

THE SITUATION OF ROMA IN EUROPE

ERGO NETWORK SNAPSHOT OF...

Childcare and Support to Children



Every third Roma child (30%) lives in households where someone went to bed hungry at least once in the previous month.



Only about half (53%) of young Roma children are enrolled in early childhood education and care programmes.



With the exception of Sweden, participation of Roma and Traveller children in early childhood education in six countries is far below the target set by the EU's Education and Training Strategy.



In Sweden, every fifth Roma and Traveller child (22%) went to bed hungry at least once in the previous month, while every second Roma or Traveller child lives in a household that has difficulties or great difficulties in making ends meet.



Every fourth Roma and Traveller child in six countries lives in a household affected by severe material deprivation.

The umbrella term "Roma" encompasses diverse groups, including Roma, Sinti, Kale, Romanichels, Boyash/Rudari, Ashkali, Egyptians, Yenish, Dom, Lom, Rom and Abdal, as well as Traveller populations (gens du voyage, Gypsies, Camminanti, etc.), as defined by the European Commission.

The first years of a child's life are the most important in their personal development, and yet Roma children have been left behind for centuries in terms of what constitutes a good start in life.

Poverty and lack of access to basic services has a considerable impact on children's physical, mental, and emotional development, and increases the chances of lagging behind in all aspects of their adult life.

While education, including early childhood education and care, is touted to be free in many countries, in reality this is not the case, and many poor Roma families can't cope with the associated costs of clothing, nappies, transport, hygiene etc.

Additionally, many Roma neighbourhoods are segregated or isolated, with no childcare facilities nearby. Roma parents and their children are often turned away due to institutional antigypsyism.

Cuts in national spending on social protection and public services have left Roma communities in a dire situation, with poor living conditions which in turn determine poor health and lower educational outcomes.



Additional complicating factors include the lack of identity papers or of a fixed address, lack of information about registration processes and available services, as well as language barriers.

The Covid-19 situation highlights the urgent need to invest in proper care services and support to children and their families.

In order to provide equal opportunities for every Roma child, we must guarantee that Roma children and parents have access to affordable early child education and care of a good quality, which is in line with the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union, the United Nations' Convention on the Rights of the Child and with the United Nations' Sustainable Development Goal 4.2.

ERGO Network Recommendations



- Enact the thorough implementation of the Investing in Children Recommendation of 2013 through an ambitious Child Guarantee that specifically includes and targets the multiple needs of Roma children, to ensure their healthy and harmonious development.
- Provide children in need with free, nutritious, healthy meals, through school meal programmes as well as soup kitchens, social cafeterias and hot meals delivered directly in the community, to avoid holiday hunger.
- There are no poor children in rich families – ensure wrap-around support for parents, including adequate income, decent living conditions, access to quality healthcare and other essential services, and opportunities for quality employment.
- Support quality, affordable or even free community-based childcare services that Roma parents can access, including through social economy initiatives.
- Combat discrimination against Roma parents and their children in both public and private early childhood education and care facilities, by providing anti-bias training and resources and ensuring diversity and Roma workers also within the staff.
- Foster cooperation between early childhood education and care services and parents, to support active participation of Roma parents, and raise awareness about pre-primary school benefits among them.
- Increase the capacity of pre-school personnel to provide quality, inclusive education including diversity games and awareness about Roma language, culture, history, and employ Roma staff.

Sources

- European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights, Second European Union Minorities and Discrimination Survey – Roma, 2017
- European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights, Roma and Travellers in Six Countries, 2020



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This snapshot is an excerpt from ERGO Network's position paper [How to ensure that the European Pillar of Social Rights delivers on Roma equality, inclusion, and participation?](#), October 2020.