

Estonia

FRANET National Focal Point

Social Thematic Study

The situation of Roma

2012

Institute of Baltic Studies

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Executive summary

According to the last population census there were 542 Roma people living in Estonia (46% male v. 54% female), making up 0.04 per cent of the total census population. However, data stemming from the population registry point to a slightly higher number of people who live in Estonia and declare their ethnic origin as Roma, namely 576, while other sources point to a population of 1.000 to 1.500 individuals. Estonian Roma are not travelling and have a sedentary lifestyle.

According to the census of 2000, nearly half of the Roma aged 18 and older lacked basic **education**; approximately one third completed basic education (nine years of schooling) and 15.6% completed secondary education. The European Commission against Racism and Intolerance expressed its concern about the practice of Estonian authorities to place Roma children who are not disabled in special schools.

According to the census of 2000, 54% of Roma aged 18 and older were inactive in the labour market, 30% were unemployed and only 15% were in active employment. Generally, there is a lack of data on Roma and **employment** and further research is needed to establish the specific reasons behind high inactivity and unemployment.

There is no data available on the situation of Roma and **housing, health and poverty and economic situation**.

Due to the small size of the Roma population, there are no policies specifically targeted at this minority. The Ministry of Culture established a non-formal Roma working group, consisting of officials from several ministries, in January 2011. There is currently one Roma association — North Estonian Roma Association — that actively works with Roma in Estonia.

1 Roma population

According to the last population census there were 542 Roma people living in Estonia, making up 0.04 per cent of the total census population.¹ Out of them, 46% were male and 54% female, 80% lived in an urban setting and 20% in a rural setting. The majority of Roma speak Romani as their native language, followed by Russian and Estonian. A little less than half of the Roma had Estonian

¹ Estonia, Population and Housing Census 2000 Database, available at: <http://pub.stat.ee/px-web.2001/Database/Rahvaloendus/Rahvaloendus.asp> (accessed 24 April 2012). A new population census was carried out in January-March 2012. The preliminary data on the census results will be published by 31 May 2012.

citizenship followed by undetermined citizenship² and citizenship of another country (see Table 1 in Annex 2).

Data stemming from the population registry³ point to a slightly higher number of people who live in Estonia and declare their ethnic origin as Roma, namely 576 (as of 19 April 2012). Out of them, 273 are male and 303 female. According to census data and registry data (see Tables 1 and 2 in Annex 2), the Estonian Roma community is of urban character — 78% of Roma live in urban settings. The largest Roma community lives in the township of Valga by the Latvian border, followed by the capital city of Tallinn, Narva by the Russian border and Tartu (see Table 2 in Annex 2).

However, different estimates of the real size of the Roma population in Estonia have been given by international organisations. All these estimates put the Roma population figures at two or three times higher than official census and registry data. The Commissioner for Human Rights of Council of Europe estimated the Roma population to count 1,000 people⁴ and Council of Europe's European Commission against Racism and Intolerance (ECRI) provided estimates from 1,100 to 1,500 people.⁵ The main reason why these estimates are higher when compared to official figures is the fact that many people of Roma origin do not declare themselves officially as Roma due to fears of stigmatisation.

The Estonian Roma are not travelling and have a sedentary lifestyle. The current Estonian Roma population migrated into Estonia after WWII from other parts of the USSR, mainly from Russia and Latvia. Prior to WWII and the USSR occupation, the Estonian Roma population comprised 766 people.⁶ Today, there are very few descendants of the pre-WWII Estonian Roma community. Their

² Undetermined citizenship (*määratlemata kodakondsus*) in principle means that people do not have the citizenship of any country. They carry so-called foreigner's passports that the Estonian state issues and that prove their residency in Estonia. Currently there are around 95,000 people with undetermined citizenship in Estonia. The majority of them are former citizens of the USSR who have not taken the citizenship of another country.

³ Estonia, Population Registry (*Rahvastikuregister*) data acquired on 19 April 2012.

⁴ Council of Europe: Commissioner for Human Rights (2003). *Report by Mr. Alvaro Gil-Robles, Commissioner for Human Rights, on His Visit to Estonia, 27-30 October 2003*, 12 February 2004, CommDH(2004)5, available at: <http://www.unhcr.org/refworld/docid/41596c2d4.html> (accessed 30 April 2012).

⁵ ECRI (2006). Third report on Estonia, available at http://www.coe.int/t/dghl/monitoring/ecri/Country-by-country/Estonia/Estonia_CBC_en.asp

⁶ Viies, M. (2011). *Promoting the Social Inclusion of Roma. A Study of National Policies*. Tallinn University of Technology, p. 5, available at <http://www.peer-review-social-inclusion.eu/network-of-independent-experts/2011/promoting-the-social-inclusion-of-roma> (accessed 24 April 2012).

fate was determined first by the racial policy carried out by Germany under the Nazi regime and later by assimilation attempts carried out by USSR.⁷

2 Education

According to the census of 2000, nearly half of the Roma aged 18 and older lacked basic education; approximately one third completed basic education (nine years of schooling) and 15.6% completed secondary education.⁸ Moreover, the 2000 Census recorded only one Roma in higher education. (see Table 3 in Annex 2)

Data from the Ministry of Education and Research shows that there were 22 pupils of Roma background studying in Estonian schools during the 2011/2012 school year (up to the secondary level). Out of them, 5 pupils were studying in the school for children with special educational needs in the town of Valga and one pupil in the adults' gymnasium.⁹ Children can attend schools for students with special needs based on the decision of a consultation committee that is convened by the local county board, and after parents give their consent. According to a study conducted among Roma women in South Estonia, the committee's decision to send Roma children to a special school was often based on the fact that Roma children did not speak Estonian.¹⁰ However, the study also pointed out that for some parents it is quite often an economic rather than educational decision because special schools provide boarding.¹¹ ECRI expressed its concern about the practice of Estonian authorities to place Roma children who are not disabled in special schools.¹²

⁷ Viies, M. (2011). *Promoting the Social Inclusion of Roma. A Study of National Policies*. Tallinn University of Technology, p. 4, available at <http://www.peer-review-social-inclusion.eu/network-of-independent-experts/2011/promoting-the-social-inclusion-of-roma> (accessed 24 April 2012).

⁸ Tali, M. et al. (2007). *Naised Eesti mustlaskogukondades. Uurimuse aruanne*. Tallinna Ülikooli Eesti Humanitaarinstituut, p. 65, available at http://www.sm.ee/fileadmin/meedia/Dokumendid/V2ljaanded/Publikatsioonid/2007/Naised_Eesti_mustlaskogukondades_uuringuraport.pdf

⁹ Estonia, Ministry of Education and Research (*Haridus- ja Teadusministeerium*) (2012), E-mail correspondence, 25 April 2012.

¹⁰ Tali, M. et al. (2007). *Naised Eesti mustlaskogukondades. Uurimuse aruanne*. Tallinna Ülikooli Eesti Humanitaarinstituut, p. 28, available at http://www.sm.ee/fileadmin/meedia/Dokumendid/V2ljaanded/Publikatsioonid/2007/Naised_Eesti_mustlaskogukondades_uuringuraport.pdf

¹¹ Tali, M. et al. (2007). *Naised Eesti mustlaskogukondades. Uurimuse aruanne*. Tallinna Ülikooli Eesti Humanitaarinstituut, p. 29, available at http://www.sm.ee/fileadmin/meedia/Dokumendid/V2ljaanded/Publikatsioonid/2007/Naised_Eesti_mustlaskogukondades_uuringuraport.pdf

¹² ECRI (2010). Report on Estonia (fourth monitoring circle), p. 37, available at http://www.coe.int/t/dghl/monitoring/ecri/Country-by-country/Estonia/Estonia_CBC_en.asp

3 Employment

According to the census of 2000, 54% of Roma aged 18 and older were inactive in the labour market, 30% were unemployed and only 15% were in active employment.¹³ The high rate of inactivity and unemployment among Roma can partially be explained by their residence in areas of high unemployment such as South Estonia (Valga) and East Estonia (Narva). However, further research is needed to establish the specific reasons behind high inactivity and unemployment. The vulnerability of the Roma in the labour market is also pointed out by ECRI in its third and fourth monitoring cycle reports.¹⁴

4 Housing/ Neighbourhood

The housing situation of Roma in Estonia cannot be determined due to a lack of data.

5 Health

The health situation of Roma in Estonia cannot be determined due to a lack of data.

6 Poverty/ Economic situation

The risk of poverty and economic situation of the Roma in Estonia cannot be assessed due to lack of data in this regard.

7 Active citizenship/ Rights awareness

Due to the small size of this population, there are no policies specifically targeted at Roma. The community is also not specifically targeted in any of the large policy programmes such as the National Integration Strategy 2008–2013 (*Riiklik lõiumiskava 2008–2013*), Action Plan on Children and Families 2012–2020 (*Laste ja perede arengukava 2012–2020*) or Housing Sector Development Plan (*Eesti eluasemevaldkonna arengukava 2008–2013*).

The Ministry of Culture established a non-formal Roma working group, consisting of officials from several ministries, in January 2011. The aim of the working group was to provide an overview of the situation of Roma for the European Council meeting in May 2011 under the Hungarian presidency.

¹³ Viies, M. (2011). *Promoting the Social Inclusion of Roma. A Study of National Policies*. Tallinn University of Technology, p. 10, available at <http://www.peer-review-social-inclusion.eu/network-of-independent-experts/2011/promoting-the-social-inclusion-of-roma> (accessed 24 April 2012).

¹⁴ ECRI Third report on Estonia (2006). http://www.coe.int/t/dghl/monitoring/ecri/Country-by-country/Estonia/Estonia_CBC_en.asp
ECRI Report on Estonia (fourth monitoring cycle) (2010) and http://www.coe.int/t/dghl/monitoring/ecri/Country-by-country/Estonia/Estonia_CBC_en.asp

There is currently one Roma association — North Estonian Roma Association — that actively works with Roma in Estonia. Additionally, there is a Roma Cultural Centre in Tallinn (see Table in Annex 5). Although several Roma organisations were registered at the beginning of the new millennium, none of them is still active and several have been closed.

Annexes

1. Bibliography

- ECRI (2010). Report on Estonia (fourth monitoring circle), available at http://www.coe.int/t/dghl/monitoring/ecri/Country-by-country/Estonia/Estonia_CBC_en.asp
- ECRI (2006). Third report on Estonia, available at http://www.coe.int/t/dghl/monitoring/ecri/Country-by-country/Estonia/Estonia_CBC_en.asp
- Estonia, Ministry of Education and Research (*Haridus- ja Teadusministeerium*) (2012), E-mail correspondence, 25 April 2012.
- Council of Europe: Commissioner for Human Rights (2003). *Report by Mr. Alvaro Gil-Robles, Commissioner for Human Rights, on His Visit to Estonia, 27-30 October 2003*, 12 February 2004, CommDH(2004)5, available at: <http://www.unhcr.org/refworld/docid/41596c2d4.html> (accessed 30 April 2012).
- Estonia, Population and Housing Census 2000 Database, available at: <http://pub.stat.ee/px-web.2001/Database/Rahvaloendus/Rahvaloendus.asp> (accessed 24 April 2012).
- Estonia, Population Registry (*Rahvastikuregister*) data acquired on 19 April 2012.
- Tali, M. *et al.* (2007). *Naised Eesti mustlaskogukondades. Uurimuse aruanne*. Tallinna Ülikooli Eesti Humanitaarinstituut, available at http://www.sm.ee/fileadmin/meedia/Dokumentid/V21jaanded/Publikatsioonid/2007/Naised_Eesti_mustlaskogukondades_uuringuraport.pdf
- Viies, M. (2011). *Promoting the Social Inclusion of Roma. A Study of National Policies*. Tallinn University of Technology, available at <http://www.peer-review-social-inclusion.eu/network-of-independent-experts/2011/promoting-the-social-inclusion-of-roma> (accessed 24 April 2012).

2. Statistical tables

Table 1: Roma population by native language and citizenship

| Language | Number | Citizenship | Number |
|-------------------|--------|--------------------|--------|
| National language | 426 | Estonian | 263 |
| Estonian | 45 | Russian Federation | 68 |
| Russian | 59 | Other | 95 |
| Ukrainian | 1 | Undetermined | 107 |
| Latvian | 9 | Unknown | 9 |
| Unknown | 2 | Total | 542 |
| Total | 542 | | |

Source: Population Census 2000.

Table 2: Geographic distribution of Roma population

| Settlement | 1.1.1.1 Total | 1.1.1.2 Male | 1.1.1.3 Female |
|-----------------------------------|----------------------|---------------------|-----------------------|
| Valga town | 113 | 50 | 63 |
| Tallinn city | 61 | 23 | 38 |
| Narva town | 57 | 33 | 24 |
| Tartu town | 53 | 23 | 30 |
| Kohila municipality | 35 | 16 | 19 |
| Pärnu town | 30 | 12 | 18 |
| Kohtla-Järve town | 22 | 10 | 12 |
| Audru municipality | 22 | 13 | 9 |
| Paide town | 15 | 6 | 9 |
| Võru town | 15 | 10 | 5 |
| Kallaste town | 14 | 6 | 8 |
| Türi municipality | 13 | 8 | 5 |
| Tapa municipality | 12 | 6 | 6 |
| Tamsalu municipality | 12 | 7 | 5 |
| Narva-Jõesuu town | 10 | 4 | 6 |
| Tähtvere municipality | 8 | 5 | 3 |
| Viljandi town | 7 | 4 | 3 |
| Paldiski town | 7 | 2 | 5 |
| Koonga municipality | 7 | 4 | 3 |
| Rapla municipality | 6 | 3 | 3 |
| Varstu municipality | 6 | 2 | 4 |
| Rakvere town | 5 | 2 | 3 |
| Other (less than 5 people) | 46 | 24 | 22 |
| Total | 576 | 273 | 303 |

Source: Population registry as of 19 April 2012.

Table 3: Roma education levels compared to general population

| Education | Number | Percentage | General population % (N= 1,229,047) |
|-------------------------|--------|------------|--|
| Higher education | 1 | 0.3 | 13 |
| Secondary specialised | 9 | 2.4 | 25 |
| Secondary | 58 | 15.6 | 22 |
| Basic education | 121 | 32.6 | 19 |
| Without basic education | 172 | 46.4 | 19 |
| Education unknown | 10 | 2.7 | 2 |
| Total | 371 | 100 | 100 |

Source: Tali, M., et al (2007); general population from Population Census database (2000).

3. Table of complaints

No data available.

4. Table of sources (reports and studies on Roma)

| | | |
|----------------------|------------------------------|---|
| | Title, author, source | Estonia. Promoting Social Inclusion of Roma. A Study of National Policies. Viies, M. (2011). <i>Estonia. Promoting the Social Inclusion of Roma. A Study of National Policies.</i> Tallinn University of Technology. http://www.peer-review-social-inclusion.eu/network-of-independent-experts/2011/promoting-the-social-inclusion-of-roma |
| | Source and type | Non-governmental report |
| Thematic area | <i>Education</i> | ✓ |
| | <i>Housing</i> | ✓ |
| | <i>Employment</i> | ✓ |
| | <i>Health</i> | ✓ |
| | <i>Poverty</i> | ✓ |
| | <i>Migration</i> | ✓ |
| | <i>Active citizenship</i> | |
| | Sample | NA |

| | | |
|--|--|---|
| | Location | NA |
| | Target population | - |
| | Key findings | Information and policy overview report. Contains information on Roma population, its main characteristics, policies of Estonian state (education, housing, health, labour market, culture etc). At the end of the report a list of recommendations is provided. |
| | Methodology | Desk research |
| | Representativeness, transferability of findings | - |

| | | |
|----------------------|------------------------------|---|
| | Title, author, source | ECRI Report on Estonia (fourth monitoring cycle) (2010). http://www.coe.int/t/dghl/monitoring/ecri/Country-by-country/Estonia/Estonia_CBC_en.asp |
| | Source and type | Non-governmental report |
| Thematic area | <i>Education</i> | ✓ |
| | <i>Housing</i> | |
| | <i>Employment</i> | ✓ |
| | <i>Health</i> | |
| | <i>Poverty</i> | ✓ |
| | <i>Migration</i> | |
| | <i>Active citizenship</i> | |
| | Sample | NA |
| | Location | NA |
| | Target population | NA |
| | Key findings | ECRI fourth monitoring cycle report that includes the section on Roma as vulnerable group. The report points out with concern the practice of Estonian authorities to place Roma children in special schools, it also points out to stigmatisation and vulnerable situation of Roma on the labour market. |
| | Methodology | Visit, desk research |

| | | |
|--|--|--|
| | Representativeness, transferability of findings | |
|--|--|--|

| | | |
|----------------------|--|---|
| | Title, author, source | ENAR Shadow Report 2009-2010 Kovalenko, J. (2010). <i>ENAR Shadow Report 2009/2010. Racism and Discrimination in Estonia.</i> |
| | Source and type | Non-governmental report |
| Thematic area | <i>Education</i> | |
| | <i>Housing</i> | ✓ |
| | <i>Employment</i> | ✓ |
| | <i>Health</i> | |
| | <i>Poverty</i> | |
| | <i>Migration</i> | |
| | <i>Active citizenship</i> | |
| | Sample | NA |
| | Location | NA |
| | Target population | NA |
| | Key findings | Includes some (little) information about Roma stereotyping and unemployment. |
| | Methodology | Desk research |
| | Representativeness, transferability of findings | |

| | | |
|----------------------|------------------------------|--|
| | Title, author, source | ENAR Shadow Report 2008 Kovalenko, J. (2008). <i>ENAR Shadow Report 2008. Racism in Estonia.</i> LICHR |
| | Source and type | Non-governmental report |
| Thematic area | <i>Education</i> | ✓ |
| | <i>Housing</i> | ✓ |

| | | |
|--|--|---|
| | <i>Employment</i> | ✓ |
| | <i>Health</i> | ✓ |
| | <i>Poverty</i> | ✓ |
| | <i>Migration</i> | ✓ |
| | <i>Active citizenship</i> | ✓ |
| | Sample | NA |
| | Location | NA |
| | Target population | NA |
| | Key findings | Summarizes the main information about racism and discrimination, including Roma for year 2007, mainly based on the desk research of available data, also personal interview with Roma activist. |
| | Methodology | Desk research |
| | Representativeness, transferability of findings | - |

| | | |
|----------------------|------------------------------|---|
| | Title, author, source | Naised Eesti mustlaskogukondades. Uurimuse aruanne. (Women in Estonian Roma Communities) Tali, M., Kollom, K., Velberg, M-L. (2007). <i>Naised Eesti mustlaskogukondades. Uurimuse aruanne.</i> Tallinna Ülikooli Eesti Humanitaarinstituut. http://www.sm.ee/fileadmin/meedia/Dokumendid/V2ljaanded/Publikatsioonid/2007/Naised_Eesti_mustlaskogukondades_uuringuraport.pdf |
| | Source and type | Non-governmental study |
| Thematic area | <i>Education</i> | ✓ |
| | <i>Housing</i> | ✓ |
| | <i>Employment</i> | ✓ |
| | <i>Health</i> | ✓ |
| | <i>Poverty</i> | ✓ |
| | <i>Migration</i> | ✓ |
| | <i>Active citizenship</i> | ✓ |

| | | |
|--|--|---|
| | Sample | 15 Roma women, including 1 focus group |
| | Location | Harjumaa, Raplamaa, Pärnumaa, Tartumaa, Ida-Virumaa, Valga |
| | Target population | NA |
| | Key findings | Study report gives overview of the Roma community, its characteristics. It focuses on the problems of Roma women in Estonia. The study touches on the following issues: family relationships, women and Roma community, its traditions and religion; Roma community in Estonian society (discrimination, awareness, participation in the labour market, health, active citizenship etc). It also provides recommendations for further research. |
| | Methodology | Face-to-face interviews; one focus group interview |
| | Representativeness, transferability of findings | - |

| | | |
|----------------------|------------------------------|---|
| | Title, author, source | ENAR Shadow Report 2007 Kovalenko, J. (2007). <i>ENAR Shadow Report 2007. Racism in Estonia</i> . LICHR |
| | Source and type | Non-governmental |
| Thematic area | <i>Education</i> | ✓ |
| | <i>Housing</i> | ✓ |
| | <i>Employment</i> | ✓ |
| | <i>Health</i> | ✓ |
| | <i>Poverty</i> | ✓ |
| | <i>Migration</i> | ✓ |
| | <i>Active citizenship</i> | ✓ |
| | Sample | NA |
| | Location | NA |
| | Target population | NA |
| | Key findings | Summarizes the main information about racism and discrimination, including Roma for year 2007, mainly based on the desk research of available data (majority of information about Roma is from Tali, M. <i>et al.</i> (2007). |

| | | |
|--|--|---------------|
| | Methodology | Desk research |
| | Representativeness, transferability of findings | |

| | | |
|----------------------|--|--|
| | Title, author, source | ECRI Third Report on Estonia (2006). http://www.coe.int/t/dghl/monitoring/ecri/Country-by-country/Estonia/Estonia_CBC_en.asp |
| | Source and type | Non-governmental |
| Thematic area | <i>Education</i> | ✓ |
| | <i>Housing</i> | |
| | <i>Employment</i> | ✓ |
| | <i>Health</i> | |
| | <i>Poverty</i> | ✓ |
| | <i>Migration</i> | |
| | <i>Active citizenship</i> | |
| | Sample | NA |
| | Location | NA |
| | Target population | NA |
| | Key findings | ECRI third monitoring cycle report that includes the section on Roma as vulnerable group. Report notes with concern the high unemployment rate, insufficient participation in the education system and discrimination of Roma people. Report points out that the discussion of the persecution of Roma during WWI has not brought into public discussion. It lists recommendations for Estonian authorities to improve the situation of Roma people. |
| | Methodology | Visit, desk research |
| | Representativeness, transferability of findings | - |

5. Roma networks

| Type of Associations, Organisations, NGOs | Name of Organisation | Email/Website | Roma involvement | Main area of expertise |
|---|---|---|--|---|
| NGO | <p>North-Estonia Roma Association (<i>Põhja-Eesti Romade Ühing</i>)</p> <p>Chairman: Roman Lutt, Address: Majaka 11-29, 11411 Tallinn, ESTONIA Tel. (+372) 6 380 652 GSM (+372) 55 626 601</p> | <p>E-mail: romalex@hot.ee</p> | <p>Association has 40 members who are Roma. Activities are carried out project-based. Has been funded by the Ministry of Culture through annual programme support.</p> | <p>Established in 2000. Main areas of activity focus on issues of Roma children social inclusion and education. The association is establishing Roma Family Centres as focal points for information and consultation for Roma community. Association also focuses on labour market participation and Roma discrimination. Chairman is one of the most well-known Roma community spokespersons in Estonia.</p> |
| NGO | <p>Roma Cultural Centre in Tallinn (<i>Tallinna Mustlaste Kultuurikeskus</i>)</p> <p>Contact: Ruslan Furman</p> <p>Viru 3-5, 10140 Tallinn, ESTONIA</p> <p>GSM: +37256509992</p> | <p>E-mail: ruslan@todes.ee</p> | <p>The Centre does not involve Roma community actively, it rather promotes Roma culture through dance.</p> | <p>Centre forges contacts between Roma communities of Estonia and Russia, upholds Roma identity, organises cultural events to promote Roma culture among Estonian population.</p> |