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# UN & CoE

28 January – Council of Europe (CoE) Commissioner for Human Rights issues his report following a visit to Belgium in September 2015

## January

16 February – CoE Commissioner for Human Rights publishes his letters to the governments of Bulgaria, France, Hungary, Italy and Sweden concerning evictions of Roma

## February

1 March – United Nations (UN) Committee on the Rights of the Child publishes its concluding observations on Ireland

1 March – European Commission against Racism and Intolerance (ECRI) publishes its fifth monitoring reports on France, Monaco and Georgia and the conclusions on the implementation of its priority recommendations in respect of Ireland and Liechtenstein

14 March – UN Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women (UN CEDAW) publishes its concluding observations on the Czech Republic

17-18 March – ECRI issues its fifth monitoring reports on Cyprus, Italy, Lithuania and conclusions on Finland, the Netherlands and Portugal

## March

21 April – UN Human Rights Committee adopts its concluding observations on Slovenia

28 April – UN Human Rights Committee adopts its concluding observations on Sweden

## April

17 May – UN Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities publishes its concluding observations on Slovakia

19 May – Ad hoc Committee of Experts on Roma and Traveller Issues (CAHROM) releases a thematic report on child/early and forced marriages within Roma communities

## May

3 June – UN Committee on the Rights of the Child publishes its concluding observations on Bulgaria

7 June – ECRI publishes its fifth monitoring report on Cyprus, Italy, the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, and Lithuania, and the conclusions on the implementation of its priority recommendations in respect of Finland, the Republic of Moldova, The Netherlands, Portugal, the Russian Federation and San Marino

11 June – UN Committee against Torture publishes its findings on France

15 June – CoE Commissioner for Human Rights issues his report following a visit to Poland in February 2016

22 June – CAHROM releases thematic reports on Roma health mediators and on vocational education and training for Roma

29 June – release of a joint statement on evictions of Roma and Travellers, by the Operational Platform for Roma Equality (OPRE), and signed by the Office of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR), the OSCE's Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights (OSCE/ODIHR), FRA, the European Network of European National Human Rights Institutions (ENNHRI), the European Network of Equality Bodies (Equinet), and the CoE

29-30 June – ECRI issues its Fifth monitoring report on Malta, Turkey and the United Kingdom

## June

12 July – UN Committee on the Rights of the Child publishes its concluding observations on the United Kingdom

14 July – UN Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights publishes its concluding observations on Sweden and United Kingdom

20 July – UN Committee on the Rights of the Child publishes its concluding observations on Slovakia

25 July – UN CEDAW publishes its concluding observations on France

## July

23 August – CoE Commissioner for Human Rights publishes his letter to the Prime Minister of Romania concerning the human rights of Romania's Roma population

## August

## September

3 October – Committee on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination (CERD) publishes its concluding observations on Greece and the United Kingdom

5 October – CoE Commissioner for Human Rights issues his report following a visit to Croatia in April 2016

26 October – UN Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights publishes its concluding observations on Poland

31 October – UN HCR adopts its concluding observations on Slovakia

## October

4 November – CoE Commissioner for Human Rights publishes his letter to the Prime Minister of the Czech Republic concerning the human rights of Roma and persons with disabilities

22 November – UN Human Rights Committee publishes Concluding Observations on the fourth report of Slovakia

## November

## December

# EU

January

February

March

April

May

28 June – European Court of Auditors (ECA) issues a special audit report on EU-funded projects to promote Roma integration in the Member States

June

27 July – European Commission issues a Communication assessing implementation of the EU Framework for National Roma Integration Strategies and the Council Recommendations on Effective Roma Integration Measures in the Member States

July

August

September

13 October – Council of the EU issues Conclusions on the European Court of Auditors Special Report No. 14/2016 – ‘EU policy initiatives and financial support for Roma integration: significant progress made over the last decade, but additional efforts needed on the ground’

October

November

8 December – Council of the EU adopts Conclusions on Roma

20 December – European Parliament issues Report on a European Pillar of Social Rights (2016/2095(INI))

December



# 4

## Roma integration



*Despite the ambitious goals set by national Roma integration strategies and the significant contribution of EU funds, little progress was visible in 2016. Over the past year, evidence on the situation of Roma in employment, education, housing and health shows that progress has been slow in respect to implementation of the EU Framework for National Roma Integration Strategies. Discrimination and anti-Gypsyism persist, and de facto segregation in housing and education continue to affect many Roma. The proposed European Pillar of Social Rights could give new impetus to Roma integration efforts, if it includes explicit reference to the right to non-discrimination guaranteed by Article 21 of the EU Charter of Fundamental Rights.*

### 4.1. Another challenging year for Roma integration

FRA has conducted its Second European Union Minorities and Discrimination Survey (EU-MIDIS II), which, among others, collected information on almost 34,000 persons living in Roma households in nine Member States. The results largely confirm the assessment of the European Commission's Communication of June 2016 on the implementation of the EU Framework for National Roma Integration Strategies. Acknowledging some positive trends and developments, it also identified "serious bottlenecks [...] in fighting anti-Roma discrimination, especially residential and educational segregation and prevention of forced evictions".<sup>1</sup>

In parallel, country-specific recommendations were issued under the European Semester. Those for **Bulgaria**, the **Czech Republic**, **Hungary**, **Romania** and **Slovakia** call for action to increase the provision of quality education for Roma and their inclusion in schools and pre-schools, and to prevent early school leaving.<sup>2</sup> Also along these lines, the Council conclusions on 'Accelerating the Process of Roma Integration' express regret that only limited progress has been made in advancing Roma integration, in particular at the local level, because of insufficient cooperation between

stakeholders, lack of commitment by local authorities, the ineffective use of available funds and continued discrimination against Roma. In this context, the Council conclusions in December 2016 reaffirmed the EU Framework for National Roma Integration Strategies up to 2020 and emphasised the need for integrated measures to improve the situation of marginalised and disadvantaged groups in Europe, including Roma.<sup>3</sup>

#### On terminology

The Council of Europe uses 'Roma and Travellers' as umbrella terms. They refer to Roma, Sinti, Kale, Romanichals, Boyash/Rudari, Balkan Egyptians, Eastern groups (Dom, Lom and Abdal) and groups such as Travellers, Yenish, and the populations designated under the administrative term "Gens du voyage", as well as persons who identify themselves as Gypsies.

*See the Council of Europe's [webpage dedicated to Roma and Travellers](#)*

The selected EU-MIDIS II findings published in November 2016 confirm the need for integrated measures. As many as 41 % of Roma respondents in the nine EU Member States surveyed felt discriminated against because of their Roma background at least once in the preceding five years in at least one area of daily life asked about in the survey (looking for work, at work, housing, health and education). A total of 26 % of Roma indicated that the last incident of

discrimination based on their Roma background took place in the 12 months preceding the survey.<sup>4</sup> These findings largely corroborate those of the Eurobarometer 2015 on discrimination, which highlights that a large proportion of the general population in the countries covered by EU-MIDIS II consider discrimination based on ethnic origin to be fairly or very widespread in their country (46–70 %).<sup>5</sup>

## FRA ACTIVITY

### EU-MIDIS II: generating data on the fundamental rights situation of Roma

In 2016, FRA completed the Second European Union Minorities and Discrimination Survey (EU-MIDIS II). Among others, it collected information on almost 34,000 persons living in Roma households in nine Member States. The survey was the third time the agency collected data on the fundamental rights situation of Roma. The data allow comparisons with Eurostat data, while retaining, as far as possible, comparability with the previous surveys on Roma.



In the framework of EU-MIDIS II, FRA surveyed Roma in nine EU Member States where probabilistic sampling using some form of random selection of respondents was possible: **Bulgaria, the Czech Republic, Greece, Hungary, Poland, Portugal, Romania, Slovakia** and **Spain**. The data are representative for Roma in geographic or administrative units with density of Roma population higher than 10 %.

*For more information, see FRA's webpage on the survey and FRA (2016), Second European Union Minorities and Discrimination Survey (EU-MIDIS II): Roma – Selected findings, Publications Office, Luxembourg, 2016*

This chapter presents evidence on challenges faced by Roma in the areas of education, employment, housing and health, and also with respect to hate crime, rights awareness, and reporting of discrimination and hate crime.

#### 4.1.1. Children and education

The EU has a responsibility to promote the protection of children's rights under Article 3 (3) of the Treaty on European Union (TEU). The EU Charter of Fundamental Rights guarantees the protection of the rights of the child, in particular under Article 24 (on the rights of the child) and Article 31 (on the prohibition of child labour). The 2013 Council Recommendation on effective Roma integration measures<sup>6</sup> notes that the situation of Roma children in the Union is particularly worrying, and

recommends specific measures, in particular as regards education. Across the EU, primary and lower secondary education is compulsory and free of charge. This means that governments have an obligation to ensure that all children, including Roma, enrol in and attend school.

Several years after the 2011 Commission Communication on an EU Framework on National Roma Integration Strategies, however, Roma children continue to live under conditions that violate their fundamental rights, ► the results of EU-MIDIS II show. As discussed in Chapter 7 of this report, child poverty is an issue of high concern, and Roma children are particularly vulnerable. Every third Roma child in the countries covered by EU-MIDIS II was living in a household in which at least one person had faced hunger at least once in the preceding month.<sup>7</sup>

Education is key to improving life chances and escaping the vicious cycle of poverty and exclusion. As noted above, a June 2016 report by the European Commission assessed the implementation of the EU Framework for National Roma Integration Strategies and the relevant Council Recommendation. It confirms that "education continues to receive the most attention by Member States in their integration measures". In their national policies, Member States focus on countering early school leaving (although in many cases these strategies do not explicitly target Roma); promoting access to and quality of early education (increased funds allocated to building kindergartens, legislative changes to introduce or extend compulsory pre-school education, etc.); and promoting inclusive education and individualised support to children in mainstream education (preventing placement in special schools on the basis of social background).<sup>8</sup> However, segregation and early school leaving remain problems for Roma children, requiring more concerted and targeted efforts.

According to EU-MIDIS II, 7 % of respondents (students or parents) experienced discrimination in education because of their Roma background in the 12 months preceding the survey, and twice as many (14 %) did so in the five years preceding the survey.<sup>9</sup> Additionally, on average, only every second Roma child in the relevant age group attends early childhood education (compared with the EU 2020 strategy target of 95 %) – a small increase from the previous survey results. As a result, Roma children also lag behind the general population in enrolment in subsequent levels of education (see Table 4.1).

Segregation in education remains a problem. EU-MIDIS II results show that almost half (46 %) of Roma children aged 6–15 attend schools where all or most of their schoolmates are Roma. The highest percentages were in Slovakia (62 %), Hungary (61 %) and Bulgaria (60 %).<sup>10</sup> In response, the European Commission sent a letter of formal notice to **Hungary** in May 2016, the first step ► of an infringement procedure (see Chapter 3 for more

**Table 4.1: Enrolment rates of Roma in each level of education, by age group, compared with the general population in nine EU Member States (%)**

Education level (ISCED 2011) <sup>a</sup>	Roma			General population	
	Net Enrolment rate <sup>b</sup>	Total Enrolment rate <sup>c</sup>	Not attending any educational level	Net enrolment rate	Total Enrolment rate
ISCED1+2	86	93	7	90	93
ISCED3	30	52	48	79	92
ISCED4+	(2) <sup>d</sup>	5	95	34	47

Notes: <sup>a</sup> The United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) developed the *International Standard Classification of Education (ISCED)* to facilitate comparisons of education statistics and indicators across countries on the basis of uniform and internationally agreed definitions.

<sup>b</sup> Net enrolment rate: percentage of children of the relevant age attending education level that corresponds to their age out of the total number of children of that age.

<sup>c</sup> Total enrolment rate: percentage of children of the relevant age attending any education level out of the total number of children of that age.

<sup>d</sup> Value based on low number of observations.

Sources: FRA, 2016 (*Second European Union Minorities and Discrimination Survey: Roma – Selected Findings*, p. 25); UNESCO, *International Standard Classification of Education (ISCED)*

details). The Commission similarly sent letters of formal notice regarding educational segregation to the **Czech Republic**<sup>11</sup> in 2014, and to **Slovakia**<sup>12</sup> in 2015. In **Slovakia**, de facto educational segregation due to residential concentration was reported to and confirmed by the State School Inspectorate in two elementary schools (*Základná škola*), affecting 157 and 200 Romani children in January and February 2016, respectively.<sup>13</sup> In its concluding observations on the combined third to fifth periodic reports of Slovakia, the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child also points out that “Roma children continue to be the victims of de facto segregation in the State party’s school system, with over 50 % being taught in Roma-only classes or attending classes in separate school pavilions, often providing inferior education”.<sup>14</sup>

Early school leaving continues to affect Roma children disproportionately and is one of the key reasons behind low attainment rates. On average, 68 % of Roma aged 18–24 have attained at most lower secondary education and are not involved in any further training.<sup>15</sup> In **Bulgaria**, the National Council on Cooperation on Ethnic and Integration Issues claimed that a large number of young Roma drop out of school early because their parents are not motivated to send their children to school, and that this remains a great challenge for national and local authorities.<sup>16</sup> In the **Netherlands**, a study revealed that many Roma children attend only primary school and many go to special schools for pupils with learning problems. The study argues that the high truancy rate among Roma children results from discrimination against Roma in the Dutch education system and in society combined with low parental expectations regarding education.<sup>17</sup> The 2016 Observations of the Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination for **Spain** note that early school drop-outs and “ghetto schools, which account for a large number of migrants and Roma children” are a problem in many regions. The

committee encourages the state to adopt “effective education policies that ensure the equitable distribution of students, in order to put an end to this phenomenon.”<sup>18</sup> FRA’s Local Engagement for Roma Inclusion (LERI)<sup>19</sup> research project in Agia Varvara, **Greece**, and in Sokolov, the **Czech Republic**, showed that early school leaving can be addressed by engaging parents and through participatory community-level actions to encourage students to remain in school. LERI in Medway, the **United Kingdom**, also tested family learning models to address the educational needs of both parents and students. LERI is part of FRA’s qualitative action research on the ground, identifying drivers of and barriers to inclusion efforts at the local level.

## FRA ACTIVITY

### FRA research on the ground: Local Engagement for Roma Inclusion

FRA’s Local Engagement for Roma Inclusion (LERI) project is a qualitative action research project developed in response to the European Commission’s Communication on an EU Framework for National Roma Integration Strategies up to 2020. In 2016, the research project brought together local authorities and residents, Roma in particular, to investigate how they could best be involved in Roma integration actions, and identify which aspects of these actions work, which do not, and why. The project aims to facilitate the engagement of all local stakeholders, including Roma, in joint efforts to enable Roma inclusion. The experience gained and the lessons learned during the process will help improve the design, implementation and monitoring of Roma integration policies and actions at the local level.

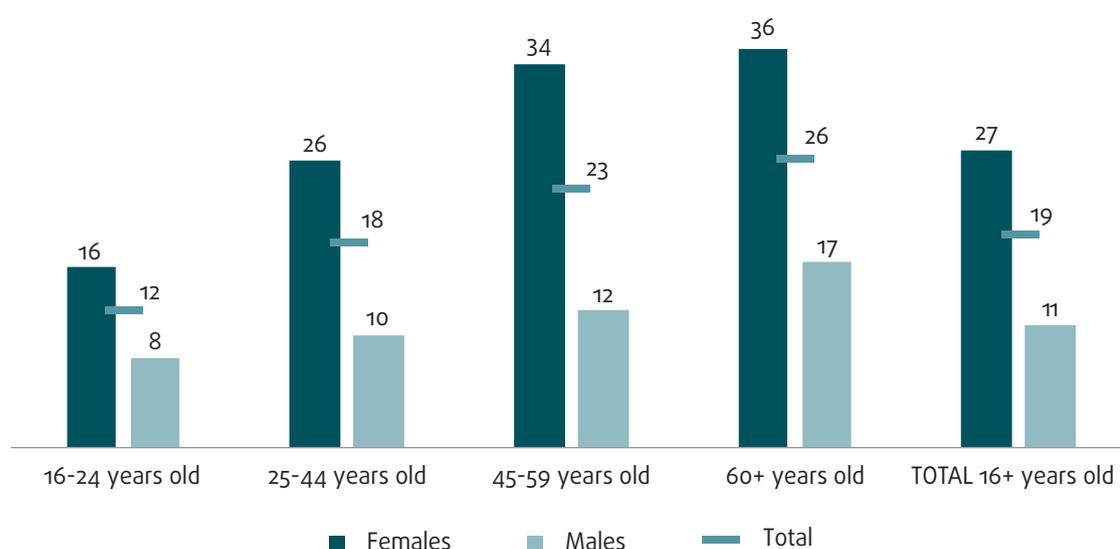
For more information, see FRA’s webpage on the project

## Early marriage among Roma

Health care, child welfare, education and other relevant authorities have a responsibility to protect and prevent Roma children from marrying early. The mean age at first marriage for Roma across the nine Member States where Roma were surveyed was 26.3 years (25.5 for Roma females and 27.3 for Roma males) – while for the general population in these countries in 2014, it was 30.2 years (28.8 for females and 31.6 for males).

The data from EU-MIDIS II show that certain progress has been achieved in this area. While, on average, 19 % of Roma respondents older than 16 years were married before the age of 18, the incidence of early marriage declines steadily over time: the share of those who married before the age of 18 among respondents older than 60 is 26 %, falling to 12 % for those aged 16-24 (see [Figure 4.1](#)).

**Figure 4.1: Roma who married for the first time when less than 18 years old, by age and gender (%)**



Sources: FRA, 2016 (EU-MIDIS II); OECD (2016), OECD Family Database, SF3.1: Marriage and divorce rates

In the **Netherlands**, although the criminal law relating to forced marriages has been tightened and child marriages are illegal, the National Rapporteur for Human Trafficking found that children in the Roma community are still at risk of such practices. The rapporteur also concluded that, at the moment, no active approach is in place under criminal law to tackle forced early marriages.

Promising practices combating early marriage are in place in some Member States. An EU-funded project called ‘Marry when you are ready’ – covering **Austria, Bulgaria, Croatia and Italy** – aims to tackle the issue of early and forced marriages among Roma. Similar projects addressing early marriage were implemented in **Belgium, Bulgaria, Greece, Slovenia and Spain** through a multi-country ‘Early Marriage Prevention Network’ project.

Sources: International Centre for Reproductive Health (ICRH) (2016), *Huwelijksdwang in België – Een analyse van de huidige situatie*, Ghent; Netherlands, National Rapporteur on Trafficking in Human Beings and Sexual Violence against Children (Nationaal Rapporteur Mensenhandel en Seksueel Geweld tegen Kinderen) (2016), *Zicht op kwetsbaarheid. Een verkennend onderzoek naar de kwetsbaarheid van kinderen voor mensenhandel*; Associazione Promozione e Solidarietà – Centro di Servizio per il Volontariato del Lazio, ‘Marry when you are ready’; European Roma Information Office, *Early Marriage Prevention Network*

## Promising practice

### Providing education to hard-to-reach populations

**France** is among the countries applying various approaches to provide Roma children with access to education. One example is *Camion école – Antennes Scolaires Mobiles* – a mobile classrooms project aiming to make school accessible to Roma children living in slums. Three mobile schools of the association ASET 93 have been operational in the Department of Seine-Saint-Denis, providing education to Roma children. The approach is particularly relevant today, with the issue of children living in unsettled conditions – not just Roma, but also migrants and refugees – increasingly a challenge.

Another example is the work of the *Groupe de suivi académique pour la scolarisation des enfants vivant en situation de grande précarité* in the region of Paris. Formed in September 2016, the group is a network of different actors (teachers, social workers and NGOs) who support children at risk of poverty in their education.

The success of both approaches depends on the support and engagement of all local stakeholders. Both send an important message: the technical infrastructure (in the first case a mobile school unit) is the last element of the chain leading to success. Unless other elements – such as preparatory work with local communities and the engagement of people who can be role models for the children – are in place, success is not feasible.

*For more information, see France, Ministry of Education (Ministère de l'Éducation), 'Organisation of the schooling of newly arrived non-French-speaking pupils' (Organisation de la scolarité des élèves allophones nouvellement arrivés), Instruction No. 2012-141, 2 October 2012; and the website of ASET 93.*

The importance of education was emphasised in the Council Conclusions on Accelerating the Process of Roma Integration, which urged Member States to ensure equal access of Roma to education, increase efforts to eliminate all forms of segregation in education (at all levels and particularly the segregation of Roma children into special schools), and provide good-quality education.<sup>20</sup> The 2016 statement by the Chair of FRA's Fundamental Rights Forum draws attention to the responsibility of EU institutions and EU Member States to "encourage the learning of social competence and human rights principles, enhance critical thinking and media literacy, and increase intercultural understanding through education."<sup>21</sup> Member States demonstrate various approaches to this.

In **Bulgaria**, the new Pre-school and School Education Act (*Закон за предучилищното и училищното образование*), in force since 1 August 2016, defines

among its main principles the provision of equal access to quality education and the inclusion of every child in the education process. The law introduces a national educational standard for children with mother tongues other than Bulgarian and prohibits the formation of classes or groups of children based on their ethnic origin. Under the law, every school and kindergarten is obliged to prepare its own programmes for prevention of early drop-out and for inclusion of children from vulnerable groups.<sup>22</sup>

## Promising practice

### Offering after-school activities via 'Tanoda' schools

'Tanoda' stands for 'study hall'. The project offers structured afternoon activities to vulnerable children in **Hungary**. It dates back to the early 1990s, when a number of civil society actors realised that just bringing children from vulnerable or marginalised backgrounds to school is only the beginning of the long road to their integration. After-school activities (not limited to assistance with homework) is no less important for overcoming deficits in knowledge, social or concentration skills.

When the programme started, it was operated by non-governmental organisations only and funded primarily by private donors. In the 2000s, the proportion of public funding started to increase and, in 2012, the government launched a publicly funded 'Tanoda Programme' using European Social and Investment Funds (ESIF). In the first budgetary period, between 2012 and 2014, public spending (from the European Social Fund) reached HUF 5,300 million (c. € 17 million) and the number of study halls tripled within these two years; in October 2014, 5,000 students were studying in 169 schools or organisations in the framework of the programme.

*For more information, see State Secretariat responsible for Social Affairs and Social Integration (Szociális Ügyekért és Társadalmi Felzárkózásért Felelős Államtitkárság) (2014), 'Within two years the number of after-schools tripled' (Két év alatt megháromszorozódott a tanodák száma), Press release, 16 October 2014*

The Government of the **Czech Republic** has put in effect several mainstream mechanisms that are expected to have a positive impact in the field of inclusive and early childhood education, explicitly affecting Roma. Amendments to the Education Act (561/2004 Coll.), as defined in Decree no. 178/2016 Coll., ensure that compulsory early childhood education starts at the age of five and envisage preferential admission for Roma children to kindergartens that are municipally owned.<sup>23</sup> Decree No. 27/2016 Coll. to the act stipulates that children with special needs are to be provided, free of charge, with supportive measures that enable them to pursue their education in mainstream schools.<sup>24</sup>

To tackle early school drop-out among Roma children, particularly among young girls, the government in **Portugal** is planning to hire Roma mediators to bridge the gap between Roma families and schools in areas where Roma communities reside and thus try to reverse the trend of early school drop-out among these children.<sup>25</sup> The Portuguese government also launched a Grants Programme for University Scholarships for Roma students in 2016. It envisages 25 scholarships during the 2016/2017 school year.<sup>26</sup>

In **Romania**, the Ministry of National Education (*Ministerul Educației Naționale*, MEN)<sup>27</sup> set aside 622 places in universities for Roma students in 2016, besides 265 places for masters' degrees; and 3,150 places were allocated for Roma students in high schools. A Romani-language curriculum was developed and included in the national curriculum. **Romania** also established a network of inspectors for Roma education issues, which means that each County School Inspectorate included in its staff plan a position for an inspector for minorities, and there are also three such positions within the central office of the MEN. In October 2016, the National School for Political and Administrative Studies launched a two-year Master Course for Roma Studies to help stakeholders dealing with Roma issues.

Implementing integration measures in education can create friction between communities, if Roma are exclusively rather than explicitly targeted. This happened in **Bulgaria**, where in 2016 the Centre for Educational Integration of Children and Schoolchildren from Ethnic Minorities (CEICSEM) (*Център за образователна интеграция на децата и учениците от етническите малцинства*, ЦОИДУЕМ) offered a stipend of € 30 per month only to Roma pupils with average grades of at least 3.5 on a scale from 2 to 6, to support them in completing secondary education.<sup>28</sup> However, the project (and the long-term benefits of affirmative action in general) was not properly communicated and non-Roma parents perceived this as discriminatory.<sup>29</sup>

#### 4.1.2. Employment

Employment is a core element of the Europe 2020 growth strategy, which aims to ensure that 75 % of the population aged 20–64 is employed by 2020. In regard to Roma, the 2013 Council Recommendation on effective Roma integration<sup>30</sup> recommends that Member States take effective measures, including combating discrimination and supporting first work experience, vocational training, on-the-job training, lifelong learning and skills development, self-employment and entrepreneurship. FRA's Chair's Statement following the 2016 Fundamental Rights Forum calls for "more precise and targeted benchmarks in the areas of growth and quality employment, adequate income support, and universal access to quality services."<sup>31</sup> The emerging

European Pillar of Social Rights identifies employment as a key priority. The European Parliament report on a European Pillar of Social Rights also addresses various aspects of employment and employability as key determinants of social inclusion and highlights the importance of personalised, face-to-face support, in particular for excluded and vulnerable households.<sup>32</sup>

Despite efforts undertaken by Member States, and as reported by FRA in 2016, Roma participation in the formal labour market remains weak. As the European Commission Communication concludes, low levels of education and skills and widespread discrimination are factors explaining poor employment outcomes for Roma.<sup>33</sup>

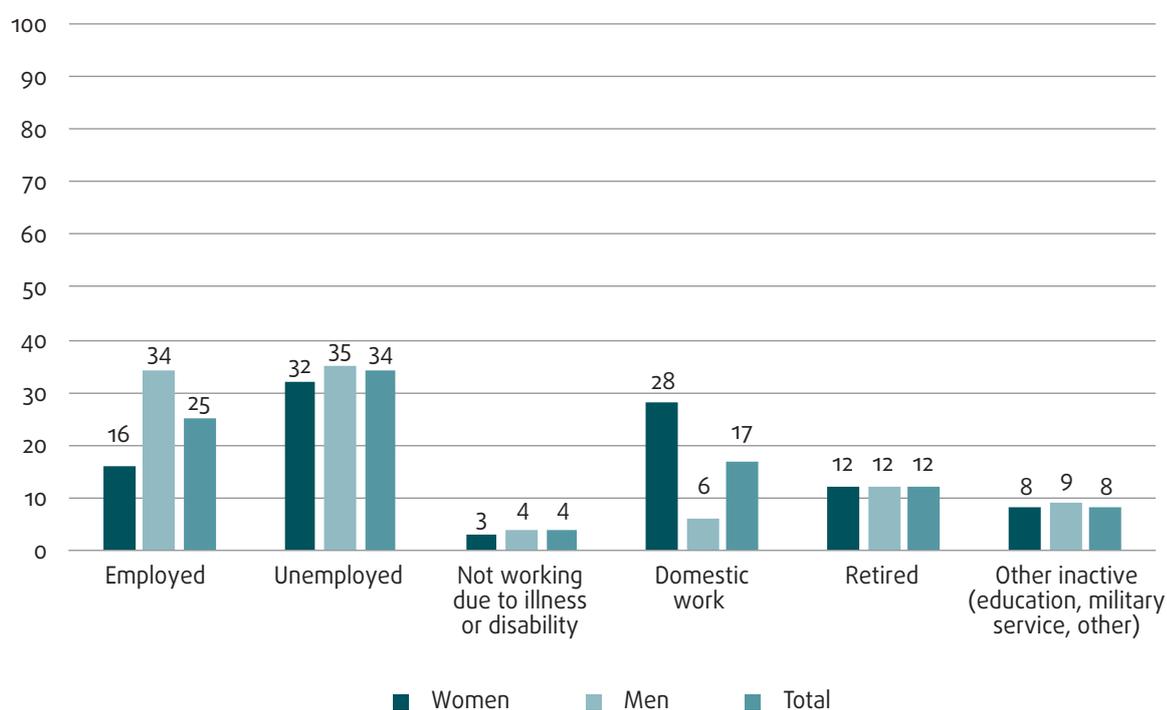
The results of EU-MIDIS II support the Commission's conclusion (see [Figure 4.2](#)). Only a quarter of the respondents consider themselves 'employed'. Not surprisingly, the 'at-risk-of-poverty rate' among Roma in the nine Member States covered by the survey was on average 80 %.<sup>34</sup>

Low employment rates result from a variety of factors, such as low qualifications, early school leaving, lack of vocational skills and training, general unemployment rates, etc. However, in the case of Roma, prejudice and discrimination augment all these issues, further decreasing the chances of employment. When looking for work, on average, one in six Roma respondents felt discriminated against on the grounds of their ethnic origin in the 12 months preceding the survey; this prevalence increases to 40 % if the period is extended to the five years before the survey. Roma also reported experiencing discrimination when at work: 5 % in the previous 12 months and 17 % in the previous five years.<sup>35</sup>

Roma are not the only group suffering from unemployment, but the magnitude of this phenomenon among Roma is unparalleled. The combination of inadequate skills, prejudice and discrimination comes on top of the 'usual' risks related to sluggish economies, jobless growth and decline in labour-intensive occupations. This is why achieving tangible improvements in the area of employment of Roma is particularly challenging.

The Council conclusions from December 2016 on accelerating the process of Roma integration include reference to specific actions that can address prejudice and discrimination against Roma and improve their skills to improve access to work opportunities. Such actions would seek synergies between education and employment policies to improve the flexibility, mobility and employability of Roma. To address jobless growth and the decline of labour-intensive occupations, the Council also calls for the creation of sustainable job opportunities in the least developed regions; support for the employability of young Roma; promotion of

**Figure 4.2: Current self-declared main activity in nine EU Member States, all persons in Roma households aged 16 years or over (%)**



Source: FRA, 2016 (*Second European Union Minorities and Discrimination Survey: Roma – Selected findings*, p. 18)

policies such as vocational and on-the-job training, individual counselling services, social entrepreneurship and first work experience programmes; and increased job opportunities in the public sector, especially the education system, to prevent the intergenerational transmission of poverty in Roma communities.<sup>36</sup>

Policy measures on employment vary among Member States and range from training and requalification to community work. In general, Member States in their reports to the Commission gave priority to mainstreaming measures for all unemployed people, such as training, subsidised jobs and public works, without explicit reference to Roma. However, many of them apply a mix of targeted and mainstreamed measures. Most Member States also report measures supporting first work experience, vocational or on-the-job training, lifelong learning and skills development.

For example, in **Belgium**,<sup>37</sup> as part of the European Social Fund (ESF) Operational Programme 2014–2020, the agency ESF Flanders (*FSE Vlaanderen*) finances projects that organise an integrated pathway towards training and jobs for people from the Roma community in Flanders and Brussels. In **Hungary**, employment interventions targeting Roma are implemented as part of the Hungarian National Social Inclusion Strategy to combat long-term poverty, which mentions Roma explicitly. The interventions include education and training, as well as public employment

programmes targeting mainly undereducated, long-term unemployed people on a compulsory basis (currently 183,000 participants annually). However, public work schemes may not be enough to improve substantially the reintegration of participants in the open labour market, and also bear the risk of “locking participants into the scheme, particularly low-skilled workers and people in disadvantaged regions.”<sup>38</sup> Employment components are also included in complex interventions to improve services in disadvantaged regions with a budget of € 58 million and in complex anti-segregation programmes with a budget of € 154.8 million.<sup>39</sup>

In **Romania**, an Integrated Package to Combat Poverty/Anti-Poverty Package (*Pachetul integrat pentru combaterea sărăciei*)<sup>40</sup> was launched at the end of February 2016. It was designed bearing in mind all public policies that aim to combat poverty and derive their budgets from state funds and the European Structural and Investment Funds (ESIF). The Operational Program for Human Capital also targets Roma communities directly (call 4.1) and indirectly (call 4.2) for implementing integrated services providing support in issuing the ID documents.

**Slovakia** adopts a mix of targeted and mainstreamed approaches and relies predominantly on ESIFs to implement Roma integration policies. The Implementation Agency of the Ministry of Labour, Social Affairs and Family

(*Implementačná agentúra Ministerstva práce, sociálnych vecí a rodiny*), using the ESF, supported national social field work and community work projects in some areas with particularly concentrated Romani populations. The projects had a specific focus on young people and children.<sup>41</sup>

In **Spain**, the long-established Acceder Programme (*Programa Acceder*), currently funded through the ESF under the Operational Programme for Social Inclusion and Social Economy, develops personalised ‘roadmaps’ to assist young Roma to access the labour market. The Learning by Doing Programme (*Programa Aprender Trabajando*) aims to increase employability and professional skills, as well as equal access to the labour market, for young Roma. In 2011, the Acceder Programme obtained authorisation from the Spanish Ministry of Employment, through the Spanish Public Employment Service (*Servicio Público de Empleo Estatal*), to function as an employment agency throughout Spain. This allows the *Fundación Secretariado Gitano* (FSG) to bring employment support services closer to Roma in their efforts to access employment. To date, more than 87,000 people have benefited directly from the Acceder Programme, with Roma constituting 67 %, and women 53 %, of the beneficiaries, far surpassing its initial objectives. Over a period of 15 years, the FSG helped into work more than 62,000 people, of whom 70 % were Roma and 52 % were women. Furthermore, it was the first job for 27 % of them. On average, half of the participants found a job after completing the project.<sup>42</sup>

The **Swedish** Employment Office (*Arbetsförmedlingen*) and the municipalities report that they have increased their contact with Roma, which has resulted in more people receiving support for studying and work. Roma relations officers (*brobyggare*) hired to serve in schools, social services and employment offices have played a significant and positive role in the initiative.<sup>43</sup>

Targeted training and participatory support activities can support Roma entrepreneurs in establishing small-scale micro-enterprises as well as expanding and improving their businesses, preliminary findings from FRA’s LERI<sup>44</sup> research in Agia Varvara, **Greece** and in Besence, **Hungary** show. Experiences from LERI in **France** also show that participatory activities to help learn French can support entry into the labour market, particularly for Roma coming from other EU Member States.

### 4.1.3. Housing

Access to adequate housing with basic infrastructure is an essential precondition for social inclusion. Article 34 (3) of the EU Charter of Fundamental Rights recognises the right to social and housing assistance to ensure a decent existence for all those who lack sufficient resources. The Council Recommendation on effective Roma integration calls for more effective measures to eliminate spatial segregation, promote non-discriminatory access to

social housing, and ensure access to public utilities and infrastructure for housing in compliance with national legal requirements.<sup>45</sup> However, the 2016 Commission report notes that “the most important housing challenges – namely fighting segregation and preventing forced evictions – were insufficiently addressed”, although several Member States reported measures promoting non-discriminatory access to social housing, while others reported measures to tackle segregation.<sup>46</sup>

Data from EU-MIDIS II highlight the urgent need for concrete measures to ensure that Roma enjoy the right to adequate housing. When trying to rent or buy an apartment or house, 41 % of Roma respondents had felt discriminated against, based on their Roma background, in the preceding five years. Housing and employment are the two areas where Roma appear to experience discrimination the most.<sup>47</sup> On average, 30 % of Roma in the nine Member States live in households without tap water and 46 % have no toilet, shower or bathroom inside their dwelling.<sup>48</sup>

In **Romania**, the government continued to implement the Social Housing Pilot Programme for Roma Communities,<sup>49</sup> which aims to build 300 units of social housing for Roma. In **Spain**, Roma are explicitly mentioned in the Development Plan for Promoting the Rental Housing, Building Rehabilitation and Urban Regeneration and Renewal, 2013–2016.<sup>50</sup> Meanwhile, in the **United Kingdom**, a 2016 report by the Equality and Human Rights Commission notes that certain local authorities are reluctant to provide new sites or refurbish existing ones, although funding was available. Gypsies and Travellers face difficulties in obtaining planning permission to develop private sites, the commission reports.<sup>51</sup> In **Ireland**, a decision delivered on 16 May 2016 by the Council of Europe’s European Committee on Social Rights (ECSR) concerning housing found Ireland in breach of Article 16 of the European Social Charter in relation to the provision and maintenance of accommodation for Travellers. The judgment arose from a 2013 collective complaint made jointly by the European Roma Rights Centre with support from the Irish Traveller Movement.<sup>52</sup>

The Council Conclusions of December 2016 again urge Member States to “prevent further unjustified forced evictions of Roma by ensuring that forced evictions always take place in full compliance with Union and national law and in accordance with international human rights instruments, in particular the European Convention on Human Rights”.<sup>53</sup> Still, there were several allegations in 2016 of evictions and/or forced demolitions of Roma houses in a number of Member States. In **Bulgaria**, non-governmental organisations (NGOs) reported that Roma houses had been demolished in the Stolipinovo neighbourhood of Plovdiv<sup>54</sup> and in Stara Zagora, Varna and Pleven.<sup>55</sup> In **Cyprus**, in 2016 Roma families residing in abandoned Turkish Cypriot houses in Limassol were

served with eviction orders. The evictions were to a large extent averted through the combined efforts of the school attended by the Roma children, the Ombudsman and the Commissioner for Children's Rights.<sup>56</sup>

In **France**, NGOs reported that the number of evictions from camps was particularly high during the first quarter of the year (3,683 people forcibly evicted from 25 locations), slowed somewhat during the second quarter of 2016 (932 people forcibly evicted from 12 locations), but again increased thereafter.<sup>57</sup> The number of evictions however continued to decline, a trend since 2013 (some 20,000 people evicted in 2013, some 11,500 in 2015, and some 10,000 in 2016).

In **Slovakia**, NGOs reported that Romani families had been evicted from the Romani suburb Lunik IX in Košice and then set up a temporary settlement in nearby woods,<sup>58</sup> and that the city of Žilina had resumed evicting Romani families living there and demolishing their houses.<sup>59</sup> In its concluding observations on the nineteenth and twentieth periodic reports of **Italy**, the UN Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination reiterated its deep concern about the persistent and entrenched discrimination that Roma, Sinti and Camminanti communities continue to experience. In particular, forced evictions continue; they continue to live in segregated camps or housing areas with substandard accommodation, many unsuitable for human habitation, and in remote areas far from basic services, including healthcare and schools; municipal authorities build new segregated Roma-only camps; and local authorities have introduced discriminatory criteria to assess social housing and housing benefits.<sup>60</sup>

FRA's LERI<sup>61</sup> research tested participatory community-level approaches to addressing housing exclusion and risk of evictions, in particular in Stara Zagora, **Bulgaria**, where mapping evicted families helped the local authorities to find appropriate solutions while at the same time raising awareness among Roma households of legal options to rebuild their homes. In Aiud and in Cluj-Napoca, **Romania**, the project developed local action groups on housing inclusion to address the housing insecurity of families in informal settlements, looking for ways to give houses official legal status, submit social housing applications, and propose changes to criteria for social housing allocation that are less likely to exclude socially marginalised populations.

#### 4.1.4. Health

In their reports on implementation of the Council recommendation, most Member States reported measures to facilitate access to healthcare and preventative care, in particular vaccination of children and family planning, and to raise health awareness. However, for some Roma, lack of registration and health insurance coverage can limit access to healthcare.<sup>62</sup> The data from EU-MIDIS II

show that, on average, 74 % of Roma respondents report that they are covered by national basic health insurance and/or additional insurance. At the same time, only 8 % of Roma respondents felt discriminated against because of their Roma background when using healthcare services in the 12 months preceding the survey.<sup>63</sup>

FRA's LERI<sup>64</sup> research in Pavlikeni, **Bulgaria**, identified one of the main challenges of the local community as low coverage of national health insurance and exclusion from the scheme. The project tested a small-scale pilot to cover health insurance fees for some Roma families so that they could overcome financial barriers to accessing healthcare and be reintegrated into the healthcare system.

#### Promising practice

##### Setting up health mediator networks

Health mediators are increasingly common in Member States. **Bulgaria** is one of the first to test and implement them not just as a system for providing access to health services to marginalised Roma communities but also as an opportunity for professional development for young Roma working as mediators.

The Ethnic Minorities Health Problems Foundation launched the approach in Bulgaria in 2001. The aim was to address discrimination that Roma face in access to health services. The foundation ran a pre-admission scheme that has enabled 106 Roma people to study as healthcare professionals: 22 as doctors and the rest as pharmacists, dentists, nurses and midwives. In 2016, a total of 195 health mediators were working in 113 municipalities in Bulgaria, an increase from 109 mediators in 2012. Their positions are funded from municipal budgets. Being part of the community themselves, the health mediators know the specific challenges first-hand and are better equipped to facilitate dialogue and cooperation between the vulnerable populations and the institutions. The implications of such cooperation go well beyond access to health.

A similar approach was adopted in **Slovakia**, where the programme also benefited from the existence of the network of field social workers. In Slovakia the programme relies predominantly on European Structural Funds. In 2016, the NGO Healthy Communities continued to implement the programme in 200 Roma settlements. It engaged some 200 health mediators, focusing on preventative care and health awareness, with a specific focus on children through vaccinations and regular check-ups.

Sources: Thornton, J. (2017), 'Bulgaria attempts to combat discrimination against Roma', *Lancet*, Vol. 389, 21 January 2017, pp. 240-241; National Network of Health Mediators (2016), 10th National Meeting of the "Initiative for Health and Vaccination Prophylactics" (Десета Национална среща "Инициатива за здраве и ваксинапрофилактика"), 8 December 2016; website of Healthy Communities (Zdravé Komunity)

The recognition of the forced sterilisation of Roma women in past years remains an issue. Regarding the **Czech Republic**, the Budapest-based NGO European Roma Rights Centre (ERRC) issued a parallel report<sup>65</sup> to the UN Committee on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) in January 2016. It pointed to persisting legal, policy and other obstacles concerning the compensation of Roma women who were subjected to forced sterilisation in the past. Another report, on the personal experiences of sterilised Romani women, followed in November.<sup>66</sup> The UN Human Rights Committee also raised the issue of recognising past forced sterilisation cases in its concluding observations on the fourth report of **Slovakia**.<sup>67</sup>

The services of Roma health mediators are increasingly used. The December 2016 Council conclusions urge Member States to secure funding for healthcare mediator programmes targeting Roma.<sup>68</sup> This approach continued to expand in **Bulgaria**<sup>69</sup> and **Slovakia**<sup>70</sup> in 2016, while **Greece** also included health mediators in legislation aimed at improving access to healthcare for vulnerable groups, including Roma.<sup>71</sup>

#### 4.1.5. Anti-Gypsyism

Deeply rooted prejudice and discrimination that many Roma face contribute to their social exclusion. There is little evidence of systematic efforts to expose and tackle negative stereotypes fuelling anti-Gypsyism. The most extreme manifestation of anti-Gypsyism is in hate crime and hate speech, which Member States need to address as these fall under the scope of the EU’s Framework Decision on Combating certain forms and expressions of racism and xenophobia by means of criminal law.<sup>72</sup> The findings of EU-MIDIS II show that one out of five Roma respondents say that someone made offensive or threatening comments to them in person in the 12 months preceding the survey because of their Roma background. Four per cent of Roma respondents report having been physically attacked in the preceding 12 months because

of their Roma background. Of Roma who experienced a physical attack, 70 % did not report it anywhere.

The Council of Europe issued a report on the situation of Roma and Travellers in the context of rising extremism, xenophobia and the refugee crisis in Europe in 2016. It notes that incidents of hate speech and hate crime remain frequent across European countries. The social climate is unfavourable for Roma and Travellers, and has worsened amidst the refugee crisis and jihadist attacks in several cities in Europe.<sup>73</sup>

National Roma integration strategies focus on sector-specific issues. References to anti-Gypsyism are rare and generic in nature (see [Table 4.2](#)). More specifically, 20 Member States do not mention anti-Gypsyism in their national Roma integration strategies or integrated sets of policy measures. Moreover, in most of these, the strategies do not even refer to racism. Three Member States do mention the term anti-Gypsyism (or its national adaptation), in the introductory sections describing the status of Roma (**Belgium, Sweden**) or by listing ECRI General Policy Recommendation No. 13 on combating anti-gypsyism and discrimination against Roma as one of several recommendations taken into account (**Latvia**). **Finland** mentions anti-Gypsyism as the aim in one key area in the strategy. Three countries’ strategies also include specific measures to combat anti-Gypsyism – those of the **Czech Republic, Italy** and **Spain**. The national Roma integration strategy of the Czech Republic devotes particular attention to this issue.

The UN Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination published its concluding observations on the nineteenth and twentieth periodic reports on **Italy**, noting the prevalence of racist discourse, stigmatisation and negative stereotypes in political debates, which are also directed against Roma.<sup>74</sup> UNAR (*Ufficio Nazionale Antidiscriminazioni Razziali*), the Italian equality body, detected 1,366 cases of

**Table 4.2: How do national Roma integration strategies or integrated sets of policy documents reflect Anti-Gypsyism?**

Not mentioned	Mentioned only	Have specific goals	Have specific measures
AT, BG, HR, CY, DK, EE, EL, DE, FR, HU, IE, LT, LU, NL, PL, PT, RO, SI, SK, UK	BE: mentioned once (Status section – anti-Roma racism) LV: mentioned once (section on recommendations from various organisations, including the Council of Europe and the EU) SE: mentioned once (living conditions – anti-Roma motive)	FI: mentioned in description of problem and one of the aims of ‘Key area 4.5’	CZ: mentioned in the status section, analysis section, with separate sub-section dealing with anti-Gypsyism; in specific goal 10.1 (protection of Roma against extremism and racially motivated crime) ES: under ‘Non-discrimination and promotion of equal treatment’ mentions a measure to promote implementation of the Council of Europe recommendation on anti-Roma attitudes IT: one of the aims of the strategy; specifically mentions eliminating anti-Gypsyism

Source: FRA, 2016 (based on information available via the Commission’s [webpage on Roma integration by EU country](#))

online hate speech targeting the Roma population from 1 August to 31 October 2016.<sup>75</sup>

Evidence of the prevalence of hate speech against Roma is also reported in several other countries. For example, in **Bulgaria**, a study on hate speech by the NGO Open Society Institute – Sofia (OSI – Sofia) estimates that the majority of hate speech cases are against Roma,<sup>76</sup> while the NGO Bulgarian Helsinki Committee (BHC) reports that progress in countering hate speech is insignificant.<sup>77</sup>

In **Slovakia**, the Ministry of the Interior recorded 25 complaints of hate speech crimes on the grounds of Roma ethnic origin in 2016. The police are investigating four of them. Furthermore, there were 17 complaints of incitement to racial hatred on the grounds of Roma ethnic origin. Out of these, the police rejected 11 petitions and are continuing to investigate the remaining six cases.<sup>78</sup>

A number of countries reported incidents of hate crime against Roma. In **Bulgaria**, a case of violence against Roma gained significant public attention. On 16 April 2016, a man made a video of himself forcing a young Roma man to say that they were not equal because of their different ethnic origin. The offender received a suspended sentence of 11 months in prison for bodily injury caused with racist motives. He was also placed on probation for three years.<sup>79</sup>

In **Croatia**, a physical attack on a Roma family was reported,<sup>80</sup> and so was a bomb attack on a kindergarten attended by Roma children.<sup>81</sup> The investigation is still in progress, so a complete case description cannot be delivered. In **Italy**, the Italian National Observatory on Hate Speech against Roma and Sinti (*Osservatorio nazionale sui discorsi d'odio nei confronti di rom e sinti*) reported nine violent attacks against Roma in various Italian cities from 1 January to 31 October 2016.<sup>82</sup>

In **Romania**, the NGO European Roma Rights Centre submitted a report to the European Commission highlighting excessive use of force against Roma.<sup>83</sup>

In **Slovakia**, the Public Defender of Rights (*Verejný ochranca práv*) reported that a Roma man had been beaten during his detention at the police station in Lučenec in May 2016. The case is currently under review,<sup>84</sup> as is another complaint reported to the Ministry of the Interior.<sup>85</sup>

In **Sweden**, the Commission against Anti-Gypsyism (*Kommissionen mot antiziganism*) reported<sup>86</sup> in 2016 that, although the legal framework for combating hate crime<sup>87</sup> is adequate, its implementation is not satisfactory, as very few complaints lead to prosecution and even fewer to convictions, despite an increase in the number of hate crimes reported. The report also notes that Roma women and children are particularly at risk of hate crime.<sup>88</sup>

For more information on hate speech and hate crime, see ► **Chapter 3** on Racism, xenophobia and related intolerance.

#### 4.1.6. Rights awareness and reporting

Awareness of rights, as well as knowing where and how to complain when these are violated, is essential to ensuring access to justice. The 2013 Council recommendation calls specifically on Member States to also empower Roma through the organisation of “information activities to further raise awareness among Roma of their rights (notably in relation to discrimination and the possibilities of seeking redress) and of their civic duties”.

Of the 26 % of the Roma respondents who felt discriminated against because of their Roma background at least once in the preceding 12 months, only 12 % reported the last incident to an authority or filed a complaint, EU-MIDIS II results show. Such a low reporting rate should be read together with the low awareness of the organisations or bodies that could provide support or advice in cases of discrimination: 82 % of Roma respondents are not aware of such an organisation in their country. More respondents (29 % on average) recognised an equality body, when the name was shown, although results vary by country. On average, only 36 % of respondents knew that a law prohibiting discrimination based on skin colour, ethnic origin or religion exists; about one third (35 %) thought that such a law does not exist; and 27 % simply did not know whether or not such legislation exists.<sup>89</sup>

#### Promising practice

##### Improving access to justice for Roma and other vulnerable groups

A project implemented in **Romania** with support from the Norwegian Financial Mechanism 2009-2014 brought together the Superior Council of Magistracy, the Council of Europe and Norwegian Courts Administration, as well as national partners such as the National Institute of Magistracy and the National Agency for Roma. It aims to increase vulnerable populations’ – especially Roma’s – awareness, knowledge and assertion of their rights and obligations, as mandatory steps for better access to justice according to European standards. The project adopts a broad social vulnerability perspective – the Roma population is an explicit but not exclusive target group.

One of the project’s targets is to strengthen legal professionals’ knowledge on the issue of counter-ing discrimination. In this respect, training sessions on antidiscrimination were organised for judges, prosecutors and lawyers during 2015 and 2016.

*For more information, see Access to justice for vulnerable groups in Romania, 2014*

The importance of being able to access justice becomes evident when looking at cases where discrimination was reported and courts or relevant bodies provided redress.

In **France**, for example, a Roma woman was not allowed to enrol her son in the local primary school. The woman appealed and the court found that the mayor's decision did not sufficiently take into account the child's right to education.<sup>90</sup> In **Italy**, a court found that a politician, a member of the European Parliament, was in breach of legislation for using derogatory language intended to humiliate Roma and contribute to a hostile and intimidating social environment that would hinder Roma integration.<sup>91</sup>

In **Ireland**, the Workplace Relations Commission is the designated body to which complaints are made in the first instance in relation to the Employment Equality Acts 1998–2015 and the Equal Status Acts 2000–2015. Subsequent appeals are heard in the Labour Court or Circuit Court. It adopted twelve decisions about discrimination on the grounds of membership of the Traveller community in 2016 (eleven Equal Status decisions and one Employment Equality decision). Six of these found that the complainant had been discriminated against.

## 4.2. Improving efforts for Roma inclusion

In 2016, for the first time, Member States reported on the measures taken in response to the 2013 Council Recommendation on effective Roma integration measures in the Member States.<sup>92</sup> The European Commission has reported that 12 Member States (**Austria, Belgium, Bulgaria, the Czech Republic, France, Greece, Hungary, Italy, Poland, Romania, Slovakia and Spain**) chose to fund measures under the investment priority of the ESF on socio-economic integration of marginalised communities, such as Roma, and they allocated € 1,5 billion to them.<sup>93</sup>

A number of Member States set up national platforms for Roma inclusion to mobilise stakeholders to coordinate action. These national platforms are supported by the Commission and were established in **Austria, Belgium, Bulgaria, Croatia, Cyprus, the Czech Republic, Finland, Greece, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Romania, Slovakia, Slovenia and Spain**, while **Estonia** established a Roma integration council (*Romade lõimumise nõukoda*).<sup>94</sup>

The national policy frameworks and measures in place do not seem, as yet, to yield significant results on the ground, as the Commission also stressed in 2016.<sup>95</sup> The active involvement of multiple stakeholders, including Roma, local authorities and civil society, is essential for the success of local-level integration measures.

This is reflected both in the Commission's 2016 report and in the special report of June 2016 by the European Court of Auditors, which notes that "the need for active participation by civil society organisations, in particular representatives of the Roma community itself, was not always taken into account in the selected [Member States] when national Roma integration strategies were being drafted."<sup>96</sup> The report also notes that relevant stakeholder groups are not always appropriately involved in the preparation and implementation of projects; that omission puts the success and sustainability of the projects at risk.

FRA research also shows that, to have tangible results on the ground that can be monitored, national-level participation needs to be translated into local-level engagement of Roma and local authorities. When local communities come together to jointly discuss integration challenges and have an opportunity to participate in designing, implementing and monitoring local-level inclusion policies and actions, meaningful and tangible results can be achieved. This is reflected in a variety of local-level case studies through FRA's LERI<sup>97</sup> project, a qualitative action research project under FRA's multiannual Roma Programme.

While the active and meaningful engagement of Roma themselves is essential, it is equally important to have in place robust monitoring procedures to inform policy development. In 2016, Member States and the European Commission continued efforts to improve the monitoring of Roma integration measures, as required by the 2013 Council recommendation. Robust and comparable data are essential. The 2016 European Court of Auditors' report issued a relevant recommendation, no. 8 (b), calling on the European Commission to encourage Member States to collect comprehensive and appropriately disaggregated statistical data within the next two years, in accordance with national legal frameworks and EU legislation and including existing possible derogations.<sup>98</sup> The European Commission commented on this recommendation that the issue should be left to the discretion of Member States, in line with the principle of subsidiarity, and also highlighted challenges in the collection of statistical data on Roma, including technical and legal difficulties as well as high costs.

The European Court of Auditors' report also calls for the inclusion of "indicators and target values which deal with anti-discrimination or, more specifically, anti-Gypsyism".<sup>99</sup> In 2016, FRA contributed to these efforts by coordinating and providing technical expertise to a working party on Roma integration indicators – comprised of **Austria, Belgium, Bulgaria, the Czech Republic, Croatia, Finland, France, Greece, Hungary, Ireland, Italy, the Netherlands, Portugal, Romania, Slovakia, Spain** and the **United Kingdom** – which developed a detailed reporting template to support reporting by Member States following the structure



of the Council recommendation. Twenty-one Member States used the template to report on measures taken. By the end of 2016, the Commission took efforts to improve the tool, with the aim of developing a more user-friendly online information collection application to simplify collection of data for indicators that identify measures taken on Roma integration. Further efforts to improve translation and full functionality of the tool are still being addressed.

Meanwhile, the Council Conclusions of December 2016 urge Member States “to set measurable goals and milestones, with a view to accelerating the process of Roma integration”, “further develop appropriate data collection, monitoring and reporting methodologies as necessary so as to support effective evidence-based policies” and “maintain a robust system for monitoring and evaluating the effectiveness of the national strategies”.

## FRA opinions

During 2016, Roma people across the EU continued to face discrimination, segregation and social exclusion. The limited progress in implementing national Roma integration strategies shows the need for a thorough review of the proposed and planned interventions. There is also a need to promote the active and meaningful participation of Roma, particularly at local level. For local-level Roma integration to succeed, the active involvement of multiple stakeholders is of utmost importance, including local authorities, civil society and representatives of all sectors of the local population. National-level participation needs to be translated into local-level engagement of Roma and local authorities to produce tangible results on the ground that can be monitored.

### FRA opinion 4.1

*EU Member States should review their national Roma integration strategies (or set of integrated policy measures) to ensure that Roma themselves are empowered to actively engage in the process of Roma inclusion. Member States should explicitly identify and implement specific measures to promote the active and meaningful participation and engagement of Roma, especially at local level.*

Findings of FRA's second wave of the European Union Minorities and Discrimination Survey (EU-MIDIS II) show that Roma continued to be discriminated against because of their ethnicity in 2016. They face social exclusion and marginalisation, exacerbated by poverty, and are victims of hate crime. Most Roma living in the EU still do not enjoy their right to non-discrimination as recognised under Article 21 of the EU Charter of Fundamental Rights, the Racial Equality Directive and other European and international human rights instruments. While the Racial Equality Directive outlaws ethnic discrimination and the Framework Decision on Racism and Xenophobia requires criminal sanctions, such legal measures alone do not suffice to address the discrimination of Roma. They need to be combined with active inclusion policies to address the racial inequality and poverty that Roma frequently experience.

### FRA opinion 4.2

*EU Member States should ensure effective enforcement of the Racial Equality Directive and the Framework Decision on Racism and Xenophobia to tackle persisting discrimination against Roma and anti-Gypsyism. They should adopt explicit policy measures to address anti-Gypsyism in their national Roma integration strategies or set of integrated policy measures.*

Findings of FRA's second EU Minorities and Discrimination Survey (EU-MIDIS II) show that employment is an area where discrimination against Roma triggers a chain of other vulnerabilities – namely, as regards income, education and housing conditions. Entire households, and not just the unemployed, bear the negative implications of unemployment. Roma children and Roma women constitute especially vulnerable groups, with their rights at risk of violation.

### FRA opinion 4.3

*The EU should consider including Roma integration in the context of the proposed European Pillar of Social Rights. The pillar should envisage specific provisions addressing the risk of structural discrimination, by, for example, reinforcing the provisions for equal treatment in the workplace and ensuring marginalised populations can effectively exercise their rights.*

Tracking progress on Roma integration requires solid data – both on the measures taken, the processes and their outcomes for the people. More needs to be done to ensure the availability of robust data collection and solid monitoring of Roma integration. The European Court of Auditors' Special Report on the EU policy initiatives and financial support for Roma integration confirmed this need. It found that the lack of comprehensive and robust data remains problematic not only in relation to projects, but also for policymaking at EU and national level. However, tools allowing for solid monitoring do exist and the relevant actors can make use of these tools.

### FRA opinion 4.4

*EU Member States should – in accordance with national legal frameworks, EU data protection legislation and with the active and meaningful engagement of Roma communities – collect anonymised data disaggregated by ethnic identity, allowing the assessment of the National Roma Integration Strategies and policies on Roma inclusion. Eurostat could include relevant questions in large-scale surveys, such as the Labour Force Survey and the EU Statistics on Income and Living Conditions, thereby following the recommendation of the European Court of Auditors. In addition, Member States should develop or use existing monitoring tools of national Roma integration strategies to assess the impact of Roma integration measures.*

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