
Lithuanian
ROMA



THE SITUATION OF ROMA IN LITHUANIA

According to Statistic Lithuania, there were 2,100 Roma living in Lithuania in 2020; the majority of them (93.3%) were citizens of the Republic of Lithuania, and a small part (4.9%) did not declare their citizenship in the survey. There were 2,069 Roma living in Lithuania in 2019.



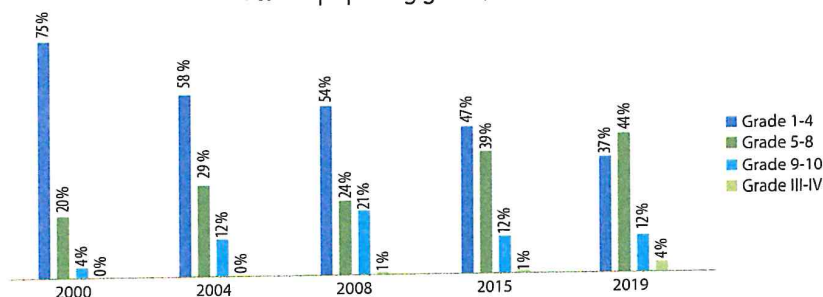
The age structure of the Roma national minority is unique in the context of the country as a whole, as a very large share in this group – 49% – consists of children and teens under 20 years of age, while in the general Lithuanian population, children and teens (0-19 years of age) make up just 22%.

ROMA PARTICIPATION IN THE EDUCATION SYSTEM

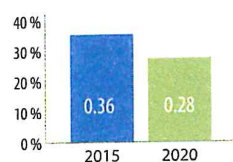
Data from the 2001 and 2011 population and housing censuses revealed important changes in education, with significant growth among the Roma population in 2011. The number of illiterate people and primary school drop-outs decreased several-fold, the portion of Roma with a primary education increased, and the number of people with a basic education also increased. We hope that the data of the 2021 census will reveal even more positive changes.

According to data from the Pupil Register, there were approximately 420-430 Roma children enrolled in Lithuanian general education schools in 2015-2019. Analysis of 2000-2019 data shows that significant changes have been achieved during this period – there has been a significant increase in the proportion of Roma pupils in grades 5 through 8 (from 20% to 44%), and a decrease in the proportion of pupils in primary grades (from 75% to 37%). It is important to note that the number of Roma pupils in the last grades of general education schools and gymnasiums is still relatively low, so greater efforts will be made in the future to achieve better results.

Roma pupils by grade, 2000–2019



Incomplete primary
education, 2015 v 2020



Education among Roma children noticeably changed in 2015-2020. Compared to 2001 data, illiteracy and incomplete primary education in this age group decreased by as much as 39% (47% in 2001, 11% in 2011, 8% in 2015), and the number of people with a basic education increased (from 7% to 27%). In 2011, the level of education of Roma children (10-19 years old) only differed more markedly from their peers

throughout Lithuania in terms of secondary education, while illiteracy and primary and basic education rates differed by 1-5% (compared to 11-36% in 2001). The changes in education observed in this age group (10-19 years old) reveal the effectiveness of the education system in working with Roma children. One of the most positive indicators is the decrease in the number of Roma children without primary education from 36% in 2015 to 28% in 2020.

Non-formal education

The Roma Community Centre is striving to fully integrate the Roma national minority into Lithuanian society by providing formal and non-formal education services. The Roma Community Centre also collects and systematises statistical, historical and demographic data on the Lithuanian Roma, and organises conferences, seminars, round-table discussions and other events related to the problems of Roma national minorities.

The Padėk Pritapti ('Help Adapt') Children's Day Centre run by the Lietuvos Sakaliukų Sąjunga (Lithuanian Young Falcon Union) does not only take care of Roma children – it is open to children of all nationalities. At the centre, children have a place to do their homework, but also to participate in singing, dancing, drawing or acting classes, where they learn about other cultures. For example, when preparing for Romani Language Day, all of the children learn Roma dances and songs, and during public holidays, they delve into their personal relationship with Lithuania.

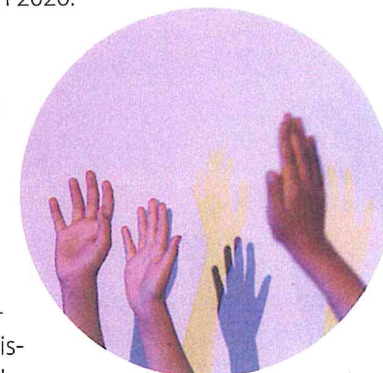


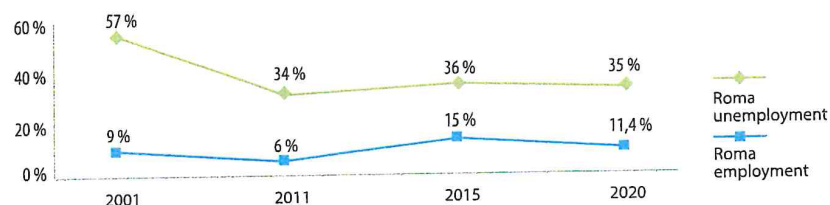
Photo from
the Padėk Pritapti archive

Place	Roma Community Centre	Padėk Pritapti Children's Day Centre
Focus	Pre-school and pre-primary education; events at the Laipteliai j Viršų Day Centre, social skills development and assistance in solving social problems.	After-school activities with Roma children. Fostering Roma culture and traditions.
	Folk dance classes led by Roma choreographer Z. Milevič and Sare Roma dancer M. Milevič.	Language games, reading fairy tales, creative writing.
	Career development classes, during which vocational guidance information is provided in various forms.	Group activities for children.
	Computer class activities.	Involvement of the child as an active decision-maker in the activities of the day centre.

ROMA PARTICIPATION IN THE LABOUR MARKET

In recent years, the trends in Roma participation in the labour market have been positive. In order to get as many Roma involved in the labour market as possible, a variety of active employment activities are in place:

- the Employment Service provides counselling and information services, and applies active labour market policy measures;
- projects are carried out promoting the integration of Roma into the labour market.



Since 2001, Roma unemployment has dropped sharply and employment has increased. Such a change is crucial for the successful integration of the Roma, both in the labour market and in society as a whole.

Projects to promote Roma integration into the labour market

Since 2004, three projects have been implemented to help Roma at social risk and experiencing social exclusion integrate into the labour market. During the implementation of the projects, Roma employment models were developed and tested, and curricula and methodological recommendations for employment mediation specialists were developed. The 'Let's Work with the Roma – New Job Opportunities and Challenges' project that started in 2016 is still under way. The aim of the project is to provide labour market integration services to members of the Roma community in order to prevent their social exclusion, facilitate their participation in the labour market, promote motivation to work and, using the latest career guidance tools, create conditions for them to acquire and improve qualifications and become established participants in social life, while also forming a positive attitude toward the Roma community and changing the employer-employee relationship in hiring Roma. The project combines activities to acquire formal and non-formal vocational education adapted to the Roma, and to do an internship in the workplace with a mentor.

Project results: 306 Roma participated in the project activities, of which 19% started looking for work, studying or working (including self-employment) after the project was over. Sociocultural services were provided to 306 Roma. During the implementation of the project, social workers, intermediaries, music teachers, employment experts and a lawyer were employed. Socially vulnerable Roma participated in social integration activities, and most of them received sociocultural services.

Project	Let's Work with the Roma – New Job Opportunities and Challenges (2016-2021)	Promoting Roma Entrepreneurship: E-Commerce (2021)
Allocated funding	868 860 €	3 700 €
Number of participants	300 (planned)	50 (planned)
Results	At least 40% of the Roma participating in the project are expected to be employed	Incentive for Roma women to participate actively in the labour market

Roma restaurant in Vilnius

Gypsy Lounge & Grill is a Roma restaurant opened in June 2020. The restaurant is run by Išvanas Kvik, a Roma who is the director of the Sare Roma ensemble as well as one of its soloists, a social activist, and a member (2020-2024) of the National Communities Board at the Department of National Minorities under the Government of the Republic of Lithuania. This restaurant is the only of its kind in Lithuania. By his example, Išvanas Kvik is destroying negative stereotypes about his fellow Roma. The founder of the restaurant has put together a team and



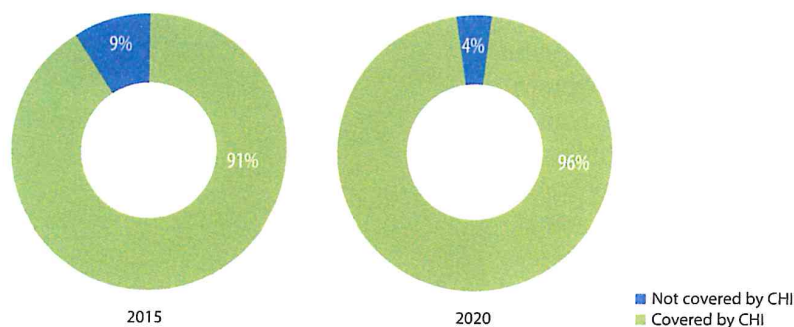
The restaurant's chefs (left – V. Dudzinski, right – I. Kvik). Photo from personal archive

is providing its members with an opportunity to learn the art of cooking, customer service and teamwork skills. As Išvanas Kvik puts it: 'Roma are not hired simply because they are different. And this is the idea of setting up a business incubator for the Roma, where they can start working and earn recommendation as employees elsewhere as well.' Vilnius City Municipality contributes significantly to this project by funding the premises in the Old Town of Vilnius. With the help of Vilnius City Municipality, the restaurant can operate and continue its activities even under lockdown.

ROMA PARTICIPATION IN THE HEALTHCARE SYSTEM

The issue of health remains relevant in the implementation of the previous action plan for the integration of Roma into Lithuanian society. It is important to increase access to health care for the Roma, as the Roma are at greater risk of falling into the category of people who are not covered by compulsory health insurance (CHI) and thus lose access to all statutory personal healthcare services.

According to data from the 'Situation of the Roma 2020' study conducted by Dr V. Kontvainė, the number of adult Roma (15 years and older) without compulsory health insurance has decreased from 14% to 6%. All children are indicated as being covered by compulsory health insurance. The proportion of persons covered by compulsory health insurance in the entire Roma group in 2020 amounted to 96%.

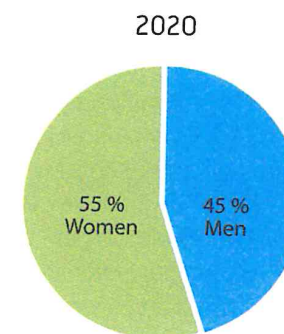


THE SITUATION OF WOMEN

Women account for a slightly higher proportion of Roma in Lithuania than men. Comparing data from the 2020 population and housing census with data from 2011, the percentage of women increased (from 52% to 55%) and the percentage of men decreased (from 48% to 45%).

At 9% in both 2015 and 2020, the employment rate for women has remained stable over the last five years. The proportion of female learners has increased marginally.

Based on Dr Kontvainė's 2020 study, there are almost no illiterate women or women without primary education (4%) in the 20-29 age group, and almost two thirds of them (60%) have a basic or higher education. These figures show the ongoing positive developments among young Roma women.



Participation of Roma women in social life

The integration of women into the labour market is particularly hampered by early marriages, with approximately a quarter (25%) of Roma females having their first child as a minor (under the age of 18). Although the number of women actively involved in public life is not high, their activities are very important in strengthening the integration of the Roma national minority. Of the seven active Roma non-governmental organisations, four are run by women. Božena Karvelienė, who is the director of the Roma Integration House, represented the Roma national minority on the National Communities Board for one term (2015-2019).

Roma women are also encouraged to take an active part in the labour market and engage in e-commerce through a project that is being carried out specifically for this purpose – Promoting Roma Entrepreneurship: E-Commerce. The project is designed to train Roma women to use an online platform for handicraft vendors and buyers, so women have something to do during lockdown and make extra money while also expanding their knowledge of e-commerce.

IMPLEMENTATION OF THE ROMA RIGHT TO HOUSING

Analysis of 2020 Roma survey data shows that the living conditions of Roma have improved, with a decrease in the number of people living in homes with housing problems (from 72% to 55%), an increase in the number of people able to heat their dwellings sufficiently (from 48% to 75%), and an increase in the living space of Roma households. Despite positive developments in relation to the country's overall indicators, Roma housing is still of lower quality. However, it is important to note that at the initiative of Vilnius City Municipality, the Kirtimai settlement (tabor) in Vilnius no longer exists – the Roma have moved to social housing or rent housing themselves, and the rent fee is reimbursed by Vilnius City Municipality.

The Roma survey showed that they have an average of 4.4 people (4.8 in 2015) per household, which is nearly twice the country's average of 2.3 people per household. Improving Roma housing conditions, encouraging them to purchase housing, and training them to maintain their housing in the long term can help ensure the Roma's right to housing and address the problems associated with it.

Problems faced by Roma households

The comparison between 2015 and 2020 shows a clear improvement in Roma household conditions.

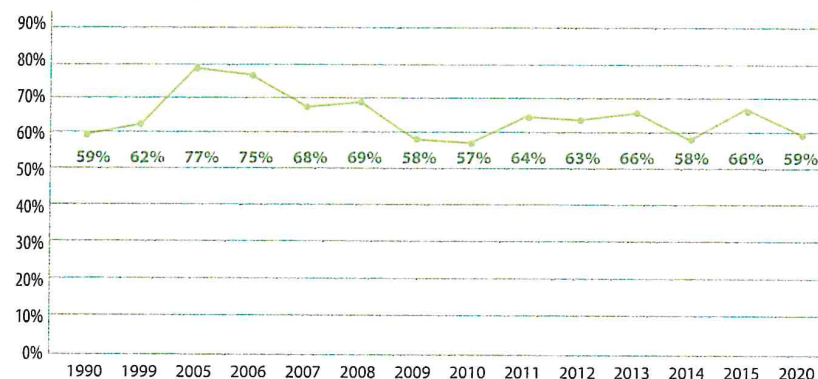
	2015	2020
Leaking roof, damp walls	72 %	55 %
Insufficient heating	48 %	25 %
Unable to pay bills on time	83 %	77 %
No shower	43 %	42 %

ATTITUDES OF LITHUANIAN SOCIETY

In the absence of detailed equality statistics, one of the tools for assessing the extent of discrimination experienced by a group of people is surveying the attitudes of Lithuanian society to analyse the social distance of the population in relation to various social groups. According to a study conducted by Baltijos Tyrimai, 58% of the Lithuanian citizens surveyed did not want to live next door to Roma in 2020. Furthermore, 37% of the Lithuanian population would not want to work in the same workplace with Roma, and 60% would not want to rent housing to them. Analysis of the results of population surveys shows that negative attitudes toward

the Roma national minority are declining, but remain relatively high. However, the Office of the Equal Opportunities Ombudsperson rarely receives complaints about discrimination against Roma. In order to reduce discrimination against the Roma in Lithuania, awareness must be increased among the Roma themselves about their rights and obligations, as well as opportunities to defend their rights. Equally important is raising public awareness of the Roma's right not to be discriminated against.

Percentage that would not want to live next door to Roma



Activities of the Department of National Minorities under the Government of the Republic of Lithuania in the field of Roma integration

The Department of National Minorities under the Government of the Republic of Lithuania participates in the formulation and implementation of the national minority policy, which guarantees the residents of the Republic of Lithuania who belong to national minorities that their legitimate interests and needs will be met and their national identity will be preserved, and enables them to participate fully in the social, political and cultural life of the country and develop their civic responsibility, tolerance and intolerance of inciting national discord.

In order to ensure the integration of the Roma national minority into Lithuanian society, the department:

- supports the dissemination of Roma culture and traditions;
- provides funding for national minority centres working with Roma children and adults;
- provides funding for projects carried out by non-governmental organisations;

- provides funding for leadership capacity building, training and seminars (for young people and women), and runs training for NGO representatives;
- implements the 'Local Roma Platforms – the Road to Co-operation with Municipalities' project to ensure the cooperation of Roma NGOs with local self-government institutions;
- cooperates with the Council of Europe and the European Commission on Roma integration issues.

Funding cultural projects

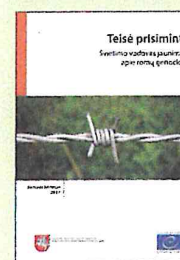
In implementing the Programme for the Integration of Roma into Lithuanian Society while preserving their identity, the Department of National Minorities under the Government of the Republic of Lithuania announces a tender every year for funding national minority cultural projects.

In 2019-2021, the Department of National Minorities under the Government of the Republic of Lithuania allocated EUR 247,500 for cultural projects designed to implement the sociocultural integration of the Roma and foster Roma culture and traditions. The Roma community organises international festivals such as the Gypsy Fest and Tamburinas, commemorates Roma Holocaust Memorial Day, and holds musical performances and exhibitions.

Activities of the Department of National Minorities regarding the memory of the Holocaust and the Roma genocide in Lithuania

The Department of National Minorities under the Government of the Republic of Lithuania has initiated discussions on the recognition of the Roma genocide. At the beginning of 2019, together with Roma NGOs and other organisations operating in the field of human rights, it formally applied to the Committee on Human Rights of the Seimas of the Republic of Lithuania with a request to include International Roma Holocaust Memorial Day on the list of remembrance days of the Republic of Lithuania. On 27 June 2019, by the decision of the Seimas of the Republic of Lithuania, Roma Genocide Remembrance Day was added to the list of remembrance days and is now commemorated every year on 2 August. This decision was an important step in drawing the public's attention to the painful facts of Lithuanian history and the situation of the Lithuanian Roma, and in contributing to the openness of Roma culture, the promotion of intercultural dialogue, and the elimination of stereotypes. This day is significant for the entire Lithuanian Roma Community. On 2 August, the Roma visit the Memorial Museum of Paneriai and attend exhibitions commemorating the Roma genocide.

As part of its targeted work on issues related to the Roma Holocaust and genocide, the Department of National Minorities under the Government of the Republic of Lithuania has contributed to the publication of books. In 2017, together with the Polish Institute in Vilnius, it released and promoted the book **Mietek na wojnie** ('Mietek at War'; Lithuanian title: **Esu Karolis**). In this book for children, a Roma boy tells about life at the Auschwitz-Birkenau Nazi concentration camp.



The same year, the Department of National Minorities presented **Teisė prisiminti** ('Right to Remember'), a self-contained educational resource about the Roma genocide that was released in collaboration with the Council of Europe Youth Department. The aim of this publication for young people is to raise awareness of the Roma genocide and combat discrimination. The educational resource is designed for everyone working in the field of education.

In 2019, the Department of National Minorities published the Collection of Works by the Winners of the Academic Works on National Minorities Competition 2016-2018, which included Aurėja Jutelytė's article entitled '**Transnational Aspects of the Memory of the Roma Genocide**'.



In 2020, the Department of National Minorities initiated, prepared and published (in Lithuanian and English) a book entitled **The Forgotten Genocide**. Lithuanian Roma During the Nazi Occupation. The texts used in the publication were written by Vida Beinortienė, Dr Arūnas Bubnys, Aurėja Jutelytė, Neringa Latvytė, and Dr Zigmantas Vitkus. Published with European Union funding, the book was compiled by Aurėja Jutelytė. This was the first time historical document and interdisciplinary research material with references to additional sources on the Roma genocide have been presented in one publication. In this way, the Department of National Minorities seeks to draw attention to the lesser-known victims of the Holocaust in Lithuania, arouse interest in the Roma genocide, and preserve the memory of the victims.

FOSTERING AND DISSEMINATING ROMA CULTURE AND TRADITIONS

Black Bird.

Memory of the Roma Genocide

In 2020, the Ministry of Culture initiated the development of a documentary film, *Black Bird. Memory of the Roma Genocide*. The documentary tells about the unique Roma community in Lithuania, which always created its own culture with its own rules and, as a result, was perceived as a threat by the rest of society.



Samudaripen

In 2018, the Lithuanian Roma Community initiated and staged a musical play entitled *Samudaripen*, which premiered at Vilnius Town Hall and was also shown in Kaunas and Šiauliai. The play was directed by Marius Jampolskis and featured approximately 30 professional artists and musicians. The play was meant to commemorate the painful events of World War II, when a large part of the Lithuanian Roma was deported and massacred in concentration camps. Half a million Roma were victims of Holocaust extermination worldwide. It is estimated that there were about 1,500 Roma living in Lithuania before World War II, of which one in three was killed during the occupation.



Gypsy Fest 2020

The international Gypsy Fest organised by the Lithuanian Roma Community has already become a traditional annual event that attracts a lot of interest from Roma music fans.

In September 2020, the Gypsy Fest was held as part of the annual Fair of Nations. One of the brains behind the festival – head of the Lithuanian Roma Community and director of the Sare Roma ensemble Išvanas Kvik – invited guests to enjoy the music of 'No Labels!' This was also the slogan for Gypsy Fest 2020. The event was designed to show that the Roma community is open to everyone and committed to common integration and joint activities with the entire Lithuanian community, and that the Roma are willing and able to participate in social life. The festival includes a parade down Didžioji Street in Vilnius, and is crowned by a huge concert in the evening. Gypsy Fest is full of exciting moments and the music, passion, freedom, sincere smiles and laughter so characteristic of the Roma. Although the Gypsy Fest is usually held on 8 April, which is International Roma Day, the event was merged with the Fair of Nations in 2020 due to the Covid-19 epidemic.



Roma music festival Tamburinas

The Department of National Minorities under the Government of the Republic of Lithuania contributes to the Roma music festival *Tamburinas*. The aim of the project is to encourage young people to nurture Roma culture, to introduce Roma culture to Lithuanian society, and to get artists and musicians involved. During the event that took place in Šiauliai in 2020, well-known Roma performers and youth groups presented their musical programmes. Romanik performers Michail Kvik and Nikita Kvik, singers Gopalas Michailovskis and Konsuela Mačiulevičiūtė, dance studio Melicha, and Roma youth dance groups performed at the festival.



The 'Local Roma Platforms – the Road to Co-operation with Municipalities' project

Being implemented by the Department of National Minorities under the Government of the Republic of Lithuania, this project aims to promote cooperation between Roma communities and local self-government and ensure mutual dialogue in addressing issues relevant to the Roma minority in the areas of social inclusion, education, healthcare and culture.

In the autumn of 2021, Roma representatives – intermediaries between local Roma communities and municipal institutions – started working at four Lithuanian municipalities (Vilnius, Jonava, Kybartai, Panevėžys). One of the intermediaries is a Lithuanian language teacher who works in Kybartai.

The nature of the activities of the intermediaries depends on the issues that matter to the Roma and the problems they face. The main areas of activity of the intermediaries are related to social, economic and cultural issues and the provision of administrative assistance to the Roma.

The intermediaries help Roma communicate with representatives of state institutions, assist Roma in handling matters at public and private institutions, help solve other problems of everyday life, and run education and prevention programmes. In municipalities, additional attention is paid to the promotion of Roma culture and public education.

Areas of activity of intermediaries:



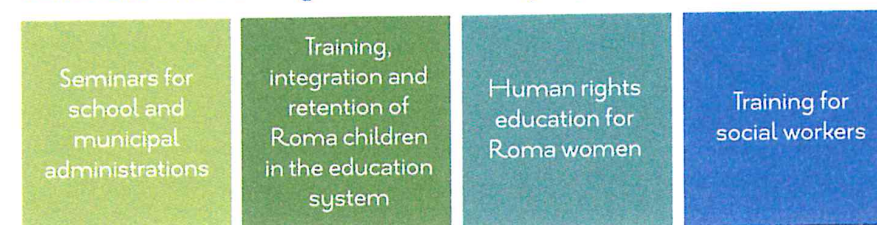
Meetings throughout Lithuania with Roma communities and municipal representatives

The project entails active communication at Lithuanian municipalities with the specialists working for them, people in charge of Roma issues, and Roma representatives.

As part of this project, specialised training is being organised for specialists working with the Roma community (employees of municipal administrations, social

workers, teachers), the involvement of Roma (especially Roma women) in solving the problems in their community is being strengthened, and studies are being conducted to understand in more detail the existing obstacles to the integration of the Roma community into Lithuanian society.

Seminars and training on the following topics are being held:



Other initiatives

Vilnius Roma Integration Programme 2020-2023

By decision No 1-609 of 26 August 2020 of the Vilnius City Council, Vilnius City Municipality approved the Vilnius Roma Integration Programme 2020-2023, which is designed to:

- promote the integration of Roma into the education system;
- ensure healthcare for Roma;
- increase the openness of the cultural identity of the Roma nation;
- reduce social exclusion;
- improve the living conditions of Roma people;
- ensure a safe environment;
- ensure the effectiveness, efficiency and continuity of integration measures.

ROMA PUBLIC ORGANISATIONS

Association of Roma in the Baltic Region	Director: Vaiva Poškaitė-Kovaliuk Tel. +37069985958 Address: Vaduvos g. 32-31 E-mail: sareromalt@gmail.com
Lithuanian Gypsy Association Čigonų Laužas	Director: Ariana Bagdanavičiūtė Address: Ribiškių Didžioji g. 2-3 Vilnius E-mail: ariana.bagd@gmail.com
Lithuanian Gypsy Association Čigonų Laužas, Šalčininkai District Division	Director: Jonas Matuzevičius Address: Vilniaus g. 56, Eišiškės, Šalčininkai District E-mail: jonas.matuz@gmail.com
Lithuanian Roma Community	Director: Išvanas Kvik Tel. +37063721575 Address: Pupinės g. 1B, Vilnius E-mail: sarreroma@gmail.com
Roma Integration Centre	Director: Konsuela Mačiulevičiūtė Tel. +37067535196 Address: Vytauto g. 113, Šiauliai E-mail: kmaciuleviciute@yahoo.com
Roma Integration House	Director: Božena Karvelienė Tel. +37060387130 Address: Švyturio g. 19-66, Vilnius E-mail: bozena81karveliene@gmail.com
Vilnius Gypsy Association	Director: Stepas Visockas Tel. +37067511832 Address: Pelesos g. 5-218, Vilnius
Public institution Sare Roma	Director: Išvanas Kvik Tel. +37063721575 Address: Pupinės g. 1B, Vilnius E-mail: sarreroma@gmail.com

OTHER ORGANISATIONS WORKING WITH ROMA:

Lietuvos Sakaliukų Sąjunga, Vilnius City branch Padėk Pritapti	Director: Inga Kreivėnaitė Tel. +37062898903 Address: Dariaus ir Girėno g. 11, Vilnius E-mail: helptofit@gmail.com
Roma Community Centre	Director: Svetlana Novopolskaya Tel. +370 5 210 4134 Address: Metalo g. 23A, Vilnius E-mail: sn713@hotmail.com

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TAUTINIŲ MAŽUMŲ DEPARTAMENTAS
PRIE LIETUVOS RESPUBLIKOS VYRIAUSYBĖS

