

# THE SITUATION OF ROMA IN EUROPE

ERGO NETWORK SNAPSHOT OF...

## Education, Training and Lifelong Learning



Only 53% of young Roma children attend early childhood education.



63% of Roma aged 16-24 are not employed, in education or training.



Only 18% of Roma completed higher secondary education or higher.



One in three Roma children attends classes where most classmates are Roma.



Only 39% of non-Roma would feel comfortable if their children had Roma classmates.



Two thirds of Roma and Travellers aged 18-24 leave school early with at most only lower secondary education.



The figures for Roma and Travellers aged 30-34 achieving tertiary education in 2019 are close to zero.

*The umbrella term "Roma" encompasses diverse groups, including Roma, Sintj, Kale, Romanichels, Boyash/Rudari, Ashkali, Egyptians, Yenish, Dom, Lom, Rom and Abdal, as well as Traveller populations (gens du voyage, Gypsies, Camminanti, etc.), as defined by the [European Commission](#).*

Roma children and students are not provided, from a very early age, with the same learning opportunities, as the vicious circles of poverty and discrimination act as powerful barriers in accessing education and training. Subsequently, they have lower attendance and completion rates, which in turn lead to poor labour market integration and social participation. Lack of majority languages skills, limited access to early childhood education and care, and a state of poverty which does not allow for proper studying at home mean that Roma pupils are even sometimes placed in schooling for children with learning disabilities.

**Additionally, segregated educational establishments breed a sectioned view of society, which fuels inequalities and discrimination.**

During the Covid-19 pandemic and associated protection and prevention measures, many Roma students found themselves unable to access online education, due to absent infrastructure and equipment (the digital divide). The lack of adequate and accessible second chance schools and opportunities to continue one's education makes it much harder for Roma to resume their studies at a later stage in life.

Additionally, Roma typically benefit much less from lifelong learning opportunities for training, finding themselves discriminated against when trying to access them.



It is important that targeted lifelong learning and training measures are put in place to guarantee that Roma in general, and young Roma in particular, are prepared for the jobs of the future and can reap the full potential of the green and digital transitions. It is equally important to foster the training of Roma teachers and staff in educational settings, to contribute to diversity and inclusion, as well as to better respond to the needs of Roma pupils and students. In order to ensure that every Roma child gets a good start in life,

**we must ensure equal access to quality and inclusive education, training, and lifelong learning,**

which is one of the four sectoral priorities of the EU Strategic Framework for Roma Equality, Inclusion and Participation, as well as the Sustainable Development Goal number 4.

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## Recommendations



- Prioritise the specific educational needs of Roma and vulnerable children, with a view to guaranteeing their right to, participation and outcomes in education, and to effectively reducing the educational gap between Roma and non-Roma – including through the EU Child Guarantee.
- End structural discrimination in education settings – abolish Roma-only schools and classes and sanction educational establishments' staff and local authorities who discriminate between pupils; ensure that schools do not apply discriminatory measures, such as justifying poor grading or suspension of Roma students because of an inability to follow long-distance learning.
- Acknowledge that segregation is illegal, by amending their legislation to reflect the UN International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination (ICERD) and the EU Race Equality Directive (RED), and promote a zero-tolerance policy against segregation in education. Systematically monitor and end school and class segregation or misdiagnosis of Roma children, build explicit desegregation programmes and revise national law on education, where relevant.
- Ensure quality, affordable services in Roma communities, specifically with regard to housing, health, nutrition, transport, but also school materials and equipment – including access to computers, electricity and Internet, and the necessary training to use them. Invest in early intervention: support efforts to include Roma children in free or affordable, quality early childhood education and care and remove financial and non-financial barriers to access.
- Tackle the high rates of early school leaving for Roma girls and boys by addressing the underlying causes and obstacles. Provide additional targeted support at school for those who need it: train school mediators and in-class assistants to support teachers and educators; provide majority language support (not just for Roma children), and after-hours support with homework; provide free meals within the school setting.

- Eliminate gender disparities in education and ensure equal access to all levels of education and vocational training for the vulnerable, including persons with disabilities, indigenous peoples, LGBTQIA+, and disadvantaged children. Build and upgrade education facilities that are child-, disability- and gender-sensitive and provide safe, non-violent, inclusive and effective learning environments for all.
- Promote positive narratives of diversity and social cohesion within school settings, as well as better awareness of Roma, their history, culture, and traditions. Ensure the teaching of Romani language and history in schools, including about the Holocaust and slavery of Roma. Invest in schoolbooks and teaching materials with the support of Roma scholars and civil society.
- Substantially increase the number of Roma youth and adults with relevant technical and vocational skills to access decent jobs, through targeted programmes for example under the Youth Guarantee, investing in second chance schools, and the recognition of non-formal qualifications, to ensure that people, particularly the most vulnerable, have access to lifelong learning opportunities.



- Ensure that EU emergency funds allocated for tackling Covid-19, such as the Recovery and Resilience Facility, specifically reflect the needs of Roma and vulnerable children, by identifying binding criteria and indicators, also in the National Recovery and Resilience Plans.
- Bring together all stakeholders: Roma and non-Roma pupils, Roma and non-Roma parents, school staff, local authorities, civil society, to identify and implement positive solutions.

## Sources

- European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights, Second European Union Minorities and Discrimination Survey - Roma, 2017
- European Commission, Report on the implementation of national Roma integration strategies - 2019
- European Commission, Special Barometer Discrimination in the EU, 2019
- European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights, Roma and Travellers in Six Countries, 2020



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This snapshot is an excerpt from ERGO Network's position paper [How to ensure that the European Pillar of Social Rights delivers on Roma equality, inclusion, and participation?](#), October 2020.