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Coordination of Roma integration Policy in Latvia

in a framework of the experts' discussion on Roma integration, policy developments and coordination practices in countries with small Roma population, organized in cooperation with the CAHROM Secretariat

03/10/2018

Activity is developed under the project "The Latvian Roma platform III: promoting cooperation and participation" with the financial support of the European Union Rights, Equality and Citizenship Programme 2014-2020. The 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.

This project is co-financed within the framework of the Rights, Equality and Citizenship Programme of the European Union





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Scope

- Numbers and situation;
- Legal framework;
- Coordination bodies and practices (incl. cooperation with municipalities);
- Supporting measures to Roma NGOs (strengthening capacity and skills of representatives of Roma civil society);
- Latvian Roma Platform project;
- Monitoring of the situation of Roma in key areas.



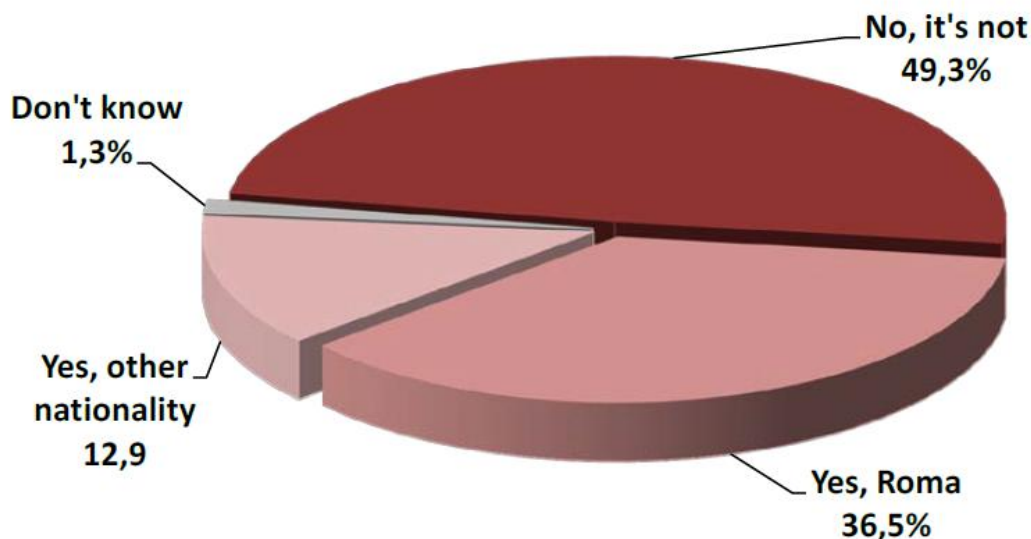
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Number of Roma in LV

- **7193** (registered Roma in LV, 2018);
- **5191** (Roma live in LV, 2018).
- **ONLY 0,3% of total LV population; compare - 24% are Russians;**
- officially available statistical data reflect only those Roma who have indicated Roma ethnicity;



Total number of Roma in Latvia might be higher than that in the official statistical data.

**Only 36,5% recognized themselves as Roma in the passport;
Almost 50% don't declare their ethnicity**

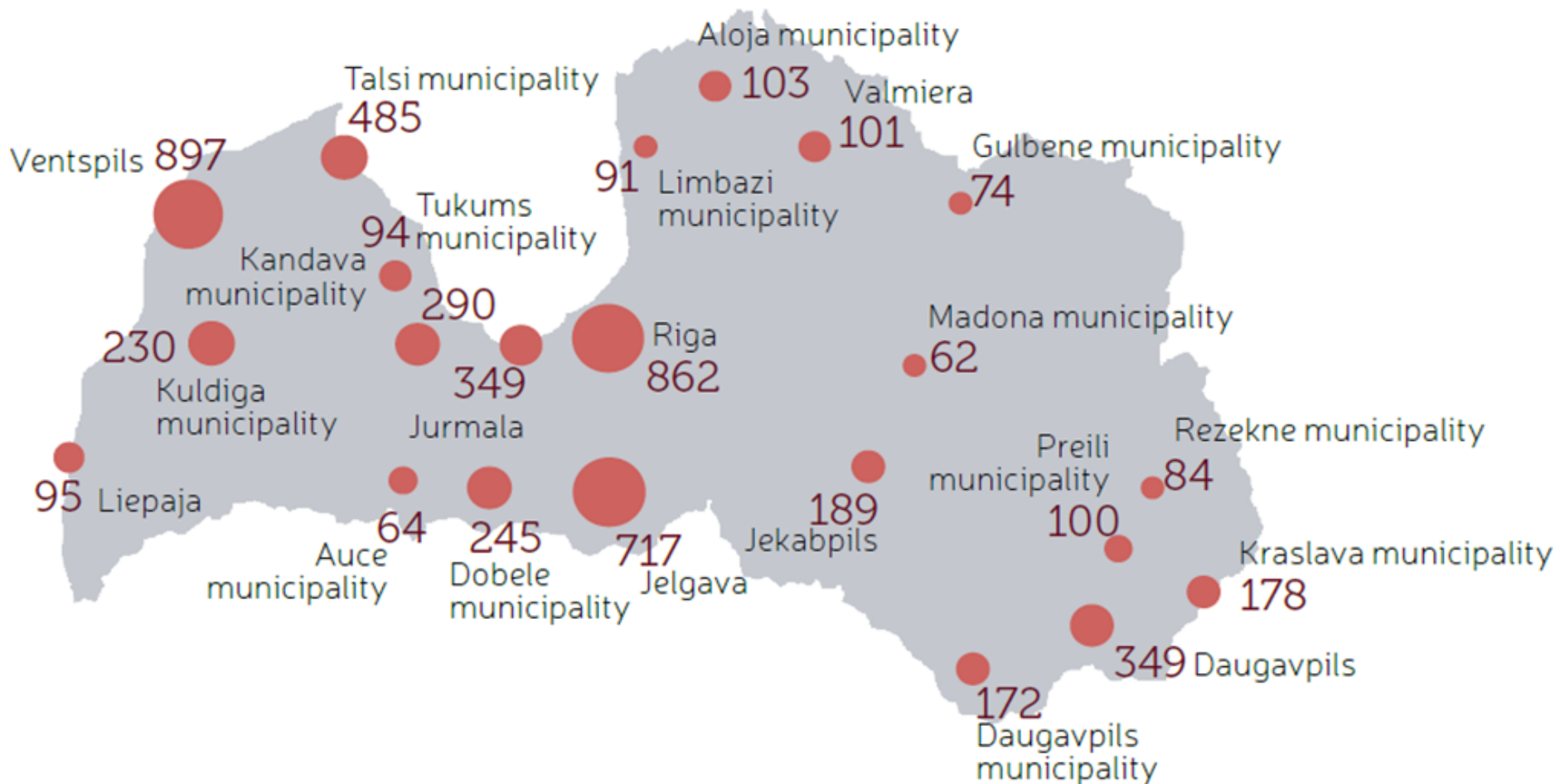


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Distribution of Roma population by region



Source: OCMA (2015)



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Legal status and overall situation

- Roma people officially are recognized as National minority in Latvia;
- According to the Report of the Group of Experts on Social Cohesion Issues (2017) and the survey Rome in Latvia (2018), despite the improvement of the Roma overall situation, the Roma are still rightly regarded as a group of people exposed to the risk of poverty and social exclusion. They are discriminated against in the labor market, and their employment opportunities are not equal to other nationalities due to their low educational and socio-economic status. The level of Roma education among other ethnic groups remains at the lowest level.



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Specific circumstances

- Latvian Roma don't have one country of origin as it have other national minorities in Latvia;
- There are no Roma ghettos and ethnically segregated classes or schools in Latvia;
- The Roma group is too small:
 - to develop integration strategy specifically for this group;
 - to be attractive for political parties to address specific Roma interests, needs and situation;
 - to develop strong Roma civil society movement in order to protect their interests and needs; as well as lack of educated specialists;
- The Roma are marginalized group for majority population.



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Roma integration policy framework

- **Roma integration policy** – horizontal policy where involved the following stakeholders:
 - Ministry of Culture responsible for coordination of the policy.
 - co-responsible ministries in key areas (the Ministry of Education and Science, the Ministry of Welfare, the Ministry of Health, the Ministry of Economy, the Ministry of Regional Development and Environment);
 - governmental agencies (State Employment Agency, State Agency for International Programs for Youth);
 - municipalities with significant Roma population;
 - Roma civil society (NGOs);
 - non-Roma experts (NGOs, academics).



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Legal framework

- *Set of national Roma integration policy measures*, included in policy document *National Identity, Civil Society and Integration Policy Guidelines 2012 – 2018* ;
- Roma integration measures are implemented according to the Action plan of the implementation of the National identity, civil society and integration policy guidelines (2017 - 2018);
- from 2019 the set of national Roma integration policy measures is included in *the Implementation Action plan for National Identity, Civil Society and Integration Policy 2019 – 2020* (adopted in the Cabinet of Ministers on 17 July 2018).



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Specific regulations

- Roma are listed in legislation and regulation as **specific target group** and among the vulnerable groups (**mainstreamed**)

For example, such regulations include Roma as one of the target groups:

- *Regulations on groups of people at risk of social exclusion and procedures for the granting, registration and supervision of social enterprise status (adopted in 2018);*
- *Regulations on the implementation of the ESF project “Increase the integration of people at risk of discrimination into society and the labor market” (adopted in 2016)*

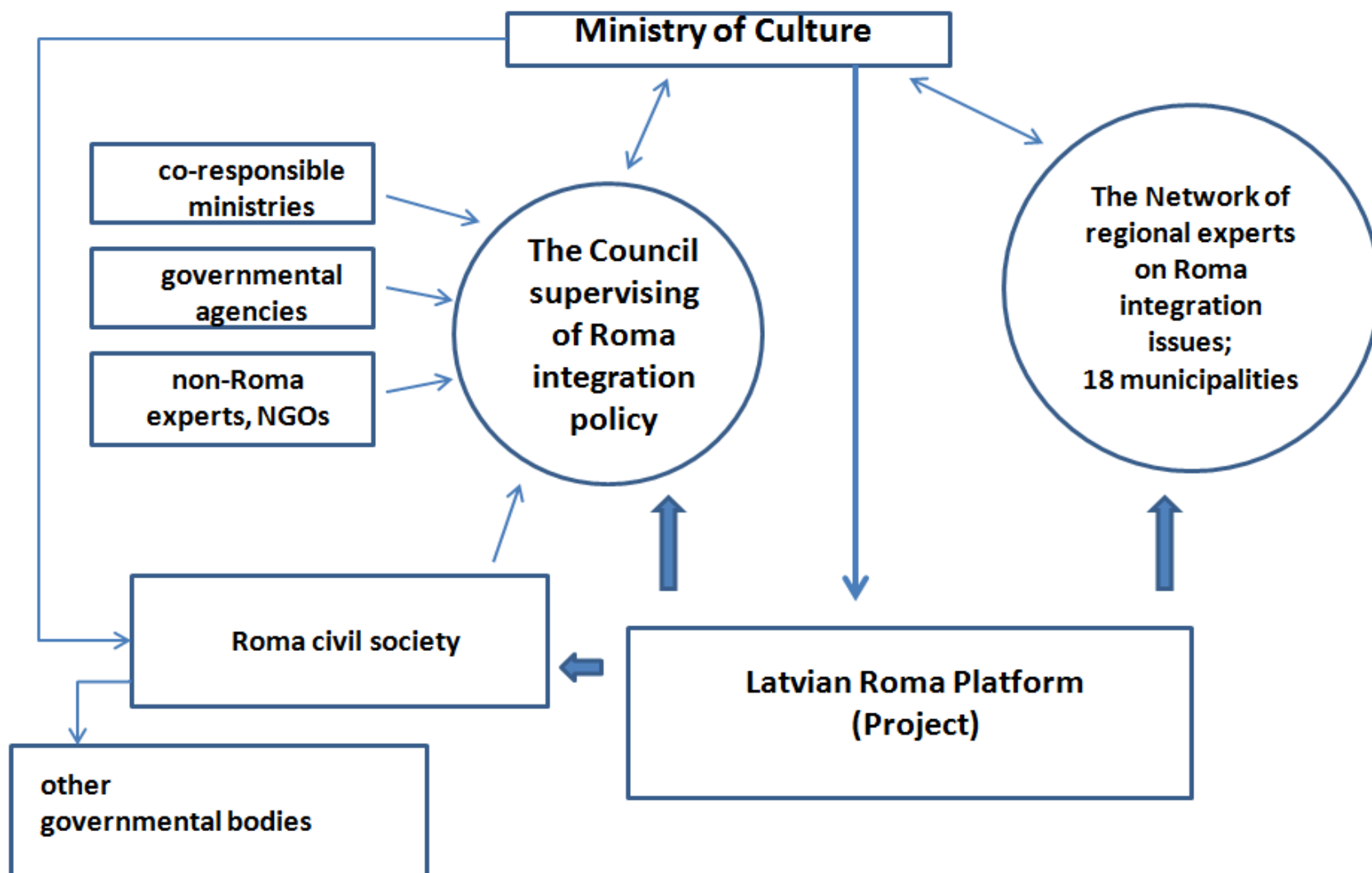


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Coordination of the policy



The Council supervising the implementation of Roma integration policy measures

- includes representatives from 10 governmental bodies (co-responsible ministries and agencies) and 6 Roma and 2 non-Roma NGOs that work in the area of protecting the interests of the Roma;
- established in 2012 by the Ministry of Culture;
- 2 meetings per year;
- *sharing information;*
- *discuss initiatives, topics, outcomes of the projects;*
- *cooperation in key areas.*





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The Network of regional experts on Roma integration issues

- set in October 2014 by The Ministry of Culture;
- representatives from 18 local government’s institutions;
- aimed at fostering regular exchange of best practices, experience and sharing information, as well as to develop cooperation between experts of local governments, representatives of Roma communities and NRCP in order to make the implementation and designing of the Roma integration policy more effective;
- providing consultations and informative support to the local government in order to use the programs of National and EU structure funds effectively;
- two meetings and best practice field visits per year;



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The Network of regional experts on Roma integration issues





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Participation of Roma representatives in other governmental bodies

- in the Minorities Advisory Council of the President of Republic of Latvia;
- the Advisory Council on the National Minority Education Affairs of the Ministry of Education and Science;
- Roma mediators have regularly taken part in the Councils of local governments (for example, in Ventspils, Valmiera, Jelgava);



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Supporting measures to Roma NGOs

- **measures for strengthening capacity and skills of representatives of Roma civil society** (trainings for Roma NGOs activists in order to improve their skills of project designing and implementing; practical guidelines for Roma NGOs and activists on project elaboration; English language courses; participation in trainings and events at the international level);
- **advocacy for Roma NGOs** (consultations);
- **targeted Roma NGO project support in the framework of the NGO supporting regional program** (at least 5 projects per year);



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Supporting measures to Roma NGOs





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Cooperation with NGOs

- **NGO “Center for Education Initiatives”** projects on fostering Roma education (project “Support for Roma children: Prepared for studies!”; project “Integration incubator to support Roma children and youth”);
- **NGO “Roma Culture Centre”** projects on fostering Roma culture and raise awareness of mainstream society (project „Roma History remembrance project: Living Memory”; International Roma Culture Festival; Roma Art and History Museum);
- **NGO “Latvian Centre for Human Rights”** and **NGO “Latvian Cooperation Network of Women's Organizations”** raise awareness measures for general public on Roma culture, history and social issues within the implementation of “DOSTA!” campaign “Go beyond prejudice, meet the Roma!”.



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Latvian Roma Platform project's tasks

- Foster cooperation and dialogue between representatives of municipalities and governmental sector and Roma people;
- Improve representatives' of municipalities and Roma's knowledge about the access to available financial resources from state programs and ES structure funds;
- Roma mediation practice development at the local level
- Support mutual learning and exchange of best practices on Roma integration in key areas at the local and regional level;
- Raise awareness of representatives of local authorities, municipalities and governmental sectors about Roma culture and history, especially about the Roma genocide during the World War II;
- Strengthen capacity and improve skills of representatives of Roma civil society.



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Latvian Roma Platform project

- regional experts meetings and field visits at local level to discuss best practices and challenges on Roma integration in key areas;
- educational lectures on Roma culture, history and its impact on their social situation and exhibition “Roma Holocaust in Latvia (1941-1945)” in municipalities;
- measures for Roma youth and women participation in the implementation of the Roma integration;
- support for Roma mediation practice development at the local level;
- workshops for improving better access of Roma to the supporting activities (ESF, etc.);
- empowering of Roma activists and participants, building their self-esteem and developing partnerships with non-Roma participants;
- **development practical solutions for development of the Roma integration policy;**



**3-days practical workshop „SĀRE KHETENE” for Latvian Roma youth in 2018;
In cooperation with the State Agency for International Programs for Youth.**



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Roma mediators cooperated with 134 disadvantaged Roma families and provided assistance to more than 170 Roma persons.

Mediators provide better access of Roma families to municipal services, European Social Fund support programs, prevent drop-out rates of Roma pupils in schools



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**Practical workshop “Better Roma access to the labor market” , 2018;
To improve dialogue between employers and potential Roma employees,
Roma civil society representatives**



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[Annual coordination meeting of the Latvian Roma platform](#) with participation of all regional experts and members of the Council supervising the implementation of Roma integration policy measures, including representatives of Roma civil society



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Roma participation

The cooperation with the Roma is one of key element of successful the implementation of the project activity.

- Roma as key persons in the project implementation (project assistant Roma activist *Mr Kaspars Arhipovs* - responsible for communication and dialogue with Roma, representatives of municipalities, local experts, and other stakeholders; external expert of the project teacher assistant *Ms Dana Didžus*);
- cooperation with the Roma Culture Centre (exhibition on Roma Genocide in Latvia and educational lectures on Roma culture and history from Roma perspective)
- many Roma women and young people, as well as local activists, mediators, teacher assistants, NGO representatives, pupils and students had active participation in the project's activities. They are involved in the constructive dialogue and developing cooperation with municipality staff, as well as represented Roma voice and needs during project's activities.



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Local authorities

- Local municipalities are responsible for provision of benefits to disadvantaged Roma families which live within the municipalities at the local level
- **BEST EXAMPLES:**
 - project “Social rehabilitation program for Roma families with preschool or school-age children living in Jelgava”; suitable support for Roma from municipality budget;
 - Day Service Centre for Roma in Jurmala city provides social rehabilitation services package such as Healthy Life school, Health Care Centre services, Life-skills development workshops, Illiteracy Reduction Program, experts individual consultation, cultural, art and sport activities etc.;
 - rehabilitation program “Social integration for Roma” in Daugavpils City;
 - Roma teacher’s assistants in Jelgava, Limbaži, Vilķene and Daugavpils;
 - 2015 Daugavpils and Jelgava are members of the European Alliance of Cities and Regions for Roma Inclusion.



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Monitoring of the situation of Roma

- **the annual report conducted by the Ministry of Culture**, based on statistical data provided by different governmental, local governmental institutions and Roma NGOs and non-Roma NGOs;
- **statistical analysis on Roma education** by the Ministry of Education and Science (number of Roma pupils and their achievements);
- **large scale survey “Roma in Latvia” based on qualitative approach** (every 5 years), last survey in 2015 available in MoC web site

https://www.km.gov.lv/uploads/ckeditor/files/Sabiedribas_integracija/Romi/Papildu/romi_latvija_petijums_ENG.pdf;



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Challenges

- **Lack of funding for Roma teacher’s assistants** (Roma school mediators) **and Roma community mediators**, as well as institutionalization of Roma mediation practice at the local level;

Planned action: cooperation with municipalities and training Roma mediators and assistants;

- **Limited Roma access to employment** because of lack of education and prejudice towards Roma in mainstream society;

Planned action: cooperation with Roma civil society (mediators), the State Employment Agency and employers;

- **The need for active Roma**; there is some criticism from Roma people on Roma integration policy, proposals for improving situation and call for immediate action, but in fact their relatively low involvement and participation when targeted activities or measures are provided.

- Planned action: activities to involve and train more Roma activists.

- **Lack of dialogue and cooperation** between Roma and non-Roma NGOs.

- Planned action: joint projects.



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Thank You for attention!

Additional information about the Roma integration policy in English is available

on the Ministry of Culture web site

<https://www.km.gov.lv/en/integration-and-society/roma>