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NEWS REPORT

Country:	LATVIA
Title:	Comprehensive survey on Roma in Latvia
Date:	29 January 2016
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<u>Context</u>	
Issue at stake:	The survey on Roma in Latvia is the largest comprehensive survey on Roma since 2003 covering the areas of education, employment, housing, health care
Ground of discrimination:	Ethnic origin
Source:	Miscellaneous
Field:	Employment, social protection, social advantages, education, housing, other
Applicable law:	-

Content

A comprehensive survey on "Roma in Latvia" commissioned by the Society Integration Fund (*Sabiedrības integrācijas fonds*) and conducted by the market and social research centre "Latvijas fakti"¹ assesses the existing situation and barriers in Roma access to education, employment, health care and housing in Latvia. These are the priority areas addressed by the EU Framework for National Roma Integration Strategies up to 2020 to tackle long-term socio-economic problems among the Roma, including in Latvia. The survey findings were launched in November. It includes the results of a quantitative survey of 365 Roma, five focus group discussions and in-depth interviews with 200 decision makers, representatives of public sector organisations, human rights and Roma experts. The survey included localities with more than 70 Roma representatives. There are around 8,000 Roma in Latvia, but Roma leaders put the number of Roma at 10-12,000.

Education

According to the 2011 Population Census 48,9% of Roma had lower than primary education, 36,5% - primary education, 3,5% - general secondary education, 3,5% - vocational education, 0,8% - higher education.² The survey results reveal strong correlation between the low education level and status of a poor or low - income person. 71, 8% of Roma with education level below 6 grades had the status of a low income or poor person, the respective proportion among those with 7-9 grade education was 47,5% and higher than primary education - 25,3%.

¹ Market and Social Research Centre "Latvijas Fakti" (2015). Roma in Latvia (*Romi Latvijā*). 44 p. The research was conducted within the project "Different people. Diverse experience. One Latvia II" Nr. JUST/2013/PROG/AG/4978/AD http://issuu.com/sif2015/docs/romi_pdf_publicesanai.

² In Latvia elementary education – Grades 1-4, primary (mandatory) – Grades 5-9, secondary – Grades 10-12.

Almost all Roma want their children to learn to read and write (98,8%), receive primary education (97,5%), secondary education (88,5%), attend a kindergarten (81,5%). In practise, 70,6% of Roma children (aged 3-7) attend kindergarten, with parents citing lack of finances, lengthy waiting lists and language barrier as key obstacles for enrolment in kindergartens. There has been higher Roma children enrolment in schools compared to the past. At the same time, the proportion of Roma students dropping out of school before the completion of primary education is significantly high – almost 16%. Lack of motivation to continue studies, early pregnancy/family, emigration or moving to another place of residence in Latvia, low educational attainment (including language barriers), economic and financial aspects are cited as key barriers.

Employment

The survey reveals much higher unofficial unemployment rate than the official one – 67,6% of the surveyed Roma of the working age do not work, while 32,4% work.³ According to the labour force survey conducted by the Central Statistical Bureau – 90,1% of Roma work, while only 9,7% do not work.⁴ 67,4% of Roma registered with the State Employment agency have lower education level than mandatory primary education (2,7% nationally). Around 20% are illiterate, 49,7% of Roma have been jobless for more than a year compared to the national average of 30,7%. 82,3% of the surveyed Roma confirmed they themselves or their closest family members have been allegedly discriminated accessing jobs by employers because of their ethnic origin, moreover, 56,7% cited having themselves experienced discriminatory attitudes by potential employers.

Healthcare

98,2% of Roma have a family doctor, of those close to 90% had visited a family doctor during the last 12 months. There is disproportionally higher share of officially registered persons with disability among Roma (16,6%) than national average (8,5%) in 2015. This is partially attributed to the interest to receive the status of the disabled person (as additional or even one of the key sources of income), however, higher disability risk among Roma due to congenital diseases, and poor living conditions are cited as key reasons.⁵

Housing

Fewer Roma (42,5%) own a dwelling than the national average (58,8%); dwelling rental is used by 18,6% Roma (national average 12,6%); and 35,6% of Roma reside in municipal or state housing. A range of factors restrict Roma access to better housing, including low and irregular income, as well as absence of savings – only 9,4% have savings exceeding 250 EUR. Prejudice against Roma as tenants and neighbours and various other factors also play a role. Roma housing is unsatisfactory and worse than among the rest of residents of Latvia. The majority of Roma live in households, which lack one of the basic amenities (e.g. water pipe, a flushing toilet, a shower or a bathroom) and the state of the dwelling is poor, sanitation being the key problem. At the same time, Roma actively use the support offered by municipalities and NGOs, predominantly municipal housing benefit.

The survey also lists examples of good practise (Roma- teacher assistants, resource centres in four cities in Latvia in 2014 for Roma children and parents to facilitate Roma inclusion in mainstream education system, Roma mediator regional network) and proposes a range of recommendations in all areas covered.

³ Ibid. p. 19.

⁴ Central Statistical Board (*Centrālā statistikas pārvalde*) (2015). Latvijas nepārtrauktās Darbaspēka izlases veida apsekojums, at: <http://www.csb.gov.lv/statistikas-temas/metodologija/nodarbinatiba-un-bezdarbs-36895.html>.

⁵ Market and Social Research Centre "Latvijas Fakti" (2015). Roma in Latvia (*Romi Latvijā*). p. 31.

Key points of analysis:

The survey concludes that low education level, illiteracy and negative stereotypes dramatically restrict Roma access to employment and perpetuate their long-term social isolation. It reveals significant unregistered unemployment rate among Roma, not identified by the State Employment Agency and Central Statistical Bureau. Access to different health care services by Roma do not significantly differ from those by other residents in Latvia, however, the differences lie in the Roma being informed about the content of health care services. In housing, amenities in Roma houses were often in critical condition and access to communal services was limited. The survey provides recommendations in different areas.

Internet link source:

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