



## Ministry of Culture

Civil Society and National Minorities Unit

Desk Officer

Majlis Nilsson

08-4059504

073-8047350

[majlis.nilsson@regeringskansliet.se](mailto:majlis.nilsson@regeringskansliet.se)

## Report on the European Framework for Roma equality, inclusion and participation 2020-30

On 6 October 2020, the European Commission presented a new Strategic Framework for Roma equality, inclusion and participation. At the same time, a proposal was submitted for a Council recommendation on the same subject (Council Recommendation on Roma equality, inclusion and participation, 6070/21). The Recommendation was adopted on 2 March 2021. The Commission has also drafted guidelines for the development of national Roma inclusion strategies. The Commission invites Member States to adopt national strategies on the basis of the Framework by September 2021.

The Communication does not entail any legislative changes or budgetary implications. The Swedish Government welcomes the Framework and considers that the existing Swedish Strategy for Roma Inclusion (Government Communication 2011/2021:56) is to a large extent in line with the Framework and that no changes are needed.

The Swedish Government has proposed an investment of SEK 14 million for 2022 to continue work on implementing the Strategy for Roma Inclusion. This amount will rise to SEK 18.5 million annually in 2023 and 2024. Subsequently, the amount will be SEK 8 million annually on a permanent basis.

### Introduction

There have been Roma people in Sweden since the 1500s. The first record of Roma presence is to be found in the Stockholm court administrative records of 29 September 1512. Since then, various Roma groups have come to Sweden at different times from a number of countries in Europe. The Roma people are not a homogeneous ethnic community, but include people from different countries, educational backgrounds, socio-economic status, etc. Within the ethnic community, there are different

internal perceptions and interpretations as regards origin, language, culture and traditions. Today, several groups of Roma people live in Sweden, including Travellers, Swedish Roma, Finnish Roma, non-Nordic Roma, and new arrivals from the former Yugoslavia. The Roma people are one of the five recognised national minorities in Sweden and the Romani Chib language (all varieties) has the status of national minority language.

In 2006, the Swedish Delegation for Roma Matters was set up with the aim of pushing forward efforts to improve the situation of Roma people in Sweden. The Delegation's report 'The rights of Roma people – a Strategy for Roma people in Sweden' (SOU 2010:55) includes a proposal for a strategy to safeguard the human rights of Roma people. In February 2012, a coordinated and long-term strategy for Roma inclusion for 2012-32 was adopted (Government Communication 2011/12:56).

### **Minority policy**

The five national minorities in Sweden are Jews, Roma, Sami, Swedish Finns, and Tornedalian. The Swedish Government has lofty ambitions in the field of minority policy, i.e. to safeguard the rights of all national minorities. The policy objective set by the Swedish Parliament is to protect national minorities, give national minorities greater influence, and support historical minority languages so that they remain alive. The policy area is divided into three sub-areas: discrimination and vulnerability; influence and participation; and language and cultural identity.

In accordance with our international commitments to protect and promote human rights, Sweden has undertaken to take appropriate action to promote full and effective equality in all areas of economic, social, political and cultural life between persons belonging to a national minority and the rest of the population.

#### *Strategy for Roma Inclusion (Government Communication 2011/12:56)*

This twenty-year Strategy is to be seen as a reinforcement of the minority policy applicable to the five national minorities of Sweden. The overall objective of the Strategy is for 'all Roma people turning 20 in 2032 to have the same opportunities in life as non-Roma people'. By that time, the rights of Roma 20-year-olds should be safeguarded within ordinary structures and areas of activity to the same extent as the rights of the 20-year-olds in the rest of the population. All aspects of implementation of the Strategy are focused on enhanced implementation and continuous follow-up regarding the access of Roma people to human rights at local, regional and national level.

The Strategy is based on various rights enshrined in international human rights agreements, i.e. the right to education, work, housing, the highest possible level of health, social care and security, language, culture, and freedom of association.

Roma participation and Roma influence must also be ensured throughout. Swedish Government Offices have therefore, after consultation with Roma representatives, set up a Roma reference group, to which 20 participants are appointed for a period of three years at a time. The aim of the reference group is to discuss how the Government can develop and improve governance and action as regards the Strategy.

The reference group will contribute, thanks to its participants' knowledge, skills or experience, to developing the Strategy.

The reference group points out that certain measures required to meet the key objectives set out in the current Strategy are missing and considers that extensive action is needed to do so.

### **Target groups**

The main target group of the Strategy is Roma people who find themselves in a situation of social and economic exclusion and face discrimination. Women and children are priority target groups.

Vulnerable EU citizens are not a target group of the Strategy, as they are not permanently resident in Sweden. The Government is instead working, among other things, to influence living conditions in countries of origin in order to bring about change and sustainability in the long term.

Throughout 2020, Swedish county administrative boards have been responsible for regional skills development action on issues concerning vulnerable EU/EEA citizens, targeting authorities, municipalities, regions, and civil society organisations that are in contact with the target group.

### **Horizontal objectives of the Framework**

*Discrimination and anti-gypsyism*

## **Fighting and preventing discrimination and anti-gypsyism**

### **Strategy for Roma Inclusion**

The Strategy is based on human rights, with particular emphasis on the principle of non-discrimination. The Government chooses to place particular emphasis on non-discrimination, as several of the problems faced by many Roma people are related to discrimination. It is particularly important to prioritise the living conditions of children and young people in order to ensure that the new generation of Roma people enjoys better conditions and opportunities. Special attention should be paid to the situation of women, as they are at risk of double discrimination – partly because they belong to a national minority and partly because they are women.

Roma experience of discrimination is an important source of knowledge for the activities of different players, in the sense that they can provide important information and knowledge on how the practices, organisation and activities of public authorities and other players can hinder their access to rights. Tackling discrimination against Roma people and promoting equal rights and opportunities is a long-term effort. Sweden's Equality Ombudsman is an important player in this work.

### **Action taken**

In 2014, a White Paper entitled 'The dark and unknown history – a White Paper on abuse and violence against Roma people in the 20<sup>th</sup> century' (Ds 2014:8) was published. The aim of the White Paper is to acknowledge the victims and their families and to raise awareness of the situation of the Roma minority today, by highlighting – in a historical context – abuses to which Roma people have been subjected and how stereotypes and prejudices have emerged and been passed on from one generation to the next and how such prejudices have underpinned State policy. Since its publication, the White Paper has been widely disseminated to stakeholders both in Sweden and abroad. The material has helped more people to learn about the history of Roma people in Sweden.

An Anti-Gypsyism Commission was set up in 2014 and operated until June 2016. The work of the Anti-Gypsyism Commission aimed to bring about a concerted effort in the fight against anti-gypsyism and to bridge the trust gap that exists between the Roma people and society in general.

The Swedish Government is continuously working against anti-gypsyism. A Holocaust Museum will be set up in Stockholm in the summer of 2022 and will also highlight the genocide against Roma people. The Swedish Prime Minister has invited heads of government, researchers and civil society to the Malmö Forum, an international conference on the Holocaust, anti-Semitism and anti-gypsyism taking place in autumn 2021. In 2022 and 2023, the Swedish National Agency for Education – together with the Living History Forum – will take systematic action by means of democracy-strengthening initiatives in schools, community education and other areas of adult education. The aim is to combat anti-Semitism and other forms of racism. The Government is also working on support for civil society, including training and other capacity-building measures to improve the conditions for and commitment to the organisation of national minorities.

The Government has also taken a number of measures in the framework of the National Plan to fight Racism, Similar Forms of Hostility and Hate Crimes adopted in 2016. The Plan highlights anti-gypsyism as one of several forms of racism that need special attention.

Under the Plan, the Swedish Ombudsman for Children has been tasked with developing and compiling, on the basis of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, expertise on the vulnerability of children and young people to racism, including anti-gypsyism. The Stockholm County Administrative Board is tasked with raising awareness of how Roma children and young people are currently exposed to anti-gypsyism. This includes organising targeted information activities at local and national level bringing together Roma children and young people and raising the profile of the issue among relevant players. To this end, the Stockholm County Administrative Board has worked towards promoting Roma role models among children and young people.

The Living History Forum is very active in providing education on various forms of racism, including anti-gypsyism, both in the past and in the present. It carries out, among other things, training courses for school staff and other civil servants, focusing on ensuring the quality of the response provided by public services to the public via work against racism.

The Swedish Media Council is tasked with developing methods to combat online anti-gypsyism among children and young people. The Swedish Police Authority has been tasked with further developing and improving efforts to combat hate crime and other crimes that threaten democracy. This remit includes implementing measures to improve skills within the Police Authority and mapping the action taken against cyber-related hate crimes and other crimes threatening democracy.

### **Assessment**

There is no need to review Government Communication 2011/12:56 as regards anti-gypsyism and discrimination.

The Roma reference group of Swedish Government Offices shares this assessment, but has pointed out that major efforts are needed to combat anti-gypsyism and discrimination. This is one of the most important areas to deal with. Efforts need to address changing the perception of the Roma minority among both politicians and the general public, not least by means of digital tools.

The Equality Ombudsman plays a central role in combating discrimination and has an extensive remit covering a wide range of areas. Appropriations for the Equality Ombudsman have risen by SEK 10 million from 2015 and SEK 10 million from 2017.

Combating discrimination effectively requires the involvement of several different players. The work of local anti-discrimination agencies highlights the importance of combating discrimination at local and regional level. There is great demand for their activities and there are currently 16 anti-discrimination agencies operating up and down in the country. The Government has increased the grant for anti-discrimination agencies from SEK 15 million per year to SEK 29 million per year.

Under its German Presidency, the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance (IHRA) has developed a non-legally-binding working definition of the concept of 'anti-gypsyism/anti-Roma racism'. Sweden has been entrusted with the IHRA presidency from March 2022 to the end of February 2023.

On 13 October, Prime Minister Stefan Löfven invited heads of State and government, international organisations and social media platforms to Remember – ReAct, the Malmö International Forum on Holocaust Remembrance and Combating Anti-Semitism. The Forum will address four themes: Holocaust remembrance; Holocaust education; anti-Semitism on social media; and the fight against anti-Semitism and other forms of racism. All participants will present their specific pledges to strengthen efforts surrounding Holocaust remembrance and the fight against anti-Semitism, anti-gypsyism and other forms of racism.

Sweden has stated the following:

- On the basis of the National Plan to fight Racism, Similar Forms of Hostility and Hate Crimes, the Swedish Government will continue to strengthen efforts to fight various forms of racism in Sweden. Specific programmes to combat anti-gypsyism and other forms of racism will be developed. In the 2022 Budget Bill, the Government proposes SEK 8 million per year to support work against racism.
- The Government proposes an investment of SEK 14 million for 2022 to continue work on implementing the Strategy for Roma Inclusion. This amount will rise to SEK 18.5 million annually in 2023 and 2024. Subsequently, the amount will be SEK 8 million annually on a permanent basis.

*Poverty and exclusion*

<b>Reducing poverty and exclusion to close the socio-economic gap between Roma people and the majority population</b>
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### **Strategy for Roma Inclusion**

In accordance with our international commitments to protect and promote human rights, Sweden has undertaken to take appropriate action to promote full and effective equality in all areas of economic, social, political and cultural life between persons belonging to national minority and the rest of the population. This means that national minorities should be fully able to develop their potential and be on an equal footing with the majority population in society. Society should therefore, according to the

Government, tackle the disadvantage and vulnerability suffered by national minorities, including Roma people.

### **Action taken**

In January 2022, the Institute for Human Rights will be established. The new Institute's roles will include monitoring, investigating and reporting on how human rights are respected and implemented in Sweden. The Institute will also make proposals to the Government on the measures needed to ensure human rights. In this way, the Institute will be able to play a role in ensuring the rights of Roma people. The Institute will not examine individual reports of human rights violations.

### **Assessment**

There is no need to review Government Communication 2011/12:56 as regards the objective of reducing poverty and exclusion to close the socio-economic gap between Roma people and the general population.

The Roma reference group of Swedish Government Offices shares this assessment, but has pointed to the continuing large socio-economic gap between [...] and the general population and indicated that major efforts are needed in the future, not least at local level with active municipalities.

The situation of Roma people today is linked to history and the discrimination faced by many Roma people over a long period of time. Greater knowledge is therefore necessary for successful and long-term efforts to make Roma rights a reality in the future. Knowledge of history and its relationship with the conditions currently faced by Roma people is therefore an important part of the Government's efforts to improve living conditions. The Government considers that a series of measures will be needed to improve the situation of Roma people and to close the welfare gap with the majority population.

Municipalities and other stakeholders may, within certain financial frameworks, seek possible available funding for Roma inclusion from the European Social Fund Plus (ESF+).

### *Participation and influence*

<b>Promoting participation through empowerment, cooperation and trust</b>
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### **Strategy for Roma Inclusion**

Roma participation and Roma influence must be ensured throughout in the Strategy for Roma Inclusion. This is done, among other things, by means of conditional State subsidies to municipalities and entrusting authorities with targeted projects and via the Government Offices' Roma reference group.

Implementation of the Strategy should be underpinned by Roma participation and influence and continuous follow-up regarding the access of Roma people to human rights at local, regional and national level. Actions and measures implemented as part of the Strategy should be long-term in nature and focus on making Roma access to human rights a reality. Measures should be carried out within existing structures and areas of activity.

## **Action taken**

The possibility of empowerment through consultation is a cornerstone of policy. This involves more than simply providing information – it is also about exchanging experience and anchoring. On 1 January 2019, the Swedish National Minorities and Minority Languages Act was reinforced. The basic protection of the language and culture of national minorities has now been strengthened and enhanced rights have been enacted regarding the administrative areas for Finnish, Meänkieli and Sami. Local and regional authorities will adopt objectives and guidelines for their work on minority-related policies. The Minority Act requires administrative authorities to give national minorities the opportunity to have an influence on matters affecting them. The amended Act clarifies the meaning of consultation with national minorities by requiring, among other things, structured dialogue. The intention here is to lead to more qualitative and long-term work.

An essential issue as regards Roma inclusion is the fact that Roma people have a greater level of mistrust towards public authorities and the public sector than the majority population. Work on the Strategy has contributed to some extent to reducing the trust gap and increasing Roma involvement, whether in dialogue processes, via State support to strengthen Roma organisation, or by employing Roma people in municipal activities.

At the heart of efforts towards Roma inclusion has been using State support to conduct work at local level. Since 2012, the Strategy for Roma Inclusion has specifically involved 10 municipalities and almost as many public authorities. Other municipalities have been involved through special State subsidies for activities involving cultural bridge-builders with Roma language and cultural skills.

## **Assessment**

There is no need to review Government Communication 2011/12:56 as regards the objective of promoting participation through empowerment, cooperation and trust.

The Roma reference group of Swedish Government Offices shares this assessment, but has pointed out that the forms participation and influence take must be improved. There is often a loss of Roma influence and ownership as the process moves forward. This also affects the possibility of participating on an equal footing in terms of the ability to spend time on work and to be paid for such.

The efforts made by municipalities are a key part of implementing the Strategy, as such efforts have been shown to narrow the trust gap between Roma people and the public sector and raise awareness of Roma people and Roma history among various public services.

Further efforts will focus on such things as creating the conditions to both preserve and anchor the work initiated at municipal level, but also on ensuring that such work is passed on to other municipalities and that the organisation and empowerment of Roma people continues to be strengthened.

## **Thematic objectives of the Framework**

**Increasing effective equal access to quality inclusive mainstream education**

**Strategy for Roma Inclusion**

Under the Swedish Education Act, everybody must have equal access to education and education must be equivalent in every type of school. All children and pupils have the right to quality education regardless of who is in charge in each type of school and where in Sweden education is provided. Children and pupils should have equal opportunities for further education and a professional life. Schools should endeavour to compensate for differences in the children's and students' ability to benefit from education (cf. Chapter 1, Sections 4, 5, 8 and 9 of the Education Act). This applies to everybody in Sweden, including Roma people.

According to the European Framework, Member States should ensure that in practice all Roma people have equal access to and equal opportunities to participate in all forms and stages of education, from pre-school and childcare to higher education, including second-chance education, adult education and lifelong learning.

Roma children are subject to the same compulsory education obligation and have the same right to education as any other children. Roma adults also have the same right to apply for and gain access to education in municipal adult education, vocational education, higher education and public education as any other adults.

**Action taken**

In order to bring about real change in the educational achievement of Roma pupils, responsible authorities, municipalities and Roma parents need to take active responsibility. Delivering better results primarily involves improving compliance with already existing rules and ensuring that they are applied in practice as regards Roma people.

Since 2012, the National Agency for Education has been responsible for implementing certain measures under the Strategy for Roma Inclusion, including five tasks specifically involving Roma people as a national minority. These tasks cover contracted training, curriculum review and dissemination of information and knowledge. The work has been carried out on the basis of the Minority Act, the Language Act, and the 2011 curriculum for primary schools, pre-school and after-school care (Igr11). The curriculum states that, by the time they have completed primary education, pupils should have knowledge of the culture, language, religion and history of national minorities.

Over the period 2012-19, ten municipalities were granted State subsidies to set up some sort of structure or equivalent long-term solution within the municipal administration to improve inclusion for Roma people. Part of the State subsidy was earmarked for employing cultural bridge-builders with Roma language and cultural skills. Knowing that schools have staff with Roma language and cultural skills has helped parents feel more secure in having their children at school. Bridge-builders have helped school staff gain a better understanding of the educational situation of Roma children and greater knowledge of Roma culture and history. They have also helped to improve school attendance and motivation for school work.



## **Assessment**

There is no need to review Government Communication 2011/12:56 as regards the thematic objective of education.

The Roma reference group of Swedish Government Offices shares this assessment and points out that education is one of the most important factors as regards long-term improvement in the living conditions of the Roma population. A wide range of measures should therefore be implemented. In particular, schools need to improve conditions for Roma pupils so that they do not feel vulnerable in school because of their origin.

Opportunities for studying the Romani Chib language through mother-tongue education need to be improved. Cultural bridge-builders in schools have been an important tool and the initiative should be continued.

The Government considers that the starting point for new action should be to see how structures and areas of activity can ensure that Roma people also have access to human rights, in particular the right to education.

Schools need to become more equal in order to provide all pupils with a more level playing field to achieve good learning outcomes. Further efforts are needed to ensure that more pupils learn more. Education should take into account the various needs of children and pupils and schools' efforts to compensate for differences in the children's and students' ability to benefit from education. Children and pupils should be supported and encouraged to develop as much as possible. National coordination enables more pupils to access education in a national minority language. In the 2022 Budget Bill, the Government has proposed entrusting the National Agency for Education with coordinating teaching and providing it with funds to that end. Funds are to be allocated to finance the increased use of remote teaching and to coordinate teaching of the different languages by the responsible authorities.

## **Work**

<b>Increasing effective equal access to quality and sustainable employment</b>
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### **Strategy for Roma Inclusion**

Work is a key area of action in breaking down Roma exclusion. The opportunities for Roma people to enter the labour market therefore need to be improved, especially as regards young people. Municipalities play a key role in enabling Roma people to enter the labour market and in monitoring the employment rate among Roma people.

The Swedish Public Employment Service (PES) should work to improve the functioning of the labour market, including prioritising those who have little contact with it. Activities should be designed to promote diversity and equality and combat discrimination in working life and gender segregation in the labour market. The PES should also promote equal access to support, services and programmes for all jobseekers. This applies to the general population and thus includes Roma people.

### **Action taken**

Since 2012, the PES has been responsible for a number of projects in the field of Roma inclusion, for instance: local dissemination of information and knowledge among Roma people on the services and support it can offer; ensuring individual support; working together with municipalities involved in pilot and development activities and with Roma representatives and experts; and ensuring the necessary knowledge within the PES of the Roma people as a national minority.

The PES is also tasked with improving opportunities for women to get involved in such actions, ensuring that the PES has the necessary operational knowledge about Roma people as national minority, and consulting Roma representatives and experts.

The PES will continue to be responsible over the period 2020-23 for further developing work on Roma inclusion in its operations. The PES has reported, among other things, that it has not detected any changes for Roma people on the labour market in the ten municipalities having received State subsidies over the period 2012-19. Interviews with Roma people reveal that many of them invariably relate to their Roma identity and are constantly weighing up whether or not to be open about their Roma identity. This places high demands on the work of public authorities and municipalities as regards Roma inclusion.

### **Assessment**

There is no need to review Government Communication 2011/12:56 as regards the thematic objective of work.

The Roma reference group of Swedish Government Offices shares this assessment. Work is one of the most important factors as regards long-term improvement in the living conditions of the Roma population. The PES's work with Roma people needs to be bolstered. Roma customer resources at the PES have been an important tool and the initiative should be continued.

Long-term and strategic work – that throws into relief and counteracts the obstacles faced by Roma people as jobseekers – is needed to ensure that Roma people can exercise their right to work.

Municipalities and other players may, within certain financial frameworks, seek available funding from the European Social Fund Plus (ESF+) for action for those groups who have little contact with the labour market, with a view to getting them into work or education.

### *Health and welfare*

## **Improving Roma health and increasing effective equal access to quality healthcare and social services**

### **Strategy for Roma Inclusion**

Long-term work is needed in many areas to improve the health of Roma people and increase social inclusion. Special focus as regards the health of Roma people should be placed on health promotion and disease prevention. In June 2018, the Swedish Parliament adopted a new overarching national public health policy objective 'to create social conditions for good and equitable health across the population and close harmful gaps within a generation'. This applies to the general population and also includes Roma people. The objective set by the Swedish Parliament for personal and family care is to strengthen capacity and opportunities for the social inclusion of people in economically and socially vulnerable

situations and to improve protection for vulnerable children. This applies to the general population and also includes Roma people. The Public Health Agency and the National Board of Health and Welfare are key players as regards mapping and monitoring the situation of Roma people in relation to those objectives.

As regards social services, the aim of the action taken is to ensure that statutory requirements for good quality are continuously met, from the point of view of users and citizens. Within the framework of the general efforts aimed at the population as a whole, the chief aim is to ensure that the challenges and needs of Roma people are taken into account in the same way as those of the majority population.

### **Action taken**

There is no universal definition of health in Sweden; health is a relative concept. The perception of what health is ties in with values and cultural patterns and changes over time. Most policy areas and fields of expertise have an impact on human health. The measures to be taken by countries to ensure that the right to health is respected include fundamental efforts to reduce ill health among the population. Countries should also create conditions that guarantee equal access to healthcare for all.

Municipalities that have received State subsidies to develop their work on Roma inclusion have, inter alia, implemented targeted actions aimed at improving the health and life of Roma people, e.g. by means of health guides. Targeted measures have also been conducted via bridge-builders and specific projects; this includes those aimed at the target groups of Roma youth and young adults.

The National Board of Health and Welfare, in addition to its contribution to ongoing work on two mapping exercises of the current situation, has also been responsible for two specific tasks related to the Strategy for Roma Inclusion. In 2016, the Board was tasked with developing – in cooperation with the National Agency for Education – appropriate mission training for people with Roma language and cultural skills to be recruited for work in pre-schools, schools, social services or healthcare services. In particular, the Board was responsible for those areas of education relating to social and healthcare services.

In 2016, the Board was also mandated to carry out a training campaign for social services based on the training material 'The future is shaped by how we treat others' published the same year.<sup>71</sup> This material is the result of a government mandate under the Strategy for Roma Inclusion. The mandate also involves work on developing care of Roma children.

According to the Board, there is still a need for confidence-building efforts to instil trust in social services' ability to provide support and assistance and for targeted information on rights and on what social services can offer. There is also a need for preventive social work, area work and early intervention, for which bridge-builders or other Roma experts can also provide support.

In 2013, the Stockholm County Administrative Board carried out an in-depth study to identify the most important issues surrounding equality between Roma women and men and Roma girls and boys. The report concludes that gender does not seem to be the power structure that primarily determines how Roma people are treated by public authorities and employers. However, some areas can be identified where the responsible authorities' treatment of Roma people suggests that the rights of Roma women and men are not met to the same degree: childcare, health and care for the elderly, schools, social services, and work.

The Swedish Agency for Youth and Civil Society (MUCF) has awarded grants to projects aimed at promoting Roma health. The MUCF considers that the grant has yielded good results and better conditions for working on health promotion measures targeting Roma people.

### **Assessment**

There is no need to review Government Communication 2011/12:56 as regards the thematic objective of health and welfare.

The Roma reference group of Swedish Government Offices shares this assessment and proposes mainly awareness-raising measures aimed at healthcare and social workers. Such people need knowledge both of the living conditions of Roma people and of minority legislation. Healthcare and social services need to employ people with a Roma language and cultural background. Cultural bridge-builders within social services have been an important tool and the initiative should be continued.

### *Housing*

<b>Increasing effective equal access to adequate desegregated housing and essential services</b>
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### **Strategy for Roma Inclusion**

Housing is a core issue as regards Roma inclusion in the sense that it has a significant impact on a person's overall living conditions, including in terms of access to employment and education and of children's right to and opportunities for stable schooling. The aim should be for Roma people to have the same access to housing as the majority population in general. The Swedish National Board of Housing, Building and Planning has a key role in mapping the situation of Roma people in respect of this objective.

The government's general role is chiefly to ensure the proper functioning of housing markets by means of long-term stable regulation and sound and predictable conditions for the construction, ownership and management of housing in all forms of tenure. Quality housing should be pursued and competition should prevail in the construction sector and housing markets. These are important measures also as regards Roma access to housing. In summary, the Government considers that the long-term aim should be for Roma people to have the same access to housing as the majority population.

### **Action taken**

The National Board of Housing, Building and Planning has been tasked with producing guidance material for property owners and landlords to raise their awareness of the situation of Roma people on the housing market and to combat discrimination. This work has been carried out together with a network of Roma representatives and representatives of property owners and landlords. Decisions were taken jointly and the product selected was an online training course to be led by Roma educational leaders. Training is offered free of charge and provided at the premises of interested housing companies, with Roma educational leaders holding group discussions as part of these courses. The National Board of Housing, Building and Planning has also been involved in the two mapping exercises of the current situation.

### **Assessment**

There is no need to review Government Communication 2011/12:56 as regards the thematic objective of housing.

The Roma reference group of Swedish Government Offices shares this assessment and proposes mainly awareness-raising measures aimed at property owners in order to combat discrimination against Roma people on the housing market.

Housing is of fundamental importance for functioning citizenship. The situation in Sweden is not such as to provide a basic standard, e.g. as regards water and electricity, as proposed as an objective by the Commission. Objectives should therefore be set in relation to other issues. In the Government's view, it is clear that discrimination against Roma people in the housing market is a problem in terms of Roma access to housing. It is also necessary to take a holistic approach to the living situation of Roma people, e.g. on the part of municipalities, in order to ensure that Roma people have access to quality housing in the long term. As long as Roma people face difficulties in the labour market and in society in general, they will also find it difficult to establish themselves in the housing market.

### **Reporting, monitoring and evaluation**

Since 2012, the Stockholm County Administrative Board has been responsible for coordinating and following up actions under the Strategy for Roma Inclusion. This role includes supporting municipalities in developing working practices and methods for Roma inclusion and ensuring that such practices and methods are continuously passed on to municipalities, county councils and relevant authorities. Special consideration should be given to consultations by municipalities and authorities with Roma representatives on working practices and methods.

No ethnicity-based statistics are collected in Sweden – other methods for monitoring progress must therefore be used. The task of the Stockholm County Administrative Board is therefore to develop a monitoring system based on previous experience of mapping the current situation.

The focus of the follow-up to the Strategy is on how public authorities and municipalities work to ensure that Roma people are able to avail themselves of their rights as regards employment, education, housing, health, social care and security. Issues surrounding treatment, discrimination, anti-gypsyism, participation and influence are of particular interest from a rights perspective.

In addition, the Stockholm County Administrative Board has been mandated by the Government to conduct – in cooperation with the PES, the National Board of Housing, Building and Planning, the Equality Ombudsman, the Public Health Agency, the National Board of Health and Welfare, the National Agency for Education and Roma experts – a mapping exercise of the current situation in those municipalities that received State subsidies in the period 2012-17 for development activities for Roma inclusion at local level ('Roma inclusion locally – the current situation in municipalities receiving State aid 2012-17').

### **Miscellaneous**

According to the EU Framework and the subsequent Council Recommendation, Member States should also work on cultural, linguistic and civil organisation issues. These are two target areas of the Strategy for Roma Inclusion.

*Culture and language*

## **Strategy for Roma Inclusion**

By ratifying the Council of Europe Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities and the European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages, Sweden has committed to promoting the preservation of national minority languages in Sweden. This means, among other things, that Sweden has undertaken to provide education and training for the teachers needed to provide mother-tongue and bilingual teaching in national minority languages.

The national minority policy objective set by the Swedish Parliament includes supporting national minority languages to ensure their survival. This means giving national minorities the opportunity to acquire, use and develop their mother tongue and a personal cultural identity. National minorities should be able to pass on their minority language and culture to the next generation. The national minority languages which form part of Sweden's cultural heritage must be able to be preserved and developed as living languages in Sweden.

### **Action taken**

Action taken for Roma children and pupils in nursery schools and schools includes mother-tongue support, mother-tongue teaching and coaching in Romani, Roma cultural bridge-builders in schools, study motivation action and homework assistance.

While a comprehensive set of rights legislation exists in the school sector, comprehensive measures are also needed to safeguard such rights.

There are regulations at national level governing the teaching of national minority languages in the school system. Under those regulations, pupils are entitled to education in primary schools and equivalent types of schools and in secondary schools and secondary special-needs schools.

In December 2020, the Government decided to promote the libraries of national minorities as resource libraries for the respective language groups and for the municipalities of Sweden. Libraries should support the municipalities and promote the provision of media in national minority languages. Special attention should be paid to access to literature for children and young people. There is currently no library for Romani Chib equivalent to those that exist for other national minority languages. The National Library of Sweden should therefore, in particular, review and make proposals for the promotion of Romani Chib library activities.

In September 2021, the Government proposed an investment of SEK 90 million to bolster efforts in support of national minorities. An action programme for the conservation of Sweden's five national minority languages is to be drawn up and language centres for the revitalisation of Finnish, Yiddish, Meänkieli, Romani Chib and Sami are to be set up.

### **Assessment**

Efforts to bolster Roma language and culture are mainly part of general minority policy work. Long-term efforts are needed to strengthen the language and culture of national minorities. There are significant differences between languages in terms of, for instance, the number of speakers. This also affects the availability of teachers and the ability to provide study and other teaching materials. The

recruitment base for studies in certain minority languages at further-education level is therefore also limited.

The Government considers that culture and language are important not only for a person's identity, but also for the development and cohesion of society. Working on language and culture issues can strengthen personal identity and pride for Roma cultural heritage. In the Government's view, culture can also play an important role in bridging the habitual trust gap between Roma and non-Roma people. It is therefore important for Roma culture and language to be given visibility and to be preserved and developed in accordance with the stated objective of national minority policy.

The Swedish Institute for Language and Folklore (ISOF) plays a central role in relation to this objective. The Government considers that the action taken by the ISOF in this area must continue, including as regards language management and allocating fund for revitalisation measures in accordance with Ordinance 2010:21 on State subsidies for action in support of national minority languages.

The Roma reference group of Swedish Government Offices shares this assessment, but points to the importance of Roma language and culture permeating the whole Strategy. These areas need to be radically bolstered, otherwise Roma culture and language may disappear over time.

#### *Civil organisation*

#### **Strategy for Roma Inclusion**

Roma inclusion and influence are essential to bring about changes in the living conditions of Roma people. The Government has therefore chosen to include 'inclusiveness and influence' as a key governance element in the twenty-year Strategy for Roma Inclusion. The 'organisation' strand of the Strategy includes action to empower Roma people, give them a voice in public debate, and foster inclusiveness.

The civil society policy objective set by the Swedish Parliament is to improve the conditions for civil society organisations as a key element of democracy. This is to be done by developing, in consultation with civil society organisations, the capacity of civil society to involve people, further enable them to contribute to social development and welfare, and deepen and disseminate knowledge about civil society. This applies to civil society at large and thus includes Roma people.

#### **Action taken**

Between 2016 and 2019, the Swedish Agency for Youth and Civil Society (MUCF) was tasked with allocating aid in accordance with Ordinance 2016:840 on State subsidies for health promotion action aimed at Roma people. In 2020, the MUCF was tasked with implementing action to help improve the conditions for young Roma people to get involved in civil society and for Roma youth organisations to engage in society. This mandate included training in bringing people together and exchanging experience between Roma and non-Roma organisations.

According to the MUCF, such action has helped improve the conditions for young Roma people to get involved in civil society and for Roma youth organisations to engage in society. The MUCF also considers that the grants awarded have helped towards the ultimate objective of promoting Roma health and better enabling civil society – and in particular Roma associations – to work on health promotion activities aimed at Roma people. Such aid also bolsters the capacity of Roma civil society. The

MUCF considers that Roma ownership and participation are essential for success. Dialogue and partnership with Roma representatives should therefore be seen as desirable in efforts towards Roma inclusion.

The MUCF also allocates grants on an annual basis under the Ordinance on State subsidies for activities to combat racism and related forms of intolerance, including anti-gypsyism.

### **Assessment**

The Government believes that Roma organisations already play an important role and provide essential knowledge for society. The Government is keen to harness the commitment and momentum to be found within various Roma organisations – and among Roma people who already participate or would like to participate in other types of civil society organisations – in order to jointly bring about a change in the living conditions of Roma people. The Government considers it important to support Roma people in various ways, to make the needs of the group more visible in society, and to increase contacts between Roma and non-Roma people. The Government appreciates the importance of supporting Roma involvement in civil society organisations as regards creating and participating in ethnicity-based organisations and taking part in other types of organisations, e.g. cultural or sports associations.

According to the Government's assessment, civil society organisations have a key role to play in contributing to the empowerment of Roma people, giving them a voice in public dialogue, and fostering inclusiveness.

The Roma reference group of Swedish Government Offices shares this assessment, but points to the need for more financial resources for Roma organisations.