

*Permanent Mission of Estonia
Geneva*

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The Permanent Mission of the Republic of Estonia to the United Nations and Other International Organisations in Geneva presents its compliments to the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights and in response to the Latter's letter from 11 February 2015 has the honour to forward the reply of the Government of Estonia to the questionnaire by the United Nations Special Rapporteur on minority issues in relation to the Human Rights Council resolution 26/4 "Protection of Roma".

The Permanent Mission of Estonia to the United Nations and Other International Organisations in Geneva avails itself of this opportunity to renew to the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights the assurances of its highest consideration.

Geneva, 11 March 2015



Enclosure: 6 pages

*Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights
GENEVA*

OHCHR REGISTRY

17 MARS 2015

Recipients : *SPD*

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Enclosure :

Response of Estonia to the questionnaire on protection of Roma

- 1. Please, provide specific information about the Roma communities living in your country. What is the estimated size of the Roma population? Are Roma communities concentrated in certain parts of the country? Please attach any relevant data.**

According to the Council of Europe from 1999 there are 600 to 1,000 (estimate) Roma living in Estonia. According to the last, 2012 census data of the Estonian Statistical Office, there are about 495 Roma in Estonia. Largest Roma communities are located in different regions of Estonia: Southern Estonia (185 Roma), North-Eastern Estonia (92 Roma), and Western Estonia (69 Roma). By proportion, the residents who have identified themselves as an ethnic group different from the main nationality form an estimated 31% of the population and 0.04% of them are Roma.

The Roma community in Estonia is small and dispersed. National Roma Contact Point (Department of Cultural Diversity, Estonian Ministry of Culture) mainly receives information about the well-being of the Roma via the education, culture and social counsellors of local governments, also from the different Ministries like Ministry of Education and Research, Ministry of Social Affairs, Ministry of Interior and the Statistics Estonia.

- 2. Does your State collect socio-economic data such as poverty and unemployment rates, healthcare data, living conditions, educational levels, income levels or rates of economic participation disaggregated by different population groups, including Roma? What does such data reveal in regard to the situation of Roma? Please, attach relevant data if available. In the absence of such data what is the source of information your State relies upon to develop various measures and programmes for Roma inclusion?**

The Roma working group, formed by the Estonian Ministry of Culture, includes the officials from several ministries, representatives of local authorities and Roma community. The aim of the working group is to discuss the problems related to the Roma and offer solutions to these problems concerning with Roma people. Constructive dialogue with civil society and close cooperation with local and regional authorities must continue.

- 3. Is there any ongoing national policy/strategy/action plan to ensure Roma inclusion in the political, social, economic and cultural life of your country? If so, please explain how these measures are developed, designed, implemented, monitored and evaluated in consultation with, and with the effective participation of Roma, including Roma women. If your State has already reported similar issues to other international or regional organisations, please share existing relevant reports and/or documentation.**

Statistical data in the field of education concerning Roma:

During 2014/2015 academic year 45 Roma students are studying in basic schools, 6 of them following the simplified national basic school curriculum in special schools. 3 are following the simplified

national basic school curriculum in mainstream schools, 36 are following the national basic school curriculum.

There were no student dropouts during 2013/2014 academic year among Roma students

- 1) In Estonia, there are no segregated schools for Roma students,
- 2) In the 2014/2015 academic year there is one Roma student at upper secondary level;
- 3) At the level of higher education, data on the student's mother tongue and ethnic background are not compiled in Estonia.

The target group of the Estonian housing policy includes young families, children without parental care and young people without parental care, disabled people, elderly people, families with many children, people released from prison and probationers, the homeless, owners of returned dwellings, students. Neither national minorities in general, nor Roma in particular are a specific target group, but the target groups mentioned above may also include Roma population.

According to the law local authorities must guarantee that all target groups are supplied with suitable housing and to reduce homelessness by increasing the proportion of social housing units and housing managed under the fund of social or municipal rental dwellings, including establishing maintenance and repair regulations and deciding other issues which by law are in the power of local government councils.

Integration is in the jurisdiction of the Ministry of Culture. In 2012 the drafting of the new Strategy of Integration and Social Cohesion in Estonia "Lõimuv Eesti 2020" was initiated and completed by the end of 2014. In preparation of the development plan, bilateral meetings were carried out between the Ministry of Culture and other ministries and institutions within their jurisdiction to identify the connections between activities of different policy areas, incl. Roma issues in education, social affairs issues. Discussion seminars in Estonian, English and Russian with representatives of the target group also took place to get an overview of their needs and the potential challenges to the policy.

During the preparation of the Strategy of Integration and Social Cohesion in Estonia "Lõimuv Eesti 2020" a website www.integratsioon.ee was opened. It offered opportunity to the general public, including Roma to be included in the drafting process and to contribute to the Strategy.

Like other area-specific strategies, the Estonian National Integration Strategy is built on the principle of equal treatment and on the basis of thematic areas rather than ethnic groups. The Integration Strategy is implemented to include all ethnic groups in the society; there are no separate strategies for including specific ethnic groups. Integration Strategy considers that in terms of linguistic-cultural communities special attention should be paid to Roma, whose integration must be supported. Compared to other European Union Member States, the Estonian Roma community is very small but still needs additional attention in the spheres of education, employment and social affairs.

As discontinuation of education is one of the problems in the case of Roma, the regional social network has been strengthened in order to notice problems and youngsters in need of help on time and to prevent such cases instead of just dealing with consequences. In order to ensure that children's transition to school is smooth and studying is not impeded by lacking language skills, free-of-charge Estonian language studies are provided starting from kindergarten age and, if necessary continued at school (financed by the local government). For the purpose of improving performance at school and to implement the most suitable study format for every student, a support system has been established in order to notice, counsel and support young people.

At local governments the subject of minority groups has been most thoroughly addressed in education development plans in which the objective for 2018 has been formulated – the education system of the rural municipality supports social cohesion and equal opportunities to participate in education have been created for all the residents.

Local governments could make more use of additional financial resources and programmes. Until now, there have been training programmes for young people in risk groups and for the purpose of supporting people with low qualification and people who have dropped out of the labour market. The Unemployment Insurance Fund has been a good cooperation partner both for the local governments and national level to the government. The Ministry of Culture is a cooperation partner for local governments at the national level and at the Ministry's initiative local government representatives have been able to attend information days and National Roma Contact Point meetings, which is important in order to obtain a more comprehensive overview and to compare the possibilities and needs of regions.

- 4. How strategies or policy measures for inclusion take into systematic consideration the specific conditions, situations and needs of Roma women, including in the areas of access to adequate education, healthcare and reproductive rights? Please attach the most relevant information including, if applicable, specific measures taken to combat segregation and/or multiple and intersecting forms of discrimination faced by Roma women, as well as the main measurable achievements in these areas.**

Look at the previous answer.

- 5. Is there any available information and data about violence against Roma population, especially women and children? If yes, what are the different forms of violence they experience and what measures have been taken to assist, protect, and compensate the victims?**

According to the data of the Ministry of Interior Affairs there are no available information and data specifically about violence against Roma.

- 6. Has your Government identified the main priority areas for Roma inclusion? If yes, what are the main goals? Please provide relevant details in this respect, as well as an estimate of funds allocated on measures relating to national strategies and policies for Roma inclusion.**

The main priority areas for Roma inclusion are educational and socio-economical issues. Look above at p.2.

In 2012-2013 Tallinn University conducted a study of social groups in the area of integration by co-funded by the European Fund for the Integration of Third-Country Nationals, and one of the aims of the survey was to map the policy areas related to the Roma. Results of survey will help to map the needs of the target group and provided an overview of how the Roma cope in the society.

Based on the results of a recent study on integration carried out by Tallinn University, the Estonian society needs more information on Roma culture, positive personal contacts with Roma people and the revoking of negative stereotypes. It is vital that government officials (including educational workers, social workers, police officers, local government representatives etc.) who have close contact with the Roma were well aware of the particularities of Roma lifestyle and traditions. The study highlighted education as one of the key problems regarding the Roma population. *Inter alia*, there is a need to develop and support the dual cultural identity (Estonian and Roma), which requires a special systemic pedagogical approach that the Estonian educational system is not yet ready for.

In 2014, the Ministry of Culture commissioned a public opinion survey from the Institute of Baltic Studies, "Monitoring of Integration in Estonian Society 2014", the results of which will be delivered by July 2015.

7. Does your Government monitor progress made in the area of Roma inclusion in the political, social, economic and culture life of the State? If so, what are the visible and measurable achievements of various efforts undertaken for Roma inclusion? Please provide details.

The EU Structural and Investment Funds Implementation Plan for 2014-2020 includes, among other things, a measure which is to be implemented by the Ministry of Culture and is aimed at increasing the active employment and social activity of permanent residents of Estonia who have not been sufficiently integrated in the society. The Plan also includes a measure which is to be implemented by the Ministry of the Interior and is aimed at supporting the adaptation and subsequent integration of new immigrants. Both measures can also be implemented in the integration of Roma people.

Estonia finds that the most appropriate solution is to continue the implementation of existing measures aimed at Roma's inclusion. The next integration monitoring of the Estonian society will be completed in the middle of 2015. Based on the random sampling, the monitoring cannot target sufficient number of Roma people to draw any generalizations. It is known that the data on how Roma cope do not differ from the data concerning other non-Estonians.

At the local government level, equal opportunities are created for all the students, incl. Roma. In a small community every person in a risk group can be approached on a case-specific basis. This is applied in education, everyday subsistence and employment. Measures to combat segregation: to support organisations, areas of activity and persons (incl. leaders), programmes and events which enrich cultural space; to engage residents, particularly people with a lower income (job-seekers, less privileged people) in informal education courses; to improve support systems for the purpose of preventing education-based stratification due to poverty (incl. unemployment); to use the local rural municipality education system to support the social cohesion of the population as well as activities encouraging initiative in the areas of culture and education, the education system is physically, socially and psychologically safe; to provide career and study counselling for all the residents of the rural municipality; to create funds and find other financing possibilities for supporting less privileged and/or talented students and education and culture figures; and to develop the relevant criteria.

A study by Raivo Vetik, Research Professor at the Tallinn University Institute of Political Science and Governance, "Stereotypes of Various Nationalities in Estonian Online Media in 2014", is also nearing completion. The objective of media monitoring is to map and analyse the stereotypes depicting individual nationalities in Estonian online media on 2014.

The questions studies are:

- a) What and how the Russian-language online media in Estonia writes about Estonians and ethnic minorities (incl. new immigrants) living in Estonia; and
- b) What and how the Estonian-language online media in Estonia writes about ethnic minorities (incl. new immigrants).

The results of the studies will allow the implementation of measures to engage Roma people, if they are in the sample.

In order to solve the problem, the Project intends to establish a sustainable counselling system all over Estonia through organising supervision seminars for teachers, capacity-building for already-existing educational counselling centres and strengthening the information dissemination and state-wide network.

Project 'Improvement of quality of study counselling for children from families of newly arrived immigrants and Roma people' has started in 2014. Since 2003 Estonia has taken measures to ensure the integration of children from families of newly arrived immigrants and Roma people, incl. teacher training and publication of teaching/study materials.

8. In the Government's view, if there are still persistent disparities among Roma and other population groups, what were the failures and what are the ongoing challenges to close the gap and achieve full inclusion of Roma? In which areas is there the biggest need to step up efforts?

However, there is still a problem with regard to counselling of schools – they lack information, are not sufficiently skilled in involvement of pupil in the joint study in classroom, weak capacity to establish joint working relation with the family members. Experience seminars will be continued in 2015 and training for counsellors will begin in the second half of the year. The aim is to ensure high-quality counselling services in every region in Estonia in the event a local school encounters any education-related challenges in connection with Roma students.

The Project Financing Agreement between the Estonian Youth Work Centre (Contracting Authority) and NGO ProDia (Lead Partner) was signed in September, 12 2014. With regard to activities the 'Distinctive School Development Centre' the 1st supervision seminar for school headmasters and teachers was held in December 2014. There are also plans include the organisation of training courses and classroom monitoring visits for specialists of regional educational counselling centres, starting at the beginning of 2015.

Several cultural events in Estonia have contributed to raise awareness of Roma history and presence in the country. In 2012 an exhibition "We, the Roma", which was launched in 2012 and which gives an overview of the Estonian Roma history, culture and everyday life in word and image. The exhibition was opened in October 2013 at the Valga County Museum (Valga is home to the largest Roma community in Estonia) and has been touring all over the country: in 2014 at the National Library of Estonia in Tallinn, Estonian Post Museum in Tartu and at Theatre Ugala in Viljandi. The material and information collected during the exhibition preparation process is very valuable to create better public awareness about Roma and have thus longer term social impact. The exhibition is currently opened in the Estonian Embassy in Helsinki and it will be transferred to Budapest in autumn 2015.

The Ministry of Social Affairs has started the elaboration of new comprehensive Social protection, inclusion and equal opportunities development plan for year 2016-2023. The new development plan aims to improve the people's independent coping, create equal opportunities to participate in society and labour market and promote gender equality in all spheres of life. The objective is to increase the general tolerance and valuation of equal treatment. There are the measures and activities that include the raise of public and target group awareness on equal treatment, creation of more tolerant attitudes (mainly through information campaigns, trainings etc.) and establishment of better legal certainty and clarity (for example by improving the state capability for legal protection etc.) are also planned. The development plan with detailed implementation programmes will be submitted to the Government for approval by the end of 2015.

9. Is Roma history and culture part of the national curriculum? Is the International Roma Day celebrated and if yes, how?

The last commemoration ceremony for the Roma Genocide took place at the Roma Memorial in August 2013 and the similar events are planned for this year. Officially Estonia does not celebrate the Roma Day. However, based on the request of any NGO the event will be financially supported by the Ministry of Culture. Estonian Museum of Occupations organised in 2014 the Exhibition "Attacks and Migration" which presented the fate of Estonians and native Estonian minorities in the 20th century. The exhibition introduces the fates of Baltic Germans, Swedes, Russians, Jews, Ingrian Finns, Latvians, Romani people, Belarusians and Ukrainians living in Estonia and affected by WW II, mobilizations, deportations, escapes and post-war industrial immigration, which significantly changed the Estonian population. The project is supported by the Estonian Ministry of Culture and the Integration and Migration Foundation Our People (MISA).

10. What channels for articulating, aggregating, and representing the interests of Roma, including through body/institution/unit or other establishments do exist in your country? If applicable, please indicate how such initiatives include staff or representatives from Roma communities.

There are two active Roma NGOs in Estonia: European Roma Forum in Estonia (ERFE) and South-Estonia Roma Union. In order to improve understanding of young Roma people at general education schools, a photo project is planned for 2015 in cooperation with the South-Estonian Roma Union and Estonian National Museum. In the course of the project, Roma children and young people will take pictures of what they consider important, and write a story to accompany their photo.