



**ROMA ACCESS TO DECENT AND SUSTAINABLE EMPLOYMENT  
IN THE CZECH REPUBLIC**

This is a specific study that, after a long time, focuses on the labour market and specifically collects data regarding the Roma community in the context of its socio-economic status in the Czech Republic.

The case study is based on the analysis of existing research conducted in the Czech Republic since 2020. Additionally, the case study is supplemented with specific stories of Roma individuals who have personally encountered discrimination in the workplace or while searching for a job.

The authors of the case study are PhDr. David Beňák, Ph.D., DiS. (prominent Roma personality) and Slovo 21 staff.

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## Introduction

Decent and sustainable employment is a key element in ensuring social inclusion, economic stability, and improvement of life quality. However, for the Roma community in the Czech Republic, achieving these job opportunities is often significantly limited. The Roma, as one of the most marginalized groups, face many obstacles that prevent them from fully participating in the labour market, leading to long-term unemployment, low wages, and inadequate working conditions.

This research study focuses on analyzing the availability of decent and sustainable employment for the Roma in the Czech Republic. The aim is to identify the main barriers that prevent the Roma from accessing quality jobs and to explore the impact of these obstacles on their living standards and social inclusion. The availability of decent and sustainable employment for Roma in the Czech Republic is not only a matter of social justice but also a crucial factor for ensuring the social and economic development of the entire society.

Discrimination in the labour market is a serious issue that negatively affects not only individuals but also the entire society. In the Czech Republic, this phenomenon particularly affects Roma, who face systematic marginalization and social exclusion. The Roma, as one of the largest ethnic minorities in the country, are subjected to discrimination in various areas of life, and the labour market is no exception. The issue of discrimination against the Roma in the labour market in the Czech Republic is not only relevant but also urgent. The long-term social and economic exclusion of this group leads to deepening social inequalities and prevents the full utilization of the potential of the entire population. Therefore, understanding and addressing this issue is crucial for creating an inclusive and just society. This research aims to contribute to this understanding and offer recommendations for improving the situation of the Roma in the labour market in the Czech Republic.

## About Slovo 21, z.s.

Slovo 21 (founded in 1999) is devoted to the successful inclusion of the Roma into Czech society. Our strategy consists of quality support for the Roma so that they can independently identify and formulate their needs and requests and then promote and fight for them. This is the reason why, as one of few NGOs, we do not provide social services, but by strengthening the capacities of the Roma themselves, we create conditions for their full emancipation and inclusion of the Roma, migrants and representatives of the majority at the local, national and international level. Cooperation is key for our organization and therefore we continuously cooperate with institutions and organizations not only in the Czech Republic but also at the international level. The work we do is meaningful. It allows us to positively influence the lives of thousands of people in need, which has a positive impact on the whole society. Slovo 21 is implementing various projects in areas of education, women empowerment, social inclusion, culture and art, capacity-building activities and advocacy. Currently, there are 22 full-time employees and over 100 contract workers (short-term contracts/part-time). Our team consists of the Roma, Czechs and foreigners from different parts of the world.

## Experience with data collection

In 2014, we conducted extensive research on the position of the Roma women in the Czech Republic. We received answers to the questionnaire from 600 Roma women from all over the country. It was the first research of its kind and its results are still used as the relevant source of data.

In 2020/2022, for the purposes of the Bidaripen/ Audacity project, we conducted a small-scale survey on the participation of the Roma in public life. The results of the survey have shown that Roma citizens rarely exercise their civil rights and are not active citizens.

In 2023 we conducted a small-scale survey on the life priorities of the Roma.

Currently, we are conducting extensive research (500 respondents - Roma women from 19 places within the Czech Republic) on domestic and gender-based violence in the Roma community. The results of the research will be published in the beginning of 2025.

## The methodology of the case study

The basic data concerning the required scope of the report is a synthesis of surveys already carried out in the Czech Republic, updated by semi-structured interviews with respondents from Roma communities from four regions with a greater concentration of Roma, specifically, from municipalities with a population of over 30,000. A total of seven interviews were conducted.

## The socio-economic situation of the Roma in the Czech Republic

The socio-economic situation of the Roma in the Czech Republic has long been complex, characterized by numerous problems that contribute to their social exclusion and marginalization. These issues affect various areas, including education, employment, housing, and health.

In education, Roma children in the Czech Republic face significant barriers, particularly due to segregation in primary schools, which results in lower educational attainment. Only a small percentage of Roma children complete secondary education, and even fewer pursue higher education.<sup>1</sup>

In the labor market, Roma individuals often encounter discrimination, leading to higher unemployment rates and employment in unskilled and low-paid positions. Many Roma work in the informal economy, negatively impacting their social security and working conditions. Discrimination in hiring is widespread, further complicating their integration into the labor

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<sup>1</sup> PAQ, STEM. Research report: Analysis of the causes of the higher proportion of Roma pupils educated under the Framework Programme for Elementary Education in classes established under § 16 para. 9, School Law and draft package of measures for education and other relevant areas, 2022

market, as experienced by more than 50% of Roma in 2021.<sup>2</sup> The unemployment rate for Roma aged 20-64 is around 11.8%, compared to 2.8% in the general population.<sup>3</sup>

Housing is another critical area where the Roma face significant challenges. They often reside in segregated and socially excluded areas with poorer living conditions. The health status of the Roma population living in these excluded localities is generally worse compared to the majority population. Roma have limited access to healthcare and preventive services, leading to higher morbidity and lower life expectancy.<sup>4</sup>

These factors collectively result in a high degree of social exclusion for the Roma. The lack of education, limited employment opportunities, substandard housing, and poorer health contribute to a vicious cycle of poverty and marginalization.

### **The Importance of Roma Inclusion in the Czech Republic for the Labour Market**

The integration of the Roma into society and the labour market is crucial for achieving decent and sustainable employment in the Czech Republic for several key reasons. It promotes social justice and equality, ensuring that all members of society have the opportunity to contribute.

The full participation of Roma in the labour market also brings significant economic benefits, boosting overall productivity. Moreover, it is one of the most effective tools for combating poverty and social exclusion, leading to financial stability, improved living standards, and enhanced social cohesion.

Furthermore, the inclusion of Roma in the labour market and their economic independence will reduce the reliance on public resources for social support. It will also reinforce democratic values such as equality, justice, and human rights.

### **The Situation of the Roma in the Labour Market**

The unemployment rate of the Roma population aged 20–64 is 11.8%; for the population of the Czech Republic in the same age category, the indicator was lower – in 2021, it was 2.8%.<sup>5</sup> 49.6% of the Roma population aged 20–64 are employed, which is a lower proportion compared to the employment rate in the general population, which for the same age category in 2021 was 80%.<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> FRA Roma Survey 2021, 2022, p. 46

<sup>3</sup> Results of a sample survey of the Roma population - evaluation of indicators, Laura Fónadova, Tomáš Katrňák, Miroslava Rákoczyová, Ivana Šimíková, RILSA, 2022. p. 26 and 29

<sup>4</sup> Results of a sample survey of the Roma population - evaluation of indicators, Laura Fónadova, Tomáš Katrňák, Miroslava Rákoczyová, Ivana Šimíková, RILSA, 2022. p. 26 and 29

<sup>5</sup> Results of a sample survey of the Roma population - evaluation of indicators, Laura Fónadova, Tomáš Katrňák, Miroslava Rákoczyová, Ivana Šimíková, RILSA, 2022. p. 29

<sup>6</sup> Results of a sample survey of the Roma population - evaluation of indicators, Laura Fónadova, Tomáš Katrňák, Miroslava Rákoczyová, Ivana Šimíková, RILSA, 2022. p. 26

In the grey economy, 6.8% of Roma work without a written employment contract, and another 1.6% of respondents stated that they do not know if they have such a contract.<sup>7</sup>

However, we realistically believe that this percentage is likely higher based on the experience of field social workers. Specific research or other evidence is not available.

Another major problem is job insecurity. Of all working Roma, 34.1% work under a fixed-term employment contract, whereas in the general population, it was only 5.3%.<sup>8</sup>

At the Labour Office, 26.1% of the Roma population aged 20–64 is registered, which is a higher proportion compared to the general population of the Czech Republic (in 2021, 3.9% of people in this age category were registered at the Labour Office). (Note: For the population aged 16–64, the indicator reaches a similar value (25.6%).<sup>9</sup>

One-third (33.1%) of respondents aged 16–29 have paid work. Therefore, two-thirds are outside the labour market, often on maternity or parental leave (31.9%) or unemployed (16.1%). 12.4% indicated daily study as their activity.

According to research conducted by FRA in the Czech Republic and Greece, young Roma (16–24 years old) have a higher share of paid employment than the Roma in other age categories. In the same age category, 51.5% of respondents were unemployed and were not attending school or undergoing any vocational training, retraining, etc. In the general population, only 10.9% of young people were in the same situation.

Another major issue is job insecurity. Among working Roma, 34.1% are employed under fixed-term contracts, compared to just 5.3% in the general population. This highlights the precarious nature of employment for many Roma individuals.

At the Labour Office, 26.1% of the Roma population aged 20–64 is registered, a significantly higher proportion compared to the general population, where only 3.9% in this age group were registered in 2021. A similar trend is observed for the population aged 16–64, with 25.6% of Roma registered at the Labour Office.

For Roma aged 16–29, one-third (33.1%) are in paid employment, meaning two-thirds are outside the labor market. Many are on maternity or parental leave (31.9%), while others are unemployed (16.1%). Additionally, 12.4% of respondents in this age group are engaged in daily studies.

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<sup>7</sup> Results of a sample survey of the Roma population - evaluation of indicators, Laura Fónadova, Tomáš Katrňák, Miroslava Rákoczyová, Ivana Šimíková, RILSA, 2022. p. 26

<sup>8</sup> Results of a sample survey of the Roma population - evaluation of indicators, Laura Fónadova, Tomáš Katrňák, Miroslava Rákoczyová, Ivana Šimíková, RILSA, 2022. p. 27

<sup>9</sup> Results of a sample survey of the Roma population - evaluation of indicators, Laura Fónadova, Tomáš Katrňák, Miroslava Rákoczyová, Ivana Šimíková, RILSA, 2022. p. 30

According to FRA research, in the age group 16-24 years old, 47% were neither in employment nor in education or training (NEET) (this value remained the same in 2016 and 2021). In the general population, this figure was 7% (according to Eurostat).

The rate of paid work is therefore 64.8% among men and 34.0% among women in the Roma population aged 20–64. The gender gap in the rate of paid work in the Roma population amounts to 30.8%.<sup>10</sup> This situation is confirmed by FRA research, which also highlights a significant gap between employed men and women. According to FRA, this difference is 21% in the Czech Republic.<sup>11</sup>

Although specific and accurate data on the employment of Roma in particular sectors are not available, the research and reports mentioned in this report and others indicate that Roma in the Czech Republic are probably most employed in manual and unskilled professions, especially in areas such as construction, agriculture, manual work in industry, cleaning services gastronomy and hospitality.

However, these are only estimates based on the following facts: - high rates of unemployment among Roma, especially those living in socially excluded locations.  
-a still significant number of Roma have low education and thus qualifications, which limits their access to better job opportunities.

We cannot also ignore the fact that concerning the above-mentioned facts and high-level indebtedness, the Roma also work in the informal economy, where they logically encounter precarious working conditions. According to current research (*reference see footnote 11*), at least 6.8% of Roma are apparently in the informal economy.

## Support for the Roma in accessing employment

Support for Roma employment in the Czech Republic includes various initiatives and programs aimed at improving their position in the labor market. These initiatives are implemented by government institutions, non-profit organizations, and European funds. The Czech government has implemented several strategies and programs focused on supporting Roma integration and employment.

Two of the most crucial initiatives concerning the Roma in the Czech Republic are the Strategy of Equality, Inclusion, and Participation of Roma 2021-2030 and the Social Inclusion Strategy by 2030. The first document includes measures aimed at supporting education, employment, housing, and health among Roma. The second strategy also significantly affects Roma communities by promoting broader social inclusion.

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<sup>10</sup> 10Results of a sample survey of the Roma population - evaluation of indicators, Laura Fónadova, Tomáš Katrňák, Miroslava Rákoczyová, Ivana Šimíková, RILSA, 2022. p.34

<sup>11</sup> FRA. Roma Survey 2021 - Main results Vienna, 2022. p. 45

The Czech Labour Office implements various active employment policy programs to improve job opportunities for Roma. These programs include retraining courses, support for job creation, community service work, and counseling services. However, it is important to note that discrimination by Labour Office staff can occur.

The European Union funds various projects aimed at integrating Roma through the European Social Fund (ESF) and other funds. Two key operational programs financed by the ESF in the Czech Republic are the Operational Program Employment Plus, which supports employment for disadvantaged groups including Roma, and the Operational Program Jan Amos Komenský, which funds projects aimed at enhancing education. Both programs are currently ongoing, and the initial projects are still in the early stages of implementation. Specific measures for the Roma community under the Operational Program Jan Amos Komenský will begin no earlier than September of this year, so no reports have been published yet to evaluate the impacts of these programs on the Roma population.

Many non-profit organizations (both Roma and pro-Roma) are actively involved in supporting Roma employment through various projects and initiatives. For example, RomPraha offers counseling, training, job-seeking support, and retraining programs. A similar initiative was implemented by IQ Roma Service in Brno. These organizations often collaborate with local businesses and labour offices to create job opportunities for Roma.

Retraining programs are also financially supported by the Labour Office, thanks to European funds. However, there is no available information on how many Roma have taken advantage of these opportunities. Reports from the Agency for Social Inclusion, the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs, and non-profit organizations include several recommendations for supporting Roma employment and reducing the barriers they face when entering the labor market.

The Labour Office implements specific activities referred to as “active employment policy instruments”, such as public-benefit jobs and socially purposeful jobs. Employers receive wage subsidies if they hire disadvantaged job seekers, including those with low qualifications, people nearing retirement age, the long-term unemployed, caregivers, recipients of repeated social assistance benefits, and those who have served prison sentences. Additionally, support is provided for other socially disadvantaged groups, such as those facing social exclusion, homelessness, or other social challenges.

According to the Report on the State of the Roma Minority for 2022, 6,658 jobs were created under the public-benefit jobs instrument, compared to 9,013 in 2021. While this includes Roma workers, the exact or approximate number of Roma in these positions is not recorded by the Czech Labour Office. In 2022, the Labour Office supported 4,419 socially purposeful jobs, compared to 6,156 in 2021, but again, the specific number of Roma employed in these roles is unknown.

Support for social enterprises is another important tool for integrating Roma into the labor market. Social enterprises employ disadvantaged groups, including Roma, providing them with employment, vocational training, and support. Examples from the past include projects like Centrum Impex s. r. o. and SP Černý Most s. r. o., which was transformed into a social enterprise focusing on promoting social enterprise among Roma. Currently, legislation on social enterprise is under discussion in the Czech Republic.

Despite these efforts, the Roma still face numerous obstacles and discrimination in the labor market. These challenges include low levels of education and qualifications, prejudices and discrimination in recruitment processes, hidden forms of discrimination, social and spatial exclusion (affecting up to 100,000 people), inadequate infrastructure, limited access to public transport, a lack of social capital, loss of trust in the system and state institutions, reduced self-esteem due to experiences of discrimination and marginalization, and poverty.

Achieving real equality and social inclusion requires not only the continued implementation and expansion of these programs but also a focused effort on eliminating prejudices and discriminatory practices.

### Support in case of job loss

Any person, including Romani people, who resides in the Czech Republic and who does not receive an old-age pension or sickness insurance benefits and who has legally worked and paid social insurance as an employee or self-employed person for at least 12 months in the past two years (including during so-called substitute periods of employment, such as caring for a child under the age of 4, caring for persons in various degrees of dependency, temporary incapacity for work, etc.) is entitled to unemployment benefits. Access to unemployment benefits is not usually problematic if all the statutory conditions are met.

The shortest period of unemployment benefit is for persons under 50 years of age, with a maximum of 5 months. During this period, the amount of unemployment benefit is gradually reduced from 65 % of the average net monthly wage (assessment base) in the first month to 45 % in the last month.

The maximum duration of unemployment benefit is 11 months and applies to people aged 55 and over.

The award of unemployment benefit is generally straightforward, provided that the person meets the legal requirements, and the process itself is not discriminatory. Thus, The Roma, as any other person who met statutory conditions can easily access these unemployment benefits.

There is a lack of information about the discrimination experienced by Roma in the Czech Republic in their efforts to access unemployment benefits.

## Antigypsyism in accessing employment

According to FRA research, there was a significant increase in the number of cases where respondents felt discriminated against in their job search between 2016 and 2021. In 2016, 28% of respondents reported experiencing discrimination, but by 2021, this figure had risen to 56%<sup>12</sup>. This trend is corroborated by MMR research, which analyzed the socio-demographic data of unemployed respondents in 2022. The study found that 27% of respondents experienced discrimination while looking for work in the past 12 months. Among the short-term unemployed, this figure was as high as 57%, and for the long-term unemployed, it rose to 64%. These findings indicate that more than half of the unemployed experience discrimination during their job search. Notably, only 18% of the long-term unemployed reported that they had not encountered discrimination while seeking employment.<sup>13</sup>

In the Czech Republic, there are thousands of Roma with trade licenses. However, many of them face ethnic discrimination, which complicates their entrepreneurial activities. Only a few Roma entrepreneurs manage to successfully overcome these prejudices and gain the trust of contractors, a process that requires significant patience and determination. Many Roma entrepreneurs highlight the unequal conditions they face in the market and emphasize the need for socially responsible public procurement practices. Adopting such practices could create opportunities for the development of Roma businesses, potentially generating hundreds or even thousands of jobs for Roma who continue to face discrimination in the job market or from employers themselves.

## The Roma and labour legislation

Roma people working in the informal economy, meaning without a written employment contract, constitute at least 6.8% of respondents, with an additional 1.6% stating they are unsure if they have such a contract.<sup>14</sup> There is a belief that the actual percentage may be higher based on the experiences of field social workers, but specific research or evidence supporting this is not available.

Structure of employed and employment contracts of employees (aged 20-64)

		Number	%
Employees	for a fixed period	196	34,1
	for an indefinite period	265	46,1
	do not know*	19	3,3
	without contract	35	6,1

<sup>12</sup> FRA. Roma Survey 2021 - Main results Vienna, 2022. p. 4

<sup>13</sup> Hall, L. Analysis of socio-demographic data of unemployed respondents from SVL-SILC survey, 2022, MMR. p. 25

<sup>14</sup> Results of a sample survey of the Roma population - evaluation of indicators, Laura Fónadova, Tomáš Katrňák, Miroslava Rákoczyová, Ivana Šimíková, RILSA, 2022. p. 26

entrepreneurs and self-employed	entrepreneurs and self-employed	60	10,4
Total		575	100

*Taken from: Results of Roma population sample survey - evaluation of indicators, Laura Fónadová, Tomáš Katrňák, Miroslava Rákoczyová, Ivana Šimíková, RILSA, 2022*

Another major problem is job insecurity. 34.1% of Roma work under fixed-term employment contracts, compared to only 5.3% in the general population. Given the obstacles Roma face in the labour market and in relation to it, it can be said that Roma are at greater risk of ending up in exploitative forms of employment and experiencing poor working conditions. This, of course, applies only to a certain number of Roma who are most exposed to the negative impacts of social exclusion, but the risk does exist.

### Adequate wages and the ethnic pay gap

Wage disparities are a widespread issue in the Czech Republic, and Roma as an employed group are no exception to this phenomenon. These disparities are influenced by several factors, including poor work-life balance, non-transparent systems of remuneration and career advancement, horizontal gender segregation in the labor market (where sectors dominated by women tend to have lower wages), vertical gender segregation, gender stereotypes and discrimination (such as traditional roles assigned to men and women in the family and workplace), and generally low law enforceability in the Czech Republic.

Evaluating fair wages and pay differences concerning Roma is a complex process that requires considering various factors and methodological approaches. It also necessitates gathering accurate statistical and representative data on Roma wages compared to the majority population. Studies focusing specifically on wage differences between Roma and non-Roma populations in the Czech Republic were conducted approximately 15 years ago. However, this data is outdated and may not reflect the current situation. These studies did reveal wage disparities related to ethnicity, confirming wage discrimination against Roma women. It is likely that these issues persist today, but without current data, it is difficult to assess their extent and depth.

Wage disparities are also influenced by objective factors such as qualifications, which tend to be lower among Roma, particularly those most exposed to the negative impacts of social exclusion. Consequently, their wages may also be lower due to these factors.

### Access to on-the-job training and career progression

No research or case studies have been conducted on this topic. In this regard, opportunities for further education and career growth often depend on personal relationships within the workplace. There are instances of Roma holding managerial positions in various sectors, indicating that such opportunities do exist.

However, there are also cases where career advancement is hindered, not due to the work abilities of the individual Roma, but primarily because of their ethnicity.

### Representation of the Roma in trade unions

No available data indicates whether or how the Roma are involved in trade unions. However, this is undoubtedly a very interesting issue that could improve their position in the labor market if they Roma actively participate. Like other minorities, the Roma often face discrimination and inequality in the workplace. Their representation in trade unions would certainly help ensure that their voices are heard and that the specific issues they face are addressed.

Trade unions strive to improve working conditions for all employees. Roma representation in these unions could more effectively advocate for better conditions for their communities, such as fair wages, workplace safety, and equal opportunities. Additionally, participation in trade union structures allows the Roma to be involved in decision-making processes, fostering a greater sense of belonging and community empowerment.

### Antigypsyism and discrimination in employment

As mentioned above, there has been an increase in cases where respondents reported feeling discriminated against while looking for a job. On average, 36% of respondents experienced discrimination during their job search in the last five years.<sup>15</sup> However, this figure rises significantly among the unemployed: up to 66% of the short-term unemployed and even 81% of the long-term unemployed reported such experiences. This data indicates that most unemployed individuals have faced discrimination at least once in the past five years. Only 16% of the long-term unemployed reported not encountering discrimination during their job search in this period.<sup>16</sup>

From the above data, it can be inferred that up to 66% of Roma may experience antigypsyism during job searches, manifesting as unfair treatment based on prejudice and discrimination, such as biased evaluation of qualifications and work experience. In employment, unequal treatment can take the form of lower pay, limited career advancement opportunities, stricter assessments of labor violations, etc. Unfortunately, these practices of antigypsyism are difficult to confirm with specific data. Often, these are individual stories shared informally on social networks or occasionally highlighted in studies like this one. In general, the awareness of the Roma about how to defend themselves against the discriminatory actions of employers is rather low. Unfortunately, even the trade unions are not very involved in this area. Possibilities to get help in the Czech Republic exist, but the Roma do not trust that their complaint will be properly investigated.

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<sup>15</sup> Hall, L. Analysis of socio-demographic data of unemployed respondents from SVL-AILC survey, 2022, MMR, p.25

<sup>16</sup> Hall, L. Analysis of socio-demographic data of unemployed respondents from SVL-AILC survey, 2022, MMR, p.25

Semi-structured interviews with Roma respondents revealed specific instances of discrimination, both in the workplace and during job searches. Legislation protecting against discrimination is sufficient, namely in the Charter of Fundamental Rights and Freedoms, the Labor Code, the Labor Inspection Act and the Anti-Discrimination Act. However, there is no faith on the part of the Roma that everything will be properly investigated in favor of the Roma complainants, although there is no publicly known case in the last 5 years that the Labor Safety Inspectorate (which is in charge of this agenda) did not properly investigate the complaints submitted to it.

*"I was interested in furthering my professional education, so I applied for it. In the first year, when I requested funding for this education, like my colleagues, I was told that there were no financial resources left and to apply again next year. As a result, I requested paid study leave, just as my colleagues did. Initially, my supervisor said he would approve it. However, he later called me and said it wasn't possible, so I was forced to take vacation days instead. As the new year approached, I again approached my supervisor, requesting funding for my long-term professional education. I was informed that it wasn't possible due to necessary budget cuts in the organization. I checked to see if other colleagues had also experienced funding cuts for their professional education, but they hadn't."*

- GŠ, 44 years old

*"I applied to a company that advertised a job opportunity online, clearly stating in the ad that they intended to hire around 10 employees, which was also confirmed over the phone. After seeing the ad, I called the number provided to confirm if the position was still available and if I met the qualifications and other requirements. The response was affirmative, and the employer's secretary even mentioned that there were still 7 vacant positions. However, when I arrived for the interview (just an hour after the phone call), the secretary informed me that all positions had already been filled. When I asked if none of the seven positions had remained available in just an hour, the assistant director's secretary bluntly told me they didn't have a job for me, apologized, said she wouldn't discuss it further, and asked me to leave. I replied: 'But I meet the qualifications, have experience, and am eager to work.' The assistant director's secretary firmly responded that the manager had a bad experience with Roma people and explicitly instructed her not to allow Roma people through reception for interviews."*

- JL, 21 years old

*"I went for an interview at a company that sells electronics, specifically for a customer service position. The job ad caught my eye, both financially and in terms of the job responsibilities. I sent my resume, highlighting my previous experience in similar roles. I was shortlisted and invited for a second round of interviews. However, upon arriving for the interview, it became clear that they were surprised. They asked me if I was indeed 'FP' (likely referring to Roma ethnicity). I confirmed that I was. They then seated me in a room to wait for management. The manager and the head of the customer service team arrived, but they showed little interest in discussing the position with me; instead, I found myself asking most of the questions. When they did speak, their remarks were vague, and they avoided eye contact, often looking out the*

*window. Their behavior made it clear to me that there was an issue, and I realized I wouldn't be chosen. They asked about my previous experience, both older and more recent, despite it being clearly outlined in my resume. I left feeling uneasy. The next day, they contacted me to inform me that they had chosen someone else. Interestingly, they continued to advertise the same position on their website even a month later. However, I'm relieved not to work there because working where you're not welcome isn't healthy."*

- FP, 25 years old

*"I'm sorry to share my experience with you about the discrimination I face almost daily in my job search. I've been registered with the Labour Office for a month now, and during this time, I've contacted about 10 employers with vacancies for jobs like cleaning, facility guarding, etc., because I have back problems and can't do heavy work. Almost every time, someone gives me a contact, and each time I call, they say, 'No problem, come in for an interview.' However, in each interview, I'm only there for about 3 minutes. Afterward, the employer tells me they've just filled the position with someone else. Once, I asked at an organization that deals with facility guarding, and they even told me they've had bad experiences with 'Gypsies' and don't want to hire others. At that moment, I felt very bad because I understood we're not all the same, and that there are people who don't want to work. But when a person wants to work and, just because I have a different skin color—because I'm Roma—I'm out of luck. There's so much of this, and it's been going on for a long time."*

- JG, 44 years old

*"I recently called a lady about a cleaning job at a shopping center. After asking if I was interested in the job, she also asked if I was of Romani origin. I replied yes, and she apologized, saying she couldn't employ Roma people because her boss had ordered it." - MZ, 18 years old*

*"I recently experienced discrimination at my workplace. My colleague and I were initially happy to find a job, even though the pay was low. However, from the first week, we had negative experiences with management. The supervisor unexpectedly showed up at our workplace and scolded us without even bothering to introduce himself. For every small mistake, he threatened us with dismissal, a threat we heard several times a week, leaving us constantly on edge, trying to avoid any errors.*

*There were only about 8 of us girls at the workplace. After two months, someone stole coffee from a coworker. The stolen coffee was discussed for a week, and my colleague and I were under suspicion the entire time. The job had performance targets, as is common almost everywhere. Sometimes we were told we were doing too little, other times too much. When we met the targets exactly, we were scolded again, called slackers, and shown errors we hadn't even made.*

*My first paycheck completely ruined my day. I find it very interesting that someone who doesn't meet targets gets all the bonuses, while those of us who do meet them receive nothing extra, just our hourly wages. My colleague and I decided to give it another try, thinking maybe the fault was on our side. However, every week brought new problems. They accused us of not cleaning the workplace properly, so we started taking photos as proof of our arrival and departure times. Despite this, they manipulated things to make themselves look right and us wrong.*

*During my last week there, I took a day off due to a toothache. The next day, I still wasn't feeling well. In three months, I hadn't taken any sick leave and had no plans to take extended time off. I was absent for just one day. The next day, they called me in to sign the termination papers and return their belongings. So, after three months of work, I went in to sign the termination papers.*

*The next day, I went to the factory to retrieve my belongings, and they told me to wait three days for my locker. When I came back the next day, I found a surprise. They had changed the lock and given me a different one. They insisted it must have been a mistake and that someone else had taken my locker. I assured them I could see clearly that the lock belonged to the factory, and I only wanted my things. They had thrown my belongings into another locker.*

*The reason for terminating my employment was that I didn't meet the targets, and they also fired my colleague. We were the only Roma in that unit; they kept the others and seemed determined to drive us out from the first week."*

- IP, 23 years old

*"At my previous job, I faced discrimination and, under pressure, decided to resign, even though I had worked there for a year. I had a contract for an indefinite period and enjoyed my job in retail. Unfortunately, I am hesitant to be specific because I still shop at this store with my family, and I don't want to relive the experience or expose myself to further public humiliation by the manager, who continually made offensive allusions to my Roma origin."*

- V.H. 36 years old

## Specific forms of employment

In the Czech Republic, various forms of employment exist, including non-standard arrangements like Agreements on Work Performance (DPP) and Agreements on Work Activity (DPČ). These differ from a standard employment contract (HPP - main employment relationship) in several key aspects:

*Contract on Work Performance (DPP):* Working time is limited to a maximum of 300 hours per calendar year per employee. The wage is predetermined, and there is no requirement to adhere to the minimum wage, particularly for occasional work. Social and health insurance contributions are not required if the monthly income does not exceed 10,000 CZK. However, if the income exceeds this amount or if multiple contracts exist (as per new regulations from 2024), contributions are required on the entire amount. For incomes up to 10,000 CZK per month, a withholding tax of 15% applies, while advance tax payments are required for higher amounts.

*Contract on Work Activity (DPČ):* Working time can be agreed upon for up to 20 hours per week on average over a period not exceeding 52 weeks. The wage must be at least equal to the minimum wage, with all statutory entitlements for work remuneration applying. Social and health insurance contributions are required if the monthly income exceeds 4,000 CZK. Advance tax payments on income apply similarly to an HPP.

*Standard Employment Contract (HPP):* The standard working time is 40 hours per week. The wage must be at least equal to the statutory minimum wage. Employees are entitled to all statutory bonuses and benefits, such as vacation and meal vouchers. Social and health insurance contributions are mandatory regardless of income level. Advance tax payments on income apply.

In the case of DPP and DPČ agreements, provisions of the Labour Code regarding termination notice periods and other protections applicable to standard employment contracts (HPP) do not apply. These distinctions highlight the regulatory framework in the Czech Republic aimed at accommodating different types of work contracts while ensuring appropriate legal protections and benefits for employees under each type of contract.

Non-standard forms of employment, like Contracts on Work Performance (DPP) and Contracts on Work Activity (DPČ), offer greater flexibility for both employers and employees, especially in occasional or part-time work arrangements. The main differences compared to a standard employment contract lie in the limited scope of work, different rules for insurance and taxation, and more flexible remuneration conditions. In contrast, a standard employment contract provides full employee protection under the Labour Code, including entitlements to vacation, sick leave, and other benefits.

Since 2023, legal changes have required DPP and DPČ contracts to be concluded and terminated in writing. Moreover, for DPČ and DPP agreements, employees accrue entitlement to 8 hours of vacation for every 100 hours worked, and social and health insurance contributions are required for multiple contracts. However, this system still allows for potential misunderstandings, particularly among those unfamiliar with the regulations, and it continues to represent an unstable employment relationship. Terminating these contracts is easier than terminating a standard employment contract (HPP) and allows for repeated agreements.

Employers often use these forms of employment, particularly in fields such as construction, cleaning, gastronomy, hospitality, and agriculture. A relatively large number of Roma work in these areas. According to the activities of the State Office of Labour Inspection, these forms are used more frequently than standard contracts for certain groups of the population, creating space for elements of the informal economy. In particular, DPPs can be very disadvantageous for employees, especially if they only have one and the remuneration does not exceed 10,000 CZK, as only income tax is paid and not social and health insurance. In terms of health insurance, if the employee does not have another employment relationship or is not a recipient of a disability or old-age pension, this can lead to debt accumulation; in the case of social insurance, the person loses the insurance period, which can lead to the non-granting of an old-age pension.

The Roma have been employed quite often in this way. There are many reasons why the Roma take up this disadvantageous way of employment: low legal awareness, discrimination on the labour market, the consequences of the impossibility of debt relief for people who are in debt, etc.

Due to historical circumstances, traditional crafts disappeared a long time ago. Only playing music persists. Seasonal, informal work, black economy - the Czech Roma mainly work in the construction (men) and cleaning (women) sectors.

### Roma working abroad

The Roma, especially those who live near the borders with Germany or Austria, use employment opportunities in these countries (commuting abroad for work), but there they do not face discrimination on the grounds of ethnicity, especially if they work for a German or Austrian employer or a local employment agency. This work is often better paid than in the Czech Republic, even if it involves low-skilled jobs, e.g. in construction, services, etc. Approximately 60,000 Czechs work in Germany, and around 20,000 in Austria. It is not known how many of them are the Roma.

After Germany and Austria, the largest number of Czechs live and work in the United Kingdom. According to the latest census from 2021, approximately 87,000 people live and work in the United Kingdom.<sup>17</sup> It is impossible to determine exactly how many of this number are Roma. Neither the Czech nor the British side keeps these statistics. However, various sources estimate that at least 10,000 Roma from the Czech Republic live and work in the United Kingdom.

### Social Business

Social enterprises often employ people from marginalized groups, including the Roma. They provide these individuals with the opportunity to gain stable employment and develop their skills. Employment in a social enterprise often includes training and support that helps Roma overcome barriers in the labour market, such as lack of qualifications or discrimination. Unfortunately, there are no available data on how many Roma work in social enterprises. However, there are also social enterprises owned by Roma, whose public identification with ethnicity can contribute to discrimination when competing for contracts from private or state-owned companies. Associations of Roma companies and tradespeople have emerged, seeking to negotiate with various business sectors and companies, (e.g. the Association of Roma Entrepreneurs and Companies of the Czech Republic, the Association of Roma Entrepreneurs, Social Enterprises, Companies and Tradesmen, the Western Czech Association of Roma Entrepreneurs or the National Association of Socially Responsible Roma Companies and Entrepreneurs in the Czech Republic).

There are no other programs or approaches from the state that would specifically create quality jobs for Roma. Active employment policy tools from the state, implemented by the Labour Office of the Czech Republic, primarily provide only contributions, which of course can motivate employers to create new jobs, but in this case, we are talking about several thousand and we do not know how many of these positions are occupied by Roma and often these are

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<sup>17</sup> : <https://plus.rozhlas.cz/cesi-v-britanii-jak-se-jim-v-ostrovni-zemi-zije-tri-roky-po-brexitu-9216295>

low-skilled jobs. The availability of these places from the point of view of the Roma alludes to the present antigypsyism and discrimination.

Currently, the Czech Republic is debating a draft law on social enterprise that could enhance support for social enterprises and contribute to the development of the social economy. Social enterprises naturally invest in training and skill development of their employees, enhancing their competitiveness in the job market and contributing to the social inclusion of Roma, while also helping to dismantle prejudices and stereotypes.

The development of the social economy could lead to the creation of new sustainable jobs for various social groups in the Czech Republic, which is one of the goals of the proposed social enterprise law.

### **Employment in Czech National Roma Strategic Framework**

According to the latest evaluation of the implementation of the Strategy for Equality, Inclusion and Participation of Roma 2021-2030 from 2022, which was adopted by the government of the Czech Republic, there are a total of 13 measures in the area listed in the aforementioned strategy. jobs were not implemented, 5 were partially implemented and 3 were fulfilled. Specific goals and measures in the area of employment are not poorly set, rather there is a problem with their enforceability, which is evident from the evaluation of their fulfillment from 2022.

A fundamental improvement in the performance of tasks by the ministries and the Labour Office cannot be expected. In its starting points, the Strategy clearly articulates the presence of racial discrimination against Roma in the Czech Republic, and the fact that Roma also face the effects of social exclusion, which creates conditions for unequal treatment of Roma not only in the labour market. The recommendations of the Strategy reflect the recommendations formulated by the UN Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination from 2019, the Council Recommendation on Roma Equality, Inclusion and Participation of 12 March 2021 (European Commission) and the identified data on the situation of Roma in the Czech Republic.

### **Conclusion**

The Roma in the Czech Republic face systematic marginalization and social exclusion. The topic of discrimination against Roma in the labour market in the Czech Republic is urgent. A significant number of the Roma are socially and economically excluded for a long time and thus face social inequality. Discrimination and specific manifestations of antigypsyism have been identified both in specific stories of the Roma and in several current studies conducted in the Czech Republic. There should be no doubt about this phenomenon in the Czech Republic, and it is all the easier to understand and solve it. So, there should be no doubts about this phenomenon in the Czech Republic, and it should be all the easier to understand and solve it.

The results of the evaluation of the implementation of the Strategy for Equality, Inclusion and Participation of Roma 2021-2030 from 2022, however, show the opposite, or point to a reluctance to approach this problem in such a way as to lead to its substantial solution. Some aspects do not include discrimination in the process itself from the point of view of the law, e.g. obtaining unemployment support, but its specific course cannot prevent manifestations of antigypsyism. There are Active Employment Policy instruments that are primarily aimed at vulnerable groups of the unemployed or potentially unemployed, but we do not have available data that could tell us whether and to what extent these instruments help the Roma to get quality and long-term employment. A certain way is the area of social economy, which has its own representation in the Czech Republic, and we hope that with the new legislation, it will be expanded. It is a way to create quality and affordable jobs for Roma. Currently, however, fundamental development lacks a limited amount of subsidy support and public contracts from the state, regions and municipalities, which would support social enterprises and help stabilize them. However, it is an area that is undoubtedly a challenge and has an unmistakable potential.

A fundamental problem for a certain group of Roma in connection with employment in the labour market is the high level of indebtedness and the impossibility of filing for insolvency. This fact drives this group of Roma into the informal economy, which definitely does not have positive effects from the point of view of social security and work safety and health. It is also extremely disadvantageous for the state, which on the one hand loses taxes and on the other creates pressure on social spending. It is undoubtedly in the Czech Republic's interest to support all effective and efficient solutions and tools that will help create jobs for the long-term unemployed, help them get a quality job and keep it in the long term.

## Recommendations

Support measures in line with the Race Equality Directive and the Employment Equality Directive, both through legislative changes and funding initiatives aimed at ending structural discrimination in access to employment and in the workplace.

- Establish legislative conditions that enable swift and effective defense against discriminatory actions by employers. Provide systematic and long-term training on anti-discrimination practices for public administration, trade unions, and employers.
- Only support models of working with Roma job seekers that ensure individualized approaches based on active inclusion strategies, utilizing additional support services, and emphasizing the development of motivation and responsibility among Roma job seekers.
- Prevent discrimination against small Romani and social enterprises in the awarding of state public contracts.
- Target funds from the European Social Fund (ESF) to support effective approaches to working with Roma job seekers, focusing on comprehensive active inclusion strategies, supporting initial work experiences, involvement in trade union activities, or the establishment of trade union organizations.

- Direct ESF funds towards supporting and developing the social economy and the creation of new social enterprises, particularly those oriented towards employing individuals who are long-term socially excluded or at risk of social exclusion.
- Facilitate active dialogue with all relevant stakeholders, including public administration, trade unions, Roma and pro-Roma organizations, and employers, to foster dialogue and cooperation aimed at reducing discrimination and transforming workplaces to embrace diversity as a positive change and contribution.