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NEWS REPORT

Country:	The Netherlands
Title:	New Roma housing policy framework
Date:	23 August 2018
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<u>Context</u>	
Issue at stake:	New housing policy for Roma to ensure non-discrimination and the enjoyment of their cultural rights
Ground of discrimination:	Race/ethnic origin
Source:	Policy development
Field:	Access to goods and services/housing
Applicable law:	n/a

Content

Policy development: In July 2018 the Minister of the Interior and Kingdom Relations issued a new housing policy framework for Roma, Sinti and Travellers (below, Roma for short).¹ The framework is directed at preventing discrimination against Roma, ensuring their cultural rights and providing legal security in the area of housing. It provides guidelines for municipal authorities, which are in charge of housing policies at the local level, that effectively limit their power to autonomously shape housing policy regarding Roma. More specifically the policy framework requires municipalities to give Roma more space to live according to their own cultural identity and to ensure their opportunity to acquire a place to live on a trailer park within a reasonable time. Most importantly, municipalities are not allowed anymore to pursue an 'extinction policy', that is a policy that would eventually put an end to 'trailer parks'.

Key points of analysis: The new policy framework represents an important step forward for Roma as in the past decades many municipalities were very reluctant to provide adequate housing for Roma on trailer parks or even pursued an 'extinction policy' regarding such parks, aiming instead to make Roma settle in more regular housing. The 'extinction policy' was challenged several times before the national equality body, the Netherlands Institute for Human Rights (NIHR), which deemed it to be in violation of the prohibition of discrimination on the grounds of race or ethnic origin.² This was reiterated in the advice of the NIHR to the government regarding Roma housing.³ Similarly, the National Ombudsman considered such policies to violate both the principle of non-

¹ *Beleidskader Gemeentelijk woonwagen- en standplaatsenbeleid*, www.rijksoverheid.nl/documenten/rapporten/2018/07/02/beleidskader-gemeentelijk-woonwagen-en-standplaatsenbeleid.

² NIHR opinions 2015-6, 2016-19, 2016-22, 2016-71, 2016-72; 2017-55; 2017-103; 2017-136; 2017-137. All opinions can be found on the website of the NIHR at <https://mensenrechten.nl/nl/oordelen>.

³ *Advies aan minister van Binnenlandse Zaken en Koninkrijksrelaties inzake Woonwagen- en standplaatsenbeleid* [Advice to the Minister of the Interior and Kingdom Relations regarding trailers and trailer sites policy], April 2018 <https://mensenrechten.nl/nl/publicatie/38448>.

discrimination and the cultural rights of Roma.⁴ The new policy framework is in line with the recommendations given by both institutions to provide housing opportunities for Roma that are in keeping with their cultural identity and respect their human rights.

Internet link source: www.rijksoverheid.nl/documenten/rapporten/2018/07/02/beleidskader-gemeentelijk-woonwagen-en-standplaatsenbeleid.

⁴ *‘Woonwagenbewoner zoekt standplaats. Een onderzoek naar de betrouwbaarheid van de overheid voor woonwagenbewoners’* [Trailer resident seeks trailer site. An investigation into the reliability of the public authorities for trailer inhabitants], www.nationaleombudsman.nl/system/files/bijlage/DEF%20Rapport%202017060%20Woonwagenbewoner%20zoekt%20standplaats.pdf.