



Status of Communities Discriminated
On Work And Descent

The Situation of Roma in Europe & Beyond

Executive Summary

The Global Forum of Communities Discriminated on Work and Descent (GFOD)
2023

The Inclusivity Project

The Inclusivity Project (TIP) is a non-profit organization founded to advocate for the rights of communities discriminated on work and descent (CDWD) and raise awareness of their issues. TIP works towards Capacity Building, Collaboration, and Research to support CDWD communities by enhancing the Social, Economic, and Political Integration and increasing their visibility at the National, Regional and Global platforms. TIP works on the sustainable development goals (SDGs), especially on the monitoring and follow-up/review, and providing data and evidence for the nation-state for effective and inclusive programme implementation.

<https://www.theinclusivityproject.org/>

Global Forum of Communities Discriminated on Work and Descent

Global Forum of Communities Discriminated on Work and Descent (GFoD), founded in 2019, is a platform to voice the rights and entitlements of the communities in Africa, Asia, Europe, Latin America and North America discriminated based on work and descent. GFoD aims for full realization of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights of the Communities Discriminated on Work and Descent and to ensure access to sustainable development goals (SDGs).

<https://www.globalforumcdwd.org>

Lead Researcher and Author: **Simona Torotcoi**

Concept and Advice: **N. Paul Divakar, Aloysius Irudayam SJ, Naveen Gautam**

Research Contributors: **Annamária Pšenková , Gyan Kothari and Naveen Gautam**

Research Coordinators: **Gyan Kothari and Naveen Gautam**

Report Design: **Sajana Jayaraj**

Cover Photo: **ERGO Network**

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Acknowledgement

This report aims to contribute towards a general understanding of Roma, one of the largest Communities Discriminated on Work and Descent (CDWD), in Europe. On the one hand, the report aims to provide insights that allow parallels to be drawn between the situation of Roma and communities facing similar discrimination across the world. On the other hand, it aims to raise awareness about Roma communities in Europe and point out the challenges they face. The report also explores how the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) of the United Nations can contribute to improving the situation of Roma.

With regards to the methodology, the report relies mainly on two country reports on the situation of Roma in Romania and Slovakia prepared by Simona Torotcoi and Annamária Pšenková, Rights Experts at the Global Forum of Communities Discriminated on Work and Descent (GFoD). The report also relies on existing secondary data, published reports by different European institutions and civil society organizations, such as the Fundamental Rights Agency and European Roma Grassroots Organizations Network (ERGO), as well as news collected and other materials documented by different Civil Society Organisations (CSOs) and international bodies.

The report has been compiled based on guidance from GFoD research experts. Throughout the data collection process, the GFoD team ensured common issues were addressed and that rights experts had a good understanding of the expectations of this research process and the concepts used. The report aims to lay the foundation for further research and

the collected data will also be used for advocacy purposes at the UN and other global organizations while advocating for the promotion and protection of the rights of CDWD in different parts of the world. The data can also be used by professional researchers for academic purposes, thereby promoting awareness and knowledge about these communities.

We would like to thank Annamária Pšenková, Jamen Gabriela Hrabanova, Ana Rozanova and the ERGO Network team, Dafina Savic, Paul Divakar, Fr. Aloysius Irudayam, Naveen Gautam, and Gyan Kothari for their feedback, guidance and mentoring. Also acknowledging the efforts of Naveen Gautam and Gyan Kothari in coordinating the whole research process. We would also like to thank Mr. Amit Kumar for editing the report and Ms. Sajana Jayaraj for designing the report.

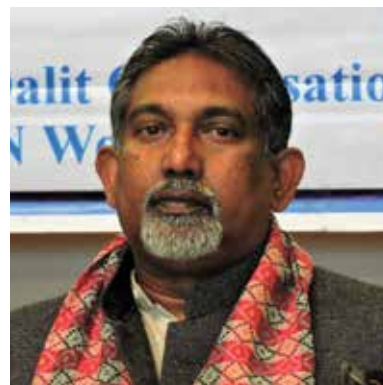
Finally, a big thanks to all the people from the Roma Community in Europe.

GFoD Team

Preface

Paul Divakar Namala

*Convener, Global Forum of Communities
Discriminated on Work and Descent*



In a Europe that prides itself on its commitment to diversity, equality, and human rights, the persistence of discrimination against Roma communities, based on work and descent, stands as a stark reminder of the challenges that still lie ahead. This regional report sheds light on the troubling issues of discrimination faced by Roma individuals, particularly in the countries of Slovakia and Romania. As we delve into the depths of this pressing concern, we are confronted with the urgent need for comprehensive and sustainable solutions.

Roma, a historically marginalised and resilient ethnic group, have long faced systemic discrimination and prejudice across Europe. Despite the strides made in the realms of social progress and legal reforms, the Roma population continues to encounter substantial barriers, particularly in areas of work and other key social services and public goods. This report illuminates the intricate web of challenges that contribute to the perpetuation of discrimination, examining the contexts of EU nations, especially Slovakia and Romania as case studies.

Slovakia, a nation rich in culture and history, has struggled to provide equal opportunities for its Roma citizens. Through careful analysis, we uncover the multifaceted dimensions of discrimination in employment, where access to decent work remains a distant dream for many Roma individuals.

In Romania, a country with its own vibrant tapestry of traditions, the Roma community faces analogous challenges. The report delves into the socioeconomic disparities that have resulted from a long history of discrimination, exacerbated by limited access to education, healthcare, and proper housing.

By focusing on the intersectionality of discrimination faced by Roma women and youth, we gain insight into the broader impact of these issues on future generations.

The purpose of this European regional report is not merely to highlight the problems, but also to underscore the potential for change. Through meticulous research, data analysis, and candid testimonies, we aim to spark a meaningful conversation on the urgent need for targeted policies, societal awareness, and international collaboration. It is with great pleasure that I would like also to acknowledge the efforts of Ms Torotcoi who has authored the report, Annamaria Pšenková who has provided substantial input on Slovakia, and Mr. Gyan Kothari and Mr. Naveen Gautam who have coordinated and contributed to the research process under the guidance of Father Aloysius Irudayam.

As we navigate the pages of this report, it is our hope that readers – whether policymakers, advocates, scholars, or concerned citizens – will be compelled to join forces in the fight against discrimination. The narratives within serve as a reminder that the principles of equality, social justice, and human dignity are not abstract concepts, but the cornerstones of a truly inclusive Europe.

In closing, this report stands as a call to action, urging us all to confront the harsh realities faced by the Roma communities in Europe. By acknowledging the historical injustices and systemic prejudices that persist, we take the first step towards fostering a Europe where every individual, regardless of their background, can truly flourish.

Foreword



Gabriela Hrabáňová,
Director,

European Roma Grassroots Organizations (ERGO) Network

Roma are among the people most vulnerable to human rights violations in Europe. We experience segregation through illegal evictions which force us to establish housing on waste dump sites. We are denied access to basic resources, such as education and medical care, and our women and girls face harassment and violence due to discrimination and racism. This remains the reality for too many of Europe's Roma in their daily lives.

The EU Agency for Fundamental Rights (FRA) has consistently demonstrated this using robust statistical data since 2008. The results of FRA's surveys in 2008, 2011, 2016 and 2019 show that the EU's and Member States' efforts have resulted in limited and uneven progress. The surveys show the enduring impact of antigypsyism and the problems many Roma face in enjoying their fundamental rights of employment, education, healthcare and housing.

European Roma Grassroots Organization (ERGO) Network is a strong advocate in fighting antigypsyism. Through our members, we are closely following the implementation of the national Roma strategic frameworks by EU Member States and taking stock of formal processes. We work with the belief that, as the root cause of discrimination and social exclusion, antigypsyism has to be tackled horizontally in every action.

Fighting antigypsyism is a key priority in the post-2020 EU Roma Framework, but often, as it is a soft law tool, it is only an option for EU Member States to develop and implement their national Roma strategies. With this regional report, we are once more providing the evidence, particularly in times of crises, that international organisations must

always take a lead in the protection of the human rights of the Roma, and in the promotion of equality and racial justice. As civil society, we learnt a great deal about what works and what doesn't. Our job, together with our Dalit brothers and sisters in Asia, the Haratins in Africa, the Burakumin in Japan, and the Quilombolas in Brazil, is to ensure that civil society has the independence and financial resources to act as a watchdog and hold national and local governments accountable towards our communities. Shrinking space for civil society to operate, with restrictions on freedom of expression and access to information have become commonplace.

Today, many Roma feel that Europe is less safe than it was 20 years ago, because despite economic growth and innovation, life continues to be extremely challenging for those at the bottom of the society. Civil society has played an important advocacy role in visibilising and contributing to the recognition of the plight of Roma, and advancing their concerns and agenda in many international institutions, and national and local governments. But now we need a renewed and stronger commitment, which reflects today's challenges and realities. We need to take this important work a step further, incorporating the lessons learned and current challenges and opportunities with the help of civil society and other relevant partners.

This report is a call to action for Member States and their political leaders to commit, both proactively and reactively. They must respond effectively to antigypsyism in all its manifestations and in all areas where it takes place, and allocate adequate resources, raise awareness in society and among civil servants and ultimately support truth reconciliation processes at the national level.

Foreword



PhD. Ismael Cortés

Board Member of the European Roma Institute for Arts and Culture (ERIAC)

This report stands out for its in-depth investigation of antigypsyism across multiple levels, spanning from a global perspective to specific national instances. The report aligns with the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and advocates for the full realization of human rights, encompassing the right to development and socio-economic rights.

Antigypsyism, as a concrete form of historical and structural discrimination that targets communities clustered under the signifier “Gypsy” (and other associated terms¹), derives from an ideology of racial supremacy and represents dehumanization practices. It manifests itself in various modes, encompassing physical aggression, hate speech, economic exploitation, stigmatization, and the most overt forms of prejudice.

The ban of racial discrimination remains at the core of universal human rights instruments. Under these instruments, domestic governments hold the responsibility to combat all manifestations of racism. Additionally, adequate protection measures must be

implemented to tackle racial abuses and provide access to justice to the communities affected by victimization.

The United Nations and the European Commission have implemented differing initiatives to combat structural racism, addressing economic inequality, unequal access to healthcare, and discrimination in education. Despite these efforts, significant work remains to be done to effectively tackle racist barriers and foster inclusivity and equality for one of Europe’s most underprivileged communities, the Roma people².

This report serves as a meticulously crafted instrument to promote the full inclusion of Roma and other disadvantaged communities on the basis of descent. Such groups frequently faced discrimination rooted in their historical background across a wide range of social, cultural, political, and economic spheres. To meet this ethical and political aim, efforts should be made for meaningful dialogues between decision-making bodies and disadvantaged communities who are deprived of their fundamental rights in today’s highly connected world.

¹Zigeuner, Zigenare, Țigan, Tzigane, Zingaro, Cigano, Athinganoi, Gitano, Cikán, Cigány.

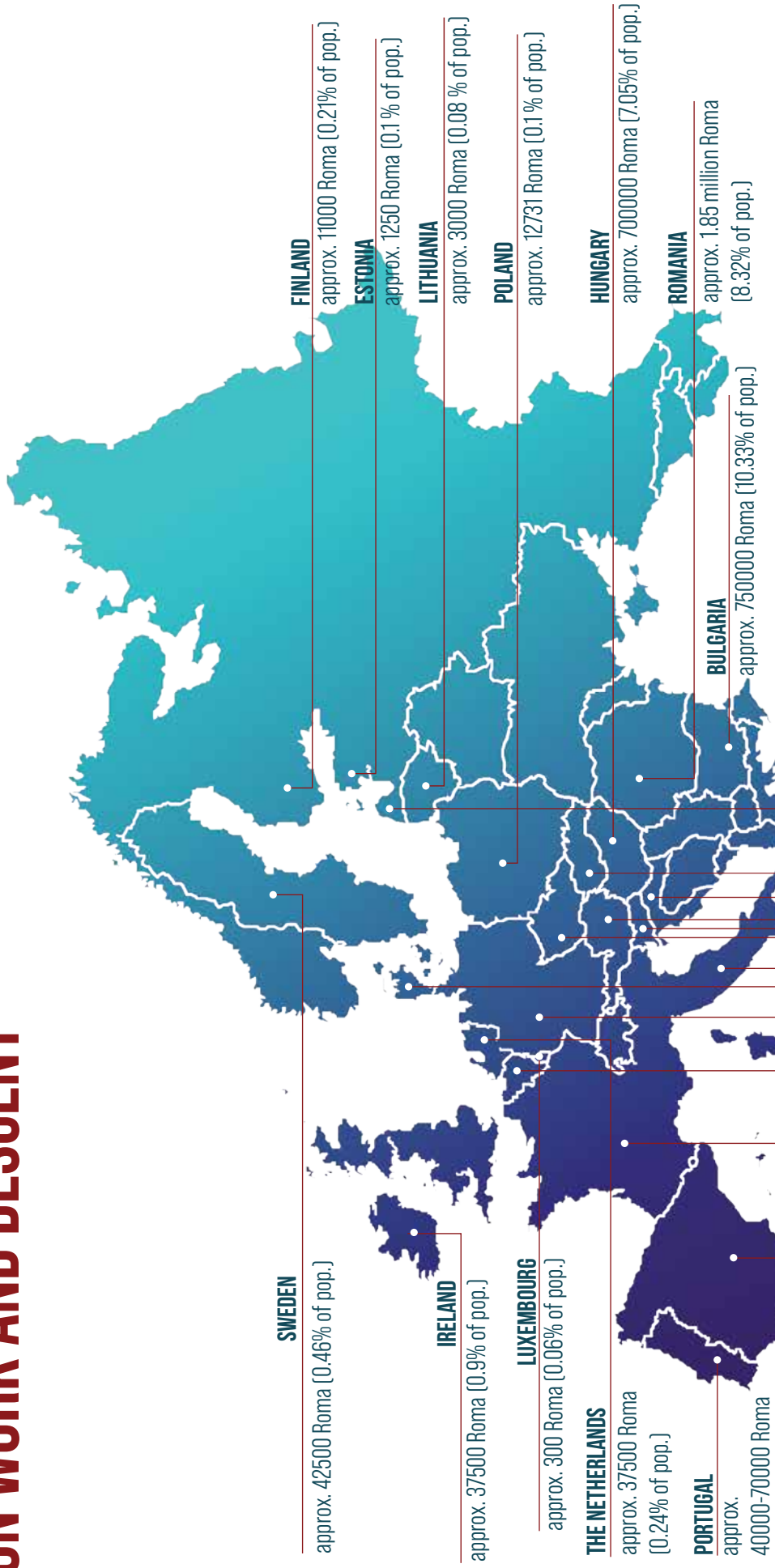
²“Roma” is the ethnonym that the members of this transnational ethnic community use to describe themselves. “Gypsy” –and other associated words- is a derogatory term, for many an insult, used by the majority population to othering the Roma people. The word “Roma” became the generic term used internationally since the first World Roma Congress in London in 1971. It is also the institutionalised term used by the United Nations, the OSCE, the Council of Europe, the European Commission, and other international organisations.

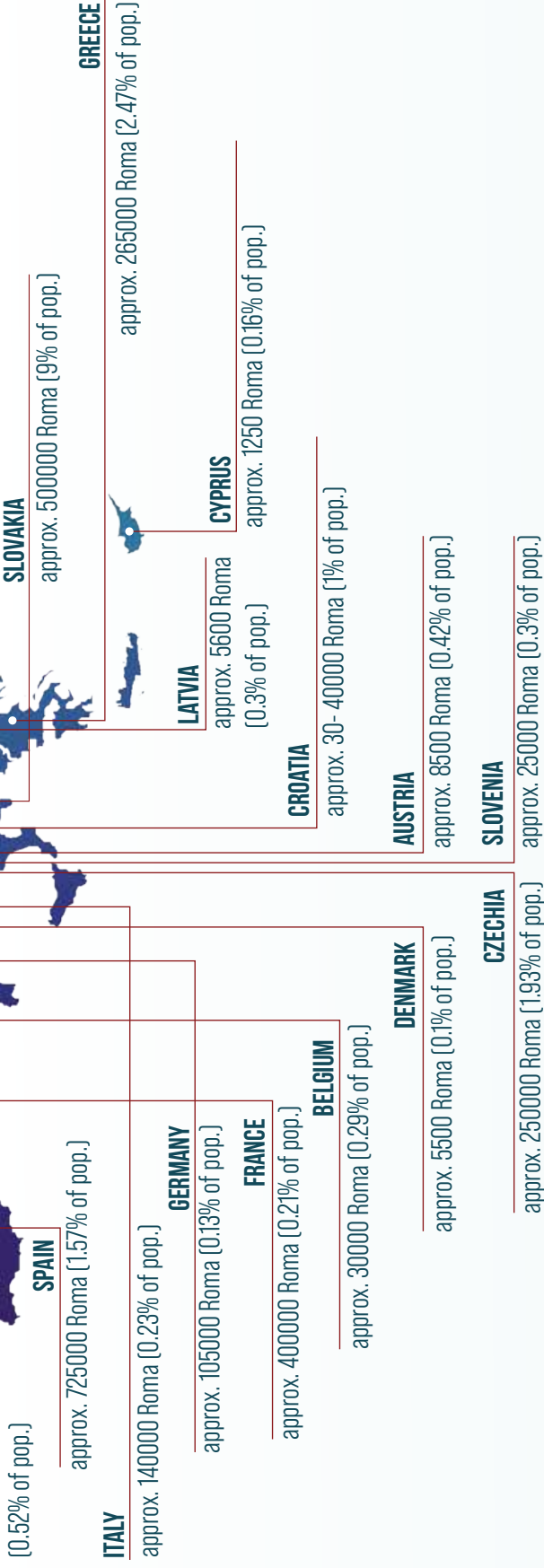
EUROPE

COMMUNITIES DISCRIMINATED ON WORK AND DESCENT

'ROMA'

as an umbrella term, encompasses a wide range of different people of Romani origin such as: Roma, Sinti, Kale, Romanichels and Boyash/Rudari. It also encompasses groups such as Ashkali, Egyptians, Yenish, Dom, Lom, Rom and Abdal, as well as traveller populations, including ethnic Travellers or those designated under the administrative term *gens du voyage* and people who identify as Gypsies, Tsiganes or Tziganes (pejoratives), without denying their specificities¹.





ANTIGYPSISM

"Antigypsyism is a historically constructed, persistent complex of customary racism against social groups identified under the stigma 'gypsy' or other related terms, and incorporates: a homogenizing and essentializing perception and description of these groups; the attribution of specific characteristics to them; and discriminating social structures and violent practices that emerge against that background, which have a degrading and ostracizing effect and which reproduce structural disadvantages"

EDUCATION

Roma children are placed in special, separate schools and classes because the teachers and school managers perceive them as intellectually disabled or unclear despite many decisions of the European Court of Human Rights on the issue (i.e., Romania, Slovakia).

One in five Roma children experienced hate motivated bullying/harassment due to being Roma while in school³.

HEALTH

Nearly 12 million Roma across Europe face barriers to good health due to Romani patients facing ill treatment and violation of human rights in healthcare institutions. These include:

- Denial of healthcare services
- Delivery of inferior medical care
- Abusive behavior during treatment.
- Segregation and extortion
- Deep-rooted antigypsyism among healthcare professionals.

EMPLOYMENT

Discrimination experiences in employment doubled on average between 2016 and 2021, with every third Roma older than 16 experiencing discrimination while looking for work.

- 56% of Roma aged 20 - 64 years were not in paid work**
- 56% of Roma aged 16 - 24 years were not in education employment or training⁴**

HOUSING

Almost half of the Roma live in a state of housing deprivation, and/or live in damp, dark dwellings or housing without proper sanitation facilities.

Every fourth Roma still faces discrimination while looking for housing.

Executive Summary

Roma¹, one of the largest communities discriminated against based on work and descent in Europe, face structural obstacles in accessing their rights.

Data from the Fundamental Rights Agency (2021) shows that one in every fourth Roma feels discriminated against based on their ethnic background. Approximately 17 percent of Roma surveyed experienced at least one form of hate-motivated harassment in the last 12 months. Besides this, discrimination occurs on a day-to-day basis between individuals. The most prominent areas where discrimination towards Roma can be seen are education, housing, employment and health. Discrimination can also be seen in the justice system.

When it comes to education, Roma children are placed in special, separate schools and classes because the teachers and school managers perceive them as mentally retarded or unclean, despite many decisions of the European Court of Human Rights on the issue. In addition, one in five Roma children experienced hate-motivated bullying/harassment due to being Roma while in school.

In housing, almost half of the Roma who have been studied by the Fundamental Rights Agency live in a state of housing deprivation, and/or live in damp, dark dwellings or housing without proper sanitation facilities. One in every four Roma still faces discrimination when looking for housing. In employment, one in every three Roma older than 16 years has felt discriminated against because of being Roma when looking for a job.

In health, in 2021, more Roma felt discriminated against for being Roma when accessing health services in the past 12 months as compared to the 2016 data.

Concerning the justice system, although European countries have anti-discrimination legislation in place in line with the European Union (EU) Racial Equality Directive, implementation of these legal protections remains poor. Even those few cases that reach the judicial system are often dismissed or racial discrimination is not found, while in other cases Roma applicants withdraw from the procedures before they end. Roma are often faced with investigators who refuse to investigate hate crimes and prosecutors who refuse to prosecute the cases, or legal systems that don't provide sanctions for the breach of Constitutional guarantees of non-discrimination².

In practice, however, implementation remains poor: the number of cases of discrimination against Roma resolved by courts is still very low across Europe. Even among legal personnel, knowledge of anti-discrimination law is limited, and Roma themselves are often reluctant themselves to report incidents due to lack of awareness, mistrust of the judicial system or a generalized disbelief that their situation will change. The Covid-19 pandemic also amplified ongoing shortcomings in the protection of Roma rights. Antigypsyism and deep-rooted stereotypes associated with the Roma community continue to hamper their inclusion.

¹The reference to 'Roma', as an umbrella term, encompasses a wide range of different people of Romani origin such as: Roma, Sinti, Kale, Romanichels and Boyash/Rudari. It also encompasses groups such as Ashkali, Egyptians, Yenish, Dom, Lom, Rom and Abdal, as well as Traveller populations, including ethnic Travellers or those designated under the administrative term Gens du Voyage and people who identify as Gypsies, Tsiganes or Tziganes, without denying their specificities.

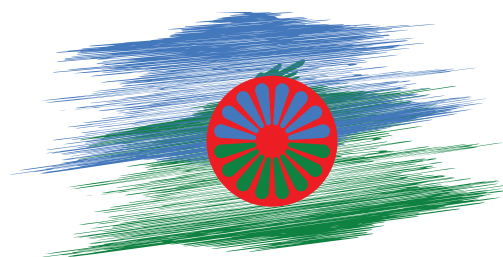
It also has significant consequences on Roma political participation and their invisibility in public life, with Roma communities largely absent from local and national political decision-making structures and electoral campaigns run with a strong anti-Roma rhetoric³. Tackling discrimination and structural racism, and dispelling prejudices are essential to ensuring that Roma can become equal citizens in European societies.

The 12 million Roma people in Europe are denied basic human rights and are victims of widespread discrimination, racist attacks and hate speech mainly because of their heritage and current social status. This widespread discrimination has severe implications for socio-economic development and the inclusion of Roma in the European countries where Roma live, and are citizens.

The United Nations has been a rather silent supporter of the Roma⁴ however in the last few years it has issued statements on the International Romani Day⁵, promoted Roma anti-discrimination campaigns and organized a conference on antigypsyism. Except through the work of Special Rapporteurs on Minority Issues, no systematic policy approaches have been taken to advance the situation of the Roma across the world.

For example, in 2015, the Special Rapporteur on minority issues, Rita Izsák (a Roma herself) published a comprehensive study of the human rights situation of Roma worldwide, with a particular focus on the phenomenon of anti-Gypsyism. The report provided an overview of the human rights situation of Roma worldwide, applying a minority rights-based approach to the protection and promotion of the rights of Roma, including the protection of their existence; the prevention of violence against Roma; the protection and promotion of Roma identity; the guarantee of the rights to non-discrimination and equality, including combating racism, antigypsyism and structural discrimination; and the guarantee of the right of Roma to effective participation in public life, especially with regard to decisions affecting them.

The SDGs have linkages in content and processes to obligations that EU member states acquired through International Human Rights Conventions, such as the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (CESCR) or the UN Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination, amongst others.



²CF (minorityrights.org)

³Why Roma Political Participation Matters - Open Society Foundations

⁴Roma, Sinti, Travellers | United Nations

⁵Antonio Guterres (UN Secretary-General) to the International Romani Union | UN Web TV

DISCRIMINATION & STRUCTURAL RACISM AGAINST ROMA

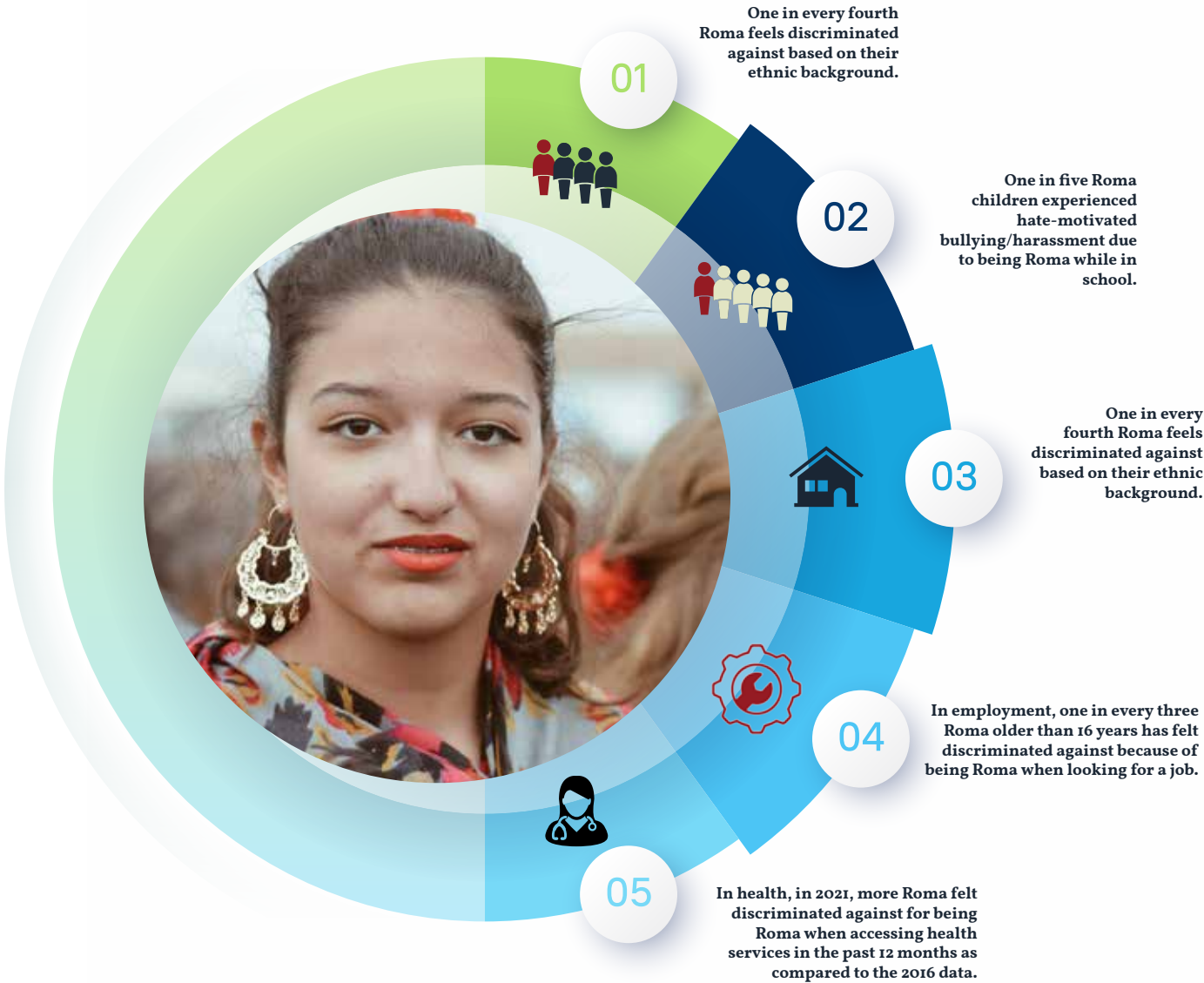


Photo by Caroline Hernandez on Unsplash

STATUS OF ROMA COMMUNITIES IN EUROPE

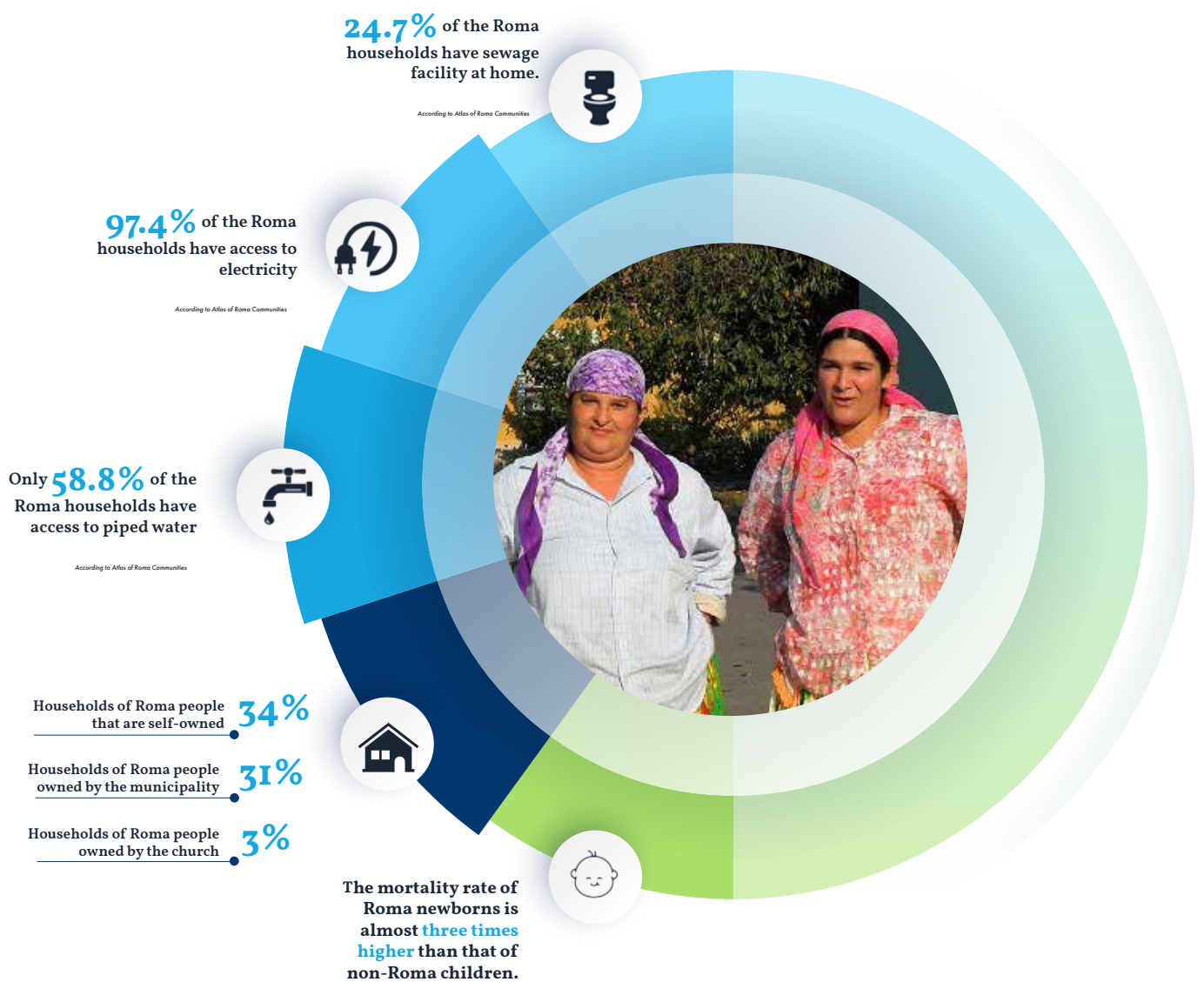




Photo via ERGO Network

Recommendations

- The Human Rights Council to contribute to the full realization of the human rights of persons discriminated against on the basis of work and descent including the Roma by considering ways to include this issue in the regular work of the Council, requesting the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights to recommend further steps for states and the United Nations system to address discrimination basis of work and descent, and through the mobilization, inter alia, of financial cooperation and technical assistance at the global, regional and national levels.
- As a truly global development agenda, the 2030 Agenda must be considered in all policies for EU member states as well as the enlargement region. Its 17 Sustainable Development Goals and the promise of governments to “leave no one behind” provide crucial opportunities for advancing the rights of Roma in Europe.
- At the same time, policy-makers and civil society face challenges when bringing European economic and social policies, such as Europe 2020 and the European Pillar of Social Rights, under the roof of the 2030 Agenda.
- Recognize the existence of discrimination based on work and descent as a distinct form of discrimination that deserves the attention of the international community and that affects communities around the world including among others, the Roma in Europe.
- Address the deep-rooted structural and institutional discrimination that exists at all levels of society and is a major barrier for members of the communities discriminated on work and descent to fully enjoy their fundamental rights in all spheres of life, including employment, housing, education, healthcare, care, social protection, and other key public services.

Discrimination based on Work and Descent (DWD) is the UN terminology used for communities who are traditionally and intergenerationally discriminated based on their identity, social-hierarchical positions, the work associated with their positions, and their lineage and descendants.

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