

CONCEPT NOTE

OSTRAVA CASE STUDY

The Social Rental Agency model to overcome Roma housing exclusion

May 2026

The European Network on Roma Equality under EU Funds (EURoma Network) has been working since 2007 to foster an increased and effective use of European Cohesion Policy Funds (notably ESF/ESF+ and ERDF) to advance the social inclusion, equal opportunities and fight against discrimination of Roma people across the EU, through mutual learning, generation of knowledge and awareness-raising activities. To this end, the Network brings together public authorities responsible for Roma policies (i.e. National Roma Contact Points) and those in charge of European Cohesion Policy Funds from 15 EU Member States, as well as the European Commission. The Fundación Secretariado Gitano (FSG), which is responsible for the Network's Technical Secretariat, leads and coordinates the Network. For further information: www.euromanet.eu

This document provides an in-depth overview of the Ostrava experience (Czechia) with the Social Rental Agency model. It places particular emphasis on the aspects that render this case especially valuable for generating transferable insights applicable across various European contexts.

As a living document, it will be updated to incorporate conclusions and lessons learned from the case study discussed during the EURoma Network meeting to be held in Ostrava in June 2026.

Annotation

The study visit explores the Social Rental Agency (SRA) model, mechanism that has proven to be effective in overcoming Roma housing exclusion and market discrimination in Czechia.

The model, built on long-term traditions of SRAs in France or Belgium, was first piloted by civil society organisations (CSO) in several Czech cities and towns in form of innovative projects supported by ESF. Based on its effectiveness, the central government transformed the model into the national legislative framework, marking a significant shift from temporary EU-funded projects to a systematised, state-budgeted policy.

The SRA model is uniquely relevant for addressing the housing needs of Roma and other vulnerable groups of population, as it tackles the chronic shortage of public housing by unlocking vacancies in the private rental market through social accompaniment¹ and risk-guarantees.

¹ In the Czech context, the term “social work” is used for social accompaniment.

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1. National context

1.1 Roma in Czechia

Roma represent the largest and most disadvantaged ethnic minority in Czechia, with an estimated population of 250,000 to 260,000, or approximately 2.4% of the total population. While roughly 50%-60% of the Roma population is integrated into mainstream society, the remainder resides in neighbourhoods experiencing varying degrees of marginalisation.² Socio-economic and symbolic exclusion do not always align; some areas inhabited by many Roma (who do not have to constitute the neighbourhood's majority) are often labelled as "socially excluded" even when they are not predominantly poor, reflecting stigma rather than objective conditions.

Roma marginalisation in Czechia had deep historical roots, shaped by 20th-century developments. Firstly, during World War II and the German occupation, the largely assimilated Bohemian and Moravian Roma and Sinti were nearly annihilated in the Holocaust (*Porajmos*). Secondly, under the Communist regime in Czechoslovakia, many Roma from Eastern Slovakia were resettled to Czech industrial regions to replace the expelled German population and to serve as unskilled labour in industrial production; they retained stronger Romani language and cultural traditions. Today, descendants of the small group of Bohemian and Moravian Roma and Sinti who survived the *Porajmos* generally hold higher social and cultural status than Roma of Slovak origin. Thirdly, the post-1989 transition had the strongest negative impact on industrial regions, where Roma were concentrated in low-skilled manual work, through deindustrialisation and economic decline.

As consequence, unlike in other Central and Eastern European countries, Roma in Czechia are predominantly urban. Their regional distribution is highly uneven, with the highest concentrations found in Ústí Region (north of the country), and the Moravian-Silesian region (north-east of the country), with Ostrava as its capital. These areas are characterised by socio-economic deprivation and deteriorating infrastructure.

1.2. Mainstreaming social inclusion approach

Social inclusion policy in Czechia emphasises poverty reduction through labour market measures, social transfers (material need allowances, housing benefits, family support), and targeted services often delivered by CSOs. Although several national strategies relevant for Roma equality and social inclusion exist,³ their implementation remains decentralised and

² Office of the Government of the Czech Republic. (2025). *Zpráva o stavu romské menšiny v České republice za roky 2023-2024 [Report on the Situation of the Roma Minority in the Czech Republic for the Years 2023–2024]*. Available at: https://vlada.gov.cz/assets/ppov/zalezitosti-romske-komunity/aktuality/Zprava-o-stavu-romske-mensiny-2023-2024_fin.pdf. And Roma Civil Monitor. *Roma in Czechia*. Available at: <https://www.romacivilmonitoring.eu/countries/czechia/>.

³ Office of the Government of the Czech Republic. (2024). *Strategie rovnosti, začlenění a participace Romů (Strategie romské integrace) 2021–2030. Revidované znění [2024 Strategy for Equality, Inclusion and Participation of Roma (Strategy for Roma Integration) 2021–2030. Revised version 2024]*. Available

largely depends on regional and local capacities. Pivotal role in this landscape is played by the Agency for Social Inclusion (ASZ), a specialised governmental body (currently part of the Ministry for Local Development) providing municipalities with methodological support in mapping local needs, introducing innovative solution based on national and international best practices, and drafting strategic plans required to access EU funds. Nevertheless, its outreach is constrained by willingness of individual municipalities to participate and the ASZ's own ESF-based operational capacity.

Since late 2000s, the Czech approach has been consciously de-ethnicised and territorially focused on "socially excluded localities" (Czech abbreviation: SVL). Exemplified by the rebranding of the ASZ (formerly "Agency for Social Inclusion in Roma Localities"), this shift aimed to destigmatise interventions and improve municipal acceptance by framing poverty as a general issue. Critics however argue that this ethnically blind paradigm systematically ignores unique challenges that Roma face (mainly the racism and discrimination), puts Roma into a situation where they must compete with other socially vulnerable groups that do not suffer with racism, and excludes Roma from decision-making.

Consistently applied, the de-ethnicised approach has resulted in significant data gaps, lack of necessary interventions or preventing effective monitoring of whether inclusion efforts reach the Roma population. Furthermore, Roma and pro-Roma civil society labels the approach of the ASZ as elitist, highlighting a breakdown of trust and questioning its relevance in addressing Roma's structural exclusion.⁴

1.3. Transformation of housing market in the post-communist transition

The fall of the Czechoslovak communist regime in November 1989 initiated a sweeping transformation of a housing system that was built on state ownership, centralised allocation, and heavily subsidised rents. The transition dismantled this architecture rapidly.⁵ The in-kind-restitution of properties nationalised after 1948 returned a significant portion of the country's housing stock to original owners or their heirs (approximately 7% of the housing

at: <https://vlada.gov.cz/assets/ppov/zalezitosti-romske-komunity/aktuality/III-Revizovane-zneni-SRI-vcetne-ukolove-casti.pdf>.

Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs. (2023). *Social Inclusion Strategy 2021–2030. 3rd Updated Edition*. Available at: https://mpsv.gov.cz/cms/documents/440532dd-4248-769a-f118-75f5185e960d/Social+Inclusion+Strategy+2021–2030_aktualizace2023.pdf?t=1729247970128.

⁴ Roma Civil Monitor. (2020). *Civil society monitoring report on implementation of the national Roma integration strategy in the Czech Republic: Identifying blind spots in Roma inclusion policy*. Publication Office of the European Union, pp. 19-22. Available at: <https://cps.ceu.edu/sites/cps.ceu.edu/files/attachment/basicpage/3034/rcm-civil-society-monitoring-report-3-czech-republic-2019-eprint-fin.pdf>.

⁵ For more details, see, for example: Lux, M. et al. (2011). *Standardy bydlení 2010/2011: Sociální nerovnosti a tržní rizika v bydlení [Housing Standards 2010/2011: Social Inequalities and Market Risks in Housing]*. Sociologický ústav Akademie věd České republiky. Available at: https://www.soc.cas.cz/images/drupal/publikace/m_34_lux_standardy_bydleni_201011_socialni_nerovnosti_a_trzni_rizika_v_bydleni_0.pdf.

stock; however, in Prague the portion constitutes as much as 70%), resulting in rent increases and the displacement of long-standing tenants.

Accelerated privatisation had an even wider effect on housing throughout the 1990s and 2000s. When the state transferred the housing stock to municipalities in 1991, no central rules or guidance were introduced on how to manage or privatise it. Unlike most Central and Eastern European countries, which adopted unified frameworks (e. g., based on right-to-buy schemes), Czech municipalities independently determined whether, when, and how to privatise their housing, including pricing. This fragmented approach produced substantial inequalities. Some households were able to purchase municipal flats quickly and at very low prices, while others faced higher costs or delays. Many tenants, including those in restituted properties or privatised as part of assets of large state enterprises, had no access to privatisation at all.⁶

The Czech Republic consequently developed a high homeownership rate in Europe (compared to 68% EU Average, but still the lowest in the region of Central and Eastern Europe), reaching almost 75 percent in 2025.⁷ At the same time, this overall rate conceals significant inequalities, as only approximately 3% of Roma households reside in owner-occupied dwellings.⁸

For vulnerable populations, including Roma, but also elderly people on pension incomes, single-parent families, people with disabilities, or persons leaving institutional care, the consequences of the transformation have been especially acute. The near-total liquidation of the social housing stock through privatisation left Czech municipalities with negligible capacity to respond to housing needs.

Unlike most Western European countries, Czechia has never developed a coherent social housing framework to replace the socialist allocation system (at least partially based on needs). Legislative efforts to establish a social housing law stalled repeatedly in Parliament, and no comprehensive national legislation has been enacted to date. The existing public housing stock (predominantly owned by municipalities) is widely considered insufficient to meet current needs. Moreover, most local governments do not allocate these units to low-income or otherwise vulnerable groups as social housing; instead, they are typically rented at market or near-market rates. The main exception is elderly residents, who (where social housing exists) are the most common beneficiary group. The development of municipal housing is mainly financed from EU funds and the State budget. Paradoxically, conditions of

⁶ Sýkora, L., Šimoničková, I. (1994). „From Totalitarian Urban Managerialism to a Liberalized Real Estate Market: Prague’s Transformations in the early 1990s.” Pp. 47-72 in M. Barlow, P. Dostál, M. Hampl (eds.). *Development and Administration of Prague*. University of Amsterdam.

⁷ Eurostat. *Housing in Europe 2025 Edition*. Available at: <https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/web/interactive-publications/housing-2025>.

⁸ EU Fundamental Rights Agency. *Roma Survey 2024. Accommodation details – Tenure structure*. Available at: <https://fra.europa.eu/en/publications-and-resources/data-and-maps/2025/roma-survey-2024>.

the public support for acquisition of new dwellings do not require that municipalities stop the continuous privatisation of their existing housing stock.

1.4. Main challenges of Roma housing

The housing situation of Roma in Czechia differed from most Central and Eastern European countries due to their predominantly urban residence (meaning rural segregated settlements typical elsewhere were largely absent) and the presence of a relatively effective housing allowance system, which, however, underwent a reform making it more residual – assessment of the reform’s impact is not available yet. Consequently, the main pre-reform challenges concerned discrimination in access to housing, affordability pressures in high-cost regions (especially large cities), segregation in disadvantaged neighbourhoods, and exploitative practices known as the “poverty business” (see “social hostels” below).

According to the 2024 FRA survey, more than one quarter (27%) of Roma face housing deprivation. Rather than access to infrastructure (93% has tap water in the dwelling and 96% has toilet and shower/bathroom), it concerns environmental problems (29%) or overcrowding (81%). This condition, often the result of unaffordable market housing and large family sizes, can severely limit children’s ability to study, rest, with negative effects on school performance and wellbeing.

The most serious problem in housing is discrimination. In the FRA survey, 45% reported experience with discrimination in the last five years because of being Roma. Roma are especially exposed due to their strong reliance on rental housing: 51% rent privately and 44% live in municipal or social housing. Barriers go beyond direct refusals by landlords. Agencies frequently screen out Roma based on assumed client preferences, while municipalities limit access through criteria that excluded poorer applicants or channelled them into lower-quality or segregated housing.

Both discriminatory barriers and individual preferences (linked to family networks, neighbourhood cohesion, schooling choices, perceived safety, and concerns about racism) contribute to the concentration of many low-income Roma in socially excluded localities. While precise figures were unavailable, estimates suggested up to 67,850 Roma lived in such areas (based on a 2016 estimate of 115,000 residents, of whom 59% were Roma), representing more than one quarter of the national Roma population.

Living conditions in socially excluded localities are substantially poorer than among the mainstream population. Estimates indicate that up to 31% of residents experience housing deprivation, 67% are exposed to excessive noise, and 64% report pollution or other environmental hazards. Overcrowding or insufficient privacy affected around half of households, while 8% reported infestations. A consequence of the large share of Roma living in disadvantaged neighbourhoods is also widespread environmental insecurity; 33.8% of Roma report problems with crime, violence, or vandalism; five times higher than the 6.6% reported by the general population. Residence in such areas also carried strong social stigma, compounded by ethnic prejudice.

A particularly severe form of housing exclusion is the concentration of Roma in so-called “social hostels” (*sociální ubytovny*). These facilities often serve as a last-resort option for households excluded from the regular rental market, despite receiving allowances sufficient for standard housing. Typically privately operated, they provide substandard conditions, including limited privacy, shared or missing facilities, poor hygiene, and exposure to crime or substance abuse. Despite this, costs are frequently inflated, at times matching or exceeding standard rents. An estimated 20,000 people live in such accommodation in Czechia, although the proportion of Roma is unknown.

2. Roma and housing in Ostrava

Ostrava, Czechia’s third-largest city, presents a complex housing landscape shaped by its post-industrial transition. Following the 1989 Velvet Revolution, the city’s heavy industrial decline led to significant population shrinkage and widespread job losses, which disproportionately affected the Roma community.

The scale of housing exclusion in Ostrava is substantial. Approximately 3,100 households (roughly 7,600 people) are identified as being in acute housing need.

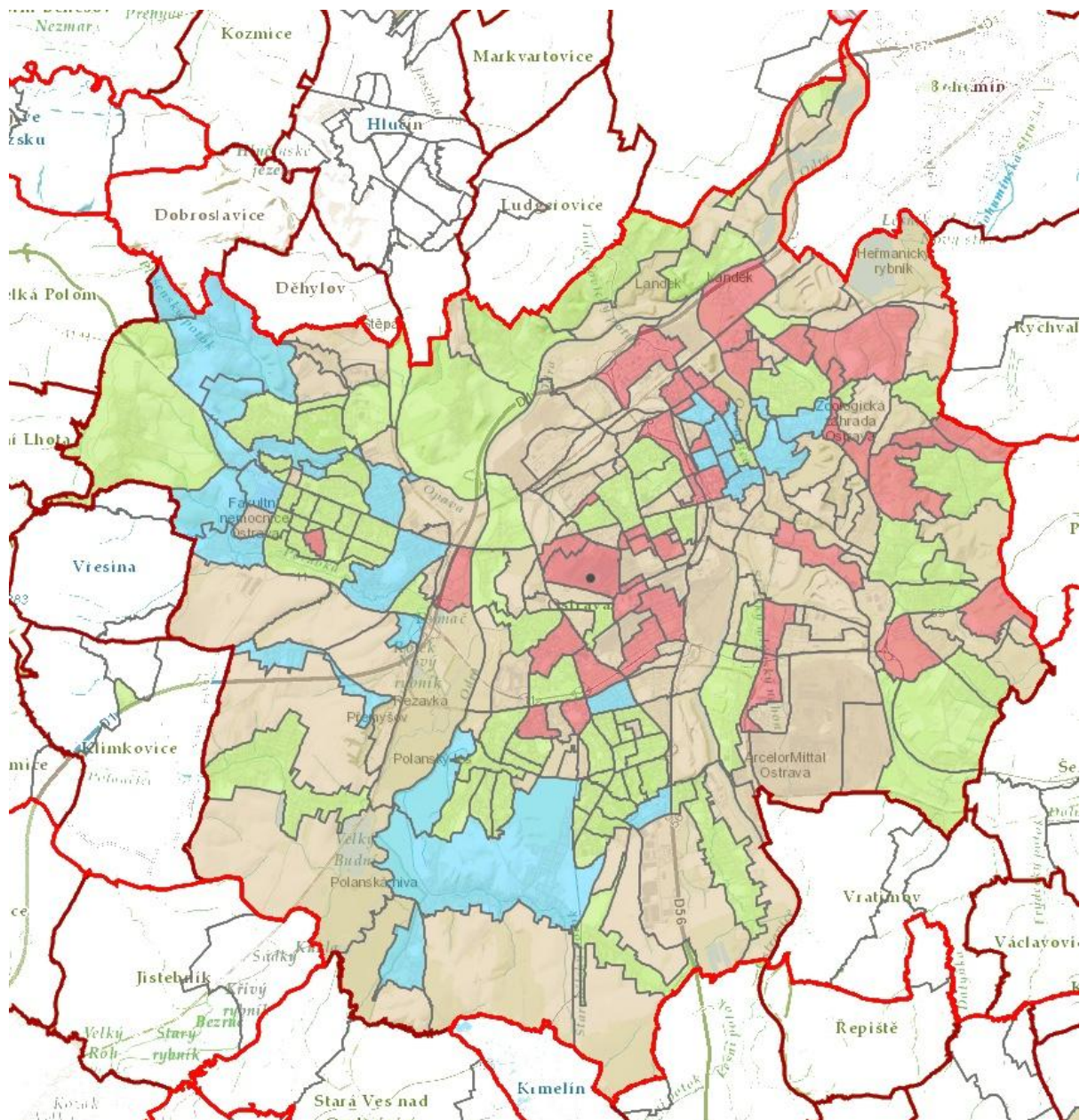
A critical barrier to addressing this need is the city’s limited housing stock. While Ostrava consists of roughly 145,000 flats, the municipality owns only 9% (12,620 units). This municipal stock is further decentralised, with management split across 23 autonomous municipal districts, creating a fragmented policy environment where individual districts often prioritise “merit-based” allocation over social need. Notably, the private company Heimstaden owns 14,000 flats, more than the city itself, making it a dominant player in the local market.

Today, the Roma population is estimated between 15,000 and 30,000, with a significant portion residing in 13 areas considered socially excluded localities or 15 overpriced social hostels characterised by substandard living conditions.

Roma families are among the most vulnerable groups, often trapped in a parallel housing market due to pervasive discrimination by private landlords and real estate agencies. The city officially adopts the de-ethnicised approach: it targets socially excluded localities and uses the ETHOS methodology for vulnerability rather than ethnicity. Despite the lack of formal data, experts involved in the city’s housing and social policy estimate that Roma households represent approximately 30–40% of the clients in social housing projects.

Residential segregation remains a persistent challenge; the city utilises a Map of Segregation⁹ developed by Charles University to identify suitable areas for social housing to prevent further concentration of poverty in marginalised zones or in high-status neighbourhoods where peaceful social interactions with the local majority are less likely:

⁹ Available at: www.segregace.cz



- Areas unsuitable for the development of social housing due to a high concentration of residents at risk of social exclusion.
- Areas where the development of social housing is not recommended due to a higher concentration of residents at risk of social exclusion.
- Areas where it is not recommended to plan or develop new social housing to an extent that would increase the concentration of residents at risk of social exclusion by 50%.
- Areas where the development of social housing is not recommended, or where it should be carefully considered, due to a higher concentration of higher socio-economic status residents.
- Areas that are suitable for the development of social housing, or to which none of the above conditions apply.

With assistance of ESF-funded project (including a systemic project implemented by the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs¹⁰), Ostrava has developed a local social housing strategy (*Koncepce sociálního bydlení*) since 2016.

Key pillars of the current version (2025-2028) of the strategy:¹¹

- takes into account the local decentralised governance where the City of Ostrava (*Magistrát*) performs a coordinating and methodological role, while its 23 autonomous municipal districts (*městské části*) implement their own housing policies and manage their municipal housing stocks;
- builds on the “Housing First” principles, which prioritise placing the most vulnerable households (priority is given to families with children, seniors, and victims of domestic violence) directly into standard housing rather than social hostels or other substandard accommodation;
- is specifically designed to facilitate the implementation of the new Housing Support Act (*Zákon o podpoře bydlení*), formalising tools such as the Housing Contact Point (*Kontaktní místo pro bydlení*) and multidisciplinary housing assistance (including social workers, psychologists, and peer workers with lived experience) to ensure long-term housing retention;
- largely relies on CSOs’ activities and coordination with them;
- focuses on early identification of rent arrears to prevent evictions from existing municipal stock;
- to address the shortage of municipal units, it aims at “unlocking” the private market through the SRA model; the city itself implements a small-scale SRA (currently 45 apartments provided by both municipal districts and private owners), while CSOs recruit privately owned dwellings both from the large company Heimstaden (such as the NGO Portavita) and smaller private landlords (for example, the NGO Romodrom) using risk-guarantees to bypass market discrimination.

Stabilised housing leads to social stabilisation, contributes to social integration, and allows families to focus on longer-term priorities. Evaluations that municipal officers strategically use to sustain the city political leadership’s commitment to social inclusion and housing activities, demonstrate that within one year of stable housing, the economic situation of households improves, and already the second year of stability allows tenants to address long-term issues such as their health.

¹⁰ The project’s webpage: <https://socialnibydeni.mpsv.cz>.

¹¹ City of Ostrava. (2025). *Koncepce sociálního bydlení statutárního města Ostravy [Concept of Social Housing of the Statutory City of Ostrava]*. Available at: https://sociopoint.ostrava.cz/wp-content/uploads/2025/09/Koncepce-socialniho-bydleni-SMO_2025_2028.pdf.

3. Social rental agency model

A Social Rental Agency (SRA) is a mechanism where a provider, such as a municipality or CSO, mediates the relationship between private property owners, and vulnerable households that would otherwise be unable to access or sustain private tenancies.

Operating between the private rental market and socially vulnerable tenants, the SRA assumes the role of guarantor vis-à-vis the owner, offering rent security, property management, and damage guarantees in exchange for a rent set modestly below market rate. The dwelling is then made available to the tenant, often with accompanying social support.

In housing systems where the public stock is insufficient, SRAs offer a structurally significant alternative. Rather than requiring the slow and capital-intensive process of constructing or acquiring new social housing, SRAs mobilise existing privately owned dwellings for social purposes. This makes them particularly well-suited to contexts of scarce municipal stock, tight public budgets, and urgent housing need. By reducing owners' risk and administrative burden, they can unlock segments of the (vacant and Airbnb-type short-term) private market that would otherwise remain inaccessible to low-income or otherwise marginalised households.

SRAs also carry advantages in terms of geographic distribution. Because they draw on the dispersed private rental stock rather than concentrated public housing estates, they can in principle facilitate more socially mixed and spatially integrated housing outcomes, avoiding the stigmatisation and spatial exclusion that have historically accompanied residualised public housing. Furthermore, the model is inherently scalable in response to fluctuating demand, as the portfolio of leased dwellings can be expanded or contracted without the fixed capital commitments associated with direct housing construction or ownership.

3.1. SRA tradition in EU

Social rental agencies have their roots in Belgium, where the first *sociale verhuurkantoren* (SVK) emerged in the early 1980s as civil society responses to growing housing exclusion in liberalising rental markets. France developed a parallel tradition through *associations d'intermédiation locative*, formalised progressively through national legislation from the 1990s onwards. These two countries established the conceptual and operational foundations upon which subsequent European models were built.

The Belgian (Flemish) model typically employs a subtenancy arrangement where the SRA acts as the primary tenant, renting apartments from private owners and subletting them to vulnerable households. By offering long-term income security (often 9-year contracts) and property maintenance guarantees, SRAs are able to negotiate rents that are below market

rates. SRAs' operation is financed by regional¹² subsidies based on the number of managed dwellings.

Conversely, the French model (AIVS) focuses on facilitating direct tenancy, where the target household signs a contract directly with the landlord. The agency provides professional mediation and financial insurance against rent arrears or property damage as well as social accompaniment support for tenants. Commercial insurance companies are involved in the model. SRAs are financed from fees paid by owners of apartments and municipal subsidies for management of the housing stock.

The spread of SRAs across the EU has followed broadly the trajectory of housing policy reform, accelerating particularly in the aftermath of the 2008 financial crisis, which exposed the fragility of market-dependent housing systems and renewed political interest in non-market instruments. Ireland established a structured national framework through its Rental Accommodation Scheme and later the Housing Assistance Payment, both of which incorporate intermediary logics. Portugal, Finland, and Austria have developed analogous mechanisms tailored to their respective institutional contexts. In Central and Eastern Europe, Slovakia's capital Bratislava operates a municipal SRA, and there are some minor pilot SRAs in Hungary.

The European Federation of Public, Cooperative and Social Housing (Housing Europe) has increasingly recognised SRAs as a legitimate and transferable component of affordable housing systems, documenting their spread and advocating for EU-level frameworks that support their financing and regulatory integration. This growing institutionalisation reflects a broader European consensus that private market intermediation, when properly structured and publicly supported, constitutes a viable complement to direct social housing provision.

3.2. SRA model in Czechia

Discussions regarding the introduction of the SRA model in Czechia, often framed as "guaranteed housing", began around 2010 through a series of seminars, conferences, and working groups. These early debates involved a wide range of stakeholders, including the Ministry for Local Development, the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs, the Public Defender of Rights, and various associations representing both tenants and property owners. This collaborative effort led to the model's inclusion in the government-approved *Strategy for Combating Social Exclusion for 2011-2015*. Consequently, the ASZ launched a pilot project in the cities of Cheb and Bruntál, supported by a guarantee fund from the CSO Open Society Foundation. However, this initial application faced significant hurdles, such as difficulties in household selection and a lack of client preparedness, which ultimately prevented the guarantee fund mechanism from being properly tested and led to the suspension of funds.

¹² Namely: Brussels-Capital Region Government directly; the Flemish Government, specifically through its dedicated agency *Wonen in Vlaanderen* (Living in Flanders); and the Walloon Government, via the *Société Wallonne du Logement* (SWL) and the *Fonds du Logement de Wallonie* (FLW).

Despite this, further SRAs continued to emerge in Czechia. In 2016, the “Fair Housing” project was launched by Prague-based CSO R-Mosty to secure housing from private market for disadvantaged groups, particularly Roma and single mothers. The project remains active and now primarily focuses on housing refugees from Ukraine. Over time, it has secured several dozen flats.¹³

The city of Most also maintained cooperation with private landlords. Within its project “Pilot testing of the implementation of a social housing system at the local level in the municipality of Most” (2017-2019), it sourced flats for clients from the private market.¹⁴

A marked expansion in cooperation between municipalities, CSOs and private owners has been observed since 2019, following the launch of Call 108 of the ESF-funded OP Employment (OPZ) call *Support for the Housing First*. Under this call, 11 beneficiaries secured more than 180 flats from the private sector. In parallel, the Centre for Community Work Western Bohemia implemented a project *Support for addressing housing need with the involvement of private owners in the Pilsen region*¹⁵ as part of Integrate Territorial Investments (ITI) instrument, securing 15 flats, and publishing a localised SRA methodology.¹⁶

In 2021, the Prague Municipal Rental Agency (MNA) was established and has since has secured and allocated 75 flats.¹⁷ It provides affordable housing to households in acute housing need, primarily targeting families with children and minorities facing market discrimination who are unable to secure standard leases independently due to a combination of financial and systemic barriers. For landlords, the guaranteed income was initially set at roughly 50-59% of market rates; however, since January 2025, the agency has increased this to 70-80% of current market rent to remain attractive to property owners. MNA’s support has a transformative impact on its target groups, with tenants reporting significant improvements in mental well-being, social inclusion, and overall life stability. Beyond simply providing

¹³ The programme’s webpage: <https://www.ferovebydleni.cz>.

See also: The Ombudsman. (2023). *Dobrá praxe v zajišťování bydlení pro zranitelné lidi. Výzkumná zpráva 2023 [Good practice in providing housing for vulnerable people. Research report 2023]*. Available at: <https://www.ochrance.cz/uploads-import/ESO/59-2022-DIS-JMK-výzkumná%20zpráva-final.pdf>.

¹⁴ See: Mikulec, M., Glumbíková, K. (2020). *Výzkumná zpráva C: Vyhodnocení dopadů, procesů a limitů místních systémů sociálního bydlení v obcích spolupracujících s MPSV i ve srovnávacím vzorku obcí a jejich následná komparace [Research Report C: Evaluation of the Impacts, Processes and Limitations of Local Social Housing Systems in Municipalities Cooperating with the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs, Including a Comparative Sample of Municipalities and Their Subsequent Comparison]*. Ostrava University. Available at: https://socialnibydeni.mpsv.cz/download/dokumenty/33-evaluan_zprva_c_fin.pdf.

¹⁵ The project’s webpage: <https://www.cpkp-zc.cz/projekty/vic-nez-jen-bydleni/>, including links to media coverage of its activities.

¹⁶ Centre for Community Work, Western Bohemia. (2025). *Garantované bydlení na území města Plzně: Postupy práce v systému garantovaného bydlení [Guaranteed Housing in the City of Pilsen: Working Procedures within the Guaranteed Housing System]*. Available at: https://www.cpkp-zc.cz/wp-content/uploads/2026/05/Metodika_garantovane_bydleni.pdf.

¹⁷ The agency’s webpage: <https://najemniagentura.praha.eu>.

housing, the model has successfully facilitated the return of nine children from institutional foster care to their families and offered a second chance for households previously trapped in cycles of discriminatory or institutional living.¹⁸

Since 2022, emergence of SRAs has continued mainly through OPZ+ Calls 007 and 101. By July 2024, 29 projects had secured more than 370 flats for Czech households. Call 101 also enabled sourcing flats for Ukrainian households, although data remain unavailable (estimated at up to 100 additional flats). These projects led to the establishment of municipal social rental agencies in Plzeň, Liberec, Brno and Prague 7.

Overall, a rough estimate suggests that between 2019 and 2024, approximately 600 to 1,600 privately owned flats were managed within the SRA programmes.

A major hurdle for NGOs was how to finance the Guarantee Fund (used to cover unpaid rent or damages) since such expenditures may be ineligible or administratively difficult under ESF rules; and moreover, at the end of the project would need to be recovered as unspent part of the grant. The Managing Authority (MA) tackled this by setting a 40% flat rate for indirect costs. This enables for flexibility and sustainability: the MA does not check specific expenditures within this 40% bulk and it is up to the beneficiaries to use it for their clients' needs. Importantly, money from the flat rate remains with the beneficiary after the project ends, allowing for the long-term sustainability of the guarantee fund and continued support for housed families.

In addition to the direct financial support to SRA operators, ESF was also used for so-called systemic projects implemented in 2016-2020 and 2023-2025 by the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs aimed at developing local social housing strategies and systems. The ministry provided municipalities with information, know-how, technical assistance in implementation, and M&E, including integration of the SRA model into their broader social inclusion and social housing policies.

Ultimately, the systemic projects' success in fostering these local systems laid the groundwork for anchoring the SRA model within the new national Housing Support Act, ensuring its evolution from a series of EU-funded experiments into a state-budgeted national policy.

¹⁸ See also: Štanderová, K., Valínová, M., Rai Revta. (2025). *Evaluace Městské nájemní agentury. Závěrečná evaluační zpráva [Evaluation of the Municipal Rental Agency. Final Evaluation Report]*. Grant Thornton Advisory. Available at: <https://najemniagentura.praha.eu/hodnoceni-mestske-najemni-agentury/>.

4. SRA in practice

4.1. Romodrom: SRA targeting Roma

The CSO Romodrom, the largest Roma-led organisations in Czechia, established its SRA in 2018 as response to the chronic housing exclusion faced by the Roma community and aimed at bridging the gap between vulnerable populations and the private rental market, particularly in the Moravian-Silesian region where approximately 90% of the CSO's clients belong to the Roma.¹⁹ Romodrom's approach is rooted in the "Housing First" philosophy, which posits that stable, standard housing is a non-negotiable prerequisite for successful social integration and the resolution of other life challenges.²⁰

Regarding cooperation with the city, Ostrava's municipal housing contact point, refers people who approach it for housing assistance to various NGOs, including Romodrom, based on their specific needs. This includes, for example, applicants who would not qualify for municipal housing under current rules (e.g. due to debts), or large families for whom the city lacks adequately sized flats. The city also refers applicants to NGOs in urgent situations, such as when families risk having their children removed due to housing deprivation and seeks to secure suitable housing as quickly as possible. Romodrom is not assigned clients based only on ethnicity, so segregation does not occur in this process. Coordination accompanies these referrals, with municipal and NGO staff exchanging information and communicating regularly by phone on specific cases. Romodrom also refers its clients to the city to register on waiting lists for municipal housing.

Housing First providers in Ostrava meet every three months (including participants from the Social Housing Platform, a national umbrella NGO, and representatives of the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs), to exchange experiences and discuss casework. The city also organises roundtables where stakeholders jointly develop policies, strategies, and ad hoc agendas. Furthermore, every one to two years, the city conducts a mapping of all housing actors, assessing their housing capacities and related resources.

A fundamental pillar of Romodrom's experience is the functional separation of social support and rental management. To adhere to international HF principles, Romodrom created a separate entity to act as the SRA, ensuring that the "social worker" and the "facility manager" roles do not overlap. This division is critical for maintaining trust; while the social worker

¹⁹ See: Nedomová, E., Lomová, E. (2024). „Czechia: A Social Rental Agency as a desegregation actor“. In: Roma Civil Monitor. *Examples of successful housing desegregation as a precondition of Roma integration*. Publications Office of the European Union, Luxembourg. Edited by Marek Hojsik. Available at: https://romacivilmonitoring.eu/wp-content/uploads/2024/07/RCM_2023_Thematic-report-desegregation_FINAL-ISBN.pdf.

Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs. (2022). *Případová studie Romodrom: Housing First v Moravskoslezském kraji [Case Study Romodrom: Housing First in the Moravian-Silesian Region]*. Available at: <https://www.esfcr.cz/documents/21802/17941389/PS+HF+Romodrom.pdf/4e188550-744b-4c8d-ad02-c68ad0966c9b?t=1646641825527>.

²⁰ See: <https://housingfirsteurope.eu/what-is-housing-first/>

provides intensive, unconditional support, the facility manager handles technical issues, rent collection, and lease enforcement. A key innovation in their staffing was the recruitment of a real estate agent: a team member with strong business and communication skills rather than a traditional social work background. This agent's role is to sell the programme to private landlords, a strategy that resulted in securing approximately 90 flats over a seven-year period.

Because municipal housing stock is often limited or subject to exclusionary criteria, Romodrom focuses on unlocking the private rental market. To overcome pervasive market discrimination and the stigma attached to Roma tenants, the SRA offers private owners a comprehensive package of financial and non-financial guarantees. The most vital tool in this regard is the Guarantee Fund, which ensures that owners receive rent on time regardless of the tenant's immediate financial situation. The SRA also provides apartment management, insurance against damages, and regular inspections to ensure property maintenance. Experience shows that these pragmatic arguments, rather than philanthropy, are what ultimately convince owners to participate.

Romodrom's SRA model is explicitly designed as a desegregation actor; in their work, they utilise the *Map of Residential Segregation* to ensure that at least 95% of their apartments are located in desegregated zones, where vulnerable population does not concentrate (this is considered a crucial prerequisite for social inclusion). To facilitate successful integration, the agency emphasises "matching chemistry", carefully considering the composition of the neighbourhood before placing a family. For instance, the SRA avoids placing large families with young children in buildings primarily occupied by elderly persons to prevent predictable noise related conflicts.

Operating an SRA involves continuous mediation and stigma management. To prevent initial prejudice, SRA staff often introduce themselves to neighbours as "flat managers" or "housekeepers" rather than social workers. When conflicts arise, the agency acts as a professional mediator. Romodrom's experience has shown that while some neighbour complaints are valid and require behavioural adjustments from the tenant, others are rooted in racism. In such cases, the agency takes a firm stance, informing neighbours of the tenants' legal rights and, if necessary, initiating official complaints against discriminatory bullying or illegal harassment.

The results of Romodrom's SRA model have been profound. Beyond achieving high housing retention rates, where 32 out of 45 households maintained their housing after two years, the project facilitated the return of six children from institutional foster care to their families. By stabilising these families in standard housing, the project not only improved their subjective well-being and health but also generated significant savings for the public budget by avoiding the high costs of state childcare.

This success was recognised internationally when the project was awarded the 2021 FEANTSA Gold Prize for its innovative cooperation with private property owners.²¹

²¹ See: <https://www.feantsa.org/resources/ending-homelessness-awards-3rd-edition-2021>.

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