

FRA/UNDP Press Release

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Widespread Roma exclusion persists, find new surveys

Many Roma continue to face discrimination and social exclusion across the EU, according to a new report published jointly by the European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights (FRA) and the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP). The situation of Roma is on average worse than the situation of non-Roma living in close proximity. The report is based on two surveys on the socio-economic situation of Roma and non-Roma living nearby in 11 EU Member States and in neighbouring European countries.

“These survey results paint a grim picture of the current situation of the Roma across the 11 EU Member States surveyed,” says FRA Director Morten Kjaerum. “Discrimination and anti-gypsyism persist. The results show that swift, effective action is needed, particularly to improve Roma education. This is key to unlock their future potential, and it will equip young Roma with the skills they need to escape the vicious cycle of discrimination, exclusion and poverty.”

The report shows that in the 11 EU Member States surveyed, where the overwhelming majority of Roma EU citizens live, the situation of Roma in the areas of employment, education, housing and health is on average worse than the situation of non-Roma living close by. Roma continue to experience discrimination and are not sufficiently aware of their rights guaranteed by EU law.

Some key findings:

- only 15 % of young Roma adults surveyed have completed upper-secondary general or vocational education, compared with more than 70 % of the majority population living nearby;
- on average, less than 30 % of Roma surveyed are in paid employment;
- about 45 % of the Roma surveyed live in households lacking at least one of the following: an indoor kitchen, toilet, shower or bath, or electricity;
- on average, about 40 % of Roma surveyed live in households where somebody went to bed hungry at least once in the last month because they could not afford to buy food.

“The partnership developed among four international organisations [FRA, UNDP, World Bank and European Commission] during the process of this research delivers a strong message: the challenges the Roma population faces are so grave that they require a concerted response. This publication is an example that such a united and coordinated approach is possible and that it delivers results,” says Andrey Ivanov, UNDP Senior Policy Advisor, Human Development and Roma inclusion.

The surveys have documented the situation on the ground. The results provide policy makers with the necessary evidence for designing effective policy responses to address the situation. The survey results have fed into the European Commission’s Roma Communication which will also be presented in Brussels on 23 May 2012.

Notes to the editors:

- The FRA and the UNDP surveys interviewed in total 22,203 Roma and non-Roma providing information on 84,287 household members in Bulgaria, Czech Republic, France, Greece, Hungary, Italy, Poland, Portugal, Romania, Slovakia and Spain. Interviews were carried out face-to-face in Roma and non-Roma respondents’ homes, all living close by and therefore sharing similar infrastructure and labour market conditions.
- This report presents the first results of the surveys based on an analysis of a small part of the available data, which will be published later in thematic reports. These and future surveys will provide decision makers with the necessary evidence for designing effective policies, supporting the European Commission’s Communication of April 2011 on an EU Framework for national Roma integration strategies up to 2020. The Commission Communication asked the FRA to continue monitoring the situation and to act jointly with EU Member States, by providing assistance in putting in place robust monitoring mechanisms that can measure progress over time in a comparative way.
- Both surveys used a common core questionnaire.
- The FRA survey focused on human rights issues, such as discrimination and rights awareness. The FRA will conduct two more surveys in the coming years till 2020 to identify trends over time and across countries.
- The UNDP/World Bank/European Commission survey looked deeper into the socio-economic situation of Roma in the selected EU countries and non-EU countries of south-eastern Europe. The survey provides baselines for the new Roma integration strategies and allows for looking at the dynamics of the Roma inclusion processes, compared with 2004 when the UNDP implemented a similar survey. The work carried out by the UNDP in partnership with the World Bank was funded by the European Commission Directorate-General for Regional Policy, as well as core resources of the UNDP and the Nordic Trust Fund at the World Bank.
- EU Member States have developed national strategies for Roma integration. Local authorities should engage with both Roma and non-Roma in their

communities to implement these plans, building trust, developing social cohesion, and combating discrimination and anti-Gypsyism.

For further information, please contact:

At the FRA: Blanca Tapia, Spokesperson

media@fra.europa.eu

Tel.: +43 1 580 30 642

At UNDP:

Zoran Stevanovic, Regional Communications Advisor

Zoran.stevanovic@undp.org

Tel: +42 1 908 729 846