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**CAHROM THEMATIC VISIT ON ROMA INTEGRATION, POLICY DEVELOPMENT AND COORDINATION PRACTICES
IN COUNTRIES WITH A SMALL ROMA POPULATION
Riga - Jelgava - Jurmala, Latvia, 3-5 October 2018**

FINAL DRAFT THEMATIC REPORT

¹ The term “Roma and Travellers” is used at the Council of Europe to encompass the wide diversity of the groups covered by the work of the Council of Europe in this field: on the one hand a) Roma, Sinti/Manush, Calé, Kaale, Romanichals, Boyash/Rudari; b) Balkan Egyptians (Egyptians and Ashkali); c) Eastern groups (Dom, Lom and Abdal); and, on the other hand, groups such as Travellers, Yenish, and the populations designated under the administrative term “Gens du voyage”, as well as persons who identify themselves as Gypsies. The present is an explanatory footnote, not a definition of Roma and/or Travellers.

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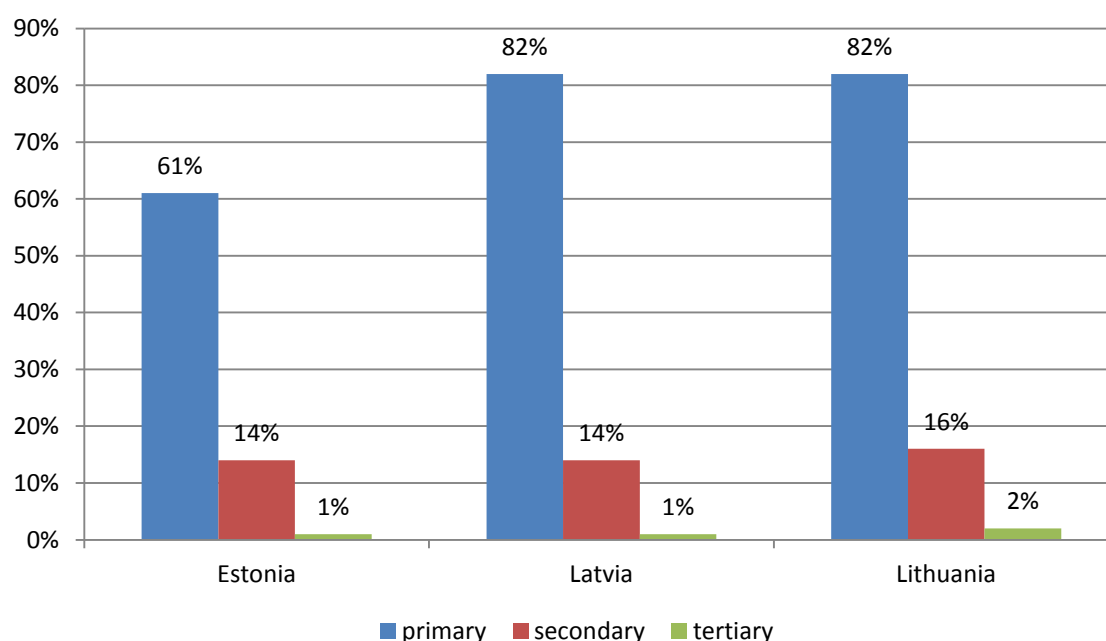
1. INTRODUCTION

1.1. Context of the thematic report and visit

The situation of Roma communities has been a matter of serious concern for at least three decades and actions have been taken at the international and national levels. Generally, the attention of the international community focuses on countries with a large Roma community, while countries with smaller Roma communities do not attract enough attention with regard to the situation of Roma and /or the effectiveness of Roma-related policies, although – despite their small number – problems faced by Roma in those countries are the same: marginalisation and lack of social integration, which results from a low level of education, absence on the labour market and dependency on social benefits as well as a discriminatory attitude from the majority population.

The level of education in Roma communities is a significant factor of their marginalisation and also hinders their full integration; data from censuses in the countries participating in the visit illustrating the level of education can be found below (Georgia, Norway and Slovenia do not collect data on education of ethnic minorities):

Graph 1: Education level (%) of Roma communities in Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania on the basis of censuses (in case of Estonia and Latvia missing percentage to the 100 % means “no data”)



It should be underlined that years of experience on Roma policies and conception of national Action Plans or National Roma Integration Strategies have had twofold results: on the one hand – diagnoses of the situation of Roma in respective countries, strategic documents and budgeting, legal and organisational/institutional frameworks and specific tools; on the other hand – lists of existing gaps, structural, formal and cultural barriers that hinder the Roma access to public services and /or their participation in public life on equal footing.

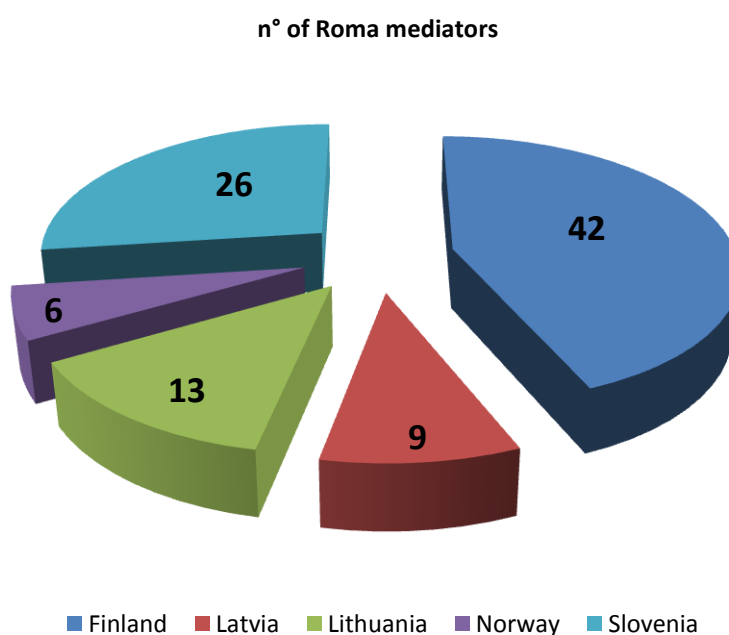
These lessons learned should be used by all countries with Roma communities, including those countries with a relatively small number of Roma inhabitants which should benefit from that experience even further, as the

cost of integration actions and policies are relatively lower, as compared with countries where Roma constitute hundreds of thousands of excluded and marginalised persons.

Among the structural tools several should be mentioned as the most efficient: political will to introduce Roma-related policy (or policy related to vulnerable groups, including Roma); accurate diagnosis of the situation, including mapping based on available data; adequate prioritization of the area of intervention, tailored to the local circumstances; legal framework - strategic documents with adequate financial and human resources for their implementation, if possible - on the regional and local level as well; involving relevant stakeholders, including local level authorities, non-governmental organisations and governmental entities.

Concrete methods are being implemented with promising results in many countries, first and foremost through the system of Roma mediators (school mediators, community mediators, labour market mediators and health mediators) which is so far the most efficient and effective practice; however, the benefits stemming from the work of mediators are well undervalued: the number of mediators working in the participating countries in the visit is far from needed, taking into account the above mentioned level of education:

Graph 2: the number of Roma mediators in countries participating in the visit (no mediators in Estonia and Georgia)



Among other significant mechanisms contributing to the structural improvement of the situation of Roma, the following should be indicated: pre-school education; inclusive education; scholarships system for all levels of education; system of support teachers (tutors), informal education especially for Roma children and youth; promotion of vocational education for Roma youth; support for Roma women – as they – being responsible for children – are much more determined to invest in children’s education and development; involving the Roma representatives (NGO, mediators, local leaders, etc.) in the implementation of the actions taken through consultation, decision making processes and mediation; professional activation of Roma youth and adults through training, classes, internships, apprenticeships etc.

The weak socio-economic status of Roma communities' demands interrelated activities as there is a clear correlation between education and employment, employment and housing, housing and health conditions; a specific approach is needed to empower Roma women, as their position within very traditional communities is subordinated to men and other members of the family. Therefore, the area of interventions (or at least planned actions) should be wide; the table below gives an overview of possible domains where the support of the state is needed, including information about the scope of interventions in countries participating in the visit:

	Education	Health	Housing	Employment	Anti-discrimination	Women	Youth	Participation	Social rights	Justice	ID	Media	Culture	Other topics/ Remarks
EST	Mainstreamed													Estonian Strategy of Integration and Social Cohesion "Integrating Estonia 2020". The Strategy notes: "In terms of linguistic-cultural communities, special attention should be paid to Roma, whose integration with society should be supported".
FIN	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y +Mainstreamed	Y	Y +Mainstreamed	Y	Y	Not relevant	Y	Y	Y	LOCAL AND REGIONAL implementation. ROMA WOMEN: included in revised strategy; violence against Roma women is mainstreamed JUSTICE: related to Roma prisoners.
GEO	Mainstreamed													
LVA	Y +Mainstreamed	Mainstreamed	Mainstreamed	Mainstreamed	Y +Mainstreamed	Mainstreamed	Y +Mainstreamed	Y	Mainstreamed	Mainstreamed	N	Mainstreamed	Y	Coordination of the policy; support and consultation providing to Roma NGO; ROMA WOMEN: included in Latvian Roma Platform project.
LTU	Y	M	M	Y	Y	Y	M	Y	M	M	M	M	Y	
NOR	Y	N	N	N	Y	N	N	Y	N	N	N	N	Y	
SVN	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y +Mainstreamed	Y +Mainstreamed	Y	Y	N	N	Y +Mainstreamed	Y	Coordination of policies and responsible national or local institutions; data collection/analysis in the field of housing; focus on local implementation; monitoring and evaluation. This is a targeted programme approach, but combined with the Law on Roma Community in the Republic of Slovenia, the sectorial laws that cover a certain area (e.g. pre-school and primary school education, culture, media, self-government (local political participation); regional development, etc.), and different programme documents or strategies in certain areas (e.g. gender equality, youth, social security, culture, language policies, etc.).
Y – Yes, area included into the National Roma Inclusion Strategy					N – No, area not included into the National Roma Inclusion Strategy					Not relevant – the problem does not exist in the country			Mainstreamed – activities incorporated into mainstreamed activities	

On the other hand several barriers were recognised: lack of basic data relating to the situation of Roma (including education), lack of understanding of the specificity of Roma culture (and historic experiences that determine their situation and customs) which can be a serious barrier preventing them from full social integration, lack of sufficient financial resources and stable budgeting; project-to-project attitude instead of a long-term strategy, actions taken based only on external donors instead of national budget resources engagement, lack of efficient policy coordination at national level, lack of stable support for municipalities with Roma inhabitants, lack of professional qualification of staff working with people from different cultural backgrounds, working with Roma communities, etc.

In order to achieve a social integration of Roma communities, whenever they are recognised by national law as “minorities” or “vulnerable group” or not, several conditions should be fulfilled, starting with basic data on the number of the Roma population and – if possible – mapping of Roma communities/settlements. It must be underlined here that “mapping” should reflect a diagnosis of the situation and needs of Roma as well as existing support – in order to be a useful tool for the evaluation of the measures and goals achieved.

Roma should be empowered with representation vis-à-vis national and local authorities to take part in consultation and decision-making processes; a state agency responsible for Roma-related policy and its coordination should be appointed. Additionally, EU structural funds and other international organisations funds can be a significant source of financial support and should be used in favour of Roma communities, not only allocated to disfavoured / vulnerable groups but also those in rural areas, and for the development and innovation projects. The role of the municipalities is crucial so local authorities should be principal and active stakeholders and not only passive recipients of national budget funds devoted to the realisation of the integration strategy. Another effective tool is a Roma mediator system building good communication and mutual trust between communities and the authorities. The comparable overview of Roma policy coordination in light of the above-mentioned specific tools in countries taking part in the visit is contained in chapter II of this Report.

It must be emphasised that excluded groups, even in small numbers, result in disproportionately large losses, both in economic terms (taxes, social benefits, etc.) and in societal terms, fuelling social tensions, mutual distrust and hostility. For example, exclusion of Roma from education can generate costs to individuals, families, communities and even nations as a whole. These costs can work insidiously to propagate poverty and stagnate economic growth. Promoting inclusion in education has the potential to generate important financial and social gains at the individual, family, community and state levels. Financial stability allows for easier integration into society and defuses tensions and distrust.

1.2 Composition of the thematic group of experts

CAHROM experts participating in the visit represented a wide range of entities dealing with Roma issues at different levels: institutions responsible for national minorities and/or persons responsible for implementation of the inclusion strategies. Latvian experts represented: Department of Society Integration of the Ministry of Culture, Public Health Department, Ministry of Health, Job Search Support Unit of the State Employment Agency, Youth International Programs Agency, representatives of different municipalities, like: General Education School Division of the Education, Culture and Sport Department of the Riga Municipality, Dobeles County Council, Social Services Department of the Tukums Regional Municipality Agency "Tukums Region Social

Service", Lādezers Primary School, Folk School of Rujiena District, Roma day centre of the city of Jurmala, Department for the Society Integration, City Council of Jelgava, Jekabpils City Social Service Support Unit for Families with Children, and Roma mediators from: Riga, Ventspils, Valmiera and Jelgava, as well as Roma activist from those municipalities and representative of Latvian NGO: Latvian Centre for Human Rights. The list of experts participating in the thematic group can be found in *Appendix 2*.

1.3 Programme of the thematic visit and main issues addressed

The agenda (*Appendix 1*) included an exchange with international experts and discussions with experts from the Network of Regional Experts on Roma Integration Issues and several relevant ministries and state agencies, although only two state agencies were present: Ministry of Health and State Agency for Employment. The absence of representatives of relevant ministries such as the Ministry of Education and Science and the Ministry of Welfare indicates a lack of efficient cooperation in Latvia between the responsible governmental institutions.

During the second day, field visits to the municipalities of Jurmala and Jelgava were conducted, enabling direct contact with staff working with the Roma community, Roma mediators and Roma beneficiaries. Both municipalities have been long active with Roma related activities, but support is still needed. A good example of the municipalities' engagement into the activities is the co-financing of the position of Roma school mediator (teachers' assistants).

On the third day, there was a visit of the Roma Museum in Riga. A debriefing session between the experts of the thematic group was organised afterwards to conclude the results of the visit.

Jelgava is a multicultural city of 59,000 of inhabitants: 60 % Latvian, 25 % Russian, 5 % Byelorussians, 2, 5 % Ukrainians and 0,8 % Roma (approx.: 350 persons) which promotes its cultural diversity. 7 NGOs meet monthly to discuss recent development, needs, etc. Numbers of concerts and cultural event organised by different nationalities are organised, including Roma. The municipality conducts a survey on how minorities feel in the city (the experts think it would be interesting to survey the majority population of the city on their perception of minorities and compare the results). The level of unemployment of Roma is high so there is a need for closer cooperation with local entrepreneurs. A few Roma work: in cafés, one in the police, at schools, in kindergarten. There is one Roma NGO. The summer camp for approx. 20 Roma children is organised with a lot of activities, including educational, like Latvian language lessons, and the excursion for Roma children, events related with Roma holidays (8 April or 5 November, or Mothers' day, Christmas, etc.) or event concerning the promotion of healthy lifestyles. There is good cooperation with municipal Board of Education, and Roma children are included into integration activities through sports. Out of approx. 350 of Jelgava Roma 300 are involved in different activities. The Toy Library – common room for children is open since January 2018, engaging 99 children from 69 families (13 of them are Roma families). A Roma school mediator works with 26 Roma families and 29 Roma pupils. Roma pupils have good results in arts and sport, but do less well in science. According to the data, half of the adult Roma have not completed primary school. 56 children do not attend school and early marriages remain a significant obstacle.

In **Jurmala** a day centre for Roma exists, it is situated on the grounds shared by a mental health hospital and a retirement home. The districts of Sloka and Kaugari have the largest Roma population, but – unlike in Jelgava - there is no data on numbers. Roma from Jurmala travel abroad for seasonal work so the low number of active Roma remaining in the city make it difficult to find active partners in the community. Those who can be considered as “successful” refused to participate in the project on a voluntary basis. Out of 169 Roma registered in the centre, about 30 to 35 visitors are present daily. As in many localities, Roma women are much more active. The centre offers creative workshops for children, music and dancing activities, sports, etc. The centre also made an interesting research on what they want to be in the future and the answers included singer, beauty salon owner, hairdresser and also math teacher). The problem signalled by the Latvian participants is the problem of drug addiction in the community. The participants of the thematic visit agreed that the issue of addiction, especially from drugs, should be addressed separately within the thematic visit.

Some of the main points addressed during the thematic visit were the following: the political will to address Roma issues when this community is small in countries participating in the visit, the budgeting of Roma-related actions with special focus on advantages and disadvantages of EU funds in this regards, the cooperation between different state agencies (or its lack of) and coordination and monitoring mechanisms in place, the problem of data collecting, advantages and threats of “Roma mapping”, the need to involve municipalities into Roma projects, the practice of Roma mediators, the involvement of the NGO sector in Roma-related projects and the presence of Roma representatives in processes of designing and implementing Roma-related actions. Apart from Finland and Slovenia – the Roma communities are generally not active so state agencies representatives admit that there is a real problem with finding partners within Roma communities.

2. CONCLUSIONS, LESSONS LEARNT, GOOD PRACTICES IDENTIFIED AND ENVISAGED FOLLOW-UP

2.1 General conclusions on the topic

As a general conclusion is must be noted that despite at least two decades of Roma related activities in CoE member states in case of countries with small number of Roma their insignificant numerical count makes them in practice “invisible” to the policy makers, which is clear in the visit’s participating countries with exception of Finland and Slovenia. One might expect that in the light of existing international standards and elaborated tools, activities taken towards small and dispersed Roma communities in the participating countries should be an excellent example of effective policies, whilst in practice a majority of activities are carried out solely using EU grants. There is no commitment on the national budget.

Conclusion: the need for engagement of national, including municipal budget into Roma related activities.

The national experts’ presentations provoke a discussion among participants on the possibility to take alternative approaches towards integration and – in cases of countries with small number of Roma - to focus on practical and tailored activities at the municipal level. To some extent, the approach of the city of Oslo is an example of such a practice as since there is no national Roma-related strategy in Norway, the municipality conducts projects addressed to the Roma inhabitants of Oslo, focusing on school mediators and mentoring project for Roma pupils.

Conclusion: the need for **multi-functional and multi-purpose approach on local level** as in some cases there is no “national strategy”. The experts suggest to focus on practical solutions in municipalities, according to the locally defined needs of Roma communities, like: day cares, school mediators, trainings for local social welfare officers, police services, teachers, NGO, Roma empowerment, etc. and to switch from a “national strategy” towards an “individual approach”.

In this regards – and as it is repeated constantly during the CAHROM thematic visit – the need for data collecting is crucial for proper recognition of needs and progress achieved. As very often states do not collect data on an ethnic basis – a useful source of information can be the national rate of pupils drop-out, as usually the majority of them concern Roma pupils and education should be the priority of all actions taken.

Conclusion: the need for data collecting (number of children at schools, drop-out rate, etc.)

Recommended above “**multi-functional and multi-purpose approach on local level**” should lead to the wider empowerment and engagement of representatives of local Roma communities, with a focus on Roma youth and Roma women.

Conclusion: the need for Roma participatory approach. Roma women - as drivers of changes - and Roma youth should be empowered and engaged wider into the local policy planning, implementing and monitoring processes.

Among countries participating in the visit only Finland and Slovenia developed the comprehensive and stable model of Roma mediators. In Estonia and Georgia there are no Roma mediators, while in Lithuania, Latvia and Norway few mediators work (project-based). Nonetheless, the engagement of the Jelgava municipality into the employment of Roma school mediators (teachers’ assistants) and the devotion of Roma mediators themselves should be underlined as good example.

Conclusion: the need for an improved Roma mediators’ system, using the experience of other countries and the methodology elaborated within the Council of Europe ROMED project (like school mediators, employment mediators, health mediators or community mediator, creating the network of mediators, institutionalisation of the mediator position/job).

CHALLENGES RELATED TO THE STATE STAKEHOLDERS

Experts participating in the visit enumerated several main challenges related to the Roma integration policies that are related both to the state and Roma communities as well. Among those related to the state:

1. Topic of integration of Roma communities seldom present on political agenda of countries with numerically small numbers of this group;
2. Problems Roma face are of the same nature regardless of the size of Roma community in the country.
3. In countries with a small number of Roma it is difficult to engage all relevant ministries in sustainable Roma-related policy, especially in terms of budgeting;

4. The adoption of strategic documents on Roma integration often depends on initiatives of international organizations which suggest introducing existing standards at the national level, including the national legal system if needed;
5. Lack of inter-ministerial cooperation - it is especially alarming in case of inefficient involvement of Ministries of Education; thus – the proper coordination is impossible to conduct effectively;
6. Lack of stable national, including municipal, financing and reliance on EU funds, while funding should combine 2 sources, namely: state budget, including municipal, and EU budget in order to underline the state responsibility towards its citizens and the municipalities' responsibility for the sustainable development of its inhabitants;
7. Problems with engaging the municipalities in Roma-related activities, with exception of Jurmala and Jelgava, Latvia, Vilnius and Panevėžys, Lithuania and Oslo, Norway municipalities,
8. The lack of data collection unables the adequate assessment of measures achieved; in case of mainstream activities (Estonia, Georgia, Norway) it is impossible to estimate the amount of financial resources that reach the Roma beneficiaries,
9. State agencies should actively look for (relatively well educated) Roma activists, especially among youth and women, and train them to be partners for state agencies in implementing policies and projects,
10. Only in case of Finland the Roma-related policy goes beyond the socio-economic dimension; the Finnish approach includes also the culture oriented approach (with a deeper understanding of the term "culture": not limited to folk festivals, regional cuisine, etc.), like: cultural identity with a focus on linguistic identity and language preservation.

CHALLENGES RELATED TO THE ROMA COMMUNITY MEMBERS

Among challenges related to the Roma-communities themselves, the experts pointed out as follows:

- low level of education, caused, among others, by early marriages phenomenon; the data on education level among Roma, presented by Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania show that more than 80 % of the Roma population has only the primary education, partly-not completed (see: the graph 1 on page 3 of this Report),
- despite the official declaration expressed on different occasions on the importance of the education by Roma parents, the level of enrolment of Roma pupils into the primary and especially secondary education is low, the level of absenteeism – high and "family values" remains the most valued issue, resulting in early marriage phenomenon,
- some tendencies to self-isolation and limited readiness to integration,
- the lack of genuine leaders (or hard to find the proper persons) that are in power to motivate the local Roma communities,
- unstable situation of Roma mediators and lack of institutionalisation of this position,
- passiveness of some Roma to use existing opportunities and mainstreamed programs,
- Roma activity within realised strategies are often limited to cultural projects like dancing groups, festivals, traditional kitchen presentations, etc. that fuels the stereotyping image of Roma;
- the "caste" stratification among Roma that negatively influences intra-group relations and its ability to cooperation,

- the success of Roma integration depends on readiness and activity of Roma themselves – state can only create the adequate framework (legal, financial, organisational, etc.), promote it and encourage Roma to make use of it.

2.2. Specific conclusions of the thematic group of experts:

On Latvia

- some problems were identified with the effective collaboration with different ministries that should be more involved into the Roma integration policy; Ministry of Culture, responsible for national Roma policy, can face some difficulties with coordination practices when it comes to the measures related to other than culture issues (like education, housing, etc.); although the local stakeholders appreciated the engagement of persons responsible for Roma related policies, the national policy should not rely on good relation of single Ministry or single persons devotion (although it is important factor), but on systemic mechanisms introduced,
- to improve the Roma policy the report on Roma image in Latvian media, prepared by the Latvian Centre for Human Rights in 2017 (covering the period 2013-2014, see: Addendum) should be taken into account;
- national budgetary resources, including municipal, should be engaged on stable basis into the Roma-related strategy, while the EU grants should play only auxiliary role, in line with the EU principle of subsidiarity (art. 5 of the Treaty on European Union),
- as Roma women in Latvia are more active – they should be empowered, as well as Roma youth.

On Georgia

Georgia is a country with relatively small experiences related to Roma policies so far although CAHROM thematic visit in this country in 2017² should be a reviving impulse for Georgian authorities to address the challenges faced by one of the most vulnerable groups in the country and to follow several activities presented during the visit; one of the most efficient practices related to Roma is the system of Roma mediators that should be implemented, using the good practices presented during the visit in Jelgava, Latvia as well as conclusions of the *CAHROM Thematic report on Roma mediation (with a focus on school mediators/assistants)*³. The above mentioned CAHROM visit that Georgia hosted in 2017 and experiences of visit in Latvia should serve to depth analysis of Roma situation in the country and preparation of nationwide strategy/action; the problem deserving for special attention and immediate action is the lack of ID documents, including birth certificates which is an obstacle in access to any public service, including education and formal diploma obtaining. This latter problem was also the subject of CAHROM thematic visit in Albania, 2018⁴ and conclusions of that visit can be considered by Georgia as well in this regard.

On Estonia

in Estonia the situation is similar to Latvia: there is this same Roma groups; the need for building of confidence for institution from Roma side is present; some trainings for Roma in Estonia were highly appreciated by Roma community; the cooperation among state stakeholders should be improved although here is some cooperation among Ministry of Culture, Ministry of Education and Ministry of Social Affairs, 4 municipalities and Roma

² CAHROM thematic visit on the situation of eastern Roma groups (Roma, Lom / Boshia / Posha / Dom / Garachi / Karachi / Abdal, etc.) and possible policy responses, held in Tbilisi, Georgia, on 21-23 June 2017, with participation of Armenia, Azerbaijan, Russia and Turkey.

³ Report following the thematic visit to Vilnius and Panevėžys, Lithuania, 25-27 April 2017.

⁴ CAHROM thematic visit on solving the lack of identity documents of Roma and their statelessness, held in Tirana, Albania, 14-16 November 2018; report should be endorsed by CAHROM in June 2019.

within established advisory council; as the mobility of Roma between those two countries: Latvia and Estonia and some problems occur (like school attendance) - the closer cooperation is recommended, including functioning of day centres that Estonia could introduce. Additionally, the experiences of Finish Youth Council were suggested to be considered, as well as study visit of the representatives of all Baltic States in Helsinki.

The efficient Roma policy and co-ordination greatly depends on local conditions. In Estonia, where 650 Roma live in 38 different municipalities, in only 10 of them the number of Roma exceeds 10 persons and just in one municipality is more than 100 persons (2009); there are only 55 children with Roma mother language who study in 18 different schools – thus, the mainstream integration measures to Roma, accompanied by some Roma targeted measures, is the best solution. As integration is horizontal by nature and involves several policy areas in the budget strategy of the state, integration strategies are most effective together with implementation plans setting measurable goals and allocating resources.

As the Roma population does not form a united community/target group, the possibilities to build confidence with different Roma groups directly to involve the Roma more closely to policy making and coordination may be an advantage in countries with small Roma population. The risk that integration measures do not reach the groups who need them most, decreases through direct contacts and more individual approach helps to change the attitude of the (self) isolated Roma more favourable towards integration.

On Lithuania

As there is only 2 day care centres in Lithuania there is need to expand this practice to other municipalities inhabited by Roma; the mediators system should be improved and expanded, using the social media as the forum for exchange and contacts among the mediators; the idea of creating a kind of network among the schools with Roma pupils in Lithuania in order to create a forum of exchange of experience, daily contacts etc. this same applies to Roma mediators in order to enable them the exchange of experience. Interesting practice in Lithuania is organising 3 times a year kind of study visits for mediators in different localities to exchange good practices. The need for collecting data, with special focus on school drop outs rate was mentioned as well.

On Finland

National Institute of Health representatives underlined the need for special attention to be paid on the Roma youth; the actions taken should be precisely adapted to the needs and problems expressed by Roma and based on results of studies conducted; this “participatory approach” is needed especially on local level; the healthy life style should be promoted among Roma communities; focus on culture preservation paid in Finland should be followed by other countries.

On Slovenia

Slovenia is good examples of comprehensive approach in regards to Roma strategy; the attention was paid on the need for active employment policy measures and more individually tailored approach as well as for the need for cooperation between education system and local employers; as a serious obstacle was pointed out the passivity of Roma in Baltic states, which is visible through small number of active Roma NGOs – Roma should be empowered and activated.

On Norway

Norway was the only country with mainstream approach towards Roma and the distance between Roma communities and relevant offices seems to be bigger than in countries participating in the visit.

Finish model of Roma Youth Council can be interesting case for Norway; the challenge still is present in the broader involvement of municipalities inhabited by Roma to more active policy as well as empowerment of Roma mediators through networking.

2.3. Lessons learnt by the experts

- The political will to address the Roma integration issues on state and municipal level is insufficient in Baltic states, Georgia and Norway;
- The cooperation between relevant state stakeholders is not sufficient (with exception of Finland and Slovenia); to address adequately the needs of vulnerable communities, including Roma, the efficient cooperation of several ministries is needed, namely those responsible for: education, housing, health, employment, social service, administration, etc.
- The lack of sustainable financing for Roma targeted measures from the states' budget is visible as well as dependency on (almost) exclusively EU funding;
- Local level authorities should be more involved into Roma related policies, including budgetary contributions;
- There is a need for improvement and institutionalisation of Roma mediators;
- The availability of reliable Roma integration related statistics, based on state and municipal registers, as well as the data collected by interview-based surveys, are of great importance for policy making and allocation of funds especially in countries with small Roma population where the differences in education, employment, living standard and participation in civil society of Roma and non-Roma population remain easily overlooked;
- The practice of Roma mediators has proven itself in many countries including Latvia. In Latvia, as in Estonia, the funds are allocated to schools and schools decide what kind of support staff and teacher assistants they need most. Besides skills and personal devotion, mediator's background and professional qualities seem to be important factors to be efficient.

2.4. Good practices identified

Latvia

- 2015 survey on the situation of Roma (report available in English in Appendix 5: other documents on Latvia, "Roma in Latvia")
- regional network of experts, meeting regularly at least twice a year; the part of those meeting are the field visits for experts in municipalities that are implementing promising practices;

Finland

- annual report of different ministries on situation of Roma and assessments of progress achieved in relevant areas,
- Roma Youth Council;

Lithuania

- Roma Holocaust commemorations, including translation from Polish language the book „Esu Karolis” (“I am Karolis”⁵), which is a story of Roma boy – the prisoner of Auschwitz-Birkenau camp; it is especially important as there is no many books address to children and youth on Holocaust,
- distance learning system, available also for adults,
- employment trainings;

Norway

- Roma and non-Roma working in team as a teacher assistant
- Application for the mobile phones: Norwegian - Romani dictionary

Slovenia

- full participation of representatives of Roma communities in planning, implementing and monitoring processes in Roma-related policy,
- Roma representatives in municipal councils,
- “academic clubs” for Roma students that empower the Roma youth;

2.5. Envisaged follow-up**Latvia**

- next Roma Platform project is planned with the engagement of the Latvian Ministry of Welfare, state Employment Agency and municipalities to secure the responsibility of key stakeholders;
- preparation for Roma youth visit in the Memorial and Museum Auschwitz-Birkenau Former German Nazi Concentration and Extermination Camp in order to improve their history knowledge and Roma Holocaust during WWII,
- better use of social media among Roma youth (like Facebook for Roma related issues, etc.)
- work meetings with the relevant Ministries as well as with the members of the Latvian Parliament in order to establish better coordination schemes;
- improving the cooperation with the Ministry of Health addressing, among others, the drug addiction problems, together with participation in forthcoming CAHROM thematic visit in Finland on health-related issues including reproductive health and vaccinations (planned in 2019)
- translation and distribution of the thematic visit report among the relevant stakeholders
- bilateral cooperation with Estonian authorities on the diagnosed during the visit problem of Latvian Roma, residing in Estonia on the registration of children within education system;
- bilateral cooperation with Finland (Hirunda Day Centre in Helsinki), engaged into the activation of some Latvian Roma on labour market), including Jurmala municipality.

The problem of drug addiction within the Roma communities should be partly addressed during a forthcoming thematic visit on health issues (planned 2019 in Helsinki, Finland); a separate visit should be devoted to this phenomenon.

⁵ The original edition: Natalia Gancarz, Diana Karpowicz, *Mietek na wojnie*, Muzeum Okręgowe Tarnów, 2013, <http://muzeum.tarnow.pl/> or natalia@muzeum.tarnow.pl. There is also the German edition: *Rudi Im Krieg*; English one is planned for 2020.

Estonia

Engagement of the Roma mediators in area where Roma people live. As the small number of Roma live dispersed all over Estonia, employment of specific Roma mediator would be reasonable only in very few municipalities. All educational and social services are provided on an individual basis in Estonia. Generally, the Roma are well aware about available social benefits, but awareness of the existing services which, in essence, are more sustainable than the system of social benefits, are rather limited. Thus, rise of awareness among the Roma about available integration, educational, social, health and labour market services, as well as understanding of the urgency of personal initiative and commitment must be supported among the Roma. In this respect the role of Roma community leaders and Roma NGOs cannot be underestimated. As Roma civil society in Estonia is extremely weak and the few existing Roma organisations include only one (and the smallest) group of Roma, identification and empowerment of future advocates/spokespersons from different Roma groups must be supported. Empowerment of Roma organisations can be supported through free trainings to Roma activists: how to manage NGOs, design and write projects, communication and negotiation skills, teamwork skills etc. Also the existing system of umbrella organisations of national minority organisations can be better engaged to rise the administrative capacity of Roma organisations. The umbrella organisations having at least 5 member organisations can get basic financing from the special programme implemented by Estonian Integration Foundation (an executive agency whose founders' rights are exercised by the Ministry of Culture). The umbrella organisation provides support and services to member organisations, for example project and report writing, providing premises free of charge etc. Also activities can be supported from the basic financing. To raise the administrative capacity of national minority organisations the Integration Foundation regularly provides free trainings (accounting, marketing, communication, etc.) for umbrella organisations. Co-operation skills of Roma advocates should be supported to ensure smooth cooperation with other national minority organisations.

Lithuania

- More efforts should be put in cooperation with municipalities,
- The possibility of establishing more day centres for Roma children should be considered,
- The collection of statistics on Roma in education should be discussed with Ministry of Education and Science
- The cooperation between three Baltic States on Roma integration issues should be enhanced on governmental level and among Roma communities.

APPENDICES

[Appendix 1](#): Agenda of the CAHROM thematic visit to Riga, Latvia, on 3-5 October 2018

[Appendix 2](#): List of experts participating in the CAHROM thematic group

[Appendix 3](#): European and International standards and reference texts

[Appendix 4](#): Size, composition, language, lifestyle and situation of the groups in question in participating countries

[Appendix 5](#): Roma Integration Policies – Legislation, Policy Developments and Coordination Practices