



Kultūras ministrija

FINAL REPORT

on the Latvian Roma platform coordination meeting in the framework of the project „Latvian Roma platform IV”

PLACE AND TIME OF THE MEETING: The Conference Hall of the National Library of Latvia (Mūkusalas Street 3, Riga), 22 July 2019, from 10:30 to 16:00

PARTICIPANTS:

- *State (members of the Advisory Council for the Implementation of the Roma Integration Policy, including the Ministry of Culture, the Ministry of Welfare, the Ministry of Education and Science, the Youth International Programme Agency, the Ministry of Health and the State Employment Agency (SEA),*
- *representatives of the Network of Regional Experts on Roma Integration, including social workers; administrators and pedagogues from educational institutions; representatives of Latvian Roma civil society (NGO activists and mediators);*
- *representatives of non-governmental organisations.*

A TOTAL OF 35 PARTICIPANTS.

CONTENT

1. MAIN RESULTS OF THE PROJECT „LATVIAN ROMA PLATFORM IV”: ACTIVITIES AND VIEWS REPRESENTED AT THE MEETING

- 1.1. Main results of the „Latvian Roma platform IV” project.
- 1.2. The main results achieved for the implemented Project measures
- 1.3. Opinions of the experts on the activities of the “Latvian Roma Platform IV” project.

2. PARTICIPANTS/EXPERTS 'RECOMMENDATIONS FOR DEVELOPMENT OF THE LATVIAN ROMA PLATFORM AND ROMA INTEGRATION POLICY

2.1. Results of the work of the working groups:

Group I: Development of the role of Roma mediators in cooperation with national and local authorities, in partnership with non-governmental organisations and NGO representatives.

Group II: Support to the civic participation of young Roma.

Group III: More effective solutions to the Roma employment issues.

2.2. Recommendations and practical solutions for the development of the Latvian Roma platform and Roma integration policy.

1. MAIN RESULTS OF THE PROJECT „LATVIAN ROMA PLATFORM IV”: ACTIVITIES AND VIEWS REPRESENTED AT THE MEETING

The project is funded under the European Commission's “Rights, Equality and Citizenship” programme (95%) and national co-financing (5%). Its measures are consistent with the national policy package for Roma integration, which is part of the National Identity, Civil Society and Integration Policy Implementation Plan 2019-2020.

Project objectives:

- Promote cooperation and dialogue between Roma, representatives of local government, sectoral ministries and their institutions, as well as social partners, by improving Roma access to different services and providing opportunities.
- Support mutual learning and exchange of best practices in key areas of Roma integration at local and regional level, as well as sharing experience on the implementation of policies on Roma integration with other EU Member States.
- Promote the capacity building, participation and effective involvement of Roma civil society, including young people and women, in the implementation of Roma integration policy measures.
- Promote public awareness of Latvia's Roma culture, history and social situation by promoting the success stories of Roma people in the wider society.

1.1. MAIN RESULTS OF THE „LATVIAN ROMA PLATFORM IV” PROJECT.

EVENTS IMPLEMENTED:

- **Support for the activities of the Roma mediators in municipalities, including a training, exchange of experience and evaluation of the results of the work.**

Roma mediators worked in Viļaka, Jelgava, Riga, Valmiera and Ventspils between September 2019 and June 2020, acting as intermediary between local Roma families and state and local authorities, facilitating access to public services for Roma families at social risk. During the course of the operation, the mediators had a “Written Communication” training course at the State Administration School (SAS). Evaluation of the activities of Roma mediators and their results for the period from September 2019 to April 2020 was carried out by expert Sandra Kraukle, presenting these results at a Roma mediation experience exchange seminar, which took place online on 11 June 2020. In total, five Roma mediators provided support to 149 Roma families. Local government co-financing

of mediators' remuneration in Ventspils and Jelgava has been ensured. The evaluation report for the work of Roma mediators is available on the website of MoC.¹

- **Meetings with specialists from national co-responsible authorities (the Ministry of Welfare (MoW), the Ministry of Education and Science (MoES), the Youth International Programme Agency (YIPA), the Ministry of Health (MoH)).**

The meetings were held at the management level with the national authorities co-responsible for Roma integration (Ministry of Education and Science (IZM), Ministry of Welfare (LM), Ministry of Health (HM) and the Youth International Programme Agency (YIPA), discussing Roma support measures in the fields of education, employment, health and youth participation, as part of implementation relevant sectoral policies after 2021. The aim of all interdepartmental meetings was to develop cooperation of the Ministry of Culture, which is the responsible authority for coordinating the implementation of the Roma integration policy, with the MoES, MoW, MoH, YIPA to ensure a sustainable Roma integration policy, including calling for the inclusion of Roma among groups at risk of social exclusion in the sectoral policy guidelines of the ministries responsible, providing them with special support measures. The meetings was held online due to the limitations for public events during the Covid-19 emergency situation announced in the country, so the number of meetings was less than expected (and were not attended by the Saeima (parliament) commissions' members and local government experts). Summaries of the results of the meetings and follow-up shall be forwarded to the Rome Advisory Council, regional experts, the European Commission.

- **Meetings of regional experts and good practice visits to Ventspils and Talsi district**

Visits to the sites of good practice of Roma integration took place in Ventspils (17 and 18 October 2019) and Talsi municipalities (2 and 3 July 2020), during which regional experts from 16 municipalities met the situation of Roma and support measures at local level, as well as met with representatives of local authorities and local Roma residents. During the events, discussions were held between experts on an exchange of views on Roma integration practices. Regional experts took note of the practice of education, cultural institutions and social services in working with Roma adults, children and young people. Examples of good practices have been identified and evaluated, such as the activities of an interprofessional support team for inclusive education in pre-schools and schools (Ventspils), individual training plans for Roma pupils (Ventspils), home - schooling practices in Roma families (Ventspils), cultural work and supporting Roma art, facilitating the involvement of young people in arts and cultural activities (Sabile), practices of family

¹ <https://www.km.gov.lv/lv/integracija-un-sabiedriba/romi/projekti-un-pasakumi/latvijas-romu-platforma-iv#gsc.tab=0>

assistants and individual employment promotion plans for the unemployed Roma (Talsi), etc. The report on good practice visits is available on the KM website.²

- **Practical workshop for strengthening the capacity of young Roma people “SARÉ KHETENE 2020”.**

On 14-16 June 2020, the practical workshop “SARÉ KHETENE 2020” of Latvian Roma young people took place in Kleisti, organised and chaired by the Creative Alliance for Youth “TREPES” in cooperation with the YIPA. The aim of the workshop was to strengthen the capacity of Roma young people, promote the development of youth cooperation and foster communication skills, inform young people about opportunities for participation in various support programmes in Latvia and the EU. 22 Roma young people from Latvia, Lithuania and Estonia, among other nationalities, participated in the event. The participants of the event, together with specialists from YIPA, actively participated in creative workshops for intercultural cooperation on a variety of topics for the initiative of the international youth project, which could be implemented in the future. A musical collaborative workshop and talent show also took place during the workshop, as well as series of inspiration speeches were held in the TEDtalk format. It helped young people develop the ability to work as a team and show off their talents. Young people also visited the Roman History and Arts Museum of Latvia and premises of the Roma NGO “Roma Cultural Centre” and the NGO Creative Alliance for Youth “TREPES”.

- **Roma Women Capacity Building Seminar “Roma Women in a Sustainable Society in Europe”.**

The seminar took place on 11 July 2020 in Riga and was attended by 39 participants, including Roma women from Latvia, Lithuania and Estonia. The seminar was organised by the non-governmental organisation “Latvian Women's Non-Government Organisations Network” in cooperation with the MoC. As a result of the workshop, Roma women improved their skills, raised awareness of sustainable communities and the role of women in building them. The participants established a wider network of cooperation to promote the capacity building of Roma women in the Baltic States, as well as discussed the benefits of setting up a Roma women organisation and the possibilities for cooperation with active non-governmental organisations of women. They presented a number of project initiatives to prepare project applications and to submit them in tenders for national or international programmes, in mutual cooperation.

² <https://www.km.gov.lv/lv/integracija-un-sabiedriba/romi/projekti-un-pasakumi/latvijas-romu-platforma-iv#gsc.tab=0>

- **Expert meeting on measures to support Roma integration in Valka and Valga.**

On 6 February 2020, an expert meeting was held on the situation of the Roma and on measures to support Roma integration in the county of Valka and in the Valga City. The event was organised by the Ministry of Culture (hereinafter - MoC) in cooperation with the Ministry of Culture of the Republic of Estonia and the municipalities of Valga City and Valka City. The visit was attended by representatives from Latvian and Estonian Ministries of Culture, the authorities of Valka Municipality and the municipality of Valga City, operating in the fields of education, social issues and culture, as well as Roma experts and residents from Jelgava, Valmiera, Valga and Valka. As a result of the meeting, experts agreed on the development of mutual cooperation to promote Roma integration in order to improve the education and social situation of Roma in the city of Valga and the city of Valka. It is planned to develop cooperation and exchange of experience in the field of Roma mediation, taking into account the launch of Roma mediator in the city of Valga in 2020. As one of the best practices developed in both Valga and Valka, the work of the creative studio "Joy" is recognised, which helps children, young people and adults to learn different styles of music and develop their vocal skills, and brings together young people of different nationalities. Conclusions on meetings and recommendations for future cooperation regarding a Roma integration are available on the website of MoC.³

- **Visit of experts on the exchange of experience and good practice in Vilnius on the integration of Roma into the labour market**

A visit to Vilnius (Lithuania) on the integration of Roma into the labour market took place on 21 and 22 November 2019. Experts from the Latvian state institutions (MoW, MoC, State Employment Agency (SEA) and local governments (Ventspils and Jelgava cities) met with Lithuanian responsible specialists to discuss local Roma integration practices in the field of employment, particularly the content and results of the European Social Fund (hereinafter - ESF) project "Work together with Roma". The activities of the project have enabled more than 300 Roma to find new jobs, build their capacity for work and skills, build new work experience, learn their rights and also recognise their responsibilities. The results and recommendations of the good practice visit were presented at the meeting of the Social Inclusion Policy Coordination Committee at the MoW on 10 June 2020. Detailed information on the visit of good practice to Lithuania on the integration of Roma in the labour market is available in the summary.⁴

³https://www.km.gov.lv/uploads/ckeditor/files/Sabiedribas_integracija/Romi/Latvijas%20romu%20platforma%20OIV/Minutes_Meeting_Valga_LV_240220.pdf

⁴https://www.km.gov.lv/uploads/ckeditor/files/Sabiedribas_integracija/Romi/Latvijas%20romu%20platforma%20OIV/Kopsavilkums_LT_230120.pdf

- **Life stories about Latvian Roma in public media (LSM.LV).**

Publications on the life of Latvia's Roma activists have been produced in cooperation with the publicist Elvita Ruka. As a result, five positive stories, inspiring and of good quality, featuring Latvian Roma are available to readers on the Latvian public media site: <https://www.lsm.lv/temas/romi/>

- **Support measures to strengthen Roma civil society.**

In order to promote the possibility of participation of Latvian Roma at EU level, Roma activists and Roma NGO representatives were offered the opportunity to attend an English training course free of charge. Two candidates showed interest, but only one Roma activist partly learned the English language course due to the constraints imposed by the emergency situation in March 2020.

1.2. THE MAIN RESULTS ACHIEVED FOR THE IMPLEMENTED PROJECT MEASURES:

- 230 people involved in the project, including 103 public administration and local government representatives, 70 Roma representatives, 14 representatives from non-Roma NGOs and others, and support to 149 Roma families has been provided. Representatives from 19 Latvian cities and municipalities were involved in the project: Daugavpils, Dobele, Jelgava, Jūrmala, Kandava, Krāslava, Kuldīga, Limbaži, Madona, Preiļi, Rēzekne, Rīga, Rūjiena, Talsi, Tukums, Valmiera, Valka, Ventspils and Viļaka.
- Cooperation and dialogue between representatives of ministries, their subordinate agencies and local municipalities, and specialists in tackling Roma issues improved during the project.
- Roma mediation practices in Latvian municipalities have been advanced and supported in order to promote better dialogue between Roma families at risk of social exclusion and local authorities.
- The exchange of mutual learning and best practices between the parties involved in policy implementation was supported in the main areas of Roma integration – health, education and social support.
- Participation of Roma young people in civil society and cooperation with active Latvian youth organisations and Roma young people from Estonia and Lithuania has been strengthened.
- The participation of Roma women in civil society and cooperation with the organisation for advocacy of Latvian women has been advanced, as well as collaboration with Lithuanian and Estonian Roma women is established.
- In order to diminish biases against Roma, public awareness of Latvian Roma, their culture, their lifestyle and their success was improved, promoting the positive life stories of Roma residents.

1.3. OPINIONS OF THE EXPERTS ON THE ACTIVITIES OF THE “LATVIAN ROMA PLATFORM IV” PROJECT

- **Roma mediation practices** are a promising approach to improve the situation of Roma families at risk of social exclusion and foster their social inclusion. The Roma mediator promotes better and more efficient access to the various services provided by municipalities and public administrations, as well as the use of ESF projects’ capabilities. Cooperation between Roma mediators and Roma associations (NGOs), state and municipal agencies (State Employment Agency (SEA), Centre for Disease Prevention and Control (CDPC), local Youth Centres), needs to be further developed and joint events should be organised involving as many Roma as possible. It is necessary to develop Roma mediation practices in other municipalities, too.
- **Coordination between the parties involved in the shaping and implementation of Roma integration policies should be developed**, particularly between national authorities – ministries and agencies. One of the tasks of municipalities would be the involvement of Roma children in pre-school education, in cooperation with local Roma mediators. It is essential to develop a Roma employment support measure in cooperation between the MoC and SEA.
- **The public has a superficial knowledge** of the social problems of the Roma, their social exclusion, and their traditional culture, and modern contexts of the Roma culture.
- **Lack of data on the situation of Roma** the more effective planning of policy initiatives to improve their positions in key areas; **the monitoring system should also be improved.**
- **The implementation of Roma policy measures needs to allocate more financial resources from the national budget**, not just from the European Commission's programmes.
- In developing Roma integration policies, greater emphasis should be placed on **educating Roma children and young people** and on strengthening Roma civil society activists and organisations.

Identified best practices:

- Good practices in Lithuania in the field of employment would also be useful for Latvia. For example, we should discuss the results of the ESF project “Work together with Roma” to promote Roma integration in the labour market and the adaptation of this project's approach to the Latvian context.

- Local governments are working to support and promote Roma education, mainly in the context of inclusive education. Good practice in Ventspils is based on research on the school environment and regular monitoring of the well-being of pupils, professional support teams.
- Roma youth workshops are designed as a Baltic-wide event inviting young people from Lithuania and Estonia to work together and write joint projects to be submitted to the EU or other funding programmes.
- The Roma mediator and the teacher's assistant with Roma descent play a very important role in promoting the cooperation of educational establishments and Roma parents. It is important to continue and develop these practices in Latvian municipalities, taking into account positive results of its application, particularly in the field of education.

2. PARTICIPANTS/EXPERTS 'RECOMMENDATIONS FOR DEVELOPMENT OF THE LATVIAN ROMA PLATFORM AND ROMA INTEGRATION POLICY

2.1. RESULTS OF THE WORK OF THE WORKING GROUPS:

Participants of the coordination meeting of the Latvian Roma Platform developed recommendations and practical solutions in three thematic groups:

Group I: Development of the role of Roma mediators in cooperation with national and local authorities, in partnership with non-governmental organisations and NGO representatives.

Group II: Support to the civic participation of young Roma.

Group III: More effective solutions to the Roma employment issues.

GROUP I: DEVELOPMENT OF THE ROLE OF ROMA MEDIATORS IN COOPERATION WITH NATIONAL AND LOCAL AUTHORITIES, IN PARTNERSHIP WITH NON-GOVERNMENTAL ORGANISATIONS AND NGO REPRESENTATIVES

Objective: Develop sustainable solutions to ensure the active functioning of Roma mediators by fostering their capacity.

IMPLICATIONS BY WORKING GROUP:

- A more accurate description of the profession 'mediator' is needed, which includes and provides for professional development and supervision.
- The mediator needs to improve language and digital skills, and municipalities employing mediators should explore the possibility of providing them with technical capacity (computer and mobile phone, working spaces, transport).
- The mediator needs a support person in the municipality, preferably at least one local government employee for communication regarding Roma issues.

- Provide information to local governments with a significant Roma population about the practices and results of Roma mediation, as well as job challenges and guidelines.

GROUP II: SUPPORT TO THE CIVIC PARTICIPATION OF YOUNG ROMA

Objective: develop recommendations for effective strategies for the outreach and engagement of Roma young people, address their interests and leisure priorities accordingly, as well as identify ways of gradually promoting their civic activity and responsibility.

IMPLICATIONS BY WORKING GROUP:

- Joint cultural and intercultural dialogue activities are suggested both for Roma and non – Roma youth.
- It is necessary to develop work with young people in Latvia on identifying and promoting the cultural heritage of Roma, also attracting non-Roma young people.
- A teacher's assistant with Roma descent and Roma mediator would help teachers to address cultural issues in school, while working with young Roma, educate his/her colleagues about the traditional cultural characteristics of Roma and the social fabric of the Roma community. Representatives of the helping professions who work with Roma people, especially young people, need courses on culturally sensitive work with Roma people.
- It is useful to prepare some Roma young people who would, on the principle of “peer-to-peer”, educate their counterparts on the issues of sexual and reproductive health.
- In order to involve Roma young people from traditional Roma families more effectively, it is necessary to cooperate with the person in trust from the local Roma environment. For example, in order to ensure the participation of Roma youth in a certain support measure or event, a person in trust, who is aware of the potential young Roma, reaches out to them and participates in the event together with them. Such a person should provide at least 3 young people from different Roma families.

GROUP III: MORE EFFECTIVE SOLUTIONS TO THE ROMA EMPLOYMENT ISSUES

Objective: develop cooperation between national and local authorities, Roma mediators and activists, to model more effective ways of boosting Roma employment.

IMPLICATIONS BY WORKING GROUP:

- Measures need to be taken to reduce illiteracy in the Roma community and to improve their state language skills.
- Promotion of a wider involvement of Roma people, particularly the long-term unemployed and the low-education Roma unemployed, in employment promotion and support measures of the SEA, for example through the use of career advisor services.

- To offer Roma mobility measures (such programme exists in SEA) to carry out appropriate jobs elsewhere, such as picking berries during the summer season with specific farmers. The SEA also has programmes to promote the self-employment of Roma women, for example by training them in the manicure master, hairdresser, baker professions.
- To make more active use of the non-formal learning approach in order to obtain professional qualifications for Roma.
- Organise a meeting between the MoC and the SEA to discuss training/employment activities targeted at Roma, including employers' meetings with potential job seekers - Roma.

2.2. RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FUTURE ACTIVITIES OF THE LATVIAN ROMA PLATFORM AND ROMA INTEGRATION POLICY

National level

- The best practices for Roma integration in states with a small Roma population are Romani mediators. It is necessary to promote the visibility of the mediators by creating publicity about them and their work. Mediators have to have the methodical support: supervisions and regular training.
- it is necessary to develop cooperation of the MoC with the co-responsible ministries (MoES, MoW, MoH) and their subordinate institutions, including measures to support Roma integration emphasised in the sectoral policy guidelines. In mutual cooperation it is possible to design concrete set of Roma integration measures reflecting basic support measures in key areas.
- In order to improve public awareness and awareness-raising measures, it is necessary to develop a systemic approach, particularly by promoting the cultural competence of professionals working with Roma.
- Continue to develop the Latvian Roma platform by extending Roma involvement in the implementation of Roma integration policy and by developing cooperation and dissemination of information at local level.
- Establishing support measures for the more effective involvement of Roma unemployed in the labour market during the investment planning period of the EU Structural Funds (2021-2027), in particular for capacity building and skills development of long-term Roma unemployed (with primary and lower education levels), including targeted support for them during job seeking period.
- Provide support measures for employers and Roma employees to reduce the risk of discrimination against Roma in the labour market.
- Improving cooperation with Roma NGOs; promoting traineeships for Roma activists in non – Roma NGOs that would train them in the project design and implementation of projects.
- Expanding the network of regional experts on Roma integration (involvement of new experts).

- Expanding the number of municipalities with Romani mediators.
- Establishment of a NGO by active Roma women at the national scale, as well development of the network of Roma women at the Baltic level.
- Continue work to activate Roma young people through social networks and creative and cultural events.

Municipal level

- Provide Roma people with better access to the range of services in the areas of social support, health, education, housing and employment. For example, provide information on services in 'easy language', as Roma who have a very low level of education, including illiteracy, need to have access to information relevant to their perceptions on the access to different rehabilitation, education and employment services and opportunities.
- Activation and involvement of local Roma young people in joint actions motivating Roma and Roma young people to participate in the activities of local youth centres.
- Develop Roma mediation practices in municipalities, focusing on the following issues: educating parents and promoting employment, child care and protecting children's rights, health issues, involvement in relevant activities co-financed by the ESF projects, development of closer cooperation with specialists in a specific field (social services, crisis centres and education specialists), local NGO, and youth centres.
- Raising the issue of the involvement of a Roma teacher assistant in educational establishments with a significant number of Roma pupils in order to reduce the risk of prematurely abandoning the educational process (dropping - out) of Roma children. Examine the possibility of using ESF funding for this purpose from already running projects, using good practice from Daugavpils High School No 6.

July 27, 2020

Final report was prepared by

Dr.paed. Liesma Ose



The report has been developed under the project "The Latvian Roma platform IV" No. 856468-NRP4-LV with the financial support of the European Union Rights, Equality and Citizenship Programme 2014-2020. The author and Ministry of Culture of the Republic of Latvia is responsible for the contents of the material. It does not reflect the opinion of the European Commission.