

LATVIAN ROMA PLATFORM

activities, results and good practice



Photos from the Ministry of Culture, Haralds Elcers and Deniss Kretalovs.

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Kultūras ministrija



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LATVIAN ROMA PLATFORM

activities, results and good practice

„The motto of the Latvian Roma Platform is – dialogue, cooperation and involvement!

The goal of the projects is to fulfil this motto.

Focus has been targeted on activating the Roma people and their involvement in the project events.

The platform helps not only to share the good practice of Roma integration in Latvia, but also unite specialists from different areas in order to support Roma on their way to a better life.”

*Deniss Kretalovs, coordinator
of the Latvian Roma Platform projects*

The Latvian Roma Platform was developed in 2016, using funds from the European Union “Rights, Equality and Citizenship Programme 2014-2020”, and it is implemented by the Ministry of Culture that is responsible for coordination of the Roma integration policy at the national level.

The Latvian Roma Platform is not a new structure – **it is a set of activities that aimed at the improving cooperation, communication, experience exchange and raising awareness of all participants involved in the Roma integration process.** In order to develop the platform, the existing coordination mechanisms are used,

such as *the Advisory Council for Implementation of the Roma Integration Policy and the Network of Regional Experts on Roma Integration*, as well as the active NGOs and specialists from local governments.

Goal of the project – to promote cooperation and dialogue between the Roma civil society, representatives of the government and municipal institutions and social partners in order to ensure broader involvement of all stakeholders, as well as better coordination and implementation of the set of Roma integration policy measures at the national, regional and local levels.

The Latvian Roma Platform has been developed by implementing annual projects which included a number of activities, for example:

- meetings and experience Exchange visits of municipal experts in Latvia's regions,
- practical workshops and informative seminars for municipal specialists, for example, on Roma access to the European Social Fund (ESF) programs,
- informative events, including exhibitions, publishing of infor-

mative materials in order to raise public awareness of the Romani culture, history and social situation,

- trainings for representatives of the Roma civil society,
- Roma mediation practice support activities at the municipal level,
- supporting and empowerment activities for improving participation of Roma, especially youth and women, in development and implementation of the Roma integration policy.

Roma youth in workshop "Sāre Khetene 2019"

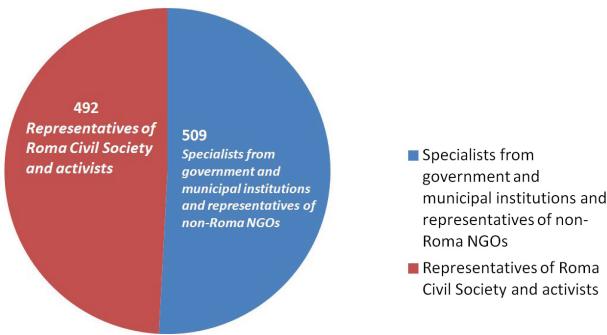


Photo: Deniss Krelatovs, 2019

PROJECT RESULTS

- Cooperation and dialogue between specialists and experts of the ministries, local governments and Roma have improved;
- Mutual learning of the involved stakeholders and exchange of sample practices on Roma integration have been supported;
- Public awareness on the Romani culture, history, including of the Roma genocide during World War II has increased;
- Participation of Roma in implementation of the Roma integration policy has been promoted.

Number of participants of the Latvian Roma platform projects activities



Since 2016, more than **930 participants** engaged in the project events, including about **509 representatives of government and municipal**

institutions and non-Roma NGOs, 10 international experts, as well as 492 Roma from 25 Latvian cities and towns.



PROJECT ACTIVITIES

Good practice exchange activities

Meetings of regional experts and good practice visits to local governments, where the good practice in Roma integration is being developed, including in education, employment, health care and housing areas, were held on a regular basis. During the platform projects' implementation, such good practice visits were held in Daugavpils, Jelgava, Jurmala, Limbazi district, Rezekne district and Vilaka district.

Representatives of the regional expert network on Roma integration issues during regional visits discussed the good practice in the main areas of Roma integration, as well as impro-

ved their knowledge and raised awareness on the situation of the Roma at the local level. The experts met local Roma activists and residents, discussed their living conditions and situation, looking for solutions to their everyday problems.

During the visits, meetings in educational institutions, social affairs departments, local branches of the State Employment Agency, culture institutions as well as city and local council premises were organized.

Such visits gave possibility to experts from different Latvian municipalities to know more about the good practices of Roma integration in Latvia,

*Meeting of regional experts and good practice visit to Limbazi district
(Ladezers school)*



Photo: Ministry of Culture, 2018

learn from it and assess possibilities to adapt it to their municipality. Reports on the regional expert meetings and experience exchange visits were prepared, including opinions, challenges, conclusions and practical solutions, and are available on the internet website of the Ministry of Culture.¹

In total about 122 specialists from 18 Latvian municipalities and Roma representatives took part in the meetings and visits.

On October 3, 2018, **expert discussion “Coordination of Roma integration policy implementation in countries with a small Roma population”** was organized by the Ministry of Culture in cooperation with the Council of Europe *Ad hoc* Committee of Experts on Roma and Travellers Issues (CAHROM). Participants of the discussion included experts from Georgia, Estonia, Lithuania, Norway, Finland and Slovenia, an expert from the European Centre for Minority Issues, as well as national representatives from the responsible ministries and state agencies, regional experts in Roma integration issues from 11 Latvian municipalities and representatives of the Roma civil society.

Experts shared the good practices in coordination and implementation of the Roma integration policy, marking challenges and problematic issues, in order to achieve better results in social inclusion of the Roma into society. Discussing their experience, mutual learning, an opportunity aimed at the better defining the challenges in Roma integration policy and find more efficient solutions to implement sustainable Roma integration policy in countries with a small Roma population. During activity, it was possible to learn experience of the neighbouring countries and their approach to cooperation development between the government and municipal institutions and Roma community members, compare it with local policy coordination practices and Roma integration measures implemented in Latvia as well as possible practical solutions that would improve the Roma situation at the local level.

Discussion results are summarized in the Thematic report, which reflects practices of development and coordination of Roma integration policy in countries with a small Roma population – in Georgia, Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, Norway, Finland and Slovenia.

¹ Reports are available on the internet website of the Ministry of Culture, on the visit to Jurmala, Jelgava and Daugavpils <https://www.km.gov.lv/lv/integracija-un-sabiedriba/romi/projekti-un-pasakumi/latvijas-romu-platforma/regionalo-ekspertu-sanaksnes>; On the visit to Limbazi district https://www.km.gov.lv/uploads/ckeditor/files/Sabiedribas_integracija/Romi/Platforma/Nosleguma%20zinojums_Limbazi.pdf; On the visit to Rezekne district and Vilaka district https://www.km.gov.lv/uploads/ckeditor/files/Sabiedribas_integracija/Nosl%C4%93guma%20zi%C5%86ojums_Malta_Vi%C4%B-Caka_070319.docx.pdf

“Roma integration, social inclusion and culture development issues are among the most topical and sensitive issues on the agenda of international organisations. Today, the majority of European countries implement a targeted Roma integration policy, based on international recommendations. It should be remembered, however, that the Roma living conditions and situations are quite different in many European countries. It is a huge challenge for countries with a small Roma population to develop Roma integration policy effectively because often there is a lack of political and financial support. Besides, the Roma civil society has weak capacity and lack of educated people, the intercultural dialogue and cooperation between the Roma and other organisations and representatives of other groups of interests are not developed sufficiently. Latvia has already achieved much by implementing a set of policy measures for Roma integration – the Latvian Roma Platform is being developed with the EU support, initiatives of the Roma NGOs are regularly supported at the regional level, especially on the Roma culture development, Roma mediation practice is implemented at the local level, a regional expert network has been established, including representatives from 18 municipalities, more and more Roma representatives are being engaged in the European Social Fund support measures.”

Deniss Kretalovs, coordinator of the Roma Platform Project

Expert discussion



Photo: Deniss Kretalovs, 2018

Support to Roma mediation practice development in Latvian municipalities

In 2017, five Roma mediators were prepared and started work in Latvian cities – Valmiera, Ventspils, Jelgava, Dobele and Riga.

The main task of Roma mediators is *to promote and ensure a dialogue and cooperation between the Roma families and specialists of municipal institutions and government agencies in such areas as education, social issues, employment, protection of children's rights, etc.*

Roma mediators help to analyse the situation of the Roma and problematic issues at local level, and, in cooperation with representatives of the municipal department for social services, education board and other institutions, find respective solutions in order to facilitate integration and social inclusion of the disadvantaged Roma families which live at social and poverty risks. In addition Roma mediator informs the local Roma residents using an “easy” language on possibilities to receive social support, on access to ESF support measures and services provided by the local

government, as well as motivates the Roma to go to school, to be active in the job market, culture and youth events.²

The mediator's tasks are defined in special guidelines³:

- to ensure services of the Roma mediator by providing communication and dialogue between employees of municipal institutions and Roma families, improving accessibility of the state and municipal services to the Roma in the framework with the guidelines and individual work plan for Roma mediators;
- to cooperate with the disadvantaged Roma families, providing them individual consultations on different issues in the following areas: promoting education, especially involving Roma children and youth in the education process, and informing parents on the role of education; dealing with social issues, including improvement of the living conditions and issues of social housing; accessibility to health care; promoting employment; to

² Detailed information about the project event is available on the internet website of the Ministry of Culture <https://www.km.gov.lv/lv/integracija-un-sabiedriba/romi/projekti-un-pasakumi/latvijas-romu-platforma-ii/atbalsts-romu-mediatoriem>

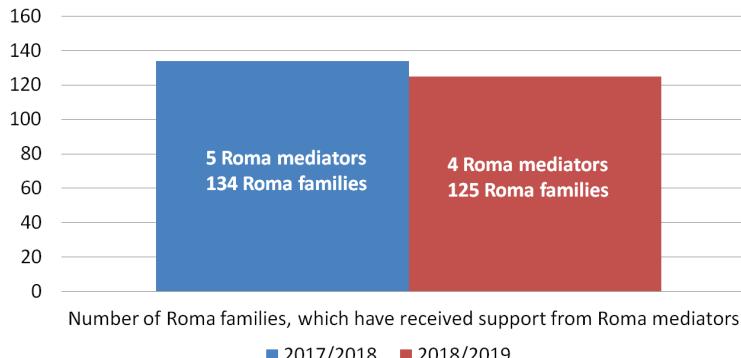
³ Guidelines are available on the internet website of the Ministry of Culture https://www.km.gov.lv/uploads/ckeditor/files/Sabiedrivas_integracija/Romi/Latvijas%20romu%20platforma%20III/Darba_vadlinijas_romu_mediatoriem.pdf

Roma mediators receiving their certificates



Photo: Deniss Kretalovs, 2017

- follow and update the situation of the Roma at the local level, informing the responsible officials of local government about the most urgent needs and problem issues;
- to promote engagement of the Roma in the European Social Fund (ESF) support measures organised by the local government, for example, activities of “PROTI un DARI!” (KNOW AND DO!) project, “Pumpurs” project to promote reduction of drop-out rates in schools, etc., in order to help the Roma equally with other target groups to use the offered support opportunities;
 - to participate in the exchange seminar of Roma mediators and other project activities.



Experience exchange seminar on the work of the Roma mediators in 2018



Photo: Ministry of Culture, 2018

In order to facilitate support of Roma mediators, assessing Roma mediators' work experience and achieved results, every year **best practice exchange seminar on Roma mediators' work in municipalities** is held annually. Tasks, guidelines and ethical principles were presented at the seminars, experience of the Roma mediators was discussed. Based on the survey results, mutual cooperation between the Roma mediators and representatives of municipal institutions is assessed regularly, benefits and future challenges are analysed and published in the Asses-

sment report on the performance and results of the Roma mediators.⁴

Those municipal employees who were in close cooperation with the Roma mediators confirmed that *the mediator helped them to improve the dialogue with the disadvantaged Roma families and find solutions to a number of problems, as well as informed on the most urgent needs and Romani culture aspects.* Mediators promoted Roma access to local services and support measures. But the biggest contribution of the Roma mediators is strengthening of the role and education in the Roma families,

⁴ Assessment report is available on the internet website of the Ministry of Culture https://www.km.gov.lv/uploads/ckeditor/files/Sabiedribas_integracija/Romi/Pasakumi/labas%20prakses%20apmainas%20seminars/1.2.6.%20Izvertejums%20_romu_med_darbs.pdf

assistance to Roma to engage in the job market and solve housing issues.

Considering assessment of the Roma mediators' work results and cooperation experience, starting from October 2018, Jelgava city and Vents-

pils city local councils ensured co-financing for activities of the Roma mediators in their cities. This good practice will be developed further by attracting new local government and Roma activists.

As a representative of a local government admitted –
„the Roma mediator is very important because he/she promotes and changes the public opinion about Roma, consolidates the Roma community, ensures trust and motivation to change the situation in their families.”

A discussion during the experience exchange seminar in 2019



Photo: Deniss Krelatovs, 2019

Practical workshops from municipal employees

Practical workshops “Improvement of the social situation of the Roma families at the local level” have been organised in local governments (Valmiera, Jelgava, Daugavpils and Ventspils) in order to improve knowledge of municipal specialists on Roma integration issues and improve Roma access to social services, benefits and support programs, and consult local specialist and Roma civil society representatives on the available ESF support programs, namely, project „PuMpURS” that

aims to promote disruption of education; project „PROTI un DARI!” (KNOW AND DO!) that is aimed at NEET youth who do not study or work, support measures of project “Support to long-term unemployed”, and activities of project “Promoting diversity”, including raising motivation and support services to groups of persons subjected to social exclusion and discrimination risks.

In total 120 participants from 19 Latvian cities took part in the workshops.

Workshop "Improvement of the social situation of the Roma families at the local level" in Daugavpils



Photo: Deniss Kretalovs, 2017

Seminar on promoting Roma employment

In order to facilitate cooperation between employers and representatives of the Roma community a **seminar “Access of Roma representatives to the job market”** was organised on March 2018.⁵

Participants of the seminar discussed:

- needs of Roma in a job market and challenges which Roma and employers faced,
- successful experience in engaging Roma in the job market, including experience of employers employing Roma in their companies,
- measures and opportunities that would help potential Roma employees to engage in the job market more efficiently,
- issues on access of long-term unemployed Roma to the job market, including available support measures organised by the State Employment Agency for the unemployed Roma with relatively low education level and lack of work experience.

It was concluded during the discussion that, **despite the positive employment practice, Roma face**

negative and superstitious attitude based on negative stereotypes in the labour market.

Individual mentoring support to Roma for better engagement in the job market is necessary, including in searching for a job, preparing for job interviews, defence of interests and human rights. Roma who have low education level should be ensured **better access to information about opportunities and availability of different services**. At the same time, special events for raising Roma self-awareness, as well as special **events improving their education and skills** should be developed.

Summary report on the seminar results was prepared, including practical recommendations for further work and cooperation development.⁶ Based on these recommendations, support measures for Roma inclusion in the labor market will be developed, as well as the employers’ network, who are ready to support Roma employment will be developed. The seminar was chaired by Roma activist Dainis Krauklis.

⁵ <https://www.km.gov.lv/lv/integracija-un-sabiedriba/romi/projekti-un-pasakumi/latvijas-romu-platforma-ii/romu-pieeja-darba-tirgum>

⁶ Report available on the internet website of the Ministry of Culture https://www.km.gov.lv/uploads/ckeditor/files/Sabiedribas_integracija/Romi/Platorma/Nosleguma_zinojums_280318.pdf

Discussion during seminar “Access of Roma representatives to the job market”



Photo: Deniss Kretalovs, 2018

Events to promote engagement of Roma youth and women

On June 6-8, 2018, in cooperation with the Agency for International Programs for Youth (JSPA) and the State Education Development Agency, the first **Latvian Roma youth practical workshop “SĀRE KHETENE”** was organised by the Ministry of Culture in order to strengthen the Roma youth capacity, promote development of youth communication and cooperation skills, inform youth on participation opportunities in different national and European support programs.⁷

During the workshop, participants were informed about support programmes available for youth, they obtained knowledge and awareness about involvement of youth in deve-

lopment of civil society and the role of voluntary work. While working in working groups, the youth developed skills to form mutual cooperation, presented project ideas and initiatives in different areas of life – culture, sports, arts and public order. Together with Latvian youth organisation and JSPA specialists, the Roma youth were able to discuss their project ideas and proposals in order to implement them in the future.

Representatives of youth organisations shared their experience, informing the Roma youth about formation of the organisation and its sustainable activities, as well as the voluntary work in organisations, support activities of ERASMUS+

⁷ <https://www.km.gov.lv/lv/integracija-un-sabiedriba/romi/projekti-un-pasakumi/latvijas-romu-platforma-ii/tris-dienu-praktiska-darbnica-romu-jauniesu-kapacitates-stiprinasanai>

programme and other programmes. The practical workshop helped the Roma youth to develop mutual communication, promote their awareness opportunities to get involved in development of the civil society through different activities, such as idea workshops, discussions in work groups, sports and culture activities.

In 2019 this positive practice was continued, organising the Roma youth practical workshop “SĀRE KHETENE 2019” in cooperation with the Agency for International Programmes for Youth.

In total 33 Roma young people from 8 municipalities were participated in the practical workshop in 2018 and 2019.

Within the framework of the workshop, it is planned to develop cooperation with the Roma youth from Lithuania and Estonia in the future.

In 2019, a seminar “Women in communities and action” for strength-

ening capacity and promoting involvement of the Roma women was organised by “Women NGOs Cooperation Network of Latvia” in cooperation with the Ministry of Culture. The goal of the seminar was to build capacity and promote involvement of the Roma women living in municipalities, as well as development cooperation opportunities with Latvian active women. Participants of the seminar included active Roma women, including youth, from Jelgava, Kandava, Limbazi, Riga, Sabile, Valmiera, Valka: in total more than 30 Roma and non-Roma women.

During the seminar, the Roma women were able to

- discuss their future goals, share their values with activists from women organisations, discover their own new capabilities and talents, understand the basics of the career development and financial literacy;

Practical workshop for Roma youth “SĀRE KHETENE”



Photo: Deniss Kretalovs, 2018

- improve their cooperation skills, understand advantages of social networking, developing their own initiatives, creative ideas and projects under the lead of specialists;
- learn the approach for the best access to the labor market and State Employment Agency (SEA) support programmes that the unemployed Roma can use to increase their capacity.

A Summary Report has been developed on the seminar results, including recommendations for promoting engagement of Roma women.⁸

It is planned to develop future cooperation with organisation “Women NGOs Cooperation Network of Latvia”, organising events for Roma women and developing cooperation with the Lithuanian Roma women organisation.

The seminar showed that both, the active women who work in women NGOs in Latvia and the Latvian Roma women share common values and common interests. In two days, the seminar participants got to learn themselves better and improved their knowledge about how to manage finances, maintain health and development cooperation. Further tasks have been set – strengthening of cooperation at the local level, engaging Roma women in events, and implementing initiatives of the Roma women and girls that were developed during the seminar with the help of specially selected mentors.”

*Inete Ielite, the chair of organisation
“Women NGOs Cooperation Network of Latvia”*

Seminar for Roma women “Women in communities and action”



Photo: Haralds Elceris, 2019

⁸ Report available on the internet website of the Ministry of Culture <https://www.km.gov.lv/lv/integracija-un-sabiedriba/romi/projekti-un-pasakumi/latvijas-romu-platforma-iii>

Trainings for representatives of Roma non-governmental organisations (NGOs)

In order to improve project development and implementation skills for Roma NGOs' representatives and activists, regular trainings were organised.

Latvian Roma organisations have a number of opportunities to use the available financing support programs at the national and European level in order to implement their initiatives on Roma integration and culture development, but unfortunately, these organisations have lack capacity and experience. Aforementioned trainings allow Roma activists and organisation representatives to expand their knowledge on development of their strategy, help them learn to define their goals and tasks better, define their project ideas, practically elaborate project applications, deve-

lop cooperation skills and partnership networks. During the trainings participants learned skills for development of the content and budget sections of project applications, including, to define the project goals and the set of activities more clearly, provide appropriate argumentation for proposed actions and identified problems as well as accurately draw up the planned results. As a result of the training, representatives of NGOs developed project applications which are submitted to the regional NGO support project tenders.

Practical recommendations and guidelines for representatives of Roma NGOs on development of project applications for regional NGO support project tenders are elaborated during the training.⁹

Training for representatives of Roma NGOs



Photo: Deniss Kretalovs, 2016

⁹ Practical recommendations and guidelines are available on the internet website of the Culture Ministry https://www.km.gov.lv/uploads/ckeditor/files/Sabiedrības_integrācija/Romi/Plat-forma/Vadl%C4%ABnijas_romi.pdf

Educational lectures and exhibitions in local governments on the Romani culture, history, including about the Roma genocide during World War II in Latvia

Educational lectures in Jelgava, Tukums and Ventspils are organised in order to raise awareness of the representatives of local governments, including experts, teachers, social workers and culture activists about the Latvian Roma culture and history, including the Roma Genocide during World War II. Within the framework of this activity, exhibition "Roma Holocaust in Latvia (1941-1945)" was organised by the Roma Culture Centre in each of the above mentioned local governments.¹⁰ The tragic historical period were discussed, for example, extermination of Roma by the Valgums Lake in

Tukums and in Jelgava by Siermuiža and Ērmīķi pine forest, as well as stories of Roma saviours - because thanks to Sabile City mayor Mārtiņš Bērziņš (1873-1968) and Talsi district chief Kārlis Krūmiņš (1895-1955) several hundreds of Latvian Roma were saved from the Genocide.

The educational lectures were provided by Normunds Rudevičs, the president of international organisation "International Romani Union". A performance of traditional Roma music group "Ame Roma" was organised during opening of the exhibition.

In total 146 participants from 9 Latvian municipalities took part in the lectures, and much more participants visited the exhibitions in municipalities.

In cooperation with organisation Roma Culture Centre, informative material on the Roma Genocide in Latvia (1941-1945) has been elaborated and published. The material is available on the internet website of the Ministry of Culture in Latvian and English.¹¹

In order to raise public awareness on the Latvian Roma cultural heritage and Roma personalities, on



Photo: Deniss Kretalovs, 2017

¹⁰ Information available on the internet website of the Ministry of Culture <https://www.km.gov.lv/lv/integracija-un-sabiedriba/romi/projekti-un-pasakumi/latvijas-romu-platforma/izstade-romu-holokausta-latvija> (Skatits 01.03.2018.)

¹¹ https://www.km.gov.lv/uploads/ckeditor/files/Sabiedribas_integracija/Romi/Platforma/Buletis_LV_Print_9Marts.pdf (Skatits 01.03.2018.)



Performance of traditional Roma music group “Ame Roma” during opening of the exhibition at Pārventa library

Photo: Deniss Kretalovs, 2017

May 2019, an informative seminar “Different faces of Latvian Romani culture” was organized in the Riga Film Museum.

During the seminar, an illustrated informative material „A short introduction to Latvian Romani culture” was presented which describes the history of the Latvian Romani culture and outstanding culture activists and their contribution to preservation of the Latvian Romani cultural heritage. The author of the

material is publicist Elvita Ruka, Mg.art. The material is available in Latvian and English on the internet website of the Ministry of Culture.¹²

During the seminar, the Latvian Romani culture was presented through Roma culture personalities who have contributed to the development and preservation of the Romani culture heritage. Roma culture activists and pioneers of the Roma civil society Jānis and Juris Leimanis, artist, painter and poet Kārlis

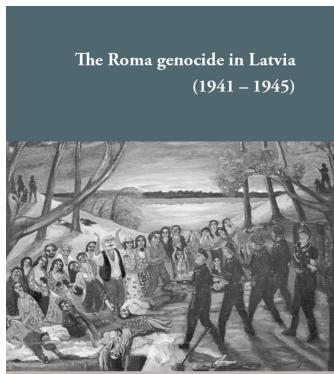
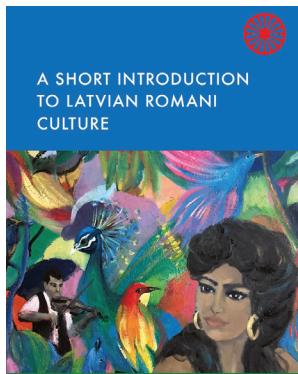


Photo: Deniss Kretalovs, 2017



¹² https://www.km.gov.lv/uploads/ckeditor/files/Sabiedribas_integracija/Romi/Romi_LV_web_FINAL.pdf



Foto: Vladlena Nagatinskaya

Topošā diriģente Agnese Korvstīle par dzīves misiju uzkata mūziku un mīlestību pret romu tautu

Rudevičs, awarded with the Order of Three Stars, and artistic director of Roma ensemble “Ame Roma” Arturs Kopiljenko were especially praised.

Folklorist Māra Viķsna described the history of the famous Roma Leimanis family and told about the history of the first book about the Latvian Roma published in Latvia in 1939 “Gypsies in Latvia’s forests, homes and markets”. Musicologist and author of book “Authentic Gypsy music” Ieva Tihovska, informed the participants about the authentic Romani music. But International Romani Union president Normunds Rudevičs presented art of his father

Kārlis Rudevičs and Roma Culture Centre head Roksana Rudeviča shared the story of traditional Roma music group “Ame Roma” established in 1976.

In order to promote the positive image of Roma, **success stories about Latvian Roma have been published** in mass media. In 2019, public media portal LSM.LV published three articles about the Roma – promised conductor Agnese Korvstīle, young Roma athlete and activist Tahirs Putraševičs, and Roma mediator Malda Avramenko. The positive stories will continue also in future platform projects.

„It is fantastic that thanks to this event we, the Latvian society, may learn more about the Latvian Romani culture, their unique heritage that developed in close connection with the Latvian culture, history and public processes. The Latvian Roma may be proud of their nationals, outstanding personalities who developed the Romani culture, contributed their creative spirit, power and energy in order to form a positive Roma image of a talented, creative and bright Roma nation in the world. I hope that the material on the Romani culture will promote better public awareness about Roma nation and reduce the existing negative stereotypes and Antigysyism.”

Deniss Kretalovs, coordinator of the Roma Platform Project

Annual meeting of the Latvian Roma platform

Every year, in the end of the project period, the Latvian Roma Platform meeting is held during which representatives of the Regional Expert Network on Roma Integration Issues, members of Roma Integration Policy Advisory Council and the Roma civil society discuss results of the project activities, the good practice in Roma integration key areas, challenges and solutions in order to implement and coordinate Roma integration policy at the national level more effectively.

Every meeting was attended by about 45 specialists from government and municipal institutions and Roma civil society representatives from all Latvian regions.

The project results, expert recommendations and conclusions identified by working groups during the Annual Latvian Roma Platform meeting have been used for the drafting of the next Latvian platform Project applications. Summary reports

on the results of the Latvian Roma Platform have been elaborated.¹³

The working groups focused on such issues as

- trainings for Roma youth and their engagement in empowerment activities;
- engagement of Roma in the labour market and promotion their employment;
- trainings for Roma women and promoting their involvement in development of the civil society and within the implementation of the Roma integration policy;
- Roma mediation practice development (the main tasks and goals of the Roma mediators), their engagement mechanisms and models for cooperation with local government institutions;
- mechanisms for better access of Roma to the European Social Fund support measures;
- Roma culture events, promoting intercultural dialogue.

Participants of the Latvian Roma platform meeting in 2018



Photo: Ministry of Culture, 2018

¹³ Reports is available on the internet website of the Ministry of Culture <https://www.km.gov.lv/lv/integracija-un-sabiedriba/romi/projekti-un-pasakumi/latvijas-romu-platforma> (Skatīts 05.03.2018.)

STAFF OF PLATFORM PROJECTS

Deniss Kretalovs, coordinator of the Latvian Roma Platform projects, specialist in Social Integration Department of the Ministry of Culture, a member of the National Roma Contact Point at the European Commission and a member of the Council of Europe *Ad hoc* Committee of Experts on Roma and Travellers Issues.

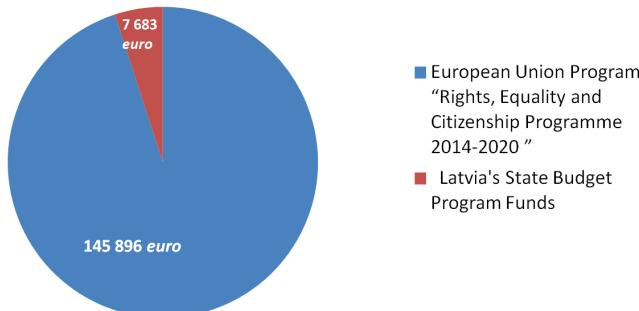
Kaspars Arhipovs, the Latvian Roma Platform projects' assistant under the Ministry of Culture, who is responsible for organisation of the Platform projects activities and development dialogue with the Roma representatives in order to motivate them to participate in the Platform as well as for promotion cooperation with other stakeholders of the Platform projects.

Dana Didžus, external expert of the Latvian Roma Platform projects,

who takes part in all Platform activities and assesses whether and to what extent Roma representatives take part in the events, whether their opinions, needs and proposals are taken into consideration during discussions, whether projects' activities are held in the framework of the projects activities' program. The external expert prepares a Evaluation reports of the Platform project activities and presents conclusions during the Annual Platform meetings.

Dana Didžus has been working with Roma integration issues in Jelgava City for a long period of time - since 2009 she has been working as Roma teacher assistant at Jelgava Primary School No.4 and takes active part in the implementation of different international projects aimed at Roma integration; works in Roma organisation "Romani čačipen" in Jelgava city.

Funding of Latvian Roma Platform Projects for period
2016-2019



General information:

Considering Latvia's socio-economic situation, especially in the areas of education, employment, health care and housing, as well as the small Roma population in the country, the Ministry of Culture in cooperation with other responsible ministries has been implementing national set of policy measures for Roma integration since 2012.

Until 2018, these events were included in the **National Identity, Civil Society and Integration Policy Guidelines for 2012-2018**, but from 2019 in the **National Identity, Civil Society and Integration Policy Plan for 2019-2020**.

The Advisory Council on Implementation of the Roma Integration Policy

The Advisory Council on Implementation of the Roma Integration Policy was established in 2012 in order to ensure planning and coordination of Roma integration policy measures among several stakeholders, including the co-responsible state institutions, Roma NGOs and non-Roma NGOs which work in the field of Roma integration. The Council's work is coordinated and chaired by the Ministry of Culture.

The goal of the Council is to *promote integration of the Latvian Roma and assess its implementation, strengthen cooperation of the Roma community and government institutions, and activate civil participation of the Roma community.*

The Council has following functions:

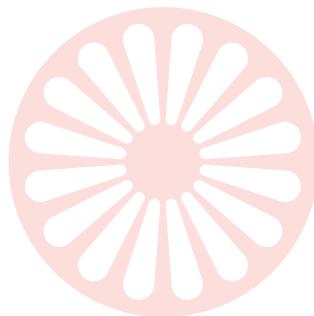
- ensures coordination and results assessment of the Roma integration policy results assessment;

- provides consultations and recommendations to the ministry of Culture and co-responsible ministries on the set of policy measures for Roma integration;
- promotes cooperation between the government administration and Roma community within implementation and development of Roma integration policy;
- provides support to the ministry in implementation and development of the Roma integration policy and preparation of the necessary information for the European Commission on the implementation of the set of policy measures for Roma integration.

Members of the Council were regularly informed on the relevant issues on Roma integration at the national and the EU levels, for example, about international events, the good

practice examples, the open project tenders, etc. The internet website of the Ministry of Culture has a section on Roma integration¹⁴ where the national and international documents, materials and informative reports and other materials on Roma

integration, are available. This section also has specialised materials for local government about the basic aspects of the Romani culture, Roma mediation practice , as well as access to the EU structural funds programs for Roma integration activities.



*Meeting of the Network of Regional Experts on Roma Integration Issues
in Jelgava City*



Photo: Ministry of Culture, 2017

¹⁴ <https://www.km.gov.lv/lv/integracija-un-sabiedriba/romi> (Skatīts 23.02.2018.)

The Network of Regional Experts on Roma Integration Issues

Considering the EU Council Recommendation on effective Roma integration measures in the Member States (9 December 2013), in order to promote information and experience regular exchange between local government specialists on Roma integration issues as well as to develop cooperation between the Ministry of Culture, municipal institutions and the Roma community in 2014 the Network of Regional Experts on Roma Integration Issues was established by the Ministry of Culture. The Network included official delegates from 19 Latvian municipalities (Daugavpils, Jelgava, Jekabpils, Jurmala, Riga, Dobele, Kandava, Kraslava, Kuldga, Limbazi, Madona, Preili, Rezekne, Rujiena, Tukums, Talsi, Valmiera, Ventspils and Vilaka).

Main tasks of the Network include:

- to coordinate information exchange of good practices, initiatives and situation in Roma integration at the national and EU level;
- to inform and consult local government institutions on opportunities to access to the structural funds and financial programs of the national and EU levels in order to promote Roma integration;
- to promote cooperation of local government institutions and Roma communities, including Roma NGOs;
- to engage specialists of local government institutions in the implementation of the set of policy measures for Roma integration.

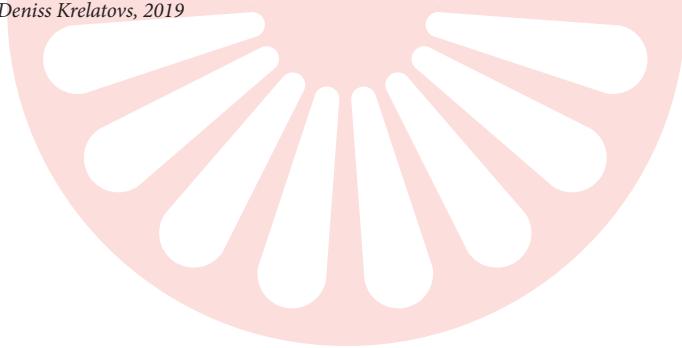
In the framework of the Network:

- informative events are organised in order to inform local government experts and Roma community representatives about participation possibilities in the ESF activities;
- the best Roma integration practices and initiatives as well as information about the Roma situation in municipal level are collected and disseminated to the Advisory Council on Implementation of the Roma Integration Policy and broader society. Results are submitted by the members of the Network are included in the Annual report on the Roma integration policy measures;
- experience and practices of the local governments are used in order to improve implementation of the set of policy measures for Roma integration.

Participants of Roma youth workshop „Sāre Khetene 2019”



Photo: Deniss Krelatovs, 2019





Kultūras ministrija



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