
WORKING TOGETHER FOR BETTER ROMA INCLUSION IN EUROPE

EUROCITIES contribution to EU Roma framework post-2020

Report summarising evidence and views¹ from cities on Roma inclusion - April 2019

The EU Roma framework post-2020 should:

1. Adopt an integrated approach to Roma inclusion and involve cities in all stages of policy making to ensure that the local needs of Roma communities are met effectively.
2. Set up a multi-level governance mechanism for Roma inclusion to enable EU, national and local authorities to work together, coordinate and mutually reinforce their strategies and tailor them to the local needs of Roma communities, also improving monitoring.
3. Improve access of city authorities to EU and national funding to support the integrated measures and services for Roma inclusion at local level.

Setting the context: the situation of Roma people in Europe

The situation of Europe's largest minority remains critical. Roma² are at a greater disadvantage than non-Roma across Europe. Roma people are much more likely to be unemployed and live in poverty compared to non-Roma. The overwhelming majority of Roma remain at risk of poverty (80% in 2016)³. The gap in educational attainment remains very wide and further aggravates social inequalities. Roma face more precarious housing and more difficulty in accessing healthcare or basic services (electricity, sanitation and running water) compared to non-Roma. Life expectancy among Roma is 10-15 years less than for non-Roma⁴. Above all, Roma continue to face widespread discrimination across Europe, being victims of racially motivated attacks and anti-Gypsyism. Roma women are at greater disadvantage as gender discrimination overlaps other discrimination grounds.

Nowhere is the poverty and social exclusion of Roma more visible than in cities. Many Roma people live in urban areas to increase their chances of finding work. Due to high cost of living in cities, Roma tend to live in some of the most deprived neighbourhoods where housing is cheaper, but that also have a high concentration of inequalities and poverty. This leaves Roma at high risk of marginalisation and social exclusion, widening the gap with non-Roma.

¹ Evidence and views from cities were collected during mutual learning activities and study visits of the EUROCITIES Working Group on Roma inclusion in the period 2017-2018, in the framework of the Social Affairs Forum.

² The term 'Roma' is used in line with the terminology of EU institutions and international organisations to refer to a number of different groups and includes Gypsy and Travellers, without denying these groups' specific characteristics.

³ European Union for Fundamental Rights (2018). *Fundamental Rights Report 2018*. Chapter 5: Roma integration. <https://bit.ly/2xMLtC9>

⁴ European Public Health Alliance (2017). *Health and Early Childhood Development in Roma Communities analysis*. <https://bit.ly/2ppUbil>

Intra-EU mobility and the migration of Roma from East to West has intensified the shortcomings of the existing EU framework, such as lack of access to services for EU citizens who do not meet the conditions for a prolonged stay in another EU member state. This has made the situation of newly-arrived Roma far worse than that of domestic Roma⁵. As a result, new needs and challenges have emerged, such as the language barrier, requiring additional support services for Roma inclusion. Roma inclusion is now a shared concern across Europe, especially in cities⁶.

Assessing the EU framework: added value, but little impact

The biggest achievement of the EU Roma framework is that it puts Roma inclusion high on the political agenda, even in the member states where before it was not a priority. This raised awareness about the situation of Roma and their challenges. Moreover, the structures set up at national level, especially the national contact points and the national platforms for dialogue on Roma inclusion, are a step in the right direction but need to be better used and reinforced with the capacity to ensure effective coordination of efforts at local, regional and national levels.

Despite the added value of the EU framework, progress has been slow in the implementation of the national Roma integration strategies and the measures that were implemented had limited or no impact. When comparing the situation of Roma in 2018 to that in 2011, a recent evaluation⁷ found no major change regarding the situation of Roma in employment, healthcare, housing and discrimination. The share of Roma in paid work remains at only 25%; however, many Roma work in the informal economy as self-employed in small or family unregistered enterprises. The risk of poverty and social exclusion remains five to six times higher among Roma than for non-Roma. The share of young Roma who are not in education, employment or training has increased from 56% in 2011 to 63% in 2016. There has been little or no change to Roma discrimination in employment across Europe⁸. Education is the only area where the situation of Roma has improved slightly, but segregation remains problematic and has increased from 10% in 2011 to 15% in 2016⁹.

The EU Roma framework has failed to improve the Roma situation in Europe due to:

- **Limited or no involvement of local authorities in the planning, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of national Roma integration strategies.** Member states were asked by the EU Roma framework to involve local authorities in the process, but only few did so. The result has

⁵ EUROCIITIES (2017). *Roma inclusion in cities: Mapping of the situation of Roma in cities in Europe*. <https://bit.ly/2GhKJVy>

⁶ Cities work in different contexts. For some, Roma are national minorities in their cities while, for others, Roma populations constitute a new group of mobile EU citizens who arrive in conditions of extreme vulnerability, disadvantage and poverty. Finally, Roma non-EU citizens (most often from Western Balkans) fall under the scope of third country nationals, often as asylum seekers or irregular migrants. Although interrelated, rights and entitlements for these groups are different and cities do not always have legal competences in this area.

⁷ European Commission (2018). Communication of 4.12.2018: Report on the evaluation of the EU Framework for National Roma Integration Strategies up to 2020. COM (2018) 785 final. <http://bit.ly/2RM82QV>

⁸ European Network Against Racism (2017). *Racism and discrimination in employment in Europe 2013-2017 - Shadow report*. <https://bit.ly/203euA6>

⁹ European Union for Fundamental Rights (2018). *Fundamental Rights Report 2018*. Chapter 5: Roma integration. <https://bit.ly/2xMLtC9>

been that the national strategies do not match the local needs of Roma people. Roma communities living in different cities in the same country have different needs, which requires a flexible strategy to enable a tailored approach at local level. Most cities were not consulted by the national authorities in the planning or implementation of the national strategies. There are however some good examples, such as in Sweden where the national government delegated the responsibility for Roma integration at local level, while also providing adequate support to cities to deliver on this responsibility.

- **Limited scope.** The existing framework addresses only ‘domestic’ Roma who are citizens in the country where they live, while the newly arrived Roma that migrate from the East to West are often left out of the provisions. This is problematic because the newly-arrived Roma often face worse conditions and need more tailored support for integration. Nonetheless, in many EU member states, the national Roma integration strategies only apply to the Roma who are national citizens of that country, while the EU-mobile citizen Roma fall under the provisions of EU law which, paradoxically, does not include the EU Roma framework. There is a need to recognise intra-EU poverty migration to help all Roma groups integrate.
- **Lack of integrated and coordinated approach to Roma inclusion.** Roma face complex challenges that are interrelated and can be best achieved through integrated measures. The current national Roma integration strategies are a collection of thematic actions on housing, employment, education and healthcare, but follow a fragmented approach. This is an issue because some policies can have competing or conflicting objectives and generate adverse effects. For example, when a policy aims at improving the housing situation of Roma by offering them social housing, depending on the concentration of social housing in a specific area, this can lead to spatial and educational segregation. It is not sufficient to divide actions or funding into thematic actions. These areas also need to be connected to an integrated framework that takes into account diversity at local level, and addresses core horizontal issues such as discrimination against Roma and their lack of participation.
- **Lack of strong political will:** in some cases, national Roma integration strategies remained a formality on paper with limited implementation on the ground. This is explained by the voluntary nature of the political commitment to the EU Roma framework. More incentives and a closer monitoring during implementation would be needed in the future framework.
- **Insufficient funding allocated to Roma inclusion at local level.** National budget allocations to Roma inclusion remain limited and insufficient, with little or no resources reaching local authorities that know best how to address the local needs of Roma communities. Most cities only have municipal budget to support Roma inclusion at local level, but these have been shrinking after the economic crisis. Access to EU funding is also very difficult for cities as the funds are channelled through national and regional managing authorities that show little or no flexibility to account for the needs at local level, which require integrated measures.

Overall, the EU Roma framework could have delivered better results if it accounted fully for Roma inclusion at local level and provided for the role of local authorities in the process.

Roma inclusion begins at local level

Different Roma communities experience different challenges to social inclusion depending on where they live and their specific needs for inclusion vary across cities within the same country. Cities are the first authorities in contact with Roma and are in the best position to identify their specific challenges at local level and develop tailored solutions. As the level of government closest to Roma, cities play a key role in tackling poverty and the social exclusion of Roma by:

- **bridging the gaps** between Roma and non-Roma communities to enhance **social cohesion**
- adopting **integrated approaches** to address the interrelated challenges faced by Roma
- delivering **targeted support** services for outreach, counselling and intervention
- providing **non-discriminatory access** for Roma to mainstream public services
- consulting and **involving Roma** in local policies and projects that affect them directly
- raising awareness of the **rights of Roma** and their **positive contribution to society**

Over the past decade, city authorities responded to the critical situation of Roma people by taking action and accelerating Roma inclusion at local level. The EU framework may have given an impetus and a political justification to act for Roma inclusion, but what pushed cities' efforts was the critical situation on the ground. A recent mapping of the situation of Roma in cities in Europe¹⁰ found that more than half of the cities in the study had a local Roma inclusion strategy while others included Roma as part of their mainstream strategies to tackle poverty in their cities. Nearly all cities have put in place structures for dialogue with Roma communities (local platforms or Municipal Roma Councils) to engage Roma in developing and implementing local policies. Many cities collaborate with Roma civil society to reach out and engage Roma, such as by supporting Roma NGOs' projects through municipal grants.

Many city authorities work on improving Roma people's access to education, employment, housing, healthcare and essential services. Most employ a combination of targeted measures in different policy areas to address specific obstacles that Roma face. Most initiatives for Roma inclusion at local level are funded from municipal budgets while only a few receive national or EU funding. City authorities also invest in training people from Roma communities as mediators.

However, the full inclusion of Roma in society cannot be achieved by cities alone but requires the coordinated support from national and EU authorities. **Inclusion policies need to be integrated in national frameworks coordinated at EU level to ensure support is available for Roma inclusion regardless of the city, region or country where Roma live, while sufficient flexibility should be given to local authorities to adapt the framework of actions to the local needs.**

¹⁰ EURO CITIES (2017). *Roma inclusion in cities: Mapping of the situation of Roma in cities in Europe*. <https://bit.ly/2GhKJVy>

A post-2020 EU Roma framework involving cities as partners

We call for a renewed EU Roma framework for the period 2020-2030 with a stronger commitment by the EU member states to deliver an integrated strategy for Roma inclusion with coherent national plans of actions in partnership with local authorities. Building on the lessons from the current period up to 2020, the renewed framework should establish shared responsibility for Roma inclusion between all different levels of government in the member states with a reinforced focus on Roma inclusion at local level to account for the specificity of diverse Roma communities. However, the approach should be sufficiently flexible to allow for targeted and inclusive strategies that involve Roma among other groups at risk of social exclusion.

We propose three main changes to achieve this ambition and make it a reality on the ground:

1. Improve access of local authorities to national and EU funding

Roma inclusion happens at local level, but only if there is adequate EU and national support. Given cuts in municipal budgets, cities need the support from national and EU level to continue and step up their efforts for Roma inclusion at local level. Cities working on Roma inclusion should be given better access to EU funding and sufficient flexibility to determine how to spend the funds to respond to the specific needs of Roma communities. Inclusion measures are most effective when they are based on real local needs and engage local communities. A step in the right direction is that ESF+ has a specific objective on promoting the integration of marginalised Roma communities¹¹, but this can only work if ESF+ resources are matched with local needs.

Cohesion policy post-2020 should ensure support for city authorities to tackle Roma poverty in deprived urban areas through **integrated territorial strategies** for social inclusion. It is essential for city authorities to be able to combine material assistance (FEAD) with support for active inclusion (ESF+), health prevention (Health) and investment in infrastructure such as social and affordable housing (ERDF). Innovative approaches to combining different EU funds in integrated measures for Roma inclusion at local level should be encouraged by managing authorities. Support for building capacity of local authorities for Roma inclusion should be reinforced with a specific focus on **transnational cooperation between cities of origin and destination cities**. This should include stronger support for city-to-city cooperation on voluntary return of Roma between cities in the West and in the Balkans under the Instrument for Pre-Accession Assistance (IPA 2).

¹¹ European Commission (2018). Proposal for a Regulation of the European Parliament and of the Council on the on the European Social Fund Plus (ESF+). COM (2018) 382 final. 30 May 2018. <http://bit.ly/2WmEcRo>

We recommend:

- ease access to EU funds for cities that develop integrated Roma inclusion plans at local level
- facilitate the combination of ESF+, FEAD and ERDF in integrated measures for Roma inclusion
- encourage piloting of innovative approaches and scaling up of the successful innovations
- ensure a more flexible approach from the managing authorities to enable local authorities to identify priorities for using EU funds in line with the specific needs of Roma at local level
- increase support for capacity-building of local authorities to apply for EU funding and develop sustainable local Roma inclusion strategies. Encourage mutual learning and policy transfer

2. Adopt an integrated EU framework for all Roma (both domestic and newly-arrived)

The post-2020 EU Roma framework should be aligned to the principles of the European Pillar of Social Rights and should be inclusive of all Roma groups to enable access to social rights for all¹². The focus should be on promoting an integrated approach to Roma inclusion by connecting policies for better Roma access to housing, education, employment and healthcare in a coherent strategy. Non-discrimination and Roma participation should be horizontal priorities as well as equal access to public services. The renewed national strategies should be flexible to enable tailored approaches at local level in line with the locally identified priorities to respond to specific needs and challenges of Roma in the area. In addition to specific measures, the post-2020 EU framework should urge integrating a Roma focus into mainstream social, education and health policies via coordinated efforts across the European Commission and national ministries.

We recommend:

- Roma inclusion should be addressed through an integrated approach. Thematic actions should be replaced by integrated programmes. A long-term vision should be developed to integrate policy, legal and funding instruments, and implement a coherent approach to Roma inclusion.
- Access to education, employment, housing and healthcare should remain a priority but the focus should be on integrated measures to address multiple interrelated challenges at once.
- The new framework should add the fight against discrimination and anti-gypsism, **equal access to services** and **empowering Roma civil society** as horizontal priorities.
- Roma inclusion should be mainstreamed into all relevant policies and included in the monitoring of the implementation of the European Pillar of Social Rights.
- The new framework should ensure the flexibility to identify priorities at local level in line with the specific needs of diverse Roma communities, both domestic and newly-arrived Roma.

¹² EUROCITIES (2017). Social rights for all: Cities are committed to deliver on the European Pillar of Social Rights. <http://bit.ly/2S31XyQ>

3. Introduce multi-level governance together with closer monitoring

Roma inclusion is a complex task that no one actor can do alone, it can only be achieved through a genuine partnership between all levels of government that should support and complement each other's actions. This was recognised under the Urban Agenda for the EU¹³. Identified as a priority for tackling urban poverty in the EU, Roma inclusion became a focus of the action plan on urban poverty adopted in 2018¹⁴. This is a step in the right direction to multi-level governance of Roma inclusion in Europe and should be at the core of the new EU Roma framework to ensure cities, member states and the EU work together towards joint solutions.

Local and urban authorities should be involved in all stages of development of the renewed EU framework and national strategies from planning to implementation and evaluation, to ensure that the local needs of Roma communities are met. We propose setting up mechanisms for coordination of the national Roma integration strategy in each member state to make it easier for local and national authorities to work together on a coherent plan of actions.

In addition, we propose a multi-level governance of the renewed EU framework to ensure a coherent approach between the EU, national and local strategies for Roma inclusion. This should follow the model of the Urban Agenda partnerships between cities, regions, national authorities and EU institutions, with regular coordination meetings to discuss and define a coherent approach.

The monitoring of the situation of Roma should be improved by extending it beyond national aggregates to capture different situations at local and regional level within the same member state. This should also apply to the policy coordination through the European Semester, which should include an urban analysis in the country reports and some territorial-specific recommendations on Roma inclusion.

We recommend:

- Each member state should set up a mechanism for coordination of the national Roma integration strategy to coordinate efforts and ensure coherence at different levels of government. This should take the form of an advisory board, including representatives of all relevant national ministries, from local and urban authorities, and from Roma civil society.
- This mechanism should ensure that measures for Roma inclusion are developed, implemented and evaluated by national authorities in close partnership with local authorities. This coordination would address the local diversity and specificity of Roma communities.
- Set up a monitoring system of Roma situation at national and local level to capture inequalities between Roma and non-Roma. Develop guidelines for data collection from local level.

¹³ Urban Agenda for the EU 'Pact of Amsterdam' agreed on 30 May 2016. <http://bit.ly/2UKtdBJ>

¹⁴ Urban Agenda for the EU. *Urban Poverty Partnership Final Action Plan 2018*. <https://bit.ly/2xySnaE>

- Improve Roma policy coordination under the European Semester by extending it to Western states and adding a local analysis into the country reports and specific recommendations.

Further considerations

Taking a broader perspective, the post-2020 EU Roma framework should be linked to a wider EU strategy to address the intra-EU poverty migration, which goes beyond Roma. Many of the needs of newly-arrived Roma are similar to those of other EU-mobile citizens in vulnerable situations. This structural problem should be acknowledged and addressed at EU level.

We recommend the full implementation of the Racial Equality Directive¹⁵ in all EU member states to combat discrimination based on the grounds of racial or ethnic origin. Moreover, we support the proposal of the European Parliament¹⁶ for establishing minimum standards for the protection of minorities in the EU in order to improve the situation of minorities in all member states and avoid double standards. A starting point could be the harmonisation of minority rights into the Council of Europe's Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities.

Conclusion: Working together for a sustainable Roma inclusion

EUROCITIES is convinced that Roma integration and inclusion should remain a priority of the EU and its member states. We believe that as the EU's main tool to coordinate Roma inclusion, the EU Roma framework post-2020 must be shaped closer to Roma people to better respond to the social challenges they face at local level. Sustainable integration and inclusion of Roma can only be achieved through a strategic approach that takes into account the local conditions and specificities. And only by involving city authorities as partners in the governance and policy making, can the new framework lead to bigger impact on improving the situation of Roma in Europe. Cities are ready to work with the EU and member states to make Roma inclusion a reality on the ground.

¹⁵ Council Directive 2000/43/EC of 29 June 2000 implementing the principle of equal treatment between persons irrespective of racial or ethnic origin. OJ L 180, 19.7.2000, p. 22-26. <http://bit.ly/2Dx9MVe>

¹⁶ European Parliament (2018). *Report on minimum standards for minorities in the EU*. 2018/2036(INI) adopted on 24 October 2018. <http://bit.ly/2RhORcq>