

The Fundamental Rights Position of Roma and Travellers in the European Union



Who are the Roma and Travellers?

The term “Roma” is used as an umbrella term including groups of people who share more or less similar cultural characteristics, such as the Roma, Sinti, Travellers, Ashkali, and Kalé. These groups also share a history of persistent marginalisation in European societies.

No official data on ethnicity is collected consistently across all EU Member States. According to estimates there are currently 10-12 million Roma in the EU, making the Roma **the largest ethnic minority in the EU**.

Most of the Roma living in the European Union are nationals of an EU Member State and are therefore EU citizens with the same rights and responsibilities as any other EU citizen.

FRA work on the situation of the Roma

The Fundamental Rights Agency (FRA) is mandated to provide evidence-based advice on fundamental rights issues to European Union institutions and bodies and EU Member States, when implementing European Union law.

The FRA has repeatedly identified the Roma as **the ethnic minority most vulnerable** to discrimination and human rights violations in the EU.

The FRA conducts research on Roma access to education, health care, housing and freedom of movement. Having analysed the problems faced by the Roma, including cases of racist violence, the FRA identifies positive initiatives where these problems have been overcome and suggests ways forward.

The FRA works **with Roma communities**, empowering them to contribute to improving the situation of the Roma in the EU in a sustainable way. The FRA also works with **local authorities**, who are well placed to see that the rights of the Roma are protected in practice. The FRA cooperates with the **European institutions**, the **Council of Europe** and other **international organisations** to ensure that the work done by the FRA and other institutions is complementary.

For more information visit the FRA’s Roma webpage:
www.fra.europa.eu/fraWebsite/roma/roma_en.htm

Key fundamental rights violations faced by the Roma

- **Discrimination in access to jobs** – major factor behind Romani unemployment.
- **Discrimination in access to education** – less favourable treatment of Roma children when they are given less attention from teachers.
- **Discrimination in access to housing** – segregated housing and homelessness.
- **Discrimination in access to healthcare** – abuses and violations of the right to equal access to health services.
- **Racist violence and crime** – consequences of stereotyping and discrimination.

Moving to another EU Member State

- The Roma **experience problems with border/visa officials**, including demands for bribes by corrupt officials, when leaving and/or returning to their countries of origin.
- The Roma are aware of their **general right to move**, but **less aware of** the specific, and often complex, array of **rights and obligations** concerning the establishment of **residence** for EU citizens in another Member State.
- **Poverty** caused by **unemployment, discrimination and racism** is the main factor pushing Roma to leave their countries of origin.
- The Roma face **difficulties in finding jobs** in the formal labour market of their destination country because they face stereotyping and discrimination.
- The Roma face **difficulties registering their residence** in their new country of residence. As a consequence, they may face **difficulties in accessing** national health systems, public housing, social assistance and labour market integration measures.
- The resulting exclusion from social assistance has a **disproportionate** impact on women, children, old persons and persons with disabilities.

From the report - [The situation of Roma EU citizens moving to and settling in other EU Member States – Nov 2009](#)

Positive initiatives

Spain - although the obligation to register residence in Spain exists, Union citizens only have to prove their identity and nationality. This approach greatly facilitates the social inclusion of Roma.

United Kingdom - the UK school census includes ‘Roma’ as a category of ethnicity, which is important for monitoring the progress of the Roma at school and tackling any discrimination that may be taking place.

Italy - housing solutions exist to assist Roma families living in segregated substandard ‘nomad camps’ to move into integrated, rented accommodation. The different institutional actors involved - municipal, provincial and regional – Non Governmental Organisations and the Roma community work together to implement such interventions.

From the report - [Selected positive initiatives - The situation of Roma EU citizens moving to and settling in other EU Member States – Nov 2009](#)

Access to housing

- Very few Roma know that laws exist prohibiting discrimination in relation to ethnicity when securing housing.
- Only 11.5% of affected Roma report discrimination incidents to the relevant organisations.
- Roma children of families who are exposed to forced evictions have great **difficulties in attending school**.
- Those living in secluded settlements are most likely to attend **segregated schools**.
- Roma living in segregated communities or in substandard conditions have only **limited access to public services and social networks**.
- Living in segregated areas makes it more difficult to find work and to get to work.
- Substandard living conditions have **severe consequences on health**, particularly for women and children.

From the report - [Comparative report on the housing conditions of Roma and Travellers in the EU – Oct 2009](#)

Positive initiatives:

- The project *Vesnička soužití* (Coexistence Village), sponsored by the **Czech government** provided a new neighbourhood with 54 dwellings to Roma and non-Roma flood victims who lost their homes after a flood in July 1997 in the city of Ostrava.
- The Municipality of Nálepkovo was among the first in **Slovakia** to design and implement a Roma housing 3-phase project starting in 1994, including

building 64 new dwellings and providing accessible interest-free micro-loans to furnish or renovate housing. This initiative had an impact on the formation of a specific national policy on Roma housing.

- The Local Government of Kerecsend, **Hungary**, developed nest-homes for young Roma families, who pay 21 EUR per month rent and an additional 58 EUR per month in the form of savings so that they can acquire a new house in five or six years to make room for new families in the ‘nest homes’.

From the [Case studies on specific housing initiatives for Roma and Travellers – Oct 2009](#)

Victims of crime

- 1 in 4 Roma respondents to a [recent FRA survey](#) reported an average of 4 incidents of assault, threat or serious harassment over a 12 month period, suggesting that **racially motivated crime is an everyday experience**.
- **Lack of confidence in law enforcement** and justice structures was reported by more than 65% Roma surveyed.
- Only 14% of Roma respondents could name an organisation that could assist them if they were discriminated against.

From the report - [EU-MIDIS - European Union Minorities Discrimination Survey - Data in Focus Report: Roma – Apr 2009](#)

Future FRA work on the Roma

- The FRA’s work on and with the Roma will be in line with the EU priorities listed in the recent European Commission Communication on [“The social and economic integration of Roma in Europe”](#), the [platform for Roma Inclusion](#) and the [10 Common Basic Principles on Roma inclusion](#).
- The FRA will develop innovative and inclusive methodologies, focusing on policy implementation and generating more impact on the ground, by engaging further with the Roma, the authorities at national and local level and the majority population.

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