

FRA Press Release

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Roma and Travellers Survey: Europe needs to break the vicious circle of poverty and discrimination against Roma and Travellers

Living in some of the richest countries in the world, a quarter of Roma and Travellers in Western Europe cannot afford basic items such as heating or healthy food, and up to a fifth of their children go to bed hungry, reveal the results of the EU Fundamental Rights Agency's (FRA) new survey. Rampant discrimination coupled with early school leaving also leads to lack of job opportunities and widespread poverty for many. As a result, the life expectancy of Roma and Travellers is 10 years below the expectancy of the general population. These findings should drive policy responses at EU and national level and support policymakers to work with Roma and Travellers to tackle exclusion and poverty.

"This report lays bare the shocking hardship too many Roma and Travellers endure in the Europe of today," says FRA Director [Michael O'Flaherty](#). "Already labouring under inequalities pre-COVID-19, the findings serve as an urgent reminder of the need for governments and society to break the vicious cycle of poverty and social exclusion."

The [Roma and Travellers Survey](#) report provides, for the first time, comparable data on Roma and Travellers' experiences of fundamental rights in Belgium, France, Ireland, the Netherlands, Sweden and the United Kingdom. It highlights widespread inequalities that perpetuate cycles of poverty and exclusion:

- **Living conditions:** Over 90% of Travellers in Belgium, Ireland and the Netherlands say that there are not enough places for them to live. Every fourth Roma and Traveller child surveyed lives in a household that cannot afford basic items, such as healthy food or heating, or has trouble paying the rent. Many face hunger. And their life expectancy is 10 years lower than among the general population.
- **Work:** Fewer Roma and Travellers are in paid work compared to the general population. This ranges from 15% in Ireland to 50% in Belgium. For women and the young, the employment situation is particularly hard.
- **Schooling:** Almost a third of parents said that their children have been verbally harassed at school because they are Roma or Travellers. Two thirds of young Roma and Travellers completed only lower secondary education.

The EU will soon release its new EU Roma Strategic Framework for Equality, Inclusion and Participation. Moving forward, FRA calls on the EU and its Member States to work with the Roma and Traveller communities to design policies and set clear targets to:

- **Improve life quality:** Member States should allow Travellers to follow their lifestyles, providing sufficient halting sites that offer decent accommodation. They should avoid forced evictions, especially as it affects children, and offer alternative housing for evicted people. They should also offer social protection to improve healthcare, reduce poverty, and eliminate hunger, especially among Roma and Traveller children.

- **Enhance employment opportunities:** Member States should find ways to enable women and the young to find jobs through work experience, public sector job schemes and better access to bank accounts, for example.
- **Boost educational prospects:** Member States need to tailor education to Roma and Travellers needs through, for example, assigning special teaching assistants, home schooling and distance learning, and create incentives so they reach a higher level at school. Curricula and teacher training should also counter negative Roma stereotypes within schools.

The survey involved face-to-face interviews from December 2018 until July 2019 with over 4,500 Roma or Travellers. It complements [earlier FRA research](#) in nine other EU countries.

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