

Understanding EU action on Roma inclusion

SUMMARY

The Roma are Europe's largest ethnic minority. Out of an estimated total of 10 to 12 million Roma in Europe as a whole, some 6 million live in the European Union (EU) and most of them are citizens of an EU Member State. A significant number of Roma people live in very poor socio-economic conditions. The social exclusion, discrimination and segregation they face are mutually reinforcing. Their restricted access to education and difficulties entering the labour market result in low income and poor health compared with non-Roma people.

Since the mid-1990s, the EU has been stressing the need for better Roma inclusion. In 2011, a key EU initiative was launched with the adoption of an EU framework for national Roma integration strategies up to 2020. The aim was to tackle the socio-economic exclusion of and discrimination against Roma, by promoting equal access in four key areas: education, employment, health and housing. When the framework came to an end, in early October 2020 the European Commission adopted a new strategy for 2021 to 2030. Through this new strategy, Member States were invited to tackle the disproportionate impact of the pandemic on Roma people. In March 2021, the Council adopted a recommendation on Roma equality, inclusion and participation, replacing an earlier one from 2013. This recommendation encouraged Member States to adopt strategic frameworks for the inclusion of Roma communities. The EU also supports Member States in their duty to improve the lives of all vulnerable people, including Roma people, through the European structural and investment funds and other funding instruments.

Issues relating to the promotion of democratic values and practices, and economic, social and cultural rights for Roma people have received particular attention from civil society organisations, while Parliament has been advocating for Roma inclusion since the 1990s.

This is an update of a briefing published in April 2023.



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Background

The umbrella-term '[Roma](#)' is commonly used in EU policy terminology. It encompasses several groups, including Roma, Sinti, Kale, Romanichels, Boyash/Rudari, Ashkali, [Balkan Egyptians](#), Yenish, Dom, Lom, Rom and Abdal, as well as Traveller populations (gens du voyage, Gypsies, Camminanti, etc.).

As stated in the Council of Europe report on [Promoting the inclusion of Roma and Travellers](#), there is a significant [lack of data](#) on Roma people, which can be explained by three main elements:

- some Roma people are [nomads](#) and may be missing during collection of data;
- some Member States do not define Roma people as an [ethnic minority](#);
- [studies](#) show that minority groups often refuse to declare that they are from a different ethnic background than the national majoritarian one, fearing discrimination.

The Roma people are Europe's largest ethnic minority. According to [Council of Europe data](#), of an estimated 10 to 12 million in Europe, some [6 million](#) Roma people live in the EU, most holding EU citizenship. The estimated share of Roma people in the various Member States ranges from 30 % in Romania, 12.2 % in Bulgaria, 12.2 % in Hungary, 12.2 % in Spain, 7.9 % in Slovakia, 6.5 % in France, 3.2 % in Czechia, 2.8 % in Greece, 2.4 % in Italy, 1.7 % in Germany to less than 1 % in most of the other EU Member States. According to 2019 [data](#), Roma people tend to be younger (25.1 years old) than the EU population average (40.2 years old).

A lack of data on Roma people makes it difficult to obtain an exact picture of their socio-economic situation in the EU. Nevertheless, in [2012](#)¹ the EU Agency for Fundamental Rights ([FRA](#)) conducted a comprehensive survey, which was first updated in [2016](#). In [2020](#), the FRA launched another survey, – the Roma survey 2020-2021 (whose [results](#) were published in 2022 in a report entitled 'Roma in 10 European countries') – to collect comparable data in eight selected Member States (Czechia, Greece, Spain, Croatia, Italy, Hungary, Portugal and Romania) and two accession countries (North Macedonia and Serbia). The three studies focus on poverty and social exclusion, labour market participation, education and discrimination. In December 2023, the FRA launched its [Roma survey 2024](#), which had the same structure as the Roma survey 2020-2021. It should collect data in 10 EU Member States (Bulgaria, Czechia, France, Greece, Hungary, Ireland, Italy, Portugal, Romania and Spain) and three accession countries (Albania, North Macedonia and Serbia). The main field surveys should take place in the spring and summer of 2024. The first results should be published by mid-2025.

Poverty and social exclusion

According to the FRA's abovementioned 2021 survey, 'Roma in 10 European countries', in 2021 8 out of 10 Roma were living on an income below the respective national [at-risk-of-poverty](#) threshold. On average, over a quarter of Roma people (27 %) were living in a household that had faced [hunger](#) at least once in the previous month. More than half lived in a state of [housing deprivation](#), in damp, dark dwellings or housing without proper sanitation facilities (52 %); one in five Roma lived in dwellings without indoor [tap water](#) (22 %). However, these figures are lower than in 2016 (respectively 61 % and 30 %). Roma people's [life expectancy](#) is, on average, 10 years below that of the general population in the countries where they live: Roma women live 11 years less than women in the general population, and Roma men live 9.1 years less than men in the general population. Moreover, Roma people encounter [barriers to accessing healthcare services](#), as few have health insurance and most live in segregated areas.

Labour market participation

According to the 2021 FRA survey, as in 2016, the [paid work rate](#) for Roma aged 20 to 64 years is 43 %, much lower than the EU average (70 % at that time). The [gender pay gap](#) worsened (31 percentage points in 2021 compared to 27 percentage points in 2016). Roma women reported much lower paid work rates than Roma men: 28 % compared with 59 %. The situation of young Roma people was significantly worse. On average, 56 % of Roma aged 16 to 24 were not employed

or in education or training ([NEET](#)), compared with an 11 % EU average for the same age group. The situation had worsened since 2016 (53 % at that time). For this age group, the gender gap was substantial: 69 % of young Roma women were not employed or in education or training, compared with 44 % of young Roma men.

Education

Roma women

[Equality](#) between men and women has been one of the European Union's core values since 1957. Yet, the implementation and enforcement of this principle remain a challenge. Among women, Roma women suffer a '[double layer of exclusion](#)': first, as women; and second, as members of Europe's largest ethnic minority. Roma women have to face additional barriers, since extreme [poverty, exclusion](#) and [discrimination](#) reinforce their disadvantaged position.

According to the 2019 FRA 'Second European Union Minority and Discrimination Survey – [Roma women in nine EU Member States](#)', Roma women are disadvantaged compared to Roma men in terms of education, employment and health, and compared to women in general. Moreover, Roma women, in particular those who [marry](#) and have a family at a very young age while living in severely deprived material and poor housing conditions, are even more disadvantaged and at risk of social exclusion and marginalisation.

Roma children lag behind non-Roma children at all levels of education. Less than half (44 %) of Roma children between the ages of 3 and 7 (or the starting age of compulsory primary education) participate in early childhood education, compared with a 93 % EU average for the same age group. While nine out of 10 Roma children aged between 7 and 15 are reported as attending school (88 %), participation in education decreases significantly after compulsory schooling: only 27 % of young Roma adults surveyed had completed their [upper secondary education](#).

The number of Roma [early school-leavers](#) is disproportionately high compared with the general [EU](#) population (71 % compared to 9.7 %). Moreover, [school segregation](#) remains a particular problem in Bulgaria, Croatia, Romania and Slovakia, despite the legal prohibition of this practice and [case law of the European Court of Human Rights](#).

Discrimination

Roma face high levels of discrimination in all spheres of life – when looking for work or at their workplace, when in need of education or healthcare, when trying to buy or rent a house or contact the administration, and when entering a shop. According to the 2021 FRA survey, some 3 out of 10 Roma had [felt discriminated against](#) in the core areas of life because of being Roma in the past 12 months (27 %). They experienced the highest rate of discrimination when looking for a job (33 %) and seeking accommodation (24 %). Some 17 % of Roma surveyed had experienced at least one form of hate-motivated harassment in the 12 months preceding the survey, although this is significantly less than the percentage in 2016 (30 %). On average, half of Roma respondents had heard of at least one equality body, national human rights institution or ombudsperson's office in their country (50 %, compared to 29 % in 2016). Nevertheless, this rise in awareness is not reflected in a rise in the proportion of Roma reporting cases of discrimination to any authority: most Roma victims of hate-motivated violence (75 %) did not report the most recent incident to any authority in 2021, compared with 70 % in 2016.

According to the fourth [Eurobarometer](#) survey on Discrimination in the EU, published in December 2023, the acceptance of the Roma by the general population in daily life has improved since 2011. Some 67 % of respondents said they would feel comfortable working with a Roma colleague, 54 % felt comfortable about having a Roma person in the highest elected political position in their country, while half (51 %) said they would welcome a Roma person as the partner of their children. However, almost two thirds of respondents (65 %) thought that discrimination against the Roma is widespread in their country.

EU legal framework

The Treaty on European Union (TEU) defines equality and respect for human rights – including the rights of persons belonging to minorities – as EU shared values ([Article 2 TEU](#)). The fight against social exclusion and discrimination and the promotion of economic prosperity, social cohesion and solidarity between Member States feature among the EU's common objectives ([Article 3 TEU](#)). The Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union (TFEU) provides the legal basis for EU action to combat discrimination based on six grounds, including racial or ethnic origin ([Article 19 TFEU](#)). The Charter of Fundamental Rights of the EU prohibits discrimination on any grounds, including race and ethnic origin ([Article 21](#)). It also ensures the protection of the rights of the child ([Article 24](#)).

The [Racial Equality Directive](#) (2000/43/EC) prohibits discrimination, including harassment, based on racial or ethnic origin in key fields such as employment, education, healthcare, and housing. It introduces the concepts of indirect discrimination (see box) and endorses the principle of positive action. The directive has become [a major source](#) of

further legal and policy provisions shaping equality policies in various policy domains at both EU and national level. The Council Framework Decision on [combating certain forms and expressions of racism and xenophobia](#) by means of criminal law (2008/913/JHA) obliges Member States to criminalise hate speech and hate crime, including against Roma. Similarly, the legislative proposal on standards [equality bodies](#) should strengthen the institutional framework for combating discrimination.

The directive establishing [minimum standards on the rights, support and protection of victims of crime](#) (2012/29/EU) pays particular attention to victims who have suffered from biased or discrimination-motivated crimes. The [Audiovisual Media Services Directive](#) (2018/1808/EC) calls upon Member States to ensure that audiovisual media services do not contain incitement to violence or hatred directed against a group of persons or a member of a group based on any of the grounds referred to in Article 21 of the EU Charter of Fundamental Rights (see above). The directive also requires Member States to ensure that media service providers do not include or promote discrimination based on racial or ethnic origin. On 9 December 2021, the Commission published the communication on [A more inclusive and protective Europe: extending the list of EU crimes to hate speech and hate crime](#), inviting the Council to adopt a decision identifying hate speech and hate crime (to which Roma people are subjected) as another area of crime meeting the criteria set out in [Article 83\(1\) TFEU](#). A [proposal](#) for such a Council decision is annexed to the communication. If adopted, the Commission may make a proposal based on [Article 83 TFEU](#) for a directive on minimum rules concerning the definition of criminal offences and sanctions in this area of crime.

Direct and indirect discrimination

According to the [Racial Equality Directive](#), **direct discrimination** takes place when 'one person is treated less favourably than another is, has been or would be treated in a comparable situation on grounds of racial or ethnic origin' (Article 2 (2)a). In education, direct discrimination can be identified when there is unjustified placement of Roma children in special schools for children with disabilities or segregating Roma from non-Roma classrooms because of their ethnic origin.

In contrast, **indirect discrimination** occurs when 'an apparently neutral provision, criterion or practice would put persons of a racial or ethnic origin at a particular disadvantage compared with other persons (Article 2 (2)b). In fact, school segregation is often the result of indirect discrimination ([Council of Europe, 2017](#)). For example, it can include cases of Roma-only classes and schools located in neighbourhoods where the Roma become over-represented. However, the European Court of Human Rights has ruled that 'a lack of discriminatory intent is not sufficient. The States are under a positive obligation to take positive effective measures against segregation' ([Lavidia and others v Greece](#), 30 August 2013).

Source: European Commission, [Combating Antigypsyism](#), January 2020.

EU policies

The EU Member States bear primary responsibility for improving the living conditions and inclusion of Roma people, while the EU acts as coordinator. The past two decades have seen major progress in the establishment of EU policies for Roma inclusion.

First initiatives

As early as the second half of the 1990s, the European Commission called for national measures in accession countries with large Roma populations to scale up the social integration of Roma people. In 2000, the Commission called for the [transposition](#) of the Race Equality Directive. In December 2007, the [European Council](#) acknowledged, for the first time, that the Roma faced 'a very specific situation' across the EU and called upon Member States and the EU to use all means to improve their inclusion. In July 2008, the Commission adopted a communication on [non-discrimination and equal opportunities: a renewed commitment](#), stressing that the tools for advancing the social integration of the Roma had to be applied in a better way. Launched for the first time in 2008, the [European Roma summits](#) aim to support and promote a joint commitment by the Member States, the EU institutions and civil society. In its 2010 communication on [the economic and social integration of the Roma in Europe](#), the Commission stressed anew the need for better Roma integration.

EU framework for national Roma integration strategies up to 2020

In 2011, as a response to the [controversial evictions and expulsions of mobile EU Roma citizens](#) the previous year in France and Italy, and while the FRA revealed the striking marginalisation and discrimination faced by Roma people in the above-mentioned [2011 survey](#), the Commission adopted an [EU framework for national Roma integration strategies up to 2020](#), aiming to tackle the socio-economic exclusion of and discrimination against the Roma by promoting equal access to four key areas: education, employment, health, and housing. Member States were called upon to ensure that all Roma children completed primary school and to close the gaps between the Roma and the non-Roma with respect to employment, health, housing and public utilities (water, electricity, etc.).

The Commission proposed the adoption of national Roma integration strategies ([NRISs](#)), to ensure that Member States implemented effective policies. The EU NRIS framework encouraged Member States and enlargement countries to adopt a comprehensive approach to Roma integration and socio-economic inclusion, mainstream Roma inclusion using policy, legal and funding instruments, adopt NRISs, and set up coordination, consultation and monitoring mechanisms. At EU level, in October 2012 the Commission strengthened its dialogue with Member States on Roma integration, in particular by establishing the network of national Roma contact points ([NRCs](#)). Since 2010, the European Commission has organised an annual European Roma platform, a two-day international conference in Brussels that brings together representatives from the EU institutions, national governments, local authorities and Roma civil society organisations.

In 2013, the EU framework was strengthened by a [Council recommendation](#) on effective Roma integration measures in the Member States. The document placed a stronger focus on two horizontal areas: anti-discrimination and poverty reduction. It also introduced, as of 2016, an annual reporting obligation for Member States, to improve the EU monitoring system. The December 2016 [Council conclusions](#) on accelerating Roma integration confirmed the Member States' commitment.

EU Roma strategic framework for equality, inclusion and participation for 2020-2030

A new strategic framework

As the EU framework for Roma integration ended in 2020, the European Commission adopted the [EU Roma strategic framework for equality, inclusion and participation for 2020-2030](#) on 7 October 2020. The new 10-year plan was announced in the Commission [work programme](#) as one of the equality and non-discrimination initiatives under 'A new push for European democracy'. The

non-legislative strategy draws on policy learnings from the previous framework and was adapted to the new challenges of the pandemic. It reflects findings from [consultations and evaluations](#) conducted by the Commission using information from each country, and from non-governmental and international organisations and the FRA. Both the [European Court of Auditors](#) (2016) and the [FRA](#) (2020) had pointed to the need for disaggregated data by ethnic origin to evaluate the impact of Roma-targeted policies, in particular desegregation measures in housing and education. The Commission's final [assessment](#) of the previous framework concluded that it had improved political commitment and financial support at national level, but overall progress on Roma integration had been limited since 2011. A 2020 EPRS [implementation assessment](#), summarising opinions on the previous framework, highlighted a general consensus that the non-binding nature of the framework was a key weakness.

The current EU Roma strategic framework for equality, inclusion and participation for 2020-2030 includes a three-pillar approach aimed at fostering equality, inclusion and participation, in addition to the pre-existing four-sector approach (education, employment, health, and housing). The objective is to complement the previous socio-economic inclusion approach with the promotion of equality with a focus on the fight against discrimination and [anti-Gypsyism](#) and the promotion of Roma participation in political, economic and cultural life. In addition, the Commission added a new approach to [intersectionality](#), to address the needs and disadvantages of the various Roma groups. The new framework reflects the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals ([SDGs](#)) and corresponds to the principles of the [European Pillar of Social Rights](#).

While this strategic framework remains non-binding, the Commission has stepped up EU monitoring and implementation to support Member States. In the framework of the EU action plan against racism, it also committed to ensuring the [effective implementation](#) of EU law on equality and against racism and xenophobia, bringing more infringement procedures if needed. The EU strategic framework also reflects the need to revise the objectives to make them 'more specific, measurable and realistic'. It furthermore sets new, measurable EU [headline targets](#) to improve data collection, reporting and monitoring, with a new portfolio of indicators and objectives: the [2020 monitoring framework](#).

On 12 March 2021, the Council adopted a [recommendation on Roma equality, inclusion and participation](#), through which it stepped up the Member States' commitment to fighting discrimination against Roma people effectively and to promoting their inclusion in the key areas of education, employment, health and housing. The 2021 recommendation, replacing the 2013 version, has an expanded scope, and includes measures to fight online and off-line discrimination; to combat multiple and structural discrimination against the Roma, in particular women, children, LGBTI persons and persons with disabilities; and to promote multi-cultural awareness-raising activities and campaigns in schools.

The recommendation highlights the importance of the equal participation of Roma in society and of their role in policymaking. Moreover, it stresses the need for a stronger gender perspective. According to the recommendation, Member States must adopt [national Roma strategic frameworks](#) within their broader social inclusion policies to improve the situation of Roma people, and communicate them to the European Commission. Member States are also encouraged to include and promote the rights of and equal opportunities for Roma people in their [national recovery and resilience plans](#).

New initiatives

In line with the new strategic framework, the European Commission supports the implementation of various projects and programmes, some of which are mentioned below.

- Many projects focus on **access to education**, such as the joint EU and Council project 'Inclusive Schools: Making a Difference for Roma Children' ([INSCHOOL](#)), which started in 2017. The current (third) cycle of the project has renewed its commitment to improving the access, participation and performance of Roma and children at risk of

marginalisation and exclusion in pre-school and compulsory education in Bulgaria, Czechia, Hungary, Romania, Portugal and Slovakia. In order to promote equal access to quality education for all through the European Education Area (EEA), the [digital education action plan](#) and the European Social Fund+ (ESF+), the Commission facilitates cooperation between Member States. It also continues to foster mutual learning on fighting discrimination in and through education under the EEA strategic framework [working group on equality and values](#).

- The [EU4Health](#) programme seeks to help **prevent diseases** and facilitate vaccination and support the development of mechanisms to deal better with health-related crises, including among the Roma population.
- The Housing and Empowerment of Roma (HERO) pilot project, managed by the Council of Europe Development Bank (CEB), aims to improve **access to housing** and employment for vulnerable Roma families.
- Established in 2016, the [High Level Group on combating hate speech and hate crime](#) is committed to promoting positive narratives and Roma role models, and to **combating anti-Gypsyism**, stereotyping, anti-Roma rhetoric and hate speech. Similarly, the Citizens, Equality, Rights and Values programme (CERV) supports projects fighting [racism, anti-Gypsyism and discrimination](#) and commemorating the Holocaust through its [European Remembrance](#) calls.
- The 'Building up political will and understanding of Roma inclusion at local and regional level' project ([ROMACT](#)) acknowledges the fact that measures at local and regional level are decisive for generating improvement in Roma communities. The ROMACT approach is innovative, establishing at the beginning of the process an informal group called the 'Community/Citizens' Action Group' (CAG), which is expected to become a partner of the municipality in facilitating the **participation of Roma citizens in the local development process**. The [Roma Civil Monitor](#) 2021-2025 initiative on building the capacity of Roma civil society organisations aims to monitor the implementation of national Roma strategic frameworks (NRSFs). [National Roma contact points](#) and national Roma platforms receive support through the Commission's dedicated calls under the CERV. The objective of the call is to back the national Roma contact points in their strengthened role as facilitators of the participation and involvement of Roma civil society in the design, implementation, monitoring and review of NRSFs and local action plans.
- **The Council [conclusions on measures to ensure equal access for Roma to adequate and desegregated housing, and to address segregated settlements](#)**, adopted on 9 October 2023, are another key follow-up to the 2020-2030 EU Roma strategy. In the conclusions, the ministers also stressed the importance of tackling anti-Gypsyism, of tapping into EU funding and of involving Roma themselves in the development of policies that affect them.

Implementation of the strategy in the Member States

As part of the EU Roma strategic framework 2021-2030 and in line with the Council Recommendation on Roma equality, inclusion and participation of 12 March 2021, Member States developed plans adjusted to their national plans, which included a series of common features and minimum commitments, targets for different segments of the Roma population, steps for setting up monitoring mechanisms, general and targeted measures, etc.

In an [assessment report](#) published on 9 January 2023, the European Commission took stock of NRSFs, assessed the commitments made by the Member States and provided guidance on any improvements needed. According to the Commission, only eight Member States had integrated these commitments into their national plans, 12 had done so only partially and six to a very limited extent.² Only five Member States had submitted their strategic frameworks on time (i.e. by September 2021).

In general, the missing elements relate to the identification of clear targets, the mobilisation of earmarked budgets for policy implementation and monitoring, and initiatives that take into account the diversity within the Roma population. The Commission regretted the fact that the proposed measures were not always that concrete and that the information on the budget allocation was unclear. The Commission also called on Member States to develop targeted policies and allocate clearly-defined budgets when it comes to the fight against the social exclusion of Roma communities (education, employment, health, and housing).

Nevertheless, according to the Commission, the seven Member States with a large Roma population (Bulgaria, Czechia, Greece, Hungary, Romania, Slovakia and Spain) had implemented more ambitious measures.

EU funding

2021-2027 EU cohesion policy legislative package

With regard to policy objectives, the 2021-2027 [Common Provisions Regulation](#) (CPR) emphasises the need to use the funds to make Europe more 'social and inclusive implementing the European Pillar of Social Rights'. It also stresses that the country-specific recommendations from the [European Semester](#) process should be taken into account in how the funds are spent.

For the 2021-2027 programming period, a specific objective, [Article 5\(1\)\(d\)](#), under the CPR policy objective 'a more social and inclusive Europe', will allow Member States to carry out long-term programming and targeted measures on access to health, housing, education, employment and social services for the Roma population, as well as specific measures on fighting discrimination and anti-Gypsyism.

The European Social Fund Plus ([ESF+](#)) budget of €99.3 billion for the 2021-2027 period also addresses key social inclusion areas, allocating specific percentages to address the particular difficulties that affect Roma people. These are described below.

- Funds specifically allocated to social inclusion should reach at least 25 % of total resources, intensifying the social dimension of the ESF+ and compelling Member States to address vulnerability.
- Some 12.5 % of ESF+ resources should address youth employment measures, education and training, focusing on reducing the NEET rate in those countries where it is above the EU average.
- At least 5 % of the ESF+ budget can be devoted to measures for reducing child poverty. Countries with a child poverty rate higher than the EU average of 22.5 % may devote 5 % of their ESF+ budget to child poverty reduction measures. In 2022, in seven countries, the share of the population aged under 18 at risk of poverty is [over 22.5 %](#) in Bulgaria, Spain, Italy, Luxembourg, Germany, Malta and Ireland, and over 40 % in Romania.
- Furthermore, 3 % of the total budget can be allocated to the FEAD through basic material assistance and food to address severe deprivation.

Other funding instruments to support Roma and Traveller communities

The European structural and investment funds (ESIF) are also key financial resources to address the needs of Roma people. The EU supports the inclusion of Roma communities through various instruments. A number of these are given below.

- [REDI](#) Economic Development S.A., supported by the Open Society Foundations ([OSF](#)) and the European Investment Fund ([EIF](#)), is an investment vehicle that focuses on facilitating access to finance for Roma entrepreneurs in eastern Europe and the Balkans.

REDI provides €4.65 million in loans to micro-enterprises in Roma communities in four European countries (Bulgaria, North Macedonia, Romania and Serbia).

- The [Climate and Infrastructure Funds](#) support projects promoting affordable social housing for Roma people.

To respond to the health and socio-economic [consequences of the Covid-19 pandemic](#), which hit Roma people particularly strongly, the Commission adapted the rules of the relevant funding programmes, such as the coronavirus response investment initiative ([CRII](#)), complemented by the coronavirus response investment initiative plus ([CRII+](#)), the new package of recovery assistance for cohesion and the territories of Europe ([REACT-EU](#)) and the EU Solidarity Fund ([EUSF](#)).

Stakeholders

Issues relating to the promotion of democratic values and practices with regard to Roma people and to their economic, social and cultural rights, have received particular attention from civil society organisations and other stakeholders. At EU level, the [European platform for Roma inclusion](#), set up in 2009, is a forum for debate and concerted action by all relevant stakeholders: EU institutions, national governments, international organisations, academics and Roma civil society representatives.

The **framework for Roma inclusion** has been rigorously assessed by several organisations. For example, the European Roma Rights Centre ([ERRC](#)) considers that the [new EU Roma framework](#) 'falls short on police brutality, justice and segregation'. According to the ERRC, the new strategy 'does little to address police misconduct against Roma, lack of access to justice for Romani citizens, and the persistent segregation of Romani schoolchildren. It additionally remains toothless in terms of lack of conditionality of funding as well as its mechanisms, including the Racial Equality Directive, which are unfit for purpose when it comes to protecting the rights of Romani EU citizens'.

An issue dominating recent debates has been **anti-Gypsyism**. According to the [Alliance against Antigypsyism](#), anti-Gypsyism is neither the result of the poor living conditions in which many Roma people live, nor a 'minority issue', but is deeply rooted in social stereotypes. In its policy paper '[Developing measures to combat antigypsyism after 2020](#)', [ERGO Network](#) states that 'anti-Gypsyism is the root cause of exclusion of Romani people' and that it cannot be simply treated as a thematic issue, alongside housing, education, health and employment, but rather needs to be dealt with as 'an integral part of thematic policies'. In the same vein, [Minority Rights Group Europe](#) (MRGE) set up a programme '[Freedom from hate: Empowering civil society to counter cyberhate against Roma](#)' to evaluate effective counter-narrative campaigns targeting online hate speech against Roma communities in Bulgaria, Czechia, Croatia, Hungary and Slovakia, and across Europe. The organisation underlines the need to further develop effective approaches to combating 'anti-Gypsyism' and promoting public participation of Roma on the internet and social media.

A further focus for stakeholders is **respect for Roma rights**. Since its establishment in 1996, the [ERRC](#) has endeavoured to provide Roma people with the necessary tools to combat discrimination and achieve equal access to justice, education, housing, healthcare and public services. The ERRC campaigns, in particular, for effective state responses to issues such as [violence and hate speech](#) against the Roma, [school segregation](#), [anti-Gypsyism](#), forced evictions and other [housing](#) rights abuse. It also focuses on promoting Roma [women's rights](#). Most recently, the ERRC has drawn attention to the particularly difficult situation of Ukrainian Roma since the start of Russia's war against Ukraine (see box below).

Roma people in Russia's war on Ukraine

There is a lack of official data on the exact number of Roma people in Ukraine. According to [the official All-Ukrainian 2001 census](#), there were some 47 587 Roma living in Ukraine, out of a population of approximately 48.5 million. [Other sources](#) suggest there may be between 120 000 and 400 000 Roma spread across the country. There are three main explanations for the disparity between the official and unofficial figures: 1) in some areas, many Roma do not have personal documents, and thus are not registered in the country; 2) the reluctance of Roma to declare their ethnic origin, fearing discrimination; 3) the incorrect recording by the authorities of 'Roma' as 'Romanians'.

The Roma population as a whole is believed to be the [most vulnerable minority group in Ukraine](#). Civil society organisations have highlighted high levels of poverty among Roma and [discrimination](#) against the Roma people. According to the [European Network on Statelessness](#), around 10 % to 20 % of the estimated 400 000 Roma people living in Ukraine lack the civil documentation needed to acquire or confirm their Ukrainian citizenship and to prove their residence status. Since the beginning of the conflict, Ukrainian Roma fleeing the war have been facing border-crossing issues such as [discrimination](#), [segregation](#) or [denial of access](#) to neighbouring countries owing to a lack of documentation to prove their residence status. At the same time, according to an Open Society Foundations [study](#), one in four of the respondents in a survey (December 2022 – January 2023) said that their family members were currently in military service.

Stakeholders also highlight the importance of addressing the specific situations and needs of **Roma children and students**. In 2021, the Fundación Secretariado Gitano ([ESG](#)) launched an awareness-raising campaign '[Dare to share their dreams](#)', which focuses on difficulties faced by Roma students in exercising their right to study and promotes their entitlement to a quality education. The ERGO Network also condemns segregated schools for Roma children, which encourage a sectioned view of society and fuels inequalities and discrimination, and pleads for [inclusive education](#), as does the Roma Education Fund ([ERF](#)), which is dedicated to [closing the gap in educational outcomes](#) between Roma and non-Roma people.

Another concern for stakeholders is the situation of **Roma women**, who often have to face extreme poverty, exclusion and discrimination. According to the [Romani civil rights movement](#), '[f]or Romani women, the variables of gender, race/ethnicity, nationality ... class, age and sexual orientation intersect, mak[ing] them a particularly vulnerable social group'. International Women's Rights Action Watch Asia Pacific ([IWRAP Asia Pacific](#)) makes the same observation: 'We cannot have a proper conversation about the situation of the Roma community in Europe without mentioning what it means to be a Roma woman facing intersectional discrimination in the form of racism, sexism, classism and other ways'.

European Parliament's position

Since the mid-1990s, Parliament has prioritised the fight against all forms of discrimination against Roma people, not least through its Anti-Racism and Diversity Intergroup ([ARDI](#)), which promotes racial equality, counters racism, and educates about non-discrimination. In a first [resolution on discrimination against the Roma](#), adopted on 13 July 1995, Parliament called on the European institutions and the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe ([OSCE](#)) to work together to combat discrimination against Roma people. In 2005, Parliament strongly condemned all forms of discrimination faced by Roma people and called on the European institutions, Member States and candidate countries to consider recognising the Roma as a European minority. In this [resolution](#), Parliament was the first institution to use the term 'anti-Gypsyism' in an official EU document.

In 2006, Parliament stressed that [Roma women](#) were among the most threatened groups and individuals in the EU. In this resolution, Members called for measures to combat the high levels of multiple discrimination faced by these women on the grounds of both ethnicity and gender and, among other areas of concern, to ensure that all Roma women had access to healthcare. In its 2009 resolution on [the social situation of the Roma and their improved access to the labour market in the EU](#), Parliament considered that there was a need for a coordinated approach to improve the working

and living conditions of the Roma community, one aimed at increasing economic opportunities for the Roma, building human capital, and strengthening social capital and community development.

On 9 September 2010, in the context of the repatriations and returns of Roma that had taken place in several Member States, Parliament adopted a resolution on the [situation of Roma and on freedom of movement in the European Union](#), which stressed that mass expulsions are prohibited by the Charter of Fundamental Rights and the European Convention for the Protection of Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms, and that such measures are in violation of the EU Treaties and EU law. Members of the Parliament also considered that the EU and all Member States shared responsibility to promote the inclusion of Roma people and that this required a comprehensive approach at EU level in the form of an EU Roma strategy.

In its 2013 resolution on progress made in the [implementation of national Roma integration strategies](#), Parliament condemned the ethnic profiling and illegal expulsions, police abuse and human rights violations against Roma in EU Member States, asking the Commission to set up an EU-wide monitoring mechanism. In a separate resolution on [gender aspects of the European framework of national Roma inclusion strategies](#), Parliament deplored the discrimination faced by Roma women on the grounds of gender and ethnicity and called on Member States to focus on empowering Roma women in their national strategies.

With its resolution of 15 April 2015, on the occasion of [International Roma Day – anti-Gypsyism in Europe and EU recognition of the memorial day of the Roma genocide](#) during World War II, Parliament expressed its deep concern at the rise of anti-Gypsyism, and demanded greater efforts to end discrimination, hate crime and hate speech against Roma. It recognised the genocide and called on Member States to do the same. It also declared that 'a European day should be dedicated to commemorating the victims of the genocide of the Roma during World War II', to be called 'European Roma Holocaust Memorial Day'. In its resolution of 25 October 2017, on [Fundamental rights aspects in Roma integration in the EU: fighting anti-Gypsyism](#), Parliament urged the Commission to set up a 'truth and reconciliation commission' at EU level and called on Member States to mark 2 August as Roma Holocaust Memorial Day, to upgrade their national Roma integration strategies, and to combat discrimination and promote equality. On 12 February 2019, Parliament called on the EU and the Member States to adopt a [stronger, better funded, post-2020 framework](#), including clear and binding targets and a specific anti-discrimination goal. Parliament also wanted to see more involvement of Roma stakeholders in drawing up and monitoring the policy framework, more attention paid to specific groups within the Roma population, gender mainstreaming, and a child-centred approach.

On 17 September 2020, Parliament adopted a resolution on the implementation of [Roma integration strategies](#). Members noted that the overall situation of the Roma people in the EU had not improved, often owing to persistent anti-Gypsyism and a lack of political will. They deplored the fact that a significant number of Roma in Europe live in extremely precarious conditions, which have worsened with the pandemic. Parliament called on the Commission to develop a 'Roma mainstreaming policy' and on Member States to formally recognise anti-Gypsyism as a particular form of racism against Roma people; Parliament expressed particular concern about the high level of segregation faced by Roma children in schools. On 21 January 2021, Parliament adopted a resolution on [access to decent and affordable housing for all](#), to encourage Member States to increase public investment to eradicate homelessness and house deprivation by 2030. Members explicitly called on Member States to 'fight against ... anti-Gypsyism'. They also noted 'with deep concern that the conditions of Roma people continue to be extremely worrying, with many often living in segregated settlements characterised by substandard living conditions, and call on the Member States to promote spatial desegregation', urging the Commission and the Member States to 'utilise the planned Just Transition Fund'. On 20 May 2021, during a [debate](#) in the plenary on the inclusion of Roma people in the EU, some Members expressed their disappointment regarding the EU's lack of commitment to ending discrimination and called on Member States to legislate to improve Roma people's lives.

In November 2021, a delegation of members of Parliament's Committee on Employment and Social Affairs (EMPL) visited Roma villages in Slovakia and published an infoclip to illustrate Roma people's [severe housing deprivation](#). On 7 April 2022, after a Commission statement to mark International Roma Day, Members held a [debate](#) on the situation of marginalised Roma communities in the EU, calling on the Commission to implement its Roma strategic framework effectively so that it does not remain a dead letter. On 5 October 2022, Parliament debated the shortcomings of the EU's inclusion policies for Roma communities and voted a resolution to denounce their marginalisation in unhealthy [settlements](#) and their exclusion from the labour market and the education system. On 10 November 2022, Parliament adopted a resolution on racial justice, non-[discrimination](#) and anti-racism in the EU, which considers the intersectional issue regarding Romani women and discrimination against Roma people when fleeing Ukraine. Members also regret that 'Romani communities remain one of the most discriminated and vulnerable groups in the EU'.

In 2023, Parliament adopted three resolutions focusing on Roma children. On 4 October 2023, Members called on the Commission and the Member States to fight against the [segregation and discrimination of Roma children in education](#), in particular, through policies supported by sufficient EU and national funding. On 21 November 2023, with their resolutions on reducing and promoting social inclusion in [times of crisis for children and their families](#) and on strengthening the [Child Guarantee](#), Members urged the Commission and the Member States, when implementing the Child Guarantee, to take into account the specific challenges faced by Roma children.

MAIN REFERENCES

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Lecerf M., [The impact of the coronavirus crisis on Roma and Travellers](#), EPRS, European Parliament, April 2021.

Pasikowska-Schnass M., [Roma and Sinti Holocaust](#), EPRS, European Parliament, January 2020.

Shreeves R., [Stepping up Roma inclusion policies](#), EPRS, European Parliament, July 2020.

ENDNOTES

¹ The FRA has published a series of studies and surveys on the Roma. In 2008, it surveyed Roma in seven EU Member States in the context of the first EU minorities and discrimination survey ([EU-MIDIS I](#)). In [2011](#), the FRA conducted a second survey on Roma in 11 EU Member States ([EU-MIDIS II](#)). In [2016](#), the FRA surveyed Roma for a third time as part of EU-MIDIS II, to assess progress over time. In 2019, the FRA surveyed [Roma and Travellers in six Member States](#).

² Malta did not adopt a National Roma Strategic Framework as there is no known Roma population on its territory.

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