

APPROVED
by the Order No IV-33
of 1 July 2022
by the Director of the Department of
National Minorities under the
Government of the Republic of
Lithuania

ACTION PLAN FOR INTEGRATION OF ROMA INTO LITHUANIAN SOCIETY FOR 2022-2023

CHAPTER I GENERAL PROVISIONS

1. The purpose of the Plan of Measures for the Integration of Roma into Lithuanian Society for 2022-2023 (hereinafter referred to as the Plan of Measures) is to promote equality by effectively preventing discrimination against all Roma, including women, youth, children, the elderly, the disabled and stateless persons; to reduce the economic and social exclusion of Roma people by combating poverty and promoting participation of Roma people in the labour market and in public life; to ensure that all the Roma have equal opportunities to all the levels of education; and to increase public awareness and tolerance.

2. The Action Plan is based on the Communication from the European Commission on the National Strategic Framework for EU Roma Integration for 2020-2030 of 7 October 2020 (COM(2020) 620), and by considering Lithuania's international obligations under the Council of the European Union's Recommendations on Roma Equality, Inclusion and Participation (2021/C 93/01), the Council of Europe's Convention for the Protection of National Minorities, the United Nations Convention on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination, the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights and the International Covenant on Social, Economic and Cultural Rights, as well as other international agreements.

3. The measures of the Action Plan are planned on the basis of the study The Situation of Roma in 2020 by the NGO Diversity Development Group and by consulting with public administration institutions and NGOs representing Roma and the Roma minority.

CHAPTER II SITUATION ANALYSIS

SECTION I DEMOGRAPHIC FEATURES OF THE LITHUANIAN ROMA

4. According to the preliminary data from the Department of Statistics, 2,077 Roma people lived in the country in 2021 (1,093 females and 984 males). Since 1989, the number of Roma in the country has steadily declined, in line with the overall decline in Lithuania's population (the number of Roma has fallen by 5%, the same as the of the Lithuanian population). Since 2001, the decline in the Roma population has exceeded the overall national average, and reached 18%. Roma people live in the following districts of the country: 27% in Vilnius, 20% in Marijampolė, 19% in Kaunas, 11% in Šiauliai, 11% in Panevėžys, 4% in Utena, 3% in Klaipėda and 2% in Tauragė.

5. The statistics on the age of the Roma people stand out from the general context of the Lithuanian population statistics by the fact that 49% of all the Roma people are children and young people under the age of 20, while in the general context of the Lithuanian population, children and young people make up 22% of the total population of Lithuania. Over the decade, the share of Roma children and young people in the total population has increased by 3%, whereas, the share of this age group in the total population has fallen from 27% to 22% in Lithuania.

SECTION II PARTICIPATION IN THE EDUCATION SYSTEM

6. The number of Roma pupils enrolled in general education institutions is increasing. A share of Roma pupils aged 10-19 who have not completed primary education or are still in a primary school has fallen over the last five years (from 36% in 2015 to 28% in 2020).¹ A stronger balance is observed in the distribution of Roma pupils by grade in general education schools, with an increase in the number of Roma children attending pre-school and pre-primary education institutions, vocational schools and gymnasiums.

7. Although the illiteracy rate among Roma is decreasing and their participation in the education system is improving, the level of their education still considerably falls behind the country's overall levels and is insufficient. Among Roma, the trend of completing only grades 7-8 of compulsory education persists. In 2020, 6% of the Roma from the age group 6-15 did not attend school (compared to 14% in 2015), and 8% of the children and young people were unable to read and write (even if they attended school) in 2020. There is a trend towards more Roma being involved in non-formal education activities, with around 24% of Roma children and young people participating in day centres or after-school clubs.

¹ NGO Diversity Development Group survey The Situation of Roma in 2020.

SECTION III PARTICIPATION IN THE LABOUR MARKET

8. Unemployment among Roma people is linked to a lack of education and, as a result, a lack of appropriate professional qualifications, general work and social skills. Improvements have been achieved through the implementation of Roma integration and employment programmes, including the EU-funded project Working Together with Roma - New Job Opportunities and Challenges. The project designed to help Roma integrate into the labour market enabled achievement of good results. Roma were provided with vocational counselling, social and cultural services, which helped most of the Roma to acquire a profession and get a job in a specialised field or to become self-employed. The above results indicate that integration of Roma into the labour market requires continuation of ongoing projects and programmes to ensure coherent and effective employment mediation and advisory services.

9. The highest share of employed Roma is recorded in the age group of 20-29, where 42% of the Roma have jobs. Over the last five years, the share of employed people in this age group has increased by 13% (from 29.7% to 42.3%). Despite the positive trends in the employment of young Roma, the employment of Roma in the age groups of 50-59 and over 60 remains a challenge.

10. The Roma who have completed primary, secondary, vocational and higher education are more successful in the labour market. Yet, this is not enough to obtain better results in a rapidly changing labour market. In addition to education, there are other factors that affect Roma people's chances of success in the labour market.

11. A direct link between the place of residence and employment exists in the labour market. Not all the municipalities have employment promotion programmes in place, or the supply of jobs is generally low, therefore in some areas more than a half of Roma people are employed, while in other areas no employed Roma is recorded.

12. Noteworthy, Roma do not escape discrimination in the labour market. Qualitative research on communities vulnerable to hate crime² reveals that one of the most difficult things for a person of the Roma origin is to find a job, even if the job does not require any education or other skills. People of the Roma origin happen to be ignored and receive unfavourable comments. Activities involving the signs of latent hate are linked to Roma access to employment.

SECTION IV

² Public Enterprise Vilnius Business Advisory Centre, Qualitative Research on Communities Vulnerable to Hate Crime, 2019, <https://vrm.lrv.lt/uploads/vrm/documents/files/Pa%C5%BEid%C5%BEiam%C5%B3%20bendruomeni%C5%B3%20kokybinio%20tyrimo%20ataskaita.pdf>

PUBLIC ATTITUDES TOWARDS THE LITHUANIAN ROMA

13. According to the survey commissioned by the Lithuanian Social Research Centre³, negative attitudes towards the Roma minority are decreasing, yet remain quite high. In 2020, 58% of the Lithuanian population would not want to live next to Roma. Negative public attitudes towards Roma indicate that discrimination against this group is entrenched in the society and very slow to change.

14. Although both organisations representing Roma and individual Roma report about discrimination in the labour market, when renting housing or in the education system, yet there are not many complaints placed about discrimination experienced by Roma, i.e., only a few complaints and enquiries each year. Reducing discrimination against Roma in Lithuania requires raising awareness among Roma themselves of their rights, obligations and possibilities to protect their rights, and raising public awareness of the right of Roma to non-discrimination.

SECTION V REPRESENTATION OF ROMA AND PARTICIPATION IN PUBLIC ACTIVITIES

15. The first Roma non-governmental organisation was established in 1992 (Lithuanian Gypsy Community, reorganised into Vilnius Gypsy Community in 1996). Six Roma organisations are currently active. The Roma minority has its representative in the National Communities Board, which operates under the Department of National Minorities under the Government of the Republic of Lithuania and represents national minorities in the matters related to coordination of the policy for national minorities in Lithuania.

CHAPTER III GOALS AND TASKS OF THE ACTION PLAN

16. Goals and tasks of the action plan:

16.1. Promotion of Roma participation in the education system:

16.1.1. developing and improving pre-school, pre-primary and general education for the Roma children;

16.1.2. promoting vocational, post-secondary and higher education, and improving education of the Roma adults.

³ Public Attitudes Survey 2020 by Baltijos tyrimai (Baltic Surveys), <http://www.ces.lt/wp-content/uploads/2010/02/Visuomen%C4%97s-nuostatos-apklauso-rezultatai-20201.pdf>

16.2. Developing and strengthening of civic attitudes among children and young people, and encouraging participation in non-formal education activities.

16.3. Providing services and implementing measures to promote integration of Roma in the labour market.

16.4. Promotion of inter-cultural dialogue:

16.4.1. increasing openness of the Roma culture and public tolerance;

16.4.2. fostering the Roma national culture and traditions, strengthening and ensuring continuity of the spread thereof;

16.4.3. reducing discrimination against Roma people.

17. Measures have been developed and deadlines, allocations and responsible implementers have been established to achieve the goals and tasks set forth in the Plan for 2022-2023 (Annex 1).

CHAPTER IV MONITORING OF THE ACTION PLAN

18. The implementation of the measures of the Plan shall be coordinated by the Department of National Minorities under the Government of the Republic of Lithuania. The monitoring of the measures of the Plan shall be carried out by a permanent inter-institutional working group set up by order of the Director of the Department of National Minorities under the Government of the Republic of Lithuania.

19. The inter-institutional working group shall meet at least once a year to analyse the progress of implementation of the measures of the Plan, assess the achievement of the benchmarks and, if necessary, make proposals for any adjustments to the Action Plan. Meetings may be convened more frequently, where necessary.

20. The inter-institutional working group shall be composed of representatives of the state institutions implementing the measures of the Action Plan, representatives of Roma and of organisations working with Roma.

21. The criteria for evaluation of the Plan are set out in Annex 1 of the Action Plan.

CHAPTER V FINANCING OF THE ACTION PLAN

22. The measures provided for in Annex 1 of the Plan shall be financed from the State budget and from the financial contributions from the European Union.

23. The measures included in Annex 1 of the Plan, for which no funding is specified, shall be financed from the State budgets.
