



Incorporating Roma in European Youth Policies: An Assessment of Inclusion Efforts

This paper assesses the extent of effectiveness of the existing European youth Framework and measures for the inclusion of the Roma community. Roma youth continue to be underrepresented in the European Union's (EU) youth-focused policies despite numerous inclusion efforts. The survey gathered insights from various stakeholders and Roma youth for identifying gaps and proposing possible directions for improving the social, economic, and educational inclusion of Roma youth.

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1. Introduction

The Roma community constitutes one of the largest European minorities. Simultaneously, it has continuously experienced structural and institutional marginalisation, resulting in its persistent exclusion from various spheres of society. This systemic exclusion is reflected in the hindered effectiveness of youth-focused measures within the EU policies that, based on the outcomes of this online survey, are insufficient in addressing the multifaceted needs and aspirations of Roma youth.

Many individuals of Roma youth face substantial barriers impeding their accessibility to essential resources, opportunities, and representation within wide-ranging societal constellations. These impediments comprise disparities in education, restricted economic prospects, cultural biases, lack of access to healthcare, or inadequate housing. The identified situation is paradoxical, given that various dedicated efforts are aimed at fostering Roma inclusion nationally and internationally. However, regardless of specific initiatives targeting Roma inclusion, the meaningful engagement and representation of Roma youth remains limited within broader youth-centric policies and related programs.

This survey illustrates an endeavour to underpin the challenges faced by Roma youth and proposes a possible orientation for a more holistic approach to including Roma youth. This survey aims to inform policy decision-makers who seek to address Roma exclusion through empowering Roma youth.

2. Objectives

To achieve the mentioned aim, this survey consists of four objectives:

- **To evaluate the inclusiveness of youth measures concerning the Roma community.**
- **To identify potential barriers that hinder the effective participation of Roma youth in these measures.**
- **To gather stakeholders' perspectives on the importance of Roma inclusion in broader youth policies.**
- **To provide recommendations for enhancing the representation and participation of Roma youth in youth-focused initiatives.**

3. Methodology

The survey was conducted online, making it accessible to more respondents. In total, fourteen participants provided their inputs into a questionnaire that included eleven questions relevant to extracting the extent of their awareness of and involvement in the participation within the EU youth-centric policies.

The questionnaire consisted of closed-ended and open-ended questions, allowing the participants to provide specific inputs while gathering quantifiable data for analysis.

The survey aimed to target the following constituencies:

- Policy makers and governmental representatives involved in youth affairs and Roma inclusion.
- NGOs and civil society organisations working on Roma and youth-related issues.
- Educators, researchers, and experts on youth development and minority inclusion.
- Roma youth and representatives from the Roma community.

4. A brief overview of the relevant EU policies concerning youth

In the following paragraphs, seven EU policies pertaining to youth development are described:

1. [European Youth Strategy](#): establishes the general framework of the Union's youth policies and initiatives. Various beneficial opportunities in areas of education, training, and employment are provided for the youth by the strategy. It supports active and democratic participation of youth in decision-making processes. The European Youth Strategy also centres on promoting social inclusion, health, well-being, and intercultural awareness among young people.
2. [Erasmus+ Programme](#): is one of the Union's most renowned programs that supports and encourages activities encompassing education, training, youth, and sport. Erasmus+ offers a wide range of opportunities for youth, ranging from participation in mobility projects, youth exchanges, and volunteering activities to youth worker training. By supporting these initiatives, the program aims to enhance youth's skills, employability, and intercultural awareness of young people.
3. [European Solidarity Corps](#): provides youth with volunteering and working opportunities within projects that benefit various European communities and people. By offering volunteering placements, traineeships, or jobs for youth, the program contributes to addressing societal challenges.
4. [Youth Employment Initiative \(YEI\)](#): aims to address youth unemployment in regions where youth joblessness is exceptionally high. The program furnishes funding for measures and projects that support youth in finding employment, training, or educational opportunities.
5. [Youth Guarantee](#): This program features a commitment assumed by the EU member states to engage individuals under the age of twenty-five years, within four months of becoming jobless or ending formal education, in a good-quality job offer, continued education, or are involved in other activities such as traineeship or apprenticeship
6. [European Youth Week](#): This event is organised by the European Commission, and it is a biennial event bringing together young people and policymakers to discuss youth-related issues, share experiences, and engage in various activities or workshops.
7. [Structured Dialogue with Young People](#): an initiative that encourages a dialogical process allowing the youth to engage with policymakers over relevant matters. It targets youth organisations and decision-makers by creating a platform for consultations and discussions to shape youth policies and initiatives.

5. Overall Summary of Responses

This section presents the findings that were derived from eleven questions that were posed to the participants of the survey. Accordingly, it portrays the distribution of respondents, their perception regarding the involvement of Roma youth in local, national, and international (EU) level policy decision-making processes and other youth initiatives, and their suggestions for improving the Roma youth within various policy-making processes and related initiatives.

Regarding the distribution of the participants, the survey involved fourteen respondents comprising Roma youngsters and Roma or pro-Roma NGOs, as illustrated below in **Figure 2**.

To gather the respondents' insights regarding their understanding of Roma youth involvement in multilateral policy-making processes and other related initiatives, the participants of the survey were asked questions that are divided into the following themes and sub-themes:

- **Awareness and Familiarity with EU Youth Policies**
 1. Level of awareness
 2. Extent of involvement
- **Perceptions of Roma Youth Inclusion in EU Policies**
- **Awareness of Specific Policies Addressing Roma Youth Needs**
 1. Awareness of specific EU youth policies relevant to addressing the concerns of Roma youth
 2. Perception of the effectiveness of these policies
- **Representation and Engagement of Roma Youth in Policy-making**
 1. Perceptions of adequate representation of Roma youth in advisory bodies
 2. Awareness of the existence of national-level policies targeting Roma youth
- **Recommendations for Enhancing Inclusion**

Generally, the survey findings illustrate the lack of Roma youth involvement in the policy-making processes and related youth initiatives. Moreover, the results of the survey demonstrate that anti-Roma racism sentiments are the underlying force that informs this lack of engagement. Finally, participants

Distributions of the participants

The distribution of the respondents shows, see **Figure 1.**, that pro-Roma, or organisations working for the benefit of Roma, constitute a higher number of respondents than Roma-led representatives or NGOs.

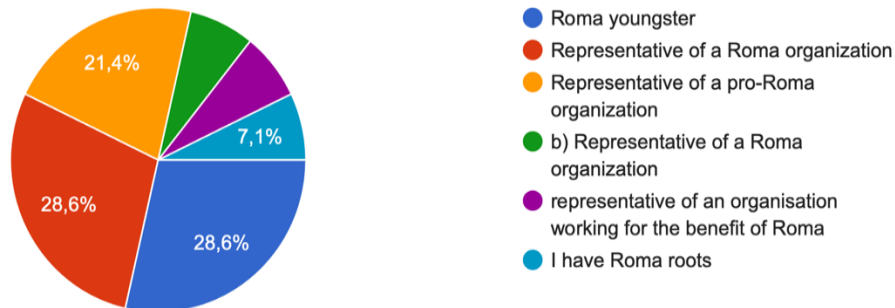


Figure 1.

Awareness and Familiarity with EU Youth Policies

Level of awareness

Have you or your organisation been involved in any EU youth policy-related activities or initiatives?

YES, which one?

NO, Provide your answer below.

12 participants answered this question. Half of them, six individuals, mentioned that they are involved in the EU youth policies to some extent. The initiatives mentioned by respondents who were, in some ways, engaged in the programs featuring EU youth policies comprised participation in the Erasmus+ program, the European Solidarity Corps, or involvement with PECAO. Conversely, the same number of respondents, 6 participants, indicated no such involvement in EU youth policies.

Extent of involvement

Before this survey, have you heard of European Union (EU) youth policies?

YES, Which one?

NO, Provide your answer below.

13 respondents provided the inputs for this question. While eight mentioned their prior knowledge of the EU youth policies, 5 identified no previous awareness of such initiatives. The EU youth policies known by participants before this survey encompassed the following initiatives: Erasmus+, European Solidarity Corps, the European Youth Strategy, the Youth Guarantee, European Student Assembly, Learning the History of the Romani Peoples in History Lessons at School (this initiative has been organised by the Council of Europe, therefore not reflecting the EU youth policies).

How familiar are you with EU youth policies in general?

To this question, 64,3% (9 participants) indicated a limited familiarity with the EU youth policies. 14,3 % (2 participants) mentioned no such familiarity, and 14,3 % (2 participants) noted a moderate familiarity, while only 7,1% (1 participant) stated high familiarity with the EU youth policies; see **Figure 2**.

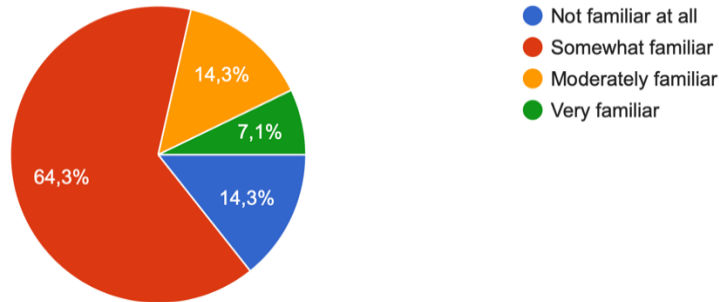


Figure 2.

Perceptions of the extent of Roma youth inclusion in EU youth policies

In your opinion, to what extent are Roma youth included in European youth policies?

Respondent’s perceptions concerning the extent of Roma youth inclusion in the EU youth policies unravel the limited scope of such involvement, see **Figure 3**. According to it, 42,9% (6 participants) noted a minimal inclusion of Roma, 28,6% (4 participants) mentioned the lack of Roma inclusion and if, at all, 14,3% and 7,1 % (3 participants) identified partial inclusion. Only one fully included Roma youth in the general EU youth policies.

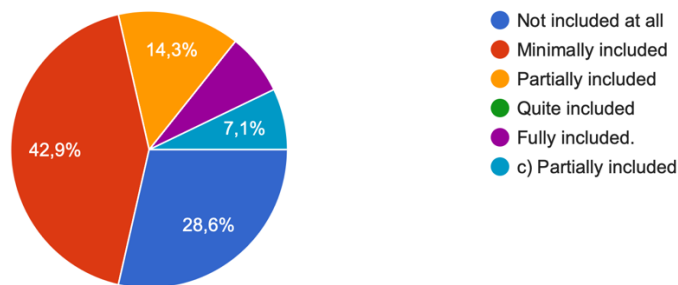


Figure 3.

Awareness of Specific Policies Addressing Roma Youth Needs

Awareness of specific EU youth policies relevant to addressing the concerns of Roma youth

Are there any specific EU youth policies that you know address the needs or concerns of Roma youth?

More pessimistic trends can be observed in participants' responses regarding their awareness of Roma youth-specific policies within the EU youth policies. Specifically, twelve participants mentioned that they were not aware of the specific EU youth policies addressing the needs or concerns of Roma youth. Accordingly, only two participants identified youth policies concerning Roma within the Council of Europe. The latter is an external institutional body to the EU.

Perception of the effectiveness of these policies

How effective do you believe these policies address the challenges Roma youth face?

Similar participants' attitudes are observed by assessing their reconnaissance regarding the perceived effectiveness of these policies in addressing the challenges faced by Roma youth. According to **Figure 4.**, see below, 50% (7 participants) believe that the EU youth policies are moderately effective in addressing the challenges faced by Roma youth; 42,9% (6 participants) noted that they are not effective at all; and only 7,1 (1 participant) thinks that these policies are somewhat effective.

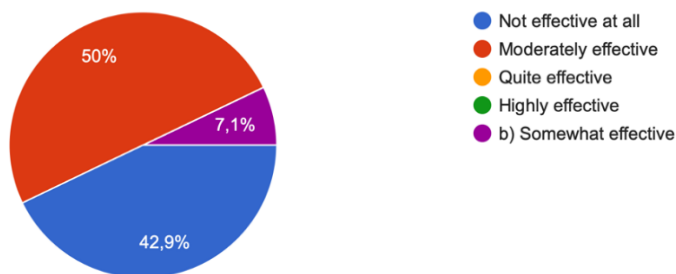


Figure 4.

Representation and Engagement of Roma Youth in Policy-Making

Perceptions of adequate representation of Roma youth in advisory bodies

Do you think there is adequate representation of Roma youth in youth councils or advisory bodies related to EU youth policies?

Respondents' perceptions concerning an adequate representation of Roma youth within various councils or advisory bodies related to the EU youth policies disclose a tendency towards negative attitudes. For example, as portrayed in Figure 4., see below, all participants think the representation within the bodies mentioned above is inadequate.

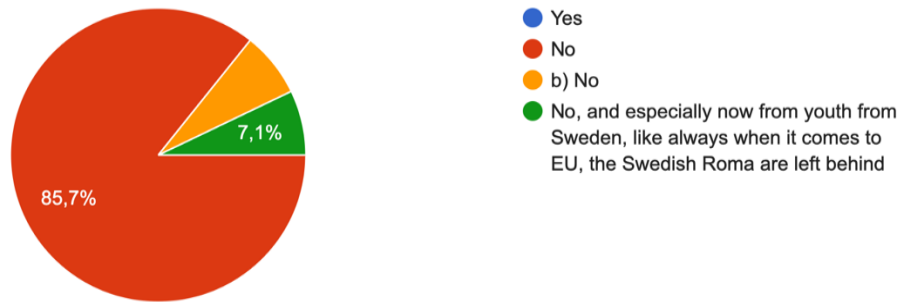


Figure 5.

The existence of national-level policies targeting Roma youth

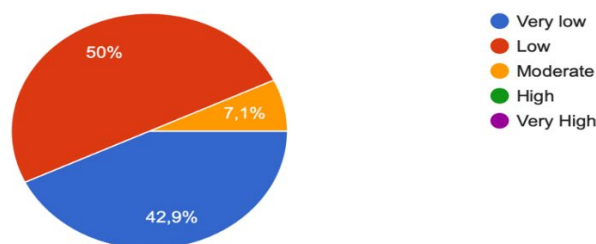
Are there any national-level youth policies in your country explicitly targeting Roma youth? Please provide examples.

The lack of adequate representation of Roma youth within the EU youth policies could be related to the limited Roma youth engagement within national-level policies. When respondents were asked whether any national-level youth policies in their country specifically targeted Roma youth and provided examples of such policies, out of 14 respondents, ten answered negatively. Three participants mentioned that there are some weak local strategies, and one respondent referred to the “French strategy 2020-2030 implemented by the government in response to the recommendation of the Council of the European Union of March 12, 2021, for “equality, inclusion and participation of Roma.”

Evaluation of the level of engagement of Roma youth in shaping national youth policies

How would you rate the level of engagement of Roma youth in shaping national youth policies in your country?

Similarly, respondents’ attitudes towards the level of engagement of Roma youth in shaping national youth policies indicate very low, low, or moderate participation. According to Figure 6., see below, 42,9 % (6 participants) mentioned very low involvement of Roma youth in the national youth policies; 50% (7 participants) indicated low engagement; and 7,1% (1 participant) noted a moderate involvement.



6. Recommendations for Enhancing Inclusion

This sub-section focuses on several themes that feature the provided participants' suggestions for enhancing the inclusion of Roma youth in European, national, and local youth policies:

Access to Opportunities- Participants emphasised a need to address Roma youth's limited access to education, healthcare, job opportunities, or participation in social and cultural events.

Combating Prejudices- There was a recognition among participants to tackle deeply rooted prejudices against Roma communities that persist within majoritarian societies should more nuanced participation of Roma youth be anticipated.

Community Engagement and Awareness Raising - Many participants indicated a need to develop various initiatives, including training, conferences, or social media outreach. These initiatives are also to raise awareness about Roma rights, available resources, and the means to tackle anti-Roma racism within social and public environments.

Institutional Changes- The need for changes within institutional constellations was apparent in participant responses. Training on the anti-Roma racism or antigypsyism theme should be carried out for teachers in schools, medics in hospitals, or judges in the courts.

Local Targeting and Engagement- Participants suggested that the importance of local approaches in engaging Roma youth should not be downplayed. Therefore, involving Roma youth directly in decision-making processes, projects, and strategies on the local levels is a must.

Representation and Involvement- Accordingly, participants emphasised the need for higher Roma youth representation within decision-making bodies at the national and EU levels.

7. Conclusion

This survey presented the outcomes of an online survey. By analysing respondents' insights on the general and specific youth policies, it assessed the effectiveness of existing youth measures for including the Roma youth in various policies regarding decision-making and participation within related youth initiatives. The findings of the survey affirm that Roma youth continue to be underrepresented in the European Union's youth-focused policies despite numerous inclusion efforts.

Regarding that, this survey efforted not only to underpin the challenges faced by Roma youth but also to propose a possible avenue of a more holistic approach to including Roma youth.

Generally, the suggestions revolve around creating more inclusive policies that directly engage Roma youth in decision-making processes, empower them through various educational opportunities, and design workshops or trainings for Roma and non-Roma awareness raising about anti-Roma racism and means of combating them. This survey is expected to bear valuable insights for policy decision-makers aiming to empower Roma youth by reversing the long-lasting Roma exclusion.