodies and mechanisms.⁵²⁰

512 Response from Norway.

513 Response from Romania.

514 Response from Slovakia.

515 Response from Slovenia.

516 Response from Sweden.

517 Response from Switzerland.

518 Response from Türkiye.

519 Response from Ukraine.

520 Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Czech Republic, Finland, Ireland, Latvia, Lithuania, Moldova, Montenegro, North Macedonia, Poland, Romania, Slovenia, Spain, Sweden, Türkiye and Ukraine.

Albania informed ODIHR that Roma and Egyptian representatives are part of dialogue with the central and local governments and that Civil society organizations also play an important role in raising awareness about problems in implementing programmes and support data collection processes, in collaboration with central and local institutions.⁵²¹

Bulgaria noted that Roma and pro-Roma organizations are members of the National Council for Cooperation on Ethnic and Integration Issues at the Council of Ministers. Roma and pro-Roma organizations are also members of the Regional and Municipal Councils for Cooperation on Ethnic and Integration Issues and take part in the Monitoring Committees of operational programmes under the Partnership Agreement between Bulgaria and the European Commission.⁵²²

Croatia reported that Roma are represented at the central level by a Roma member of the Croatian Parliament with a guaranteed seat for a representative of Roma, as well as eleven other smaller minorities in Croatia. In the 2020 parliamentary elections, a Roma representative was re-elected. Following local and regional elections in May 2021, there are two Roma deputy mayors of municipalities. As of May 2021, Roma are entitled to elect 16 representatives to local and regional government bodies (municipal councils). In elections for national minority councils and representatives, held in May 2019, Roma elected 34 Roma national minority councils and three individual representatives, an increasing number of Roma councils (in 2015, there were 28 councils and nine individual representatives of the Roma national minority elected). Participation of Roma women as candidates for all these bodies remains low. However, voter turnout at minority elections, and thus presumably the interest of Roma in political participation, is one of the highest among all 22 national minorities.⁵²³

Lithuania reported about its advisory body, the Council of National Communities, established under the Department of National Minorities under the Government of the Republic of Lithuania. One Roma representative participates in the activities of the advisory body. Moreover, all Roma organizations participate in monitoring Roma in-

tegration based on the action plan for 2022-2023. More than half of the leaders of these organizations are Roma women.⁵²⁴

Moldova stated that seven Roma civil society organizations take part in the Co-ordinating Council of Ethno-cultural Organizations under the Agency for Interethnic Organizations, which serves as a platform for dialogue between state authorities and national minorities. The Agency acts as a representative body in the process of elaborating, implementing and monitoring state policy in the field of inter-ethnic relations. Furthermore, representatives of Roma NGOs form part of the inter-institutional working group responsible for coordinating and monitoring the implementation of the Program on the support of the Roma Population for 2022-2025. Roma civil society representatives participate in its meetings and share their experiences and recommendations for further improving the Program's implementation process.⁵²⁵

Montenegro described a range of activities under ROMACTED, which included cooperation with municipalities, direct work with local governments, direct engagement with communities, and the formation of municipal working groups, as well as awarding mini-grants.⁵²⁶ **North Macedonia** informed ODIHR about the adoption of the National Action Plan for Roma Women.⁵²⁷

Romania stated that Roma women are actively involved in public life and the number of Roma in governmental positions has increased during the reporting period. The government appointed a young Roma woman as State secretary in the Ministry of Youth and Sports, and currently she is appointed as a sub-prefect. Also, the number of Roma under-secretaries of states has increased in the current Cabinet. The Parliament has appointed two Roma women as members in Romania's Equality Body, the National Council for Combating Discrimination, and a number of Roma women are present and/or running the County Offices for Roma within the Prefecture's offices, which means they are directly and efficiently involved in the Working Group for the implementation of the NRIS at the county level. In 2022, the Minister of Health appointed a well-known Roma woman professional as an honorary

521 Response from Albania.
522 Response from Bulgaria.
523 Response from Croatia.

524 Response from Lithuania.
525 Response from Moldova.
526 Response from Montenegro.
527 Response from North Macedonia.

advisor to help reduce the gap between decision makers in the health field and Roma communities.⁵²⁸

Slovakia informed ODIHR that the Office of the Plenipotentiary of the Government of Slovakia for Roma Communities invites Roma to run for office, especially in local elections, and provides informational support. However, the Office cannot interfere in election processes. Roma are involved in a national project targeting participation through a non-governmental non-profit organization.⁵²⁹

Spain informed ODIHR that in January 2022 it changed the selection process for the appointment of members of the State Council of Roma People representing the Roma association movement. In its fourth term of office, 2022–2026, four of the twenty positions are reserved, two for women’s organizations and another two for youth organizations, provided they meet the requirements. Currently, there are two participating Roma entities that promote Roma women’s participation and two other entities that focus on young Roma people.⁵³⁰

Sweden holds regular meetings with the Roma reference group appointed by the Government, as part of the strategy for Roma inclusion. The Roma reference group consists of 20 individuals nominated for a four-year appointment by the minority group, with a view to equal gender distribution. Government agencies, municipalities and regions are obliged to consult with national minorities (including Roma) on issues that affect them, according to the Act on National Minorities and Minority Languages of 2009. Amendments made to the Act in 2019 clarified what consultation entails. Also, the Government Offices always invite a youth organization to the consultations. During the period 2016–2019, the Swedish Agency for Youth and Civil Society was tasked with implementing initiatives intended to help improve the conditions for Roma engagement in civil society and for Roma organizations to participate in civic life, including measures to promote Roma inclusion.⁵³¹

In **Türkiye**, Roma citizens coming from densely Roma-populated areas serve as active members of the Municipal

Assembly. The Municipal Council members play an important role in representing the Roma communities and provide a voice for Roma in the public/political sphere. They also contribute to addressing issues at the local level.⁵³²

Government institutions or structures mandated to address Roma and Sinti issues

Twenty-three participating States indicated that there are government institutions or structures mandated to address Roma and Sinti issues.⁵³³

Albania indicated that the Ministry of Health and Social Protection (MHSP) is the state authority on issues of Roma and Egyptian Rights and Social Inclusion. The Ministry coordinates the implementation of the Joint Recommendations in cooperation with all responsible actors and civil society partners.⁵³⁴ The National Committee for National Minorities has a seat for a member from each of the nine minorities. The one Roma representative is mandated to address Roma issues, promote the Roma minority and report to the Prime Ministry office.⁵³⁵ **Belgium** informed ODIHR that UNIA was consulted on many occasions about the development of its NRIS.⁵³⁶

Bosnia and Herzegovina informed ODIHR about the Committee for Roma at the Council of Ministers of Bosnia and Herzegovina, which was established with the aim of improving the protection of the Roma minority. The Committee for Roma is an advisory and coordinating body that has existed since 2002 and consists of 22 members, 11 representatives of Roma and 11 representatives of institutions. There are four Roma women in this advisory body. They also noted that the Council of National Minorities consists of one representative of each national minority recognized by law, one of whom is Roma, who is also the Chair. The National Assembly established the Council of National Minorities of the Republic of Srpska, which includes one Roma representative. The Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina also established a Council as an advisory

528 Response from Romania.

529 Response from Slovakia.

530 Response from Spain.

531 Response from Sweden.

532 Response from Türkiye.

533 Albania, Belgium, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Czech Republic, Finland, Germany, Ireland, Italy, Latvia, Lithuania, Montenegro, North Macedonia, Romania, the Russian Federation, Slovakia, Slovenia, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, Türkiye, Ukraine and the United Kingdom.

534 Response from Albania.

535 Response from Roma Veritas Albania.

536 Response from Belgium. For more information about UNIA please see [About Unia](#), UNIA website.

body to its Parliament. It includes seven representatives of the Roma national minority, two of whom are Roma women. Also, the Council of National Minorities of the Brčko District was established in 2020. The Chair of this Council is Roma.⁵³⁷

In **Bulgaria**, the National Council for Cooperation on Ethnic and Integration Issues at the Council of Ministers is a coordination and consultative body, assisting the Government in formulating policy on the integration of minority groups including the NRIS and the NRSF.⁵³⁸ In **Croatia**, the Roma national policy coordination tasks are mostly performed by the Department for Rights of National Minorities, as a part of the Government Office for Human Rights and Rights of National Minorities, which is increasing its capacity, mostly through EU-funded projects. However, employees of the Department are dedicated to all national minorities in Croatia (22 minorities in total, including Roma).⁵³⁹

The **Czech Republic** maintains its Council for Roma Minority Affairs and its committees and working groups. The Council's statute guarantees at least half of the members are Roma. The Government Commissioner for Roma Minority Affairs is the new vice chair (the Prime Minister is the chair) and will become a key player in the implementation of the Strategy 2021-2030.⁵⁴⁰

Estonia noted that they do not have a special institution on Roma and Sinti issues, and that the topic is divided among several institutions, in particular the Ministry of Culture, the Ministry of Education and Research, and the Ministry of Social Affairs.⁵⁴¹ **Finland** mentioned its National Advisory Board on Romani Affairs, which is an expert body supporting cooperation between Roma and the authorities in Finland. The Advisory Board operates in connection with the Ministry of Social Affairs and Health. The Government appoints the Advisory Board for three years at a time. In addition, the Advisory Board for Non-Discrimination (working with the office of the Non-Discrimination Ombudsman), appointed between 2020 and 2023, includes representatives of the Finnish Roma Youth Council.⁵⁴²

537 Response from Bosnia and Herzegovina.

538 Response from Bulgaria.

539 Response from Croatia.

540 Response from the Czech Republic.

541 Response from Estonia.

542 Response from Finland.

Georgia stated that the Office of the State Minister of Georgia for Reconciliation and Civic Equality coordinates the process of elaboration and implementation of civic equality and integration policy with respect to ethnic minorities, including Roma.⁵⁴³

Germany informed ODIHR that the Federal Government Commissioner for the Fight against Antigypsyism and for the Life of Sinti and Roma in Germany is based at the Federal Ministry of Family Affairs, Senior Citizens, Women and Youth. The Commissioner coordinates the actions of the German Government against 'antigypsyism', implements the recommendations made by the Independent Commission against Antigypsyism and acts as a central contact point for the Sinti and Roma minority in Germany. In addition, a Special Representative for International Sinti and Roma Affairs at the Federal Foreign Office heads the German delegation to the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance. There is also a Federal Government Commissioner for Matters Related to Ethnic German Resettlers and National Minorities.⁵⁴⁴

Ireland stated that the Minister for Children, Equality, Disability, Integration and Youth is responsible for the development and coordination of the overall National Traveller and Roma Inclusion Strategy. The Traveller and Roma policy team of the Department of Children, Equality, Disability, Integration and Youth acts as Ireland's National Roma Contact Point for the purposes of Ireland's engagement with the EU Roma strategic framework, and they provide the Irish member of the Council of Europe Committee of Experts on Roma and Traveller Issues.⁵⁴⁵

Italy stated that the National Office against Racial Discrimination has been designated as the National Contact Point for the drafting and implementation of the NRIS.⁵⁴⁶

Latvia has an Advisory Council for the Promotion of Roma Participation and the Latvian Roma Platform.⁵⁴⁷ In **Lithuania**, the Department of National Minorities coordinates Roma issues.⁵⁴⁸

543 Response from Georgia.

544 Response from Germany.

545 Response from Ireland.

546 Response from Italy.

547 Response from Latvia.

548 Response from Lithuania.

Montenegro stated that the Ministry of Human and Minority Rights includes its Department for the Promotion and Protection of the Rights of Roma and Egyptians. Two Roma are employed in the Ministry, including the Head of the Department who is also the National Coordinator for monitoring and implementing the Strategy of Social Inclusion of Roma and Egyptians 2021-2025. A Roma woman student is also employed in the department.⁵⁴⁹

In **North Macedonia**, the Ministry of Labour and Social Policy, the Secretariat for European Affairs and the National Contact Point are initiating a process for greater inclusion and development of capacities for monitoring the implementation of Roma policies at the national and local level. The Unit for Implementation of the Strategy for Roma Inclusion 2022–2030 coordinates Roma inclusion activities of ministries. In their reply to ODIHR, North Macedonia stated that the unit lacks human resources (currently only two people work there) and additional people should be hired and those already employed promoted to higher positions. They also noted the necessity to establish a department for monitoring public Roma policies in North Macedonia, within the Ministry of Labour and Social Policy and other ministries.⁵⁵⁰

Poland informed ODIHR in its questionnaire response that the Joint Commission of the Government and National and Ethnic Minorities has two Roma representatives, and a Sub-commission for Roma-related issues (not currently operational).⁵⁵¹

In **Romania**, the National Agency for Roma is a governmental agency under the authority of the Prime Minister. The agency is the central authority elaborating the policy and strategy in the field of respecting, promoting and affirming Roma rights. The Agency is led by a Roma dignitary (President, with a rank of State secretary) and has specialist teams of Roma experts with over two decades of expertise in Roma rights and Roma inclusion policies.⁵⁵² The Agency has around 70 per cent Roma staff.⁵⁵³

The **Russian Federation** stated that since 2020, the FGBU “House of the Peoples of Russia” serves to create condi-

tions for the preservation, revival and development of national cultures and languages of the peoples of Russia. It also supports the implementation of the national and cultural rights of Russian citizens who identify themselves with certain ethnic communities. Within the “House of the Peoples of Russia”, the all-Russian public organization the “Federal National-Cultural Autonomy of Russian Roma” was provided with an office for its activities.⁵⁵⁴

In **Slovakia**, the Plenipotentiary of the Slovak government for Roma communities, serves as an advisory body to the Government on the issue of Roma communities in Slovakia. The Advisory Commission of the Plenipotentiary is responsible for preparing the review and update of the NRSE.⁵⁵⁵

In **Slovenia**, the Government Office for National Minorities performs tasks related to the implementation of constitutional and legal provisions concerning the special rights of members of the Italian and Hungarian national communities. It also performs tasks related to the monitoring and protection of special rights of the Roma community living in Slovenia, if this does not fall within the competence of other state authorities or self-governing local communities. The Office also performs the tasks of the National Roma Contact Point.⁵⁵⁶

In **Spain**, within the Ministry of Social Rights and the 2030 Agenda’s General Directorate of Family Diversity and Social Services, the General Sub-directorate of Social Programs serves as Secretary of the State Council of the Roma People and adviser to the Government in matters of social inclusion of the Roma population. In addition, within this sub-directorate, there is a Roma Development Program Service.⁵⁵⁷ In **Sweden** the Stockholm County Administrative Board is tasked with coordinating and monitoring the implementation of the long-term strategy for Roma inclusion.⁵⁵⁸

Switzerland stated that the Foundation “*Zukunft für Schweizer Fahrende*” (Future for Swiss Travellers Foundation) was founded by the Swiss government in 1995 to help minorities who face longstanding discrimination and perse-

549 Response from Montenegro.

550 Response from North Macedonia.

551 Response from Poland.

552 Response from Romania.

553 Response from the Roma Centre for Health Policies – SASTIPEN.

554 Response from the Russian Federation.

555 Response from Slovakia.

556 Response from Slovenia.

557 Response from Spain.

558 Response to the ODIHR questionnaire from the Permanent Delegation of Sweden to the OSCE, received 22 March 2023.

cution in Switzerland, as well as to preserve their cultural identity. The Foundation board has twelve members, two members each represent the Confederation, the cantons and the municipalities and six members (one woman and five men) participate as representatives of the Yenish Sinti community. The Foundation provides professional, legal and political support for the concerns of the Yenish, Sinti and Roma minority.

In **Türkiye**, the development of policies for Roma and the coordination of services are carried out by the Ministry of Family and Social Services. The National Roma Contact Point is also under the General Directorate of Family and Community Services of the same Ministry. In addition, officials from the Human Rights and Equality Institution of Türkiye (TİHEK) have consultative meetings with Roma representatives and exchange opinions about their issues. The Roma Confederation in Türkiye (a civil society organization) has been included in the Consultative Commission for Fighting against Discrimination.⁵⁵⁹

In the **United Kingdom**, there are a number of teams across government departments working on Gypsy, Roma and Traveller policy, such as the Department of Levelling Up, Housing and Communities who lead on policy, the Department for Education, the Department of Health and Social Care, and the devolved administrations — Scotland, Wales, and Northern Ireland.⁵⁶⁰

In **Ukraine**, the State Service of Ukraine for Ethnopolitics and Freedom of Conscience is dealing with Roma issues, and it is the central executive body, directed and coordinated by the Cabinet of Ministers of Ukraine, which ensures the formation and implementation of state policy in the field of international relations, religion, and the protection of the rights of indigenous peoples and national minorities in Ukraine.⁵⁶¹

Priority areas and recommendations

Unfortunately, the priority areas and recommendations listed in the Third Status Report remain as relevant as ever. In view of rising populism, the increase of far-right ideologies across the OSCE area, explicit anti-Roma rhetoric, and racist and xenophobic agendas in mainstream politi-

cal discourse, participating States need to work with Roma and Sinti civil society to establish counter-narratives and to promote inclusive democratic spaces. Anti-Roma racism remains a prominent tactic for mobilizing constituencies driven by hate, resentment and prejudice, and it discourages Roma and Sinti people from taking part in politics. Public figures, politicians and decisionmakers should take a firm stance in condemning incidents of hate speech or political violence against Roma and Sinti communities. Anti-discrimination educational programming should be prioritized, including promoting responsible media reporting on these issues. Codes of conduct on hate speech by political and thought leaders should also be devised and deployed.

Roma and Sinti remain under-represented across the political spectrum. While this reporting period has seen sporadic increases in Roma and Sinti representation in some participating States, it has also seen a decrease in others. Awareness-raising and sensitization programmes should focus on mainstream political parties and non-Roma electoral candidates. Moreover, political parties should develop working synergies directly with Roma and Sinti communities and provide space and encouragement to Roma and Sinti, particularly women and youth, to stand as candidates for elected positions. Further efforts to build the political capacity of Roma and Sinti, particularly women and youth, should be a priority for participating States, civil society and donors. In addition, voter education programmes remain critical for Roma and Sinti communities, including programmes focused on deploying domestic election observation activities.

Community organization and mobilization programmes should be supported to empower Roma and Sinti to participate in public and political life at the local, regional and national levels. Structures that are mandated to address Roma and Sinti issues should be led by, and have a representative number of Roma and Sinti individuals employed within them.

6. CRISIS AND POST-CRISIS SITUATIONS

The OSCE commitments on Roma and Sinti also include recommended actions for participating States to ensure that the rights of refugees are secured without discrimination, including in crisis and post-crisis situations. More specifically, participating States pledged to protect Roma

⁵⁵⁹ Response from Türkiye.

⁵⁶⁰ Response from the United Kingdom.

⁵⁶¹ Response from Ukraine.

and Sinti refugees and those internally displaced in a non-discriminatory manner, in line with international instruments.⁵⁶² Over the past decades, the conflicts that have occurred within the OSCE region have caused sizeable Roma and Sinti communities to flee their homes to seek safe shelter.⁵⁶³

In its 2013 Status Report, ODIHR noted visible progress among OSCE participating States in terms of securing protection for displaced Roma and Sinti. Despite the positive changes, there are continuous challenges, such as statelessness and the unresolved legal status of Roma, Egyptian and Ashkali groups in the SEE region,⁵⁶⁴ as well as lack of documentation among Ukrainian Roma since 2014 in Ukraine.⁵⁶⁵ The developments since 24 February 2022 have caused a large number of Roma to flee the conflict areas and seek refuge either in the Western parts of Ukraine or in other OSCE participating States.⁵⁶⁶ These displaced communities were often met with biased treatment and prejudice at various stages of their efforts to secure protection and state support.⁵⁶⁷

562 OSCE Action Plan; and [Convention relating to the Status of Refugees](#), UN General Assembly resolution 429 (V), adopted 14 December 1950; [Protocol relating to the Status of Refugees](#), UN GA resolution 2198 (XXI), adopted 16 December 1966.

563 The 1991-1995 conflicts in the former Yugoslavia, the Kosovo conflict in 1999, the crisis that took place in conflict-affected regions of eastern Ukraine in 2014, and the Russian Federations military attack in Ukraine since 24 February 2022.

564 [Statelessness and the Prohibition on Discrimination against Romani Communities](#), European Network on Statelessness and the Aire Centre, April 2023.

565 [Access to Personal Documents for Roma in Ukraine: More Efforts Needed](#), OSCE/ODIHR, 9 July 2018.

566 Civil society estimates that 100,000 Roma have been forced to leave their homes as a consequence of the war since 24 February 2022, see more at [Roma From Ukraine: A Year of War and Flight](#), Anti-Discrimination Centre Memorial, April 2023.

567 ODIHR human rights monitoring efforts in Ukraine, the Czech Republic, Hungary, Moldova, Poland, Romania, and Slovakia, May 2022-June 2023; [Monitoring the human rights situation of Ukrainian Roma refugees in the Czech Republic, Hungary, Moldova, Poland, Romania and Slovakia](#), OSCE/ODIHR, 25 August 2022; [Monitoring and addressing the human rights challenges faced by Roma fleeing Ukraine discussed at ODIHR event](#), OSCE/ODIHR, 3 October 2022.

“The participating States have an obligation to ensure that, even in crisis and post-crisis situations, all fundamental rights, including the rights of refugees [...] are secured without discrimination.”

— OSCE Action Plan, Chapter VII.

“The participating States should ensure that programmes are in place to promote informed choice regarding the decision of Roma and Sinti refugees and IDPs concerning durable solutions to their situations, including the exercise of their right to safe, decent and sustainable return. Such programmes should provide concrete information regarding each subject of concern to refugees and IDPs and should be made available in the relevant languages.”

— OSCE Action Plan, Chapter VII, Paragraph 109.

“The ODIHR will assume a proactive role in analysing measures undertaken by participating States relating to Roma and Sinti people and offer advice with a view to better tackling those elements of tension in particular contexts which may evolve, if not prevented, into open conflict situations.”

— OSCE Action Plan, Chapter VII, Paragraph 116.

Continuing challenges and emerging trends

The post-conflict environment in the SEE region

More than two decades have passed since the conflicts in the SEE region, yet some challenges still remain for Roma, such as statelessness, lack of personal documents and registration of property. These issues cause the legal invisibility of Roma, Ashkali, or Egyptian groups that, in turn, restricts their participation in the official labour market, education, housing and the health system, as well as in voting and significantly limits their ability to access social benefits, public services and infrastructure, such as water and sanitation.⁵⁶⁸

Past estimates suggested that there are nearly 10,000 stateless people in the SEE region, most of whom are Roma, Ashkali, or Egyptians.⁵⁶⁹ According to the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), Roma are most at risk of statelessness in the region with 5,000 recorded stateless Roma.⁵⁷⁰ There has been considerable

568 [The Wall of Anti-gypsyism. Roma in the Western Balkans](#), Civil Rights Defenders, November 2017; [Multi-dimensional Review of the Western Balkans. Assessing Opportunities and Constraints](#), OECD Development Pathways, June 2021.

569 [Handbook on Statelessness in the OSCE Area International Standards and Good Practices](#), OSCE/ODIHR, Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, OSCE High Commissioner on National Minorities, 2017.

570 [Ending Statelessness in South Eastern Europe](#), United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, May 2018.

improvement over the past decade, but continuous efforts should be maintained to eradicate the phenomenon.⁵⁷¹

In 2019, the Prime Ministers of the SEE region pledged to enhance efforts for full equality and integration of Roma in the region through the adoption of the Declaration of Western Balkan Partners on Roma Integration within the European Union Enlargement. The Declaration recognizes, among other things, the need to ensure that all Roma are included in the civil registries. Nevertheless, no specific commitments on eradicating statelessness are incorporated.⁵⁷² Following the endorsement of the Declaration in 2021, the Ministry of Human Rights and Refugees of Bosnia and Herzegovina and the Regional Co-operation Council organized the Second Ministerial Meeting to assess the progress achieved and discuss further steps. According to the conclusions of the meeting, the roadmaps towards eliminating statelessness among Roma, Ashkali, or Egyptians communities in the SEE region should be incorporated into national integration strategies.⁵⁷³

Montenegro's executive power passed the Strategy for Social Inclusion of Roma and Egyptians for the period 2021-2025. The document includes tailored measures to refine the procedures for obtaining personal documents, including for internally displaced people (IDPs) and refugees, and to clarify the legal status of Roma and Egyptian populations, with an emphasis on children. By 2025, the authorities intend to eliminate completely the lack of personal documentation and statelessness.⁵⁷⁴

In the National Action Plan for Equality, Inclusion and Participation of Roma and Egyptians 2021-2025, the Albanian authorities noted that these groups are still at risk of statelessness despite some progress achieved in reducing the number of stateless Roma and Egyptians. At the same time, the government emphasized that it does not have a mechanism in place to determine statelessness status that

would enable the identification of relevant cases. Thus, stateless Roma do not get systematically and individually identified and remain invisible from the legal perspective. To tackle this issue, the authorities plan to ensure equal access to justice and civil registry office services for Roma and Egyptians.⁵⁷⁵

The Action Plan of Bosnia and Herzegovina for the Social Inclusion of Roma for the period 2021 to 2025 also includes measures to address the legal status of Roma communities. To that end, the government outlined actions to monitor the implementation of the Roadmap for Ending Roma Statelessness and the harmonization of regulations related to the issuance of personal documents and registration of citizenship.⁵⁷⁶

The eradication of statelessness also remains a priority for Serbia. In the Strategy for Social Inclusion of Roma 2022–2030, the authorities marked steady progress in solving civil registration, yet recognized the need to continue efforts to eliminate the risk of statelessness in Roma communities by 2024. The Strategy does not incorporate tailored actions to achieve this.⁵⁷⁷

Last year, North Macedonia passed the Strategy for the Inclusion of Roma for 2022 to 2030. It acknowledges the challenges linked to birth registration and the unregulated civil status of Roma populations. The roots of these issues lie in the inability of some Roma to collect the required documents due to administrative barriers, discriminatory treatment, poverty and exclusion. Statelessness remains an inherited problem and particularly affects non-registered children. The authorities envisage that all Roma will have civil registration by 2030.⁵⁷⁸

571 Eben Friedman, et al., *Roma access to personal documentation in the Western Balkans*, United Nations Development Programme, 2018.

572 *Declaration of Western Balkan Partners on Roma Integration within the EU Enlargement Process*, 5 July 2019, Poznan, Poland.

573 *Final conclusions - Second Ministerial meeting on Roma integration*, Ministry of Human Rights and Refugees of Bosnia and Herzegovina and the Regional Cooperation Council, 28 June 2021.

574 *Strategy for Social Inclusion of Roma and Egyptians 2021-2025*, Government of Montenegro, September 2021.

575 *National Action Plan for Equality, Inclusion and Participation of Roma and Egyptians 2021-2025*, Government of Albania, November 2021.

576 *Action Plan of Bosnia and Herzegovina for Social Inclusion of Roma 2021-2025*, Government of Bosnia and Herzegovina, December 2020.

577 *Strategy for Social Inclusion of Roma in the Republic of Serbia 2022-2030*, Government of the Republic of Serbia, 17 February 2022.

578 *Strategy for inclusion of Roma in North Macedonia 2022-2030*, Government of North Macedonia, May 2022.

Kosovo*: The Strategy for the Advancement of the Rights of the Roma and Ashkali Communities 2022-2026 recognizes that lack of documentation among Roma and Ashkali remains a challenge. Undetermined legal status imposes barriers to owning homes and land, obtaining social benefits and accessing health care. Consequently, it leads to forced evictions and discrimination. The Strategy envisions a mechanism for the identification, prevention, reduction and protection of Roma whose births are not registered, although there is no budget allocation for implementation.⁵⁷⁹

Despite the positive changes outlined above, the legal status of Roma, Ashkali, and Egyptian communities remains a persistent challenge in the SEE region. Human rights institutions raise concerns over the longstanding lack of identity documents and birth certificates, and the risk of statelessness among Roma, Ashkali and Egyptians in the region.⁵⁸⁰ Similar observations are flagged by Roma civil society.⁵⁸¹

Ukraine

Some 100,000 Roma refugees are estimated to have fled Ukraine since 24 February 2022.⁵⁸² However, the authorities do not collect data about the flow of Ukrainian refugees disaggregated by ethnicity, so this is only an es-

imate.⁵⁸³ This hampers a comprehensive analysis of the human rights situation and humanitarian needs of Roma forced to flee Ukraine that is needed to inform better responses during the war and post-war recovery period.

Analysis of survey responses indicates that Anti-Roma attitudes are often the cause of the obstacles faced by displaced Roma in Ukraine and abroad. There have been reports of discrimination, biased treatment and intolerance, along with incidents of violence and denial of humanitarian assistance. Roma have encountered anti-Roma sentiment throughout the various stages of their displacement journey — from the outbreak of hostilities and evacuation, to securing and accessing shelter, aid, information, documentation, facilities for IDPs and refugees, education, and employment.⁵⁸⁴

The current state of affairs of displaced Roma communities cannot be assessed properly without taking into account the human rights challenges they experienced before the war started in 2022. An ODIHR human rights mission conducted in Ukraine in 2014 found that Roma who were forcibly displaced from the war-affected regions of eastern Ukraine faced difficulties registering as IDPs due to lack of documentation. This, in turn, meant that they were not able to access any services or benefits made available to IDPs.⁵⁸⁵ This remains an issue in the context of the war.⁵⁸⁶

The lack of civil status documentation significantly limits the potential of Roma to exercise other rights. It specifically obstructs their socio-economic rights to access employment, education and healthcare services.⁵⁸⁷ Consequently, Roma become more vulnerable to hate incidents, abuse,

* There is no consensus among OSCE participating States on the status of Kosovo and, as such, the Organization does not have a position on this issue. All references to Kosovo in this publication, whether to the territory, institutions or population, in this text should be understood in full compliance with United Nations Security Council Resolution 1244.

579 [Strategy for the Advancement of the Rights of the Roma and Ashkali Communities in Kosovo 2022-2026 and the Action Plan 2022-2024](#), Government of Kosovo, July 2022.

580 [ECRI Report on Bosnia and Herzegovina \(fifth monitoring cycle\)](#), European Commission Against Racism and Intolerance, 28 February 2017; [ECRI Report on Albania \(sixth monitoring cycle\)](#), European Commission Against Racism and Intolerance, 2 June 2020; [ECRI Report on Serbia \(fifth monitoring cycle\)](#), European Commission Against Racism and Intolerance, 16 May 2017; [ECRI Report on the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia \(fifth monitoring cycle\)](#), European Commission Against Racism and Intolerance, 7 June 2016; [ECRI Report on Montenegro \(fifth monitoring cycle\)](#), European Commission Against Racism and Intolerance, 19 September 2017.

581 Participants of ODIHR's consultation workshop.

582 [International Roma Day: Statement by Vice-President Jourová, Commissioners Dalli and Várhelyi](#), European Commission website, 7 April 2022.

583 [Monitoring the human rights situation of Ukrainian Roma refugees in the Czech Republic, Hungary, Moldova, Poland, Romania and Slovakia and Monitoring and addressing the human rights challenges faced by Roma fleeing Ukraine](#) discussed at ODIHR event.

584 *Ibid.*; [Roma Rights Under Siege: Monitoring Reports from One Year of War in Ukraine](#), European Roma Rights Centre, February 2023; [Reports of the fact-finding missions to Romania, Republic of Moldova, Poland, Slovakia, and the Czech Republic](#), Special Representative of the Secretary General on Migration and Refugees, Council of Europe, 2022-2023; [Response from Romania](#).

585 [Situation Assessment Report on Roma in Ukraine and the Impact of the Current Crisis](#), OSCE/ODIHR, 29 September 2014.

586 [Monitoring the human rights situation of Ukrainian Roma refugees in the Czech Republic, Hungary, Moldova, Poland, Romania and Slovakia, and Monitoring and addressing the human rights challenges faced by Roma fleeing Ukraine](#) discussed at ODIHR event.

587 ODIHR's consultation workshop.

exploitation and human trafficking. Lack of civil status also impedes their freedom of movement inside the country, as well as abroad, thus imposing serious security threats and restricting their right to liberty and security.⁵⁸⁸ Poor documentation among Roma communities in Ukraine has been a long-running problem, with 30,000 Roma estimated to be without personal documents.⁵⁸⁹

Roma women and children are, however, disproportionately affected by lack of documentation. The United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women estimated that 60 per cent of Roma women and children in Ukraine have no civil status documentation.⁵⁹⁰ They remain an extremely vulnerable group among Roma and displaced people in general.⁵⁹¹ The intersecting characteristics of displaced Roma women feed a variety of experiences of exclusion in the context of the war.⁵⁹² Roma women with disabilities, the elderly and youth face major challenges in securing refuge and accessing basic services, while reporting multiple and intersecting circumstances of discrimination and violence.⁵⁹³ They also face a higher risk of human trafficking, sex trafficking, labour trafficking and exploitation.⁵⁹⁴

588 [Monitoring the human rights situation of Ukrainian Roma refugees in the Czech Republic, Hungary, Moldova, Poland, Romania and Slovakia, and Monitoring and addressing the human rights challenges faced by Roma fleeing Ukraine discussed at ODIHR event.](#)

589 [About 30,000 Roma in Ukraine have no documents. The story of a Roma activist](#), United Nations in Ukraine website, 4 January 2021.

590 [Making the Invisible Visible: An evidence-based analysis of gender in the regional response to the war in Ukraine](#), United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women, 2022.

591 [Resolution P9_TA\(2022\)0206 on the impact of the war against Ukraine on women](#), European Parliament, adopted 5 May 2022, Strasbourg, Preamble (D), section 22.

592 [Monitoring the human rights situation of Ukrainian Roma refugees in the Czech Republic, Hungary, Moldova, Poland, Romania and Slovakia, and Monitoring and addressing the human rights challenges faced by Roma fleeing Ukraine discussed at ODIHR event; Making the Invisible Visible: An evidence-based analysis of gender in the regional response to the war in Ukraine.](#)

593 [Monitoring the human rights situation of Ukrainian Roma refugees in the Czech Republic, Hungary, Moldova, Poland, Romania and Slovakia, and Monitoring and addressing the human rights challenges faced by Roma fleeing Ukraine discussed at ODIHR event.](#)

594 [Conflict in Ukraine: Key Evidence on Risks of Trafficking in Persons and Smuggling of Migrants](#), United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, December 2022.

Dom refugees in Türkiye

As of 2020, around 50,000 Dom people⁵⁹⁵ from Syria are estimated to have fled to Türkiye as a consequence of the civil war. Civil society indicates that this group of refugees face substantial barriers in accessing housing, employment, education and, more importantly, registering their refugee status to benefit from available services and assistance.

According to civil society reports, Dom refugees are allegedly forced to stay in self-improvised tented camps, rather than in refugee camps, due to discrimination based on stereotypes from other residents and the camp administration. There are also Dom individuals forced to sleep outdoors — on the streets and in parks. In addition, they face difficulties during the registration process, mainly due to lack of identification documents and intolerant attitudes. Without legal status in Türkiye, Dom refugees cannot benefit from healthcare services, humanitarian aid, housing, employment and education. These refugees are at higher risk of exploitation and human trafficking, in particular the women and children.⁵⁹⁶ At the same time, the Human Rights and Equality Institution (TİHEK) has received no applications in regard to these allegations.⁵⁹⁷ Türkiye evaluates asylum applications, prioritizing special needs cases for temporary accommodation. Various administrative and judicial mechanisms and institutions are in place to address potential complaints.⁵⁹⁸

Action by participating States

The Second Status Report flagged that the sustainable return of Roma, Ashkali and Egyptian refugees across the SEE region was challenged by obstacles in the property restoration process and civil registration. Due to this, a significant number of Roma, Ashkali and Egyptian communities remained in substandard housing conditions without access to socio-economic rights.⁵⁹⁹ Within this

595 The umbrella term “Roma and Sinti” is used by OSCE/ODIHR to encompass a variety of groups including communities from Central Asia and Middle East such as Dom, Lom and others.

596 [The Dom. The “Other” Asylum Seekers from Syria. Discrimination, Isolation and Social Exclusion: Syrian Dom Asylum Seekers in the Crossfire](#), Kırkayak Kültür, 2020; participants of ODIHR’s consultation workshop also raised concern about the experiences of the Dom; and Response to the ODIHR questionnaire from the European Roma Rights Centre, received 11 July 2023.

597 Response from Türkiye.

598 *Ibid.*

599 [Status Report 2013.](#)

reporting timeframe, 14 OSCE participating States noted existing national policies and programmes on the status of IDPs and refugees,⁶⁰⁰ while four participating States have no such measures in place and 17 provided no answer.

Tangible progress was observed by **Croatia** where the statelessness and documentation status of Roma was addressed by the country-wide work of mobile field teams and joint efforts with the UNHCR. The Ministry of Interior continues its programmes to enable access to civil registration, while the Ministry of Justice and Administration provides funds for legal aid initiatives to that end.⁶⁰¹

In **Italy**, the authorities flagged the risk of statelessness among Roma communities who fled the conflict in the former Yugoslavia. According to the National Office against Racial Discrimination, there are second or third generations of displaced Roma in Italy who have never resolved their stateless status nor obtained citizenship, including lacking regular residence permits. To tackle this, the Ministry of the Interior set up a joint working group with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the National Office against Racial Discrimination, the UNHCR and other institutional structures. However, its activity ceased for an unknown period of time. Recently, a Draft Protocol was passed with the purpose of creating a network of collaboration among the Central Directorate of Civil Rights, Citizenship and Minorities, the National Commission for the Right to Asylum, and the UNHCR to deal with the administrative recognition of the status of statelessness.⁶⁰²

The challenges linked to civil status and personal documentation were recognized in **Montenegro's** Strategy for Social Inclusion of Roma and Egyptians 2021-2025.⁶⁰³ Within this timeframe, the authorities intend to reduce the percentage of Roma and Egyptians without personal documents and ensure that all Roma and Egyptians are registered at birth.⁶⁰⁴

In **Serbia**, the Ministry for Human and Minority Rights and Social Dialogue communicated to ODIHR that

UNHCR, the Protector of Citizens, and the Ministry of State Administration and Local Self-Government signed an agreement that enabled the establishment of an operational group tasked to locate and eliminate cases of statelessness. The authorities also put in place tailored measures targeting maternity facilities to ensure that children delivered by women without personal documents receive birth certificates.⁶⁰⁵



One way to address the lack of personal documentation is by reaching out to Roma communities, specifically from remote areas, to inform them about existing documentation procedures and services. A good example in this regard are the “mobile teams” in **Bosnia and Herzegovina, Montenegro, Serbia and North Macedonia** that visit Roma-populated areas, collect data and help deliver identification documents to individuals who are not able to visit relevant state offices.⁶⁰⁶

The OSCE Mission to **Bosnia and Herzegovina** noted progress as regards access to personal documentation for displaced Roma with only 30 unresolved cases. The Mission works closely with the UNHCR focusing on supporting displaced Roma women from Kosovo.⁶⁰⁷

The OSCE Mission in Kosovo reported supporting an inter-institutional channel between Kosovo and **North Macedonia** on addressing issues related to personal documentation of conflict-affected displaced persons, mainly of displaced Roma from Kosovo currently residing in North Macedonia. The activity is part of the UNHCR initiative called the “Skopje Process”, to which both the OSCE the Mission to Kosovo and the Mission to Skopje provide expert support and advice. In 2022, the Mission to Kosovo facilitated two bilateral meetings where the institutions expressed interest in developing a joint roadmap.⁶⁰⁸ And, in early 2023, the Mission to Skopje organized a preparatory meeting for the relevant ministries from North Macedonia to prepare an action plan on the bilateral activity of the Technical Working Group for Personal Documentation.⁶⁰⁹

600 Albania, the Czech Republic, Finland, Germany, Ireland, Italy, Moldova, Montenegro, Romania, the Russian Federation, Slovakia, Slovenia, Ukraine and the United Kingdom.

601 Response from Croatia.

602 Response from Italy.

603 Response from Montenegro.

604 *Strategy for Social Inclusion of Roma and Egyptians 2021-2025*, Ministry of Justice, Human and Minority Rights in Montenegro, September 2021.

605 Response to the ODIHR questionnaire from the Ministry of Human and Minority Rights and Social Dialogue of the Republic of Serbia, received 2 April 2023.

606 Response from the Council of Europe.

607 Response from the OSCE Mission to Bosnia and Herzegovina.

608 Response from the OSCE Mission in Kosovo.

609 Response from the OSCE Mission to Skopje.

In response to Ukrainian refugees

The mass displacement of Ukrainian refugees to other OSCE participating States necessitates special measures to accommodate their needs. For instance, the **Czech Republic** reported that the Ministry of the Interior devised a tailored programme to help particularly vulnerable groups of refugees, which includes financial support to cover basic needs, mainly accommodation. Furthermore, the Refugee Facilities Administration of the Ministry of the Interior cooperated with Roma civil society to ensure that the challenges of Roma refugees are addressed, including the provision of information in Romani language.⁶¹⁰

In **Romania**, the authorities also indicated joint efforts with civil society to address the immediate needs of Ukrainian refugees, including Roma. The executive power allocated funding to support the integration of refugees into the local society.⁶¹¹

In **Ukraine**, tailored measures were also applied by the authorities in the context of martial law. According to the Ministry of Health, a series of amendments were passed to facilitate the access of IDPs to primary medical care and medicines. The Ministry noted that some of these amendments specifically target individuals who suffer from oncological conditions, cardiovascular diseases, pregnant women, new-borns and others.⁶¹²

Several participating States, including **Germany, Liechtenstein, Moldova, Norway, Romania Slovakia, and Türkiye** noted that domestic legislation, including the asylum procedure and temporary protection provisions, were applied equally and in a non-discriminatory manner.⁶¹³ For example, **Ireland** communicated that the Department of Children, Equality, Disability, Integration and Youth ensures access to available facilities on an equal footing, while for accommodation arrangements they take into account family unity and needs.⁶¹⁴



The Office of the Plenipotentiary of the Government of Slovakia for Roma Communities has provided aid for Ukrainian Roma refugees since their arrival. Its employees played a major role in overcoming language barriers, providing necessary information, assisting with the documentation process and ensuring accommodation, transport and humanitarian assistance. The Office also carried out human rights monitoring efforts and documented discriminatory instances, including at the border. In addition, they offered support to crisis management teams and assisted with registration at Michalovce and Humenné refugee camps. Moreover, the Office was a member of the Roma for Humanity platform that coordinated help and assistance for Roma refugees.⁶¹⁵

In some OSCE participating States initiatives targeted vulnerable groups of migrants. The **United Kingdom** made grant funding available to a network of civil society organizations and their partners to support groups at risk when applying to the European Union Settlement Scheme. The network has supported more than 480,000 vulnerable individuals to apply through the scheme.⁶¹⁶

The **Finnish** legislature passed amendments in 2022 to add to emergency care well-being services for foreign nationals who do not have a municipality of residence in the country or who are not entitled to public healthcare services.⁶¹⁷

In **Albania**, the authorities reported to ODIHR about the harmonization of domestic legislation with international standards and the existence of a strategic framework that provides for a coordinated and intersectoral approach to address the social exclusion of returnees, migrants or refugees and marginalized people.⁶¹⁸

Amendments to existing legislation to address statelessness and lack of documentation were covered in **Georgia's** response to ODIHR's questionnaire. Such adjustments ease the procedure for obtaining citizenship and make it free of charge for stateless people. In addition, the authorities passed amendments to the Law on Civil Acts in 2021

610 Response from the Czech Republic.

611 Response from Romania.

612 Response from Ukraine.

613 Responses from Liechtenstein, Germany, Moldova, Norway, Romania, Slovakia and Türkiye.

614 Response from Ireland.

615 Response from Slovakia.

616 Response from the United Kingdom.

617 Response from Finland.

618 Response from Albania.

to ensure the digitalization of civil registration certificates and verification by e-signature or qualified e-stamp.⁶¹⁹

Priority areas and recommendations

Given the concerns raised above, more effort must be invested in addressing the persistent issue of statelessness, lack of civil registration and unsolved legal status of Roma, Egyptian and Ashkali in the post-conflict environment in the SEE region. Tailored measures are needed to ensure not only compliance with international standards but also efficient implementation of legislative and policy frameworks. These measures should be adequately financed and informed by gender considerations. In the long-term, this approach will provide safety and security to Roma, Egyptian and Ashkali people in the region and fulfil their social, economic and political rights, a prerequisite for a democratic society.

In the current situation of Ukrainian Roma, it is of paramount importance to ensure tailored measures to allevi-

ate the specific difficulties faced by Roma in general and displaced groups in particular. The measures should take into account gender, ethnicity, age and other identities of those displaced, as well as the multiple and intersecting forms of discrimination experienced by displaced Roma. It is also crucial that Roma integration and post-conflict recovery frameworks acknowledge the particular challenges faced by displaced Roma in access to documentation and information, housing, employment and education, and contain steps to address these difficulties. Accountability for human rights violations faced by displaced Roma and facilitated access to justice system and redress measures is also key. It is also essential to provide support to Roma and Roma civil society organizations already in the field that are rendering assistance and support to Roma forced to flee.

Finally, particular attention should be paid to removing the substantial barriers faced by Dom refugees in accessing housing, employment, education and registration processes.

619 Response from Georgia.

PART III

The OSCE's role in implementing the Action Plan

ODIHR is mandated to assist OSCE participating States in implementing the commitments relating to Roma and Sinti, stemming from the OSCE Action Plan on Improving the Situation of Roma and Sinti within the OSCE Area and the three subsequent Ministerial Council Decisions.⁶²⁰

From the perspective of assessment, the Action Plan tasks ODIHR with reviewing the implementation of OSCE commitments relating to Roma and Sinti.⁶²¹ Moreover, the Action Plan mandates ODIHR and its Contact Point for Roma and Sinti Issues to “serve as a clearing house on initiatives undertaken by participating States and facilitate exchanges of information on best practices.”⁶²² The OSCE participating States have further entrusted ODIHR to “act as a catalyst for exchanges of information and best practices among participating States and other international organizations.”⁶²³

In addition, “[t]he implementation of the Action Plan’s provisions will be reviewed at the Human Dimension Implementation Meetings, Review Conferences and other relevant human dimension events.”⁶²⁴ Through the Action Plan, ODIHR’s Director is also mandated to “report to the Permanent Council, which may recommend to participating States and OSCE institutions priorities

for cooperation and coordination.”⁶²⁵ The Action Plan also notes that “[t]he Permanent Council will periodically organize informal briefings by the Contact Point for Roma and Sinti Issues on the areas covered by the present Action Plan in order to assess the impact at the national and local levels of the measures foreseen by it.”⁶²⁶

Realizing its core tasks: assisting participating States in implementing OSCE commitments

The core mandate of the ODIHR Contact Point for Roma and Sinti Issues is to assist participating States with implementing the OSCE commitments related to Roma and Sinti by offering expertise, knowledge and guidelines through direct contact, as well as through reports and publications. ODIHR has maintained ongoing communication with OSCE Delegations and governments, made field-assessment visits to various participating States and provided expertise to governments and civil society in developing and implementing Roma and Sinti programming.

Previous Status Reports have provided a basis for ODIHR to encourage governments to design policy measures or to enhance existing ones focusing on Roma and Sinti. ODIHR programmatic activities during the review period, including field-assessment visits and reports on particular issues, were also based on the Status Report’s analysis and recommendations. The findings of these Reports and follow-up activities by participating States to implement ODIHR recommendations were presented and discussed at OSCE Human Dimension meetings. ODIHR reports have also provided reference points in consultations held with civil society organizations, experts and academics.

620 OSCE Action Plan; OSCE Ministerial Council, Decision No. 6/08, *Enhancing OSCE efforts to implement the Action Plan on Improving the Situation of Roma within the OSCE Area*, Helsinki, 5 December 2008; OSCE Ministerial Council, Decision No. 8/09 on *Enhancing OSCE efforts to ensure Roma and Sinti sustainable integration*; and OSCE Ministerial Council, Decision No. 4/13, *Enhancing OSCE efforts to implement the Action Plan on Improving the Situation of Roma within the OSCE Area, with a particular focus on Roma and Sinti women, youth and children*, Kyiv, 6 December 2013.

621 OSCE Action Plan, paras 24, 102, 103, 125, 126, and 129.

622 OSCE Action Plan, para 24.

623 OSCE Action Plan, para 102.

624 OSCE Action Plan, para 133.

625 OSCE Action Plan, para 134.

626 OSCE Action Plan, para 135.

Prioritizing action

Based on the mandate and provisions of the Action Plan and the three subsequent Ministerial Council Decisions, as well as the findings from previous Status Reports, ODIHR has developed and prioritized its activities.

During the review period, ODIHR placed particular emphasis on combating racism and discrimination, including through providing capacity-building to Roma and Sinti civil society in human rights monitoring and reporting methodology, and through building a network of Roma Human Rights Defenders. Within the review period, ODIHR also embarked on preparing capacity-building tools for NHRIs and NEBs.

In the area of addressing socio-economic issues, ODIHR prepared guidelines for civil society and activists in addressing *evictions*, and guidelines on addressing *access to quality health care*. Building on its previous work, ODIHR also continued to address the promotion of early education for Roma children and preventing their segregation in education systems. ODIHR has also promoted awareness-raising and supported activities to commemorate the Genocide of Roma and Sinti.

Enhancing the participation of Roma and Sinti in public and political life was a cornerstone of ODIHR's work within the reporting period. This was primarily addressed through building the capacity of Roma and Sinti in elected and appointed functions, as well as civil society representatives, and Roma and Sinti women and youth.

ODIHR has also deployed human rights monitoring activities concerning Ukrainian Roma refugees.

Sharing expertise, seeking solutions

The mandate of ODIHR includes provisions on its role serving as a "clearing house" in relation to information concerning Roma and Sinti issues. Through its Contact Point for Roma and Sinti Issues, ODIHR collects and disseminates relevant information to participating States and civil society organizations and offers its expertise on policy programming and the challenges faced by Roma and Sinti communities.

Within the review period, the Contact Point for Roma and Sinti Issues assisted participating States in the devel-

opment of policy to improve the situation of Roma and Sinti, providing expert input to Bulgaria, the Czech Republic and Hungary in 2020.

During the review period, the Contact Point for Roma and Sinti Issues conducted a field visit in Ukraine in 2022 and engaged in communication for facilitating a field visit in the Czech Republic, which was conducted in 2023. During these visits, Contact Point staff met with relevant stakeholders, including Roma communities and civil society representatives.

Roma civil society

Within the review period, ODIHR has placed key focus on continuing its efforts to build the capacity of Roma and Sinti civil society organizations, particularly women and youth. ODIHR also continues to facilitate and support the participation of Roma and Sinti organizations in major OSCE Human Dimension events and conferences, especially as speakers and moderators, paying attention to both mainstream issues and those that target Roma and Sinti women and youth.

In follow-up to a recommendation from consultation workshops with civil society during the elaboration of the Third Status Report, ODIHR reinstated and consolidated the International Roma Contact Group.⁶²⁷

Cooperation with OSCE institutions and structures

Within the review period, ODIHR continued to maintain close cooperation and coordination with OSCE institutions and structures. ODIHR co-organized an online roundtable in 2020 with the OSCE High Commissioner for National Minorities and the OSCE Representative on the Freedom of the Media, entitled "Promoting fair portrayal of Roma and Sinti by the media: Challenges and perspectives". In 2022, these efforts were further consolidated at an OSCE-wide event on countering hate speech.

⁶²⁷ The International Roma Contact Group was established in October 2000 at the initiative of the ODIHR Contact Point for Roma and Sinti Issues. It was reconstituted as a key consultative activity in 2019 and has since been organized on an annual basis. Participants in the International Roma Contact Group include Roma and Sinti from elected and appointed functions, experts and the ODIHR Contact Point for Roma and Sinti Issues.

ODIHR also continued to hold annual meetings with Roma Focal Points from the OSCE Field Operations to better coordinate efforts and to build synergies on addressing Roma and Sinti issues. In addition, ODIHR continued to maintain close working relations and cooperation with the OSCE Strategic Police Matters Unit.

ODIHR also cooperates with the Gender Section and the OSCE Special Representative and Co-ordinator for Combating Trafficking in Human Beings, addressing the multiple forms of discrimination against Roma women and girls and the particular vulnerability of Roma to trafficking.

Cooperation with other intergovernmental organizations

ODIHR has established, and continues to maintain good working relationships with major intergovernmental organizations, particularly with the Council of Europe and institutions of the European Union and the United Nations. These efforts were consolidated by reinstating the Informal Contact Group on Roma of Intergovernmental Organisations.⁶²⁸

ODIHR has implemented several joint initiatives with the Council of Europe, such as a website dedicated to the remembrance of the Roma genocide, as well as a recently created joint training curriculum for police. In addition to these concrete activities, the Council of Europe and ODIHR regularly participate in each other's events, consult their work plans to avoid duplication and build synergies for joint action.

Within the review period, ODIHR also cooperated with the European Commission, in particular, the Non-discrimination and Roma Coordination Unit of the Directorate-General for Justice and Consumers, and the Directorate-General for Neighbourhood and Enlargement Negotiations.

In addition, ODIHR regularly attends and contributes to the proceedings of the Committee on the Genocide of the Roma of the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance.

628 As per the OSCE Action Plan, the Informal Contact Group on Roma of Intergovernmental Organisations is composed of representatives from OSCE/ODIHR, the Council of Europe, the European Commission and the European Union.

Some of the Contact Point's key activities and initiatives⁶²⁹

Supporting governments and enhancing policy instruments

As noted in the sections above, within the reporting period, one of ODIHR's key activities was continued assistance to participating States in policy and programming processes. To that end in 2020, ODIHR provided policy advice and input to Bulgaria, the Czech Republic and Hungary. This process included review of their NRISs and input into their then upcoming NRSEs, in line with the principles of the Action Plan which include, among others, early involvement of Roma and Sinti in the inception stage, inclusivity, transparency, ensuring meaningful participation and ownership.⁶³⁰ ODIHR will continue to offer policy advice and technical assistance in the coming period.

Field-assessment visits

Within this review period ODIHR undertook a monitoring field-assessment visit in Uzhhorod, Ukraine between 2 and 7 November 2022. The primary purpose was to monitor the human rights situation of Roma in Ukraine. The assessment included a visit to a refugee reception centre, as well as interviews with Roma women and men, and relevant civil society organizations.

As mentioned, ODIHR also initiated planning for the deployment of a field-assessment visit in the Czech Republic. Unfortunately, due to the COVID-19 pandemic, ODIHR was unable to deploy further visits. However, this activity remains one of the tools at ODIHR's disposal and will be implemented in the period to come.

Combating racism and discrimination

Activities that focused on combating racism and discrimination formed a large part of ODIHR's work during this review period. Particular emphasis was given to building the capacity of Roma Human Rights Defenders in human rights monitoring safety and security, beginning in 2019 and continuing as key programming in 2020. This activity contributed to strengthening the capacity of Roma and

629 The activities listed below represent some of the core activities of ODIHR and its Contact Point for Roma and Sinti Issues. As such, the list is not exhaustive and does not cover all activities that have been and/or are being undertaken.

630 As stipulated in the OSCE Action Plan, Chapter VI.

Sinti in performing human rights monitoring work and in raising awareness about the human rights situation of Roma and Sinti. In 2021, ODIHR expanded this work by organizing another training course for Roma activists on human rights monitoring and reporting and then selecting ten individuals to undertake human rights monitoring activities in eight participating States.⁶³¹ In 2022, ODIHR closely monitored the human rights situation of Roma, including those who have fled Ukraine to seek refuge in neighbouring countries. To this end, ODIHR supported human rights monitoring activities by Roma Human Rights Defenders in Hungary, Moldova, Poland, Romania and Slovakia.⁶³² ODIHR also co-organized a Roma Rights Summer School, in 2022, in Budapest, Hungary, jointly with the European Roma Rights Centre.⁶³³

In addition, ODIHR's Contact Point for Roma and Sinti Issues organized side events related to combating racism and discrimination during the 2018 and 2019⁶³⁴ Human Dimension Implementation Meetings, and in 2022 at a side event of the Warsaw Human Dimension Conference, focusing on the human rights situation of Ukrainian Roma refugees in the Czech Republic, Hungary, Moldova, Poland, Romania and Slovakia.⁶³⁵ In 2022, ODIHR also organized a workshop with Roma women who were sterilized without their informed choice and consent in the Czech Republic.

Within the reporting period, ODIHR also undertook a needs assessment to identify and analyse the capacity-building needs of NHRIs and NEBs to better address Roma and Sinti issues within their work. As a result, ODIHR began the preparation of guidelines on the topic which should be published in 2024.

Security — Roma and police

To strengthen trust between Roma and Sinti and the police, ODIHR continued to deploy its train-the-trainer

course on Effective and Human Rights-Compliant Policing in Roma and Sinti Communities. Within the review period ODIHR conducted twelve editions of this training.⁶³⁶ In addition, ODIHR piloted workshops between the police and Roma in Ukraine, during which aspects relating to the safety and security of Roma were explored, including of women and youth and the relationships between police and Roma.⁶³⁷

To assist participating States in addressing the security needs of Roma and Sinti, ODIHR also prepared a security guide during the review period, which was published in 2023. This guide highlights measures that promote safety and security without discrimination, in line with OSCE commitments, and provides relevant stakeholders — government officials, political representatives, civil society and the broader public — with an overview of the situations Roma and Sinti communities face, an analysis of their corresponding security needs and areas where positive action could improve their access to rights.⁶³⁸

Addressing socio-economic issues

In the field of addressing socio-economic issues, during the review period, ODIHR published guidelines for civil society and activists on addressing evictions. The purpose of these guidelines is to give Roma and Sinti activists an easily accessible overview of the relevant international and regional human rights standards on forced evictions, with a particular focus on the findings of international and regional human rights tribunals in relation to Roma and Sinti evictions. In addition, by including numerous references to the judgments and decisions of international human rights courts, Roma and Sinti activists can familiarize themselves with these decisions and draw them to the attention of non-governmental organizations and human rights lawyers with whom they cooperate. These can then be incorporated into their legal advocacy and litigation, rendering them more effective.⁶³⁹

631 Albania, Czech Republic, Germany, Greece, Hungary, North Macedonia, Romania, Slovakia, and Ukraine.

632 For more information see [Monitoring the human rights situation of Ukrainian Roma refugees in the Czech Republic, Hungary, Moldova, Poland, Romania and Slovakia](#).

633 For more information see [Roma Rights Summer School \[Class of 2022\] - European Roma Rights Centre](#), European Roma Rights Centre, 18 August 2022.

634 For more information see [ODIHR event explores ways to address racism, intolerance and violence against Roma and Sinti](#).

635 For more information see [Monitoring and addressing the human rights challenges faced by Roma fleeing Ukraine discussed at ODIHR event](#).

636 The twelve editions of the training were implemented in Bulgaria, Italy, North Macedonia, Poland, Slovakia, and Ukraine. The training also took place in Kosovo.

637 For more information see [Ukraine: ODIHR workshop on relation between police and Roma](#).

638 For more information see [Understanding Anti-Roma Hate Crimes and Addressing the Security Needs of Roma and Sinti Communities: A Practical Guide](#), OSCE/ODIHR, 18 May 2023.

639 For more information see [Guidelines for Activists Addressing Roma and Sinti Evictions](#), OSCE/ODIHR, 21 December 2022.

ODIHR also prepared guidelines for activists on access to health care and vaccination for Roma and Sinti. This publication aims to support civil society, human rights defenders and activists, public institutions and other stakeholders in implementing health-related activities to increase Roma and Sinti's access to health care and vaccination services as a core human right.

Improving access to education

Within the reporting period, improving access to education remained a priority for ODIHR. ODIHR worked to raise awareness about access to quality education for Roma and Sinti children and youth by organizing a side-event during the 2018 Supplementary Human Dimension Meeting in Vienna. In addition, a regional seminar on promoting equal access to quality early childhood education for Roma and Sinti children was organized in 2019.⁶⁴⁰ ODIHR also supported civil society activists at awareness-raising activities at the grassroots level, and organized a consultation meeting on the quality and effectiveness of education for Roma and Sinti children during the COVID-19 pandemic, reviewing the challenges and good policy practices in education.⁶⁴¹

Teaching about the Roma and Sinti genocide

ODIHR organized a side-event during the 2019 OSCE Supplementary Human Dimension Meeting in Vienna, marking 75 years since the Roma and Sinti genocide and the persistent manifestations of intolerance, racism and discrimination against Roma and Sinti. During the OSCE Human Dimension Implementation Meeting in 2019, ODIHR also facilitated a photo exhibition about the Roma and Sinti Genocide. There was also a study visit in Austria that year, followed by a webinar on the continued path to recognition of the Roma and Sinti genocide in 2020.

Enhancing participation in public and political life

In light of the recommendations of the Third Status Report, during this review period ODIHR intensified its capacity-building work to enhance the participation of Roma and Sinti in public and political life. In 2019, ODIHR developed and piloted the Roma Leadership Academy, named

after “Nicolae Gheorghe”, to strengthen democratic institutions and governance by building the capacity of Roma and Sinti in elected and appointed office, of potential Roma and Sinti candidates for public office, as well as experienced Roma and Sinti civil society advocates. During the three editions of this academy, participants deepened their knowledge and understanding of ways to maximize their policy and decision-making leverage to benefit Roma and Sinti at local, national and international levels.⁶⁴²

Likewise, in order to strengthen the capacity of Roma and Sinti activists at the local level, in 2021, ODIHR devised and organized capacity-building training covering human rights, participation and mobilization in North Macedonia and Serbia. As part of the training, participants were supported to develop community action plans aimed at addressing related issues and, in follow-up, they received support to implement these plans, including through tailored coaching and guidance based on specific needs.⁶⁴³

ODIHR also organized two editions of its training for Roma and Sinti Short-term Election Observers, including women and youth. ODIHR also supported the participation of young Roma in election observation missions. In addition, ODIHR frequently supported the participation of Roma and Sinti youth in various OSCE-wide human dimension events, including as speakers.

To support the capacity-building of Roma and Sinti girls, women and feminist activists, ODIHR organized its I-Change training in North Macedonia and Poland during the review period, as well as organizing a consultation meeting with Roma and Sinti women, including youth, where challenges and perspectives for gender equality and participation were the main focus of discussion.⁶⁴⁴

640 For more information see [Promoting Equal Access to Quality Early Childhood Education for Roma and Sinti Children](#).

641 For more information see [Quality and effectiveness of education for Roma and Sinti children during the COVID-19 pandemic: Challenges and good policy practice](#).

642 In the three editions of this training a total of 65 (30 women and 35 men) Roma and Sinti, including youth, from Albania, Bulgaria, Croatia, Czech Republic, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Moldova, North Macedonia, Poland, Romania, Serbia, Slovakia, Spain, Ukraine and the United Kingdom took part.

643 For more information see [Workshop: Capacity building of Roma civil society organizations to mobilize Roma to participate in public and political life](#).

644 For more information see [Consultation meeting of Roma and Sinti women: Challenges and perspectives for gender equality and participation](#).

APPENDICES

APPENDIX 1:

1 AND 2 DECEMBER 2003, MAASTRICHT, THE NETHERLANDS

DECISION No. 3/03 ACTION PLAN ON IMPROVING THE SITUATION OF ROMA AND SINTI WITHIN THE OSCE AREA (MC.DEC/3/03)

The Ministerial Council,

Committed to respect of human rights and fundamental freedoms for all, without adverse distinction of any kind, such as race, colour, sex, language, religion or belief, political or other opinion, national or social origin, property, birth or other status,

Supporting the adoption and implementation of comprehensive anti-discrimination legislation to promote full equality of opportunities for all,

Recognizing the particular difficulties faced by Roma and Sinti people and the need to undertake effective measures in order to eradicate discrimination against them and to bring about equality of opportunities, consistent with OSCE commitments,

Recognizing that progress has been achieved in national legislation and in programmes for action and that substantial efforts have been undertaken by the participating States to this end,

Aware at the same time that resolute action is still required to improve the situation of the Roma and Sinti population across the OSCE region,

Noting the rich cultural, linguistic and historical diversity among Roma and Sinti people within the OSCE area, as well as the diversity of national structures and traditions in the OSCE area,

Noting the outcome of important recent governmental and non-governmental conferences and initiatives on Roma and Sinti in Europe, including, *inter alia*, the

launching of a Decade of Roma Inclusion and the possible creation of a European Forum for Roma and Travellers,

Convinced that Roma and Sinti populations should have an ever-increasing degree of ownership of the policies focusing on them,

Decides to endorse the Action Plan on Improving the Situation of Roma and Sinti within the OSCE Area, adopted by the Permanent Council in its Decision No. 566 on 27 November 2003, and annexed to this Decision.

Annex to Decision No. 3/03

DECISION No. 566 ACTION PLAN ON IMPROVING THE SITUATION OF ROMA AND SINTI WITHIN THE OSCE AREA PC.DEC/566, 27 November 2003, Annex

I. Scope and objectives

1. The Action Plan is intended to reinforce the efforts of the participating States and relevant OSCE institutions and structures aimed at ensuring that Roma and Sinti people are able to play a full and equal part in our societies, and at eradicating discrimination against them.
2. The Action Plan relies on the framework of international and regional human rights law, existing OSCE commitments and examples of best practices from countries throughout Europe, where these are in place, and aims at fostering such practices elsewhere. The special measures foreseen by the Action Plan with a view to improving the situation of Roma and Sinti people are based on the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination⁶⁴⁵.

⁶⁴⁵ Article I, paragraph 4 reads: "Special measures taken for the sole purpose of securing adequate advancement of certain racial or ethnic groups or individuals requiring such protection as may be necessary in order to ensure such groups or individuals equal enjoyment or exercise of human rights and fundamental freedoms shall not be deemed racial discrimination, provided, however, that such measures do not, as a consequence, lead to the maintenance of separate rights for different racial groups and that they shall not be continued after the objectives for which they were taken have been achieved."

3. Both the participating States and OSCE institutions are called upon to implement the Action Plan. Roma and Sinti communities in the participating States are invited to draw upon and contribute actively to the implementation of the Action Plan's provisions.

II. General context: for Roma, with Roma

4. Each national policy or implementation strategy should:
(1) respond to the real problems, needs and priorities of Roma and Sinti communities; (2) be comprehensive; (3) introduce a balanced and sustainable approach to combining human rights goals with social policies; and (4) maximize Roma ownership of the policies that affect them. At the same time, national policies or implementation strategies should be adapted and implemented according to the specific needs of Roma and Sinti populations in particular situations in participating States. Implementation strategies should also include mechanisms to ensure that national policies are implemented at the local level.
5. The guiding principle in the efforts of participating States and relevant OSCE institutions should be that each policy and implementation strategy should be elaborated and implemented with the active participation of Roma and Sinti communities. It is essential to ensure real participation by Roma and Sinti people in all the decisions that affect their lives. Roma and Sinti people should work alongside local, national and international authorities in the development of these strategies. Equally, Roma communities should be equal partners and should share the responsibility for the betterment of their welfare.
6. The particular situation of Roma and Sinti women should be taken into account in the design and implementation of all policies and programmes. Where consultative and other mechanisms exist to facilitate Roma and Sinti people's participation in such policy-making processes, women should be able to participate on an equal basis with men. Roma women's issues should be systematically mainstreamed in all relevant policies designed for the population as a whole.

III. Combating racism and discrimination

In order to counter prejudice against Roma and Sinti and to effectively elaborate and implement policies to combat

discrimination and racial violence, the following actions are recommended:

Legislation and law enforcement

Recommended action by participating States:

7. Consider ratifying the relevant international treaties as soon as possible, if they have not already done so, *inter alia*, the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination.
8. Adopt and implement effective anti-discrimination legislation to combat racial and ethnic discrimination in all fields, including, *inter alia*, access to housing, citizenship and residence, education, employment, health and social services. Involve Roma and Sinti representatives in the design, implementation and evaluation processes.
9. The anti-discrimination legislation should ensure:
 - Prohibition of both direct and indirect racial discrimination;
 - Imposition of effective, proportionate and dissuasive sanctions for discriminatory acts or practices;
 - Imposition of heavier sentences for racially motivated crimes by both private individuals and public officials;
 - Equal access to effective remedies (judicial, administrative, conciliation or mediation procedures).
10. It should be ensured that national legislation prohibits all kinds of discriminatory acts and that all cases of suspected discrimination are thoroughly and objectively investigated.
11. Create, where appropriate, specialized institutions to ensure the implementation of such legislation, as well as domestic mechanisms to monitor and report regularly and with transparency on the progress achieved in its implementation. Encourage participation of Roma and Sinti representatives in such bodies, whose work should be accessible to the public.
12. Develop, where necessary, comprehensive national strategies or action plans to improve the situation of Roma and Sinti people, which include specific measures to tackle discrimination in all fields of life.

13. Assess on a regular basis, especially at the local level, the results of these strategies and involve Roma and Sinti communities in the evaluation process.
14. Endeavour, by encouraging a genuine dialogue or consultations or through other appropriate means, to improve the relations between Roma and Sinti people and other inhabitants, with a view to promoting tolerance and overcoming prejudices and negative stereotypes on both sides.
15. Document, consistent with national and international standards on the protection of data, all types and relevant cases of discrimination in order to better assess the situation and respond to the needs of Roma and Sinti people.
16. Ensure the vigorous and effective investigation of acts of violence against Roma and Sinti people, especially where there are reasonable grounds to suspect that they were racially motivated, and prosecute those responsible in accordance with domestic law and consistent with relevant standards of human rights.
17. Ensure no impunity for perpetrators of discriminatory or violent acts, *inter alia*, by taking prompt and effective investigative and punitive action on the part of the police.
18. Facilitate access to justice for Roma and Sinti people through measures such as legal aid and the provision of information in the Romani language.
19. Take into account in all measures and programmes, the situation of Roma and Sinti women, who are often victims of discrimination on the basis of both ethnicity and sex.

Recommended action by OSCE institutions and structures:

20. The ODIHR and, where appropriate, other OSCE institutions and structures, including OSCE field operations, will assist participating States, at their request, in developing anti-discrimination legislation, as well as in establishing anti-discrimination bodies.
21. The HCNM, within its mandate, will continue to follow the development of anti-discrimina-

tion legislation and provide advice and assistance to the participating States in this respect, as appropriate.

22. Upon request, the ODIHR will provide advice on how a participating State's existing mechanisms, such as ombudsman offices, commissions for combating discrimination, police disciplinary commissions, and other relevant bodies can alleviate tensions between Roma and Sinti and non-Roma communities.
23. The ODIHR/Contact Point for Roma and Sinti Issues (CPRSI) will promote better relations between Roma and Sinti non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and the participating States.
24. The ODIHR-CPRSI will serve as a clearing house on initiatives undertaken by participating States and facilitate exchanges of information on best practices.
25. The ODIHR-CPRSI will, in close co-operation with participating States, Roma and Sinti communities, and where possible with other international organizations, and in full respect of the laws on the protection of personal data, collect documentation for the purpose of developing more precisely targeted policies.

Police

Recommended action by participating States:

26. Develop policies that promote awareness among law-enforcement institutions regarding the situation of Roma and Sinti people and that counter prejudice and negative stereotypes.
27. Develop training programmes to prevent excessive use of force and to promote awareness of and respect for human rights.
28. Develop policies: (1) to improve relations between Roma and Sinti communities and the police, so as to prevent police abuse and violence against Roma and Sinti people; and (2) to improve trust and confidence in the police among Roma and Sinti people.
29. Develop policies and procedures to ensure an effective police response to racially motivated violence against Roma and Sinti people.

30. Assess the gap between international standards on police and currently existing national practices in consultation with national police forces, NGOs and representatives of Roma and Sinti communities.
31. Elaborate, where appropriate, and in close partnership with international organizations and Roma NGOs, policy statements, codes of conduct, practical guidance manuals and training programmes.
32. Encourage Roma and Sinti people to work in law-enforcement institutions as a sustainable means of promoting tolerance and diversity.

Recommended action by OSCE institutions and structures:

33. The Strategic Police Matters Unit in the Secretariat and the ODIHR will assist participating States in developing programmes and confidence-building measures — such as community policing to improve the relations between Roma and Sinti people and the police, particularly at the local level.
34. The ODIHR-CPRSI and the Strategic Police Matters Unit will, within their respective mandates, produce a compilation of police “best practices” in the OSCE region with respect to policing and Roma and Sinti communities.
35. The HCNM, the ODIHR-CPRSI and the Strategic Police Matters Unit will assist the participating States in developing codes of conduct to prevent racial profiling and improve interethnic relations.

Mass Media

Recommended action by participating States:

36. Launch information and awareness-raising campaigns with a view to countering prejudices and negative stereotypes of Roma and Sinti people.
37. In order to foster freedom of expression, encourage training of Roma and Sinti journalists and their employment in media outlets with a view to facilitating wider access to the media for Roma and Sinti people.
38. Encourage the media to show positive aspects and present a balanced portrayal of Roma life, refrain

from stereotyping Roma and Sinti people and avoid inciting tension between various ethnic groups. Organize round tables between media representatives and Roma and Sinti representatives to promote this objective.

Recommended action by OSCE institutions and structures:

39. In co-operation with the ODIHR as well as relevant international organizations, the Representative on Freedom of the Media (RFOM) should consider how the OSCE could contribute to the establishment of a European Roma Radio which would broadcast throughout Europe. The ODIHR and the RFOM should organize public debates, anti-discrimination campaigns and joint training programmes with and for the media.
40. The RFOM should consider facilitating training seminars for Roma journalists.
41. The ODIHR-CPRSI and the RFOM will organize round tables with journalists on the image that Roma and Sinti communities have in society.
42. The HCNM will continue to elaborate and disseminate guidelines for policy-makers on the use of the State broadcast media in multicultural communities, aimed, *inter alia*, at encouraging support for minority broadcasters, including Roma and Sinti broadcasters, and improving their access to the media.

IV. Addressing socio-economic issues

Action is required to ensure that Roma and Sinti people enjoy social and economic rights on a par with others. Measures at the grass-roots level, particularly those originating from Roma groups themselves, are particularly needed in order to promote the integration of Roma and Sinti people into social and economic life and to combat their isolation and poverty. The OSCE and its participating States should continue to facilitate such integration.

Housing and living conditions

Recommended action by participating States:

43. Put in place mechanisms and institutional procedures to clarify property rights, resolve questions of ownership and regularize the legal status of Roma and Sin-

ti people living in circumstances of unsettled legality (e.g., Roma neighbourhoods lacking land rights or which are not included in the urban plans of the main locality; families and houses without legal residence status in settlements where the people have been living *de facto* for decades).

44. Involve Roma and Sinti people in the design of housing policies, as well as in the construction, rehabilitation and/or maintenance of public housing projects meant to benefit them. Ensure that housing projects do not foster ethnic and/or racial segregation.
45. Consider the possibility of guaranteeing loans to participating States that may be available from international organizations and financial institutions for low-income housing projects.
46. Promote the option of co-operative housing schemes for Roma communities and provide appropriate training for the maintenance of such facilities.

Recommended action by OSCE institutions and structures:

47. The ODIHR-CPRSI and the Office of the Co-ordinator of OSCE Economic and Environmental Activities (OCEEA) are encouraged to play a larger role in facilitating the provision of information about and access to resources made available by foreign donors for specific projects, particularly those generated by Roma and Sinti groups, addressing the social and economic development of Roma and Sinti communities.

Unemployment and economic problems

Recommended action by participating States:

48. Promote increased representation of qualified Roma and Sinti people in public employment.
49. Develop training programmes to prepare under-represented groups such as Roma and Sinti for employment in local public administration and other areas, and develop policies to encourage employment of the graduates of these programmes as civil servants.
50. Reassess the impact of subsidized employment programmes, paying particular attention to their educational components, to ensure that these will aim to in-

crease the competitiveness of Roma and Sinti people on the labour market.

51. Develop policies and programmes, including vocational training, to improve the marketable skills and employability of Roma and Sinti people, particularly young people and women.
52. Adopt social policies that strengthen incentives to seek employment, as a sustainable way to avoid dependency on social benefits.

Recommended action by OSCE institutions and structures:

53. At the request of participating States, the OCEEA, together with relevant international organizations, will contribute to developing approaches designed to overcome obstacles and discrimination that prevent Roma and Sinti people from fulfilling their potential in the economic sphere.
54. At the request of participating States, the ODIHR-CPRSI and the OCEEA will support development of the employability and entrepreneurial skills of Roma and Sinti people through the establishment of training and retraining programmes in participating States. Successful practices, particularly relating to the development of entrepreneurial skills and small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) (e.g., the Youth Entrepreneurship Seminars programme) could be adapted to the needs of Roma and Sinti people. The OCEEA could also facilitate economic and social insertion by acting as a catalyst for support by partner organizations and financial institutions of micro-credit programmes, in the form of small loans for the establishment of small-scale businesses.
55. The OCEEA, working in close contact and in co-operation with other international organizations, so as to avoid overlapping, can assist governments in assessing the impact of economic policies and processes on Roma and Sinti communities (by developing policy performance/assessment indicators).
56. The ODIHR-CPRSI and the OCEEA will draw upon the research developed by UNDP and other agencies to assess the needs of Roma and Sinti people with a view to fostering policies that take into account the

extent and nature of their specific needs in each participating State.

57. In co-ordination with relevant international organizations (in particular UNDP and the World Bank), the ODIHR-CPRSI and the OCEEA will examine ways to stimulate better access by Roma and Sinti people to regular training programmes. Workshops or round-table discussions tailored to the needs of Roma and Sinti people can be organized, with a view to informing and educating community members regarding the economic and social rights of individuals and entrepreneurs.

Health care

Recommended action by participating States:

58. Ensure that Roma and Sinti people have access to health care services on a non-discriminatory basis.
59. Promote awareness about the specific needs of the Roma and Sinti population amongst health care personnel.
60. Address the high incidence of disease and malnutrition among Roma communities.
61. Encourage access by Roma and Sinti populations to general public health services at an early stage by:
- (a) Informing Roma and Sinti people about the availability of such services and telling them how to take advantage of them;
 - (b) Strengthening the confidence of Roma and Sinti people towards public health care providers, including through: punishing incidents of direct or indirect discrimination experienced by Roma and Sinti; training health care workers to understand relevant aspects of Roma culture; and supporting mediators who can play an important role in bridging the gap between Roma communities and public health care service providers.
62. Pay special attention to the health of women and girls, *inter alia*, by:
- (a) Promoting and/or developing programmes aimed at providing information on health care (including nutrition, neonatal care and domestic violence, etc.);
 - (b) Improving access to gynaecological health care, including prenatal, delivery and postnatal health care services, *inter alia*, through the provision of information and training.
63. Pay special attention to the health of Roma and Sinti children through the provision of appropriate paediatric care, including preventive measures such as offering vaccinations in Roma settlements.

Recommended action by OSCE institutions and structures:

64. In co-operation with other international organizations and NGOs, the ODIHR will draw upon existing research data to identify socio-economic, political and cultural factors that have an impact on the health status of particular Roma and Sinti populations, and will advise participating States regarding public health programmes which would respond to needs identified.
65. The ODIHR-CPRSI and, where appropriate, other OSCE institutions and structures, including OSCE field operations, will assist participating States in launching educational initiatives to help Roma and Sinti people make full use of regular health services. They will, *inter alia*, collect, produce and disseminate relevant information on good practices.
66. The ODIHR-CPRSI will pay special attention to ensuring that Roma and Sinti people have access to programmes aimed at prevention and/or treatment of drug abuse and addiction and AIDS and related diseases.

V. Improving access to education

Education is a prerequisite to the participation of Roma and Sinti people in the political, social and economic life of their respective countries on a footing of equality with others. Strong immediate measures in this field, particularly those that foster school attendance and combat illiteracy, should be assigned the highest priority both by decision-makers and by Roma and Sinti communities. Educational policies should aim to integrate Roma and Sinti

people into mainstream education by providing full and equal access at all levels, while remaining sensitive to cultural differences.

Recommended action by participating States:

67. Ensure that national legislation includes adequate provisions banning racial segregation and discrimination in education and provides effective remedies for violations of such legislation.
68. Consult Roma and Sinti representatives when designing educational policies affecting them.
69. Actively promote equal opportunities in the field of education for Roma and Sinti children, particularly by providing them with language-related or other assistance.
70. Take special measures to enhance the quality and effectiveness of education for Roma and Sinti children. Encourage increased representation of Roma and Sinti people among school teachers.
71. Include Roma history and culture in educational texts, with particular consideration given to the experience of Roma and Sinti people during the Holocaust.
72. Consider measures to ensure the respect, protection and promotion of the Romani language and its teaching, and of Roma culture as an integral part of the Roma and Sinti cultural heritage.
73. Develop and implement comprehensive school desegregation programmes aiming at: (1) discontinuing the practice of systematically routing Roma children to special schools or classes (e.g., schools for mentally disabled persons, schools and classes exclusively designed for Roma and Sinti children); and (2) transferring Roma children from special schools to mainstream schools.
74. Allocate financial resources for the transfer of the Roma children to mainstream education and for the development of school support programmes to ease the transition to mainstream education.
75. Facilitate Roma children's access to mainstream education by taking measures such as:
 - (a) Taking measures to eradicate manifestations of prejudice against Roma and Sinti people in schools;
 - (b) Training of educators regarding multicultural education and ways of dealing with ethnically mixed classes;
 - (c) Developing strategies to gain wider community support for the desegregation of schools;
 - (d) Providing support to bridge the gap between Roma and Sinti children and other pupils, including through pre-school programmes designed to prepare Roma and Sinti children for primary school;
 - (e) Providing support to increase the number of mediators/trainers and teachers from within the Roma communities.
76. Develop and implement anti-racist curricula for schools, and anti-racism campaigns for the media.
77. Develop policies that address the full range of factors which contribute to low-school attendance by Roma and Sinti children. This includes, *inter alia*, ensuring that Roma and Sinti families have the necessary documentation for registration as any other inhabitants.
78. Consider elaborating social support programmes for low-income Roma families with school-aged children.
79. Promote regular school attendance by Roma and Sinti children, *inter alia*, through the involvement of family and social mediators, the promotion of awareness by Roma and Sinti parents and elders of their responsibility to facilitate children's school attendance and, in particular, equal access to education for girls.
80. Pay special attention to providing Roma and Sinti girls with equal opportunities for educational and social inclusion and develop programmes to counter their particularly high drop-out rate.
81. Consider developing appropriate programmes for those who have not completed primary school or are illiterate.

82. Develop, where necessary, scholarship programmes for Roma students and encourage their increased participation in existing scholarship programmes.
83. Encourage computer literacy among Roma and Sinti people through the setting up of information websites.
84. Evaluate periodically the effectiveness of educational policies.

Recommended action by OSCE institutions and structures:

85. The HCNM will encourage participating States to comply with their commitments to provide free and equal access to public education to all members of society, and will encourage them to take steps to improve the situation of Roma and Sinti people in this respect.
86. The HCNM will continue to provide guidance on educational models, curriculum content and the teaching of, or in, the mother tongue, including the Romani language.

VI. Enhancing participation in public and political life

Roma and Sinti people face special challenges in their efforts to participate in the public — and particularly the political — life of their respective countries. Low levels of education and, in certain cases, discrimination against them contribute substantially to the under-representation of Roma and Sinti people at all levels of government. Roma and Sinti people have an equal right to participate in public affairs. This includes the rights to vote, stand for election, participate in public affairs and form political parties without discrimination. Efforts made in recent years to foster Roma political participation should be encouraged, particularly those originating from the Roma groups themselves.

Recommended action by participating States:

87. Participating States must be proactive in ensuring that Roma and Sinti people, like any other inhabitants, have all the necessary documents, including birth certificates, identity documents and health insurance certificates. In resolving problems related to the lack

of basic documents, participating States are strongly advised to work in partnership with Roma and Sinti civil organizations.

88. Participating States are encouraged to take into account the following basic conditions for ensuring effective participation by Roma and Sinti people in public and political life:

- *Early involvement:*

Any initiative relating to Roma and Sinti people should involve them at the earliest stages in the development, implementation and evaluation phases;

- *Inclusiveness:*

Roma and Sinti people should be included in formal consultative processes, and the effectiveness of mechanisms established for their participation in shaping major policy initiatives should be ensured by involving them in a broadly representative process;

- *Transparency:*

Programmes and proposals should be circulated sufficiently in advance of decision-making deadlines to allow for meaningful analysis and input from representatives of Roma and Sinti communities;

- *Meaningful participation by Roma and Sinti people at all levels of government:*

Participation by Roma and Sinti people in local government is essential for the effective implementation of policies affecting them;

- *Ownership:*

Roma and Sinti people play an essential and irreplaceable role in ensuring that the right to participate in the political process is observed in practice.

89. Elected officials should establish close working relations with Roma and Sinti communities.

90. Establish mechanisms to ensure equal, direct and open communication between Roma and Sinti representatives and government authorities, including advisory and consultative bodies.

91. Facilitate interaction between political leaders at the local and national levels and diverse Roma groups.
 92. Organize election-awareness campaigns so as to increase participation of the Roma electorate in elections.
 93. Ensure that Roma voters can make free and informed choices in elections.
 94. Take measures to guarantee the equal voting rights of women, including by enforcing prohibitions on so-called “family voting”.
 95. Encourage Roma and Sinti people to engage more actively in public service, including, where necessary, through the introduction of special measures to promote their participation in the civil service.
 96. Encourage the representation of Roma and Sinti people in elected and appointed office at all levels of government.
 97. Empower and integrate Roma and Sinti individuals into decision-making processes of States and localities as elected representatives of their communities and as citizens of their respective countries.
 98. Promote Roma women’s participation in public and political life; Roma women should be able to participate on an equal basis with men in consultative and other mechanisms designed to increase access to all areas of public and political life.
102. The ODIHR will act as a catalyst for exchanges of information and best practices among participating States and other international organizations.
 103. The ODIHR will continue and strengthen the practice of examining the involvement of Roma people in voting and election processes, and will continue the practice of including Roma and Sinti experts in its election observation missions in the OSCE area.
 104. The HCNM, within its mandate, will continue to advise States on appropriate ways and means of facilitating the participation of Roma and Sinti people in all areas of public life.
 105. The ODIHR-CPRSI and, where appropriate, other OSCE institutions and structures, including OSCE field operations, will design programmes that encourage Roma and Sinti representatives to stand as candidates for elected bodies or will identify creative solutions that would ensure the participation of Roma and Sinti representatives in national and local decision-making processes.
 106. The ODIHR will devote particular attention to activities aimed at increasing access by Roma women to all areas of public and political life.

Recommended action by OSCE institutions and structures:

99. The ODIHR and, where appropriate, other OSCE institutions and structures, including OSCE field operations, will develop programmes aimed at fostering the registration necessary for full political participation.
100. The ODIHR-CPRSI should help to organize training for and by Roma NGOs, including media organizations, for wider Roma communities on the issues of democratic processes and participation.
101. The ODIHR and, where appropriate, other OSCE institutions and structures, including OSCE field operations,

will develop and implement voter education and voter registration programmes.

VII. Roma and Sinti in crisis and post-crisis situations

The participating States have an obligation to ensure that, even in crisis and post-crisis situations, all the fundamental rights, including the rights of refugees deriving from relevant international instruments, in particular the 1951 Convention relating to the Status of Refugees and its 1967 Protocol, are secured without discrimination. They take into account the UN Guiding Principles on Internal Displacement as a useful framework for the work of the OSCE and their endeavours in dealing with internal displacement.

Recommended action by participating States:

107. Consult Roma and Sinti populations when defining crisis situations in order to facilitate adequate procedures and to identify specific geographical areas from

which refugees and internally displaced persons flee, as well as to ensure that the specific situation of Roma and Sinti people are addressed.

108. Ensure that Roma and Sinti populations in a forced displacement situation (refugees and IDPs) are duly registered and provided with the relevant documents.

109. The participating States should ensure that programmes are in place to promote informed choice regarding the decision of Roma and Sinti refugees and IDPs concerning durable solutions to their situations, including the exercise of their right to safe, decent and sustainable return. Such programmes should provide concrete information regarding each subject of concern to refugees and IDPs and should be made available in the relevant languages.

110. Ensure that Roma and Sinti refugees are treated in accordance with the relevant international norms and standards of protection, and in a non-discriminatory manner.

111. Make use of the ODIHR's role in conflict prevention and identification of areas of early intervention, and draw on the expertise of the OSCE HCNM in this regard.

112. Pay special attention to the needs of Roma and Sinti women and children in crisis and post-crisis situations, particularly by providing them with access to health care, housing and schooling.

Recommended action by OSCE institutions and structures:

113. The ODIHR will make use of its specific role in addressing conflict prevention and identifying areas of potential crisis requiring early intervention.

114. In accordance with its mandate, the ODIHR-CPRSI is called upon to respond effectively to crisis situations by, *inter alia*, co-operating with relevant governments, inter-governmental bodies and international organizations, in particular the UNHCR, to ensure protection of Roma communities at risk.

115. The ODIHR-CPRSI will raise awareness among public officials, journalists and others of the situation of

Roma and Sinti people in crisis or conflict areas.

116. The ODIHR will assume a proactive role in analysing measures undertaken by participating States relating to Roma and Sinti people and offer its advice with a view to better tackling those elements of tension in particular local contexts which may evolve, if not prevented, into open conflict situations.

117. The HCNM will continue to exercise his mandate of conflict prevention at the earliest possible stage.

VIII. Enhancing co-operation and co-ordination with other international organizations and NGOs

Given the increased attention being paid to issues concerning Roma and Sinti people by various international organizations, co-ordination and co-operation is required to avoid duplication of effort. With a view to ensuring effective implementation of the Action Plan, the OSCE, and in particular the ODIHR, will closely co-operate with international organizations and non-governmental organizations.

118. The ODIHR-CPRSI will continue to participate actively in the Informal Contact Group on Roma of the Intergovernmental Organisations⁶⁴⁶.

119. The strengthening and up-grading of this informal body will be agreed upon and implemented in co-operation with all the relevant partners, particularly by ensuring the inclusion of representatives of OSCE participating States. Regular meetings of the Informal Contact Group at the expert level, or a higher level when deemed necessary, will be considered with a view to furthering this aim.

120. The Informal Contact Group should establish common orientations and priorities, as well as better co-ordination and co-operation in order to avoid duplication of effort.

⁶⁴⁶ The Informal Contact Group on Roma of the Intergovernmental Organisations is composed of representatives from OSCE/ODIHR, the Council of Europe, the European Commission and the European Union.

121. The ODIHR-CPRSI will seek to consolidate the “International Roma Contact Group”⁶⁴⁷ and will further contribute to the Council of Europe’s initiative for a possible European Forum for Roma and Travellers.
122. The ODIHR-CPRSI will provide information and co-ordination services to relevant national and international institutions, and will facilitate dialogue among them and with Roma NGOs.
123. The ODIHR-CPRSI will seek to develop relations with Roma and Sinti organizations and help them to co-ordinate their efforts and resources, both within individual States and across borders, and to avail themselves fully of opportunities provided by existing national and international policies affecting Roma and Sinti people.
124. The ODIHR-CPRSI will draw upon the experience and input of existing monitoring projects developed by other international organizations.

IX. The ODIHR Contact Point for Roma and Sinti Issues

125. Where necessary, the ODIHR-CPRSI will facilitate information-sharing among OSCE participating States that have developed or are seeking to improve national policies on Roma and Sinti people.
126. Upon request, ODIHR-CPRSI will advise participating States on future policies related to Roma and Sinti people and will stimulate debates between governments and Roma NGOs.
127. The ODIHR-CPRSI will support capacity-building for Roma and Sinti NGOs.
128. The ODIHR-CPRSI will establish a database of best practices in OSCE participating States.
129. The ODIHR-CPRSI should assume a proactive role

⁶⁴⁷ The International Roma Contact Group was established in October 2000 at the initiative of the ODIHR Contact Point for Roma and Sinti Issues. The Contact Group includes representatives of the International Romani Union, the Roma National Congress, elected Romani representatives, Romani experts and the ODIHR-CPRSI.

in analysing measures undertaken by participating States, as well as in particular situations and incidents relating to Roma and Sinti people. Towards this end CPRSI will establish and develop direct contacts with participating States and will offer advice and opinions to them.

130. Governments concerned will co-operate with the ODIHR-CPRSI in identifying effective solutions to crisis situations.
131. The ODIHR-CPRSI will provide Roma and Sinti communities with more information on OSCE resources and activities.
132. In co-operation with relevant OSCE institutions and structures, the ODIHR will develop appropriate action aimed at tackling the root causes of trafficking in human beings, especially in children, and raise awareness of its consequences among Roma and Sinti communities.

X. Implementation: review and assessment

133. The implementation of the Action Plan’s provisions will be reviewed at the Human Dimension Implementation Meetings, Review Conferences and other relevant human dimension events.
134. Drawing on the outcome of the above-mentioned meetings, as well as on input from the consolidated Informal Contact Group on Roma of the Intergovernmental Organisations and the International Roma Contact Group, the Director of the ODIHR will report to the Permanent Council, which may recommend to participating States and OSCE institutions priorities for co-operation and co-ordination.
135. The Permanent Council will periodically organize informal briefings by the Contact Point for Roma and Sinti Issues on the areas covered by the present Action Plan in order to assess the impact at the national and local levels of the measures foreseen by it.
136. With a view to facilitating the implementation review process, OSCE participating States are encouraged to

provide information on recent developments in the situation of Roma and Sinti people and/or measures inspired by this Action Plan at the Human Dimension Implementation Meetings, prior to Review Conferences and to the Permanent Council, where appropriate.

137. All relevant OSCE institutions and structures, including OSCE field operations, will continue to interact closely with participating States in order to assist them in implementing the Action Plan.

138. The ODIHR-CPRSI will disseminate information on this Plan to Roma and Sinti communities and organizations as well as to other international organizations.

139. In order to enable ODIHR-CPRSI to carry out the tasks entrusted to it in the present Action Plan, the OSCE Permanent Council will address providing adequate human and financial resources. The details will be worked out by the Advisory Committee on Management and Finance and will be submitted to the Permanent Council.

APPENDIX 2:

ODIHR's Contact Point for Roma and Sinti Issues, Events and Activities, 2018 to 2022

List of events from 2018:			
Meeting or event:	Location:	Date:	Number of participants:
Expert meeting on improving access to identity and civil registration documents for Roma in Ukraine	Kyiv, Ukraine	29 March 2018	29 (19 women, 10 men)
Training for police officers on effective and human rights-compliant policing in Roma and Sinti communities	Prishtinë/Priština	17-19 April 2018	19 (7 women, 12 men)
Consultation workshop on the Third Status Report on Implementation of the OSCE Action Plan on Roma and Sinti: Enhancing Participation in Public and Political Life	Warsaw, Poland	5-6 June 2018	22 (12 women, 10 men)
Train-the-trainer on effective and human rights-compliant policing in Roma and Sinti communities	Zakopane, Poland	17-20 July 2018	14 (7 women, 7 men)
HDIM side event "Racism, intolerance and violence against Roma and Sinti in the OSCE area"	Warsaw, Poland	14 September 2018	Approximately 50
SHDM side event "Access to quality education for Roma and Sinti children and youth"	Vienna, Austria	9 October 2018	Approximately 40
Second practical OSCE-UNHCR Seminar on sharing good practices on statelessness among OSCE participating States	Vienna, Austria	31 October 2018	Approximately 50
Train-the-trainer on effective and human rights-compliant policing in Roma and Sinti communities	Košice, Slovakia	27-30 November 2018	14 (6 women, 8 men)
Roundtable "Access to civil registration and identity documents for Roma in Georgia"	Tbilisi, Georgia	4 December 2018	35 (28 women, 7 men)
Consultation meeting with Roma civil society on the findings and recommendations of the Third Status Report	Vienna, Austria	10 December 2018	12 (5 women, 7 men)
Launch event of the Third Status Report on Implementation of the OSCE Action Plan on Roma and Sinti	Vienna, Austria	11 December 2018	Approximately 45
List of events from 2019:			
Meeting or event:	Location:	Date:	Number of participants:
Short-term Election Observer Training for Roma Youth	Warsaw, Poland	3-4 April 2019	9 (5 women, 4 men)
14th Meeting of the Focal Points on Roma in OSCE field operations	Warsaw, Poland	24 April 2019	8 (4 women, 4 men)
SHDM Side Event "75 years after the Roma and Sinti Genocide: Increasing manifestations of intolerance, racism and discrimination against Roma and Sinti"	Vienna, Austria	15 July 2019	30

Training: Police and Roma – Effective and Human Rights-Compliant Policing	Kyiv, Ukraine	15-16 August 2019	20 (5 women, 15 men)
HDIM Photo exhibition “The long path to recognition of the Roma and Sinti Holocaust”	Warsaw, Poland	23-27 September 2019	500
Meeting of the International Roma Contact Group (IRCG)	Warsaw, Poland	25 September 2019	25 (13 women, 12 men)
HDIM Side Event “Roma and Sinti Youth Initiative: Youth as Agents of Change”	Warsaw, Poland	25 September 2019	50
HDIM Side Event “Racism, intolerance and violence against Roma and Sinti in the OSCE area”	Warsaw, Poland	26 September 2019	50
Training: Human Rights Monitoring and Reporting Addressed to Roma Human Rights Defenders	Kyiv, Ukraine	22-25 October 2019	15 (8 women, 7 men)
3rd Practical OSCE-UNHCR Seminar on Sharing Good Practices on Birth Registration and Childhood Statelessness among OSCE participating States	Vienna, Austria	23 October 2019	30
Regional Seminar on Education “Promoting Equal Access to Quality Early Childhood Education for Roma and Sinti Children”	Warsaw, Poland	28-29 November 2019	28 (15 women, 13 men)
Roma Leadership Academy “Nicolae Gheorghe”	Warsaw, Poland	4-8 December 2019	20 (8 women, 12 men)
Regional Roundtable “Portrayal of Roma in and by the media”	Warsaw, Poland	14 December 2019	20 (8 women, 12 men)
Study Visit on Teaching and Educational Materials about the Roma and Sinti Genocide	Vienna, Austria	18 December 2019	20 (13 women, 7 men)
Training of Trainers: Police and Roma – Effective and Human Rights-Compliant Policing	Bucharest, Romania	19 December 2019	17 (9 women, 8 men)
List of events from 2020:			
Meeting or event:	Location:	Date:	Number of participants:
Training-of-trainers on Police and Roma – Effective and human rights-compliant policing	Warsaw, Poland	4–6 March 2020	4 men
International Roma Contact Group (IRCG) meeting	Online	15 May 2020	18 (12 men, 6 women)
Discussion for Ukrainian human rights monitors	Online	6 May 2020	13 (5 men, 8 women)
Safety and security induction workshop for Ukrainian human rights monitors	Online	13–17 July 2020	15 (5 men, 10 women)
Webinar on the continued path to recognition of the Roma genocide	Online	11 August 2020	53 (26 men, 27 women)
15th Meeting of the Focal Points on Roma of the OSCE Field Operations	Online	21 August 2020	10 (6 men, 4 women)
Enhancing co-operation in the field of human rights monitoring and advocacy: Inter-regional networking meeting of Roma civil society, Kyiv	Online	17 September 2020	21 (9 men, 12 women)
Induction training – Monitoring and reporting on human rights for Roma human rights defenders	Online	1–3 October 2020	11 (8 men, 3 women)

Combating racism and discrimination against the Roma and Sinti	Online	5 October 2020	277 (155 men, 122 women)
Workshop on the relationship between the police and Roma in Odessa, Ukraine	Online	17 November 2020	19 (13 men, 6 women)
Workshop on the relationship between the police and Roma in Kyiv	Online	19 November 2020	20 (9 men, 11 women)
Roma Leadership Academy “Nicolae Gheorghe”	Online	20–22 November, 4–6 December 2020	21 (14 men, 7 women)
Human rights monitoring of Roma issues in Ukraine: Conclusions from ODIHR’s capacity-building programme	Online	25 November 2020	19 (7 men, 12 women)
Promoting fair portrayal of Roma and Sinti by the media: Challenges and perspectives	Online	14 December 2020	43 (25 men, 18 women)
Promoting fair portrayal of Roma and Sinti by the media: Challenges and perspectives	Online	14 December 2020	43 (25 men, 18 women)
Final workshop of the human rights monitoring capacity building programme for Roma human rights defenders	Online	15 December 2020	17 (13 men, 4 women)
List of events from 2021:			
Meeting or event:	Location:	Date:	Number of participants:
Workshop on the relationship between Police and Roma in Kharkiv region in Ukraine	Online	15 March 2021	34 (23 men, 11 women)
International Roma Contact Group meeting	Online	31 March 2021	18 (10 men, 8 women)
Webinar on strengthening Roma and Sinti movements: Participation and representation of Roma and Sinti in public and political life	Online	9 April 2021	27 (17 men, 10 women)
Workshop with Roma Coalition in Ukraine	Online	14 April 2021	12 (8 men, 4 women)
Police and Roma – Effective and human rights-compliant policing: Online training of trainers testing	Online	22–23 April 2021	26 (11 men, 15 women)
Human Rights Monitoring and Reporting training for Roma Human Rights Defenders in Ukraine	Online	26–30 April 2021	26 (11 men, 15 women)
Capacity-Building Training for Roma Civil Society Organizations and Activists on Human Rights, Participation and Mobilization of Roma Communities in North Macedonia	Online	8–11 May 2021	11 (4 men, 7 women)
Initial meeting for Ukrainian Roma human rights monitors	Online	4 June 2021	15 (3 men, 12 women)
Police and Roma – Effective and Human Rights-Compliant Policing: Training of trainers in Bulgaria	Online	7–10 June 2021	12 (9 men, 3 women)
Capacity-Building Training for Roma Civil Society Organizations and Activists on Human Rights, Participation and Mobilization of Roma Communities in Serbia	Online	12–15 June 2021	15 (8 men, 7 women)

Police and Roma – Effective and Human Rights-Compliant Policing: Training of trainers in Ukraine	Online	21–24 June 2021	14 (7 men, 7 women)
Police and Roma – Effective and Human Rights-Compliant Policing: Training of trainers in Bulgaria	Online	28 June – 1 July 2021	27 (16 men, 11 women)
Human Rights Monitoring and Reporting Training for Roma Human Rights Defenders	Online	3–6 July 2021	12 (6 men, 6 women)
Joint meeting & security brief for Ukrainian Roma human rights monitors	Online	23 July 2021	14 (4 men, 10 women)
Police and Roma – Effective and Human Rights-Compliant Policing: Needs assessment in Italy	Online	8–10 September 2021	30+ (multiple meetings)
Human rights monitoring capacity-building meeting for Roma civil society in Ukraine	Online	10 September 2021	14 (3 men, 11 women)
Consultation meeting: Taking stock of achievements and lessons of the past, looking at the future, ODIHR’s activities related to its mandate on Roma and Sinti	Warsaw, Poland	13 October 2021	12 (6 men, 6 women)
Police and Roma – Effective and Human Rights-Compliant Policing: Training of trainers organized in Italy	Online	26–29 October 2021	20 (13 men, 7 women)
OSCE-UNHCR webinar on Sharing Good Practices on Statelessness among OSCE participating States	Online	1 November 2021	66 (23 men, 43 women)
Final workshop within the Human Rights Monitoring Capacity Building Programme for Roma civil society in Ukraine	Online	11–15 November 2021	15 (4 men, 11 women)
Expert consultation meeting on upcoming publication: Addressing the Security Needs of Roma and Sinti: A Practical Guide	Warsaw, Poland	19 November 2021	13 (7 men, 6 women)
Workshop: Capacity-building of Roma civil society organizations to mobilize Roma to participate in public and political life	Online	26 November 2021	15 (6 men, 9 women)
16th Roma Focal Points Meeting of the OSCE Field Operations	Online	1 December 2021	16 (5 men, 11 women)
Roma Leadership Academy “Nicolae Gheorghe”	Online	3–12 December 2021	24 (9 men, 15 women)
Final Workshop within capacity-building programme on human rights monitoring and reporting for Roma Human Rights Defenders	Online	16 December 2021	14 (8 men, 6 women)
List of events from 2022:			
Meeting or event:	Location:	Date:	Number of participants:
Moderation of webinar on Good Practices on Improving Relations between Police Representatives and the Roma Communities, organized by the Council of Europe under the joint EU/CoE programme Roma Women’s Access to Justice – JUSTROM3	Online	14 January 2022	54

Capacity-building training for self-advocacy for Roma girls, women, and feminist activists from North Macedonia	Skopje, North Macedonia	22–25 March 2022	20 (20 women, 0 men)
Presentation on the public and political participation of Roma and Sinti youth during the Democracy Resurgence – Programme for Young Change Makers	Warsaw, Poland	26 March 2022	27 (14 women, 13 men)
Presentation of ODIHR’s activities on Roma and Sinti during the 5th meeting of the Council of Europe Committee of Experts on Roma and Traveller Issues (ADI-ROM)	Strasbourg, France	17–18 May 2022	70 (28 women, 42 men)
International Roma Contact Group meeting with a focus on the ongoing conflict in Ukraine: Roma and Sinti Populations in Crisis Situations	Online	31 May 2022	16 (11 women, 5 men)
Meeting with intergovernmental organizations on the situation of Roma in and around Ukraine	Online	15 June 2022	19 (11 women, 8 men)
Contribution to the works of the Committee on the Genocide of the Roma during the Plenary meeting of the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance (IHRA)	Stockholm, Sweden	21–23 June 2022	>150
Presentations on human rights monitoring in crisis situations during training for Ukrainian Roma mediators organized by the Chiricli Roma Women Fund	Warsaw, Poland	22 July 2022	22 (19 women, 3 men)
Roma Rights Summer School, co-organized by the European Roma Rights Centre and ODIHR	Budapest, Hungary	1–11 August 2022	14 (4 women, 10 men)
Workshop on Monitoring the Human Rights Situation of Ukrainian Roma Refugees in the Czech Republic, Hungary, Moldova, Poland, Romania and Slovakia	Online	25 August 2022	8 (3 women, 5 men)
Presentation on ODIHR activities related to Roma in and around Ukraine during the roundtable discussion on Policymaking and Implementation of State Policy on the Protection of the Rights of National Minorities, including Roma, under Martial Law	Online	30 August 2022	71
Contribution during the expert meeting and the 10th anniversary conference of the Ljubljana Guidelines on Integration of Diverse Societies, organized by the OSCE High Commissioner on National Minorities	Ljubljana, Slovenia	5–6 September 2022	>70
Warsaw Human Dimension Conference side-event: Monitoring the Human Rights Situation of Roma in Ukraine and Neighbouring participating States	Warsaw, Poland	3 October 2022	35 (19 women, 16 men)
Warsaw Human Dimension Conference side-event: Improving Access to Inclusive Education for Roma and Sinti Children	Warsaw, Poland	3 October 2022	33 (18 women, 15 men)

Consultation Meeting: Quality and effectiveness of education for Roma and Sinti children during the COVID-19 pandemic: Challenges and good policy practice in the area of education	Warsaw, Poland	4 October 2022	14 (6 women, 8 men)
Capacity-building training for self-advocacy for minorities, including Roma girls, women and feminist activists from Poland	Kraków, Poland	11–14 October 2022	13 (13 women, 0 men)
Short-term Election Observation Training for Roma and Sinti	Warsaw, Poland	27–28 October 2022	16 (8 women, 7 men, 1 other)
Presentation on the importance of education about the Roma and Sinti Genocide during the National Workshop for Policymakers, Teacher Trainers and Educators: Addressing Anti-Semitism, Intolerance and Discrimination through Education, organized by ODIHR in partnership with UNESCO and the Romanian Ministry of Education	Bucharest, Romania	3 November 2022	83 (54 women, 29 men)
Presentation on ODIHR human rights monitoring activities on the situation of Roma in and around Ukraine during the Roma Rights Network Meeting organized by the European Roma Rights Centre	Athens, Greece	7–11 November 2022	50 (28 women, 22 men)
Presentation on access to documents and other statelessness-related issues and support for the organization of the Regional Statelessness study visit of four Central Asian states to Georgia with a training component, organized by UNHCR	Tbilisi, Georgia	7–11 November 2022	35 (10 women, 25 men)
Opening address during the 2022 Western Balkans Roma Summit Perspectives from the ground: opportunities for Roma Inclusion in the Western Balkans	Pristina, Kosovo	17–18 November 2022	>60
Presentation of ODIHR activities on building trust and understanding between Police and Roma and Sinti during the OSCE Annual Meeting of Heads of Law Enforcement/ Security Co-operation Departments on Police-related Activities	Online	23 November 2022	N/A
Consultation meeting: Roma and Sinti Women — Current Challenges and Perspectives for Gender Equality and Participation	Warsaw, Poland	23–24 November 2022	29 (26 women, 3 men)
Contribution to the draft recommendation for teaching guidelines during the works of the Committee on the Genocide of the Roma at the Plenary meeting of the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance (IHRA)	Gothenburg, Sweden	28 November to 1 December 2022	>150
17th Meeting of the Focal Points on Roma in OSCE Field Operations	Online	30 November 2022	10 (7 women, 3 men)
Presentation on ODIHR activities related to Roma communities from Ukraine during the Roma Civil Society Forum on Ukraine	Online	7 December 2022	N/A

OSCE-wide event on countering hate speech, co-organized by the Office of the OSCE Representative on Freedom of the Media (RFoM), ODIHR, and the Office of the OSCE High Commissioner on National Minorities (HCNM)	Vienna, Austria	12 December 2022	99 (61 women, 38 men)
Presentation on ODIHR activities related to Roma communities from Ukraine at the Second Forum of Roma Women of Ukraine	Warsaw, Poland	12 December 2022	N/A
Training of Trainers: Police and Roma — Effective and Human Rights-Compliant Policing, organized by ODIHR and the OSCE Mission to Skopje, in cooperation with the Training Centre of the Ministry of Interior of the Republic of North Macedonia	Skopje, North Macedonia	12–15 December 2022	23 (4 women, 19 male)
Workshop with Roma Women sterilized without their informed choice and consent in Czech Republic	Ostrava, Czech Republic	14 December 2022	17 (15 women, 2 men)

APPENDIX 3:

Responses to ODIHR's Questionnaire from OSCE participating States

• <i>Albania</i>	• <i>Denmark</i>	• <i>Liechtenstein</i>	• <i>Poland</i>	• <i>Sweden</i>
• <i>Belgium</i>	• <i>Estonia</i>	• <i>Lithuania</i>	• <i>Romania</i>	• <i>Switzerland</i>
• <i>Bosnia and Herzegovina</i>	• <i>Finland</i>	• <i>Luxembourg</i>	• <i>Russian Federation</i>	• <i>Türkiye</i>
• <i>Bulgaria</i>	• <i>Georgia</i>	• <i>Moldova</i>	• <i>Serbia</i>	• <i>Ukraine</i>
• <i>Croatia</i>	• <i>Germany</i>	• <i>Monaco</i>	• <i>Slovakia</i>	• <i>United Kingdom</i>
• <i>Cyprus</i>	• <i>Ireland</i>	• <i>Montenegro</i>	• <i>Slovenia</i>	
• <i>Czech Republic</i>	• <i>Italy</i>	• <i>North Macedonia</i>	• <i>Spain</i>	
	• <i>Latvia</i>	• <i>Norway</i>		

APPENDIX 4:

Questionnaire for OSCE participating States for the Fourth Status Report

Background

The OSCE Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights (ODIHR) is mandated to assist the OSCE participating States to implement the commitments relating to Roma and Sinti, stemming from the OSCE Action Plan on Improving the Situation of Roma and Sinti within the OSCE Area and the subsequent Ministerial Council Decisions.

In this respect, the Action Plan tasks ODIHR to review the implementation of OSCE commitments on Roma and Sinti. Moreover, the Action Plan mandates ODIHR and its Contact Point for Roma and Sinti Issues (CPRSI) to “serve as a clearing house on initiatives undertaken by participating States and facilitate exchanges of information on best practices.” The States have further entrusted ODIHR to “act as a catalyst for exchanges of information and best practices among participating States and other international organizations.”

In line with this mandate, ODIHR published three status reports on the implementation of the Action Plan in 2008, 2013, and 2018 respectively. The status reports described and analysed the progress achieved in meeting the OSCE commitments on Roma and Sinti over the last five years, within the broad context of overall implementation.

Following up on its previous assessments of the implementation of the Action Plan and with the occasion of the 20th anniversary of the Action Plan’s adoption, ODIHR embarks to prepare and publish its fourth Status Report. To that end, ODIHR developed this questionnaire for participating States that aims at examining achievements in improving the situation of Roma and Sinti, as well as to identify remaining obstacles.

Questions:

A. General:

1. Please indicate whether any policies/programmes related to improving the situation of Roma and Sinti have been planned, initiated, and/or implemented

at the local and/or national levels during the period 2018-2022, which were aimed at fulfilling the objectives of the Action Plan for Improving the Situation of Roma and Sinti in the OSCE Area (Action Plan).⁶⁴⁸

Please consider policies/programmes in one or more of the thematic areas covered by the Action Plan, such as combating racism and discrimination, addressing socio-economic issues, improving access to education, enhancing participation in public and political life, Roma and Sinti in crisis and post-crisis situations.

- Yes
 No
 No answer available.

Please provide relevant details in the textbox below. Indicate the title/name and outcomes of the policy/programme, the allocated budget and source toward the policy/programme, and list the indicators used to measure the impact of the policy/programme. Please provide information on whether and how the policy/programme is gender mainstreamed and whether it has targeted measures towards Roma and Sinti women and youth.

2. As per the question above, please indicate whether any such policies/programmes related to improving the situation of Roma and Sinti have been included in relevant policy and programmatic documents in connection to funding mechanisms within the European Union framework and/or other, as applicable.⁶⁴⁹

- Yes
 No
 No answer available.

⁶⁴⁸ Hereinafter the OSCE Action Plan for Improving the Situation of Roma and Sinti in the OSCE Area is referred to as OSCE Action Plan.

⁶⁴⁹ These can include the European Regional Development Fund, the European Social Fund, the Instrument for Pre-accession Assistance and others (if/as applicable).

Please provide relevant details in the textbox below. Indicate the title/name and outcomes of the policy/programme, the allocated budget and source toward the policy/programme, and list the indicators used to measure the impact of the policy/programme. Please provide information on whether and how the policy/programme is gender mainstreamed and whether it has targeted measures towards Roma and Sinti women and youth.

B. *Designing policies for Roma and Sinti with their participation:*

3. Please indicate whether Roma and Sinti are included in the institutional arrangements for designing, implementing and evaluating policies that affect them.

Yes

No

No answer available.

Please provide relevant details in the textbox below. Note the most important developments during the reference period 2018-2022 by providing the key results of these institutional arrangements for the design, implementation and evaluation of policies/programmes. Please also provide more information about the process of selecting members and how the participation of Roma and Sinti women and youth is ensured.

4. Please indicate whether in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic there were any particular measures/policies/programmes, at the local and national levels, that aimed at alleviating the specific challenges faced by Roma and Sinti.

Yes

No

No answer available.

Please provide relevant details in the textbox below. Elaborate on any measures/policies/programmes such as delivery of direct support under the domains covered by the Action Plan, providing humanitarian assistance, and ensuring that the National Recovery Plans linked to the Recovery and Resilience Facility include Roma and Sinti as beneficiaries (*if/as applicable*).

C. *Combating racism and discrimination:*

5. Please indicate whether policy measures, programmes, laws and/or legislative amendments related to combating racism and discrimination against Roma and Sinti, especially in connection to law enforcement, policing, and media, have been adopted/implemented during the reference period 2018-2022.

Yes

No

No answer available.

Please provide relevant details in the textbox below. Indicate the title/name of the policy/programme and/or legislation and whether they specifically target Roma and Sinti. Please describe the outcomes, the allocated budget and source toward the policy/programme and/or legislation, and list the indicators used to measure their impact. Please provide information on whether and how the policy/programme and/or legislation is gender mainstreamed and whether it has targeted measures towards Roma and Sinti women and youth.

6. Please indicate whether anti-racism and anti-discrimination legal framework(s) have been assessed in view of their content, implementation and impact during the reference period 2018-2022.

Yes

No

No answer available.

Please provide relevant details in the textbox below. Indicate the most relevant assessments by providing the source, year of assessment, and main conclusions. Please also elaborate on the measures taken by your government to address the challenges indicated in these assessments, particularly as related to Roma and Sinti including how these frameworks provide protection to Roma and Sinti against racism and discrimination.

7. Please indicate whether there have been cases claiming discrimination against Roma and Sinti, which have been brought before national human rights institutions/equality bodies and/or courts in your country.

- Yes
 No
 No answer available.

Please provide relevant details in the textbox below. Indicate the number of such complaints, disaggregated by receiving entity, decisions (confirmed or infirmed discrimination) and gender of complainants. Please also provide any available information/analysis referring to the effectiveness of the redress mechanisms available.

8. Please indicate if there are any policies/programmes aimed at improving relations between Roma and Sinti communities and the police, which have been implemented during the reference period 2018-2022?

- Yes
 No
 No answer available.

Please provide relevant details in the textbox below. Indicate the title/name and outcomes of the policy/programme, the allocated budget and source toward the policy/programme, and list the indicators used to measure their impact. Please also provide information

on whether and how the policy/programme is gender mainstreamed and whether it has targeted measures towards Roma and Sinti women, and youth.

9. Please indicate whether in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic there have been any measures to address potential cases/situations of racism and/or discrimination towards Roma and Sinti.

- Yes
 No
 No answer available.

Please provide relevant details in the textbox below. Indicate the type of measures that were implemented, responsible institution(s), stakeholders engaged in the process, thematic area(s) of intervention and their specificities, as well as any additional information regarding their implementation and impact. Please also provide information on whether and how these measures were gender mainstreamed and whether they targeted Roma and Sinti women and youth.

D. Housing and living conditions:

8. Please indicate if there are any policies/programmes aimed at improving relations between Roma and Sinti communities and the police, which have been implemented during the reference period 2018-2022?

- Yes
 No
 No answer available.

Please provide relevant details in the textbox below. Indicate the title/name and outcomes of the policy/programme, the allocated budget and source toward the policy/programme, and list the indicators used to measure their impact. Please also provide information

10. Please indicate whether any specific national policies/programmes regarding housing for Roma and Sinti have been planned, initiated, and/or implemented at the local and/or national levels during the reference period 2018-2022.

- Yes
 No
 No answer available.

Please provide relevant details in the textbox below. Indicate the name/title of the respective policies/programmes, date of adoption, allocated budget and source toward the policy/programme, and outcomes.

Elaborate on the amendments to previous housing policy, if relevant, by providing the date of adoption, budget adjustments and outcomes. Please also describe whether and how such housing policies/programmes took into account the needs of Roma and Sinti women, children and youth.

E. *Health care:*

11. Please indicate whether any specific national policy/programmes have been adopted/updated/implemented regarding access to health care services on a non-discriminatory basis for Roma and Sinti during the reference period 2018-2022.

- Yes
 No
 No answer available.

Please provide relevant details in the textbox below. Describe the relevant national policies/programmes by indicating the date of adoption, budget allocation, outcomes and impact. Please elaborate on how these policies/programmes integrated a non-discriminatory approach in accessing health care services, as well as the estimated number of Roma and Sinti beneficiaries. Please also provide information on whether and how the policy/programme is gender mainstreamed and whether it has targeted measures towards Roma and Sinti women, children and youth.

F. *Employment:*

12. Please indicate whether any specific national policies/programmes have been adopted/updated/implemented in relation to employment of Roma and Sinti during the reference period 2018-2022.

- Yes
 No

No answer available.

Please provide relevant details in the textbox below. Describe the programmes, including date of adoption, budget, and outcomes. List the concrete results according to any specific indicators used. Specify the changes to previous employment policies, if relevant, including the date of adoption, budget adjustments and outcomes. Please also provide information on whether and how the policy/programme is gender mainstreamed and whether it has targeted measures towards Roma and Sinti women and youth.

G. *Education:*

13. Please indicate whether any specific national policy/programmes have been initiated, adopted and/or implemented to improve the education of Roma and Sinti children within the reference period 2018-2022.

Please consider policies/programmes that address segregation, prejudice, discrimination, school dropout, and increase access to pre-school education, teacher assistance programmes, scholarships, as well as includes Roma and Sinti history in educational texts and/or any affirmative action measures.

- Yes
 No
 No answer available.

Please provide relevant details in the textbox below. Describe the programme(s), including date of adoption, budget, and outcomes. List the concrete results according to specific indicators, and specify the changes (if any) to previous educational policies, including the date of adoption, budget adjustments and outcomes. Please also provide information on whether and how the policy/programme is gender mainstreamed and whether it has targeted measures towards Roma and Sinti girls.

14. Please indicate whether any policy measures to tackle Roma and Sinti school and class segregation, including over-representation in special schools have been undertaken during the reference period 2018-2022.

- Yes
 No
 No answer available.

Please provide relevant details in the textbox below. Describe the respective policy measures, provide the state definition of school segregation, if any, data collection mechanism(s) and measures supporting mixing of cohorts. Please describe the outcomes of these measures by providing information on the budget, number of desegregated schools and classes (mixing of cohorts that have previously been separated by ethnicity), number of teacher training sessions organized, number of meetings with parents, number and types of extracurricular activities supporting interaction of diverse student cohorts, etc., as available. Please also provide information on whether and how the policy/programme is gender mainstreamed and whether it has targeted measures towards Roma and Sinti girls.

15. In the context of the COVID-19 pandemic, please indicate whether any programme has been devised and implemented, in view of ensuring full and equal access to quality education for Roma and Sinti children at the local and/or national levels.

- Yes
 No
 No answer available.

Please provide relevant details in the textbox below. Indicate the type of support, allocated budget, number of beneficiaries, and other relevant indicators, as well as any information on outcomes and impact.

H. *Participation in public and political life:*

16. Please indicate whether any specific national policies/programmes and/or legislation have been adopted/updated/implemented in relation to participation in public and political life, which may influence the participation of Roma and Sinti during the reference period 2018-2022.

Please consider policies/programmes and/or legislation related to voter education and voter registration programmes, access to identity documents, civic rights education, and programmes encouraging Roma and Sinti to stand as candidates for elected positions.

- Yes
 No
 No answer available.

Please provide relevant details in the textbox below. Describe the policies/programmes and/or legislation, including date of adoption, budget, outcomes and impact. Specify the changes to previous policies/programmes and/or legislation, if relevant. Please also provide information on whether and how the policy/programme and/or legislation is gender mainstreamed and whether it has targeted measures towards the participation of Roma and Sinti women and youth.

17. Are there any specific policies/legal provisions/mechanisms, which ensure participation of Roma and Sinti, in particular women and youth, in public and political life, including in the consultative/advisory bodies/mechanisms?

- Yes
 No
 No answer available.

Please provide relevant details in the textbox below. Describe their mandate and provide details as to what extent Roma and Sinti participate and are represented in these structures. Include more information on whether such consultative/advisory bodies/mechanisms are engaged in the design, monitoring process and evaluation of national integration strategies and policies addressing Roma and Sinti issues. Please include information about the gender and age of Roma and Sinti representatives within the consultative/advisory bodies/mechanisms.

1. Please indicate whether there are any governmental institutions or structures mandated to address Roma and Sinti issues.

- Yes
 No
 No answer available.

Please provide relevant details in the textbox below. Describe the respective governmental institutions or structures and their mandate. Please provide details as to what extent Roma and Sinti are represented within the leadership and staff including gender composition.

1. *Roma and Sinti in crisis and post-crisis situations:*

18. Have any national policies/programmes been initiated and adopted concerning the status of internally displaced people (IDPs) and refugees (e.g., for obtaining personal identification documents, addressing the risk of statelessness, integration measures, ensuring that Roma and Sinti IDPs and refugees are treated in a non-discriminatory manner)?

- Yes
 No
 No answer available.

Please provide relevant details in the textbox below. Provide information on whether and how the respective policy/programme is gender and diversity mainstreamed and whether it has targeted measures towards Roma and Sinti including women, youth, and/or children. Please also include any relevant information on policy documents/programmes targeting Roma fleeing Ukraine into your country (if applicable).

