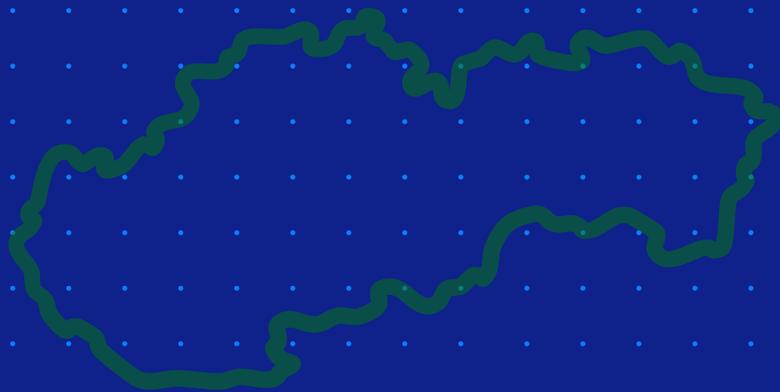


The situation of Roma in the Slovak Republic



Status of Communities Discriminated on Work and Descent

The Inclusivity Project and
Global Forum of Communities
Discriminated on Work and Descent



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 on their issue. 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 2021 is a platform to voice the rights and entitlements of the communities in Africa, Asia, Europe, Latin America and North America discriminated 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/>

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Preface

In a Europe that prides itself on its commitment to diversity, equality, and human rights, the persistence of discrimination against Roma communities, discriminated on work and descent, stands as a stark reminder of the challenges that still lie ahead. This report sheds light on the troubling issues of discrimination faced by Roma individuals and communities in Slovakia. 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 Slovakia.

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. The intertwining factors of education, cultural stereotypes, and unequal access to resources become apparent as we examine the root causes of this issue. Additionally, the discriminatory treatment of Roma based on their descent adds another layer of complexity, posing fundamental questions about the core principles of human rights and dignity.

The purpose of this 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 Annamaria Pšenková who has authored the report and also Mr. Gyan Kothari, Ms. Simona Torotcoi and Mr. Naveen Gautam who has 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. 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.

Paul Divakar Namala

Convener

The Global Forum of Communities Discriminated on Work and Descent



Foreword

Discrimination in society is a serious problem because it indicates that society has a problem in respecting fundamental human rights. In the case of the Roma national minority, we are talking about a specific form of racism, which is antigypsyism. In the modern history of Slovakia, it has not been possible to set government policies in such a way as to help improve the living situation of Roma living in a marginalised neighbourhood.

Recent research findings suggest that segregation, whether spatial or social, is a significant factor behind the failure of inclusion. Being born and growing up in a segregated environment means for a person the loss of ties with the outside world and the inability to make the contacts necessary for personal and professional development. These links are most important in the area of access to the labour market, because they help to reduce discrimination and, secondly, they enable people to obtain a variety of information about job opportunities. However, creating links with the surrounding environment can only be done through desegregation. This process, nevertheless, needs to be addressed by systemic measures and government policies that will purposefully desegregate and create an inclusive environment.

Roma from segregated localities face many disadvantages and are the most vulnerable to discrimination and racism because of their ethnic origin. Their social capital is not sufficient to help themselves. In a merit-oriented society, it is almost impossible for people from poor and segregated localities to get the same opportunities as the majority. Centuries of rejection and persecution of Roma in our society need to end and we need to start looking towards a future in which every individual has equal opportunities and chances to participate in society, regardless of their nationality or ethnic group.

I hope that this report will also contribute to making public policy makers aware that Roma are a solid part of society and only together we can develop and build a future for the next generations.

Mgr. Zuzana Havírová PhD.

Chair of Roma advocacy and research centre

Objectives of the report and methodology

My name is Annamaria Pšenková, I am a Roma from Slovakia, and I am part of the Rights Expert program of the Global Forum of Communities Discriminated Against Work and Descent (GFoD). This report has a two-fold purpose. Firstly, it intends to provide a general understanding of the Roma community in Slovakia, which is one of many communities worldwide facing discrimination based on their descent and work (CDWD). Secondly, the report seeks to highlight the common challenges shared by the Roma and other CDWD communities while also addressing their unique experiences.

With regard to the methodology used, the report relies mainly on existing data, reports and news collected and documented by different NGOs and international bodies.

The report has been compiled based on the guidance received by the GFoD research experts, following a common template other rights experts representing different CDWD had to follow as well. Throughout the data collection process, GFoD staff 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 set the foundation for further research but also to use the collected data for advocacy purposes at the UN and global level in favor of establishing and enforcing the rights of DWD Communities in different parts of the world. The data can be also used by professional researchers for their academic purposes thereby promoting awareness and knowledge about DWD communities.





Roma communities in the Slovak Republic

ORIGIN OF THE ROMA COMMUNITIES



The Roma are an ethnic group which has been struggling for emancipation, recognition and their own identity for centuries. There is no common territory or nation-state concept of their own, but they affiliate themselves with Indian origin. It is imperative to acknowledge that the perception of Roma underwent “considerable scrutiny”. The image of Roma was primarily formed through the lens of non-Roma. However, step by step Roma raised their voices and nowadays they are bringing new perspectives and approaches to the table.

Ever since the arrival of the Roma community in Europe, a multitude of conjectures and folklore concerning their ancestral heritage have been created and expanded in the collective consciousness. The language served as a tool to research and analyze the origin of the Roma. Several hypotheses (myths) have been summarized by ab Hortis who suggested that Roma came from Egypt. The underlying rationale for this analysis is due to the pejorative name “gypsy” which is until now used for the Roma. The word originates from the Greek word which means “Egyptian”. Another origin of Roma had been affiliated with the province of Zenopitana in Africa, as the people in the region were good at fortune-telling. The origin of the Roma has been searched also in the Caucasus mountains, Abyssinia and Nubia. Looking for the ancestors of the Roma, some “researchers” based their study on the Biblical figure of Cain, as being permanently on the run. They have been also considered descendants of the Jews, who had been persecuted in Germany and other countries in the 13th and 14th centuries (ab Hortis, 1994).

All these theories, myths and hypotheses were the result of the research done by linguists, historians and anthropologists since the 18th century. However, the theory of being of Indian origin has been scientifically documented and is no longer disputed. Unfortunately, the departure from India has been in conflict until now, but the most common consensus states that the Roma came to Europe between the 8th - 10th centuries, presumably from the regions of the present Indian states of Rajasthan and Punjab. It is dated that the first written evidence of the Roma in Europe occurred in today's territory of Greece from where they eventually moved to Central Europe (12th and 13th centuries).

NAMES AS A LABEL FOR ROMA



The first advent of the Roma community in Europe cultivated the pursuit of knowledge of their origin. During this process of "finding" new theories, the names by which Roma have been labeled by non-Roma were created as well.

In Horváthová (1964) scholarly work, the delineation of various reasons has been stated that underlie the reasoning of the non-Roma people to identify Roma as "Atsinkan", "Asinkan" or "Atingan". The name "Atsigan" occurred in Greece and was originally used to define members of the Manouches sect who arrived in Byzantium in the 8th century. They earned their living by fortune-telling and magic. Afterwards, the sect vanished, but the similarity of the occupations and the name of the Indian immigrants from Persia caused people to confuse them with Manouches. The oldest written document that mentions Roma came from Greece where the Roma were named "Adsincans" Another label-name was related to the Egyptian origin of the Roma. As Europeans identified Roma with Egypt, they were called Egyptians. The further versions existed in different languages - as one of them is gypsy, which means Egyptian in Greek language.

However, the Roma call themselves by different names. All European dialects of the Roma language include the word "rom" which means man or husband. The female version "romni" means woman or wife. The term Roma is mainly used in the eastern part of Central Europe and the Balkans before the 15th century. The various groups in Western Europe use different names due to the later migration wave - The Sinti live in German territory, Manusha in France, Kale in Spain and Portugal, Kaale in Finland, etc. The word manush is also included in all dialects of the Romani language. It means man, while "manusha" equals people. The usage of the terminology for "people" is the oldest way in which ancient tribes and ethnic groups used to name themselves (Čačipen Pal O Roma, 2003).

The history of the Roma, not only within the territory of modern-day Slovakia but also in general, has a lot of unanswered questions. The Roma community has endured years of discrimination, which has led to stigmatization, derogatory associations with their name, and a general reluctance among the majority to recognize and respect their traditional endo-ethnonyme, which they have chosen to use internationally.

Insufficient historical research has hindered the reconstruction of the Roma's history within our territory, dating back to the Middle Ages. Achieving an objective understanding of the Roma's development and position in Ugría, Slovakia and Europe requires significant effort and unbiased research.



Demographic profile of Roma in Slovakia - overall picture

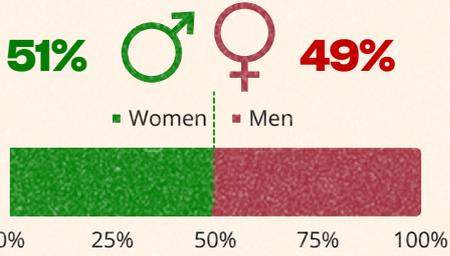


Slovakia is a country with 5 449 270 inhabitants, out of which 49% are men and 51% are women. The country's major sector of income is first and foremost industry (24,1%), after that transport, accommodation, food services (18,4%) and lastly public administration, education, human health and social work (16,8%).

The Roma in Slovakia live in different socio-economic conditions. According to the Atlas of Roma Communities, approximately 400 thousand Roma live in Slovakia. There are three subgroups present in Slovakia - Slovak Rumungre, Hungarian Rumungre and Vlach Roma of which 45% live integrally among the majority of the population. 11,5% live in settlements within the municipality, 23,6% live in settlements on the outskirts of the municipality and 18,4% live in segregated communities. The majority of Roma communities are located in Banska Bystrica, Prešov and Košice regions (Havírová, 2022). The illiteracy rate among the Roma communities presents around 4,5% of the Roma who are not able to read and write. The unemployment rate is relatively huge considering the majority of society. A huge percentage of the people live below the poverty line, which is the consequence of the immensely present antigypsyism in society. The data shows that the mortality rate of Roma newborns is almost three times higher than that of non-Roma children. In terms of housing, only 34% of all households claimed ownership. 31% of the households of Roma people are owned by the municipality or church (3%). Roma who lived segregated from the municipality and found themselves on the outskirts of the society usually have hut and brick houses. According to Atlas of Roma Communities only 58,8% of the Roma households have access to piped water, 97,4% have access to electricity and 24,7% have the sewage facility at home.

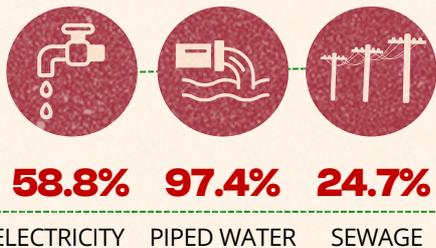
POPULATION

54,49,270

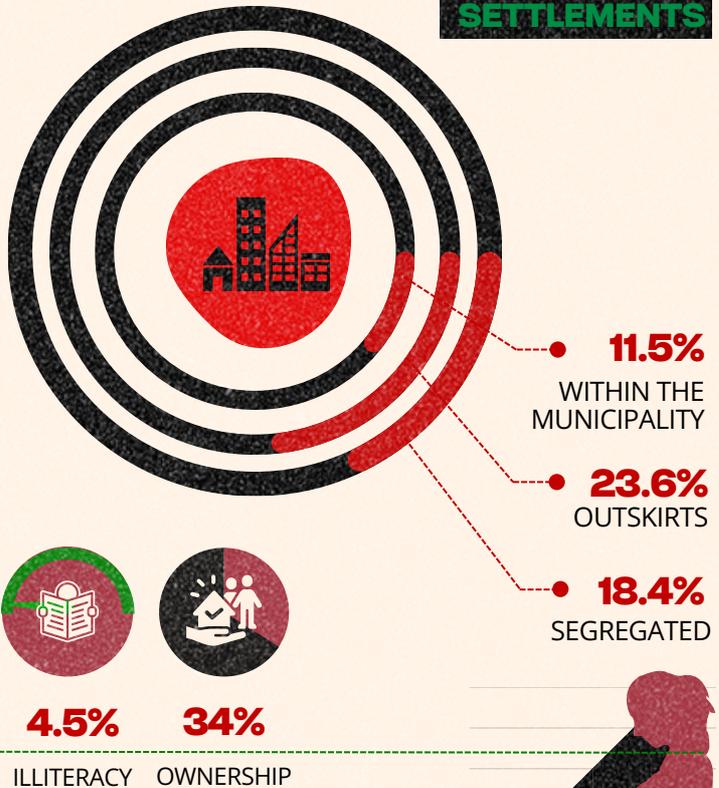


SOCIO-ECONOMIC CONDITIONS

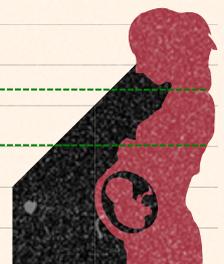
- Industry
- Transport, accommodation, food services
- Public administration, education, human health and social work



SETTLEMENTS



3X HIGHER
MORTALITY RATE



Discrimination and modern slavery



Addressing and discussing modern slavery in Slovak society can be challenging. This difficulty arises from the presence of human trafficking, particularly in the eastern regions of Slovakia. Although Roma individuals are not the primary targets, they unfortunately often become victims due to their significant presence among these regions and due to the racism and antigypsyism that is vividly present in Slovakia.

According to 2022 Slovakian Human Rights Report,¹ the law prohibits all forms of forced or compulsory labor. Police are responsible for investigating forced labor, but the government did not effectively enforce the law. The law provides strong penalties for labor traffickers, which were commensurate with those for other serious crimes, but were not fully applied. The Ministry of Interior and the International Organization for Migration trained government officials in identifying forced labor trafficking victims. There were reports by NGOs of male and female migrants forced to work in the country under conditions of forced labor, including nonpayment of wages. Underemployed and undereducated Roma from socially segregated rural settlements were disproportionately vulnerable to forced labor (p. 49).

The concentration of Roma populations in the eastern parts of Slovakia increases their vulnerability to exploitation. Consequently, modern slavery is not the central issue directly associated with Roma communities in Slovakia that requires immediate attention. Instead, the focus should be on combating discrimination and antigypsyism, which lie at the root of the poverty problems frequently experienced by Roma people. Additionally, the lack of comprehensive data compounds the challenges faced in addressing this issue effectively.



“...the focus should be on combating discrimination and antigypsyism, which lie at the root of the poverty problems frequently experienced by Roma people.”



1 SLOVAKIA 2022 HUMAN RIGHTS REPORT (state.gov)

Different forms of discrimination

Discrimination is manifesting itself at every level in various aspects of society.

Roma often face discrimination in employment and access to education, limiting their economic opportunities. Many Roma individuals also face poverty and lack access to basic resources such as housing and healthcare.

Roma individuals often face social exclusion and discrimination, leading to segregation from the rest of society. This exclusion can take the form of discrimination in housing, access to public services, and social interactions.

Roma people often face discrimination based on their cultural identity, language, and traditions. They may be prohibited from practicing their cultural traditions and be forced to assimilate into the dominant culture.

Roma often face political exclusion and are underrepresented in political decision-making processes. They may also face discrimination and violence from extremist political groups.

Racial discrimination in Slovakia is characterized by prejudiced attitudes, stereotypes, and negative perceptions towards individuals of Roma identity. Roma people often face discriminatory practices when it comes to accessing suitable housing, frequently enduring segregated living conditions. Marginalized settlements lacking infrastructure, basic services, sanitation, and adequate housing conditions are prevalent throughout Slovakia. For example, approximately 145 Roma from Stara Lubovna have experienced difficulties in registering their residences for the past several years.²

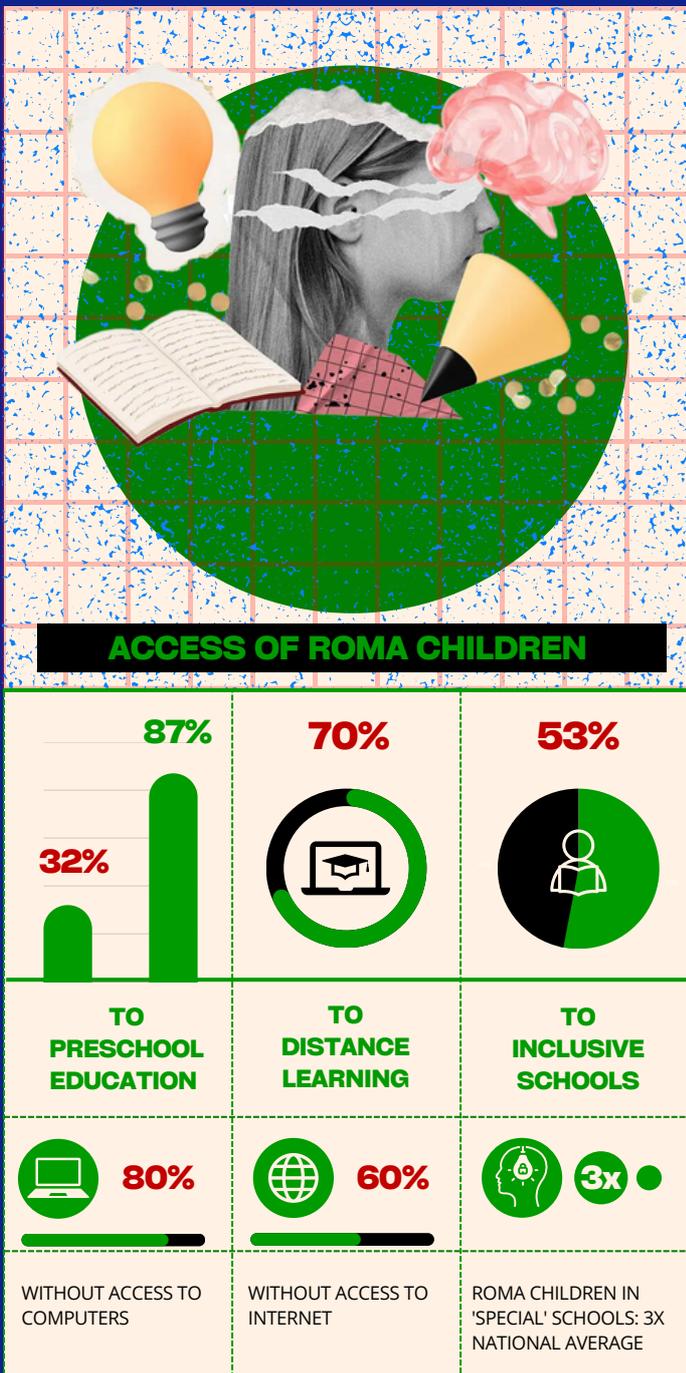


² <http://www.errc.org/roma-rights-journal/roma-prohibited-from-registering-residences-in-slovakia>

EDUCATION

In education, the Roma community encounters discrimination through the existence of separate, segregated, and special classes or schools. Roma children in primary school are put into special schools because they are labeled as “retarded”. The segregated classes are of such poor education that very few are properly equipped and supported to continue their studies after age 16.³

An analytical report released by the Roma Plenipotentiary in 2022 confirmed what the Ministry of Finance and ombudsperson had reported earlier, that Roma children were not receiving the same quality of education as non-Roma children. The report found that a significantly higher number of Roma children from marginalized communities were placed in “special” schools for children with intellectual disabilities, which was three times higher than the overall population. Additionally, 47 percent of Roma children from marginalized communities were in classes exclusively for Roma students, with 32 percent attending schools exclusively for Roma.



Preschool education was also less accessible to Roma children from marginalized communities, with only 32 percent receiving it compared to 87 percent of the general population. The COVID-19 pandemic worsened the educational disparities between children from disadvantaged backgrounds, especially those in marginalized Roma settlements, and children from more well-off families. A study by the NGO EduRoma revealed that 70 percent of marginalized Roma children couldn't participate in distance learning during the pandemic, and 60 percent had no contact with their teachers because many of them lacked access to computers (more than 80 percent) and internet access (60 percent), as reported in a March government report on digital poverty. Educational experts warned that this interruption in the education of disadvantaged children would have long-lasting effects on their future education and career opportunities.⁴

During the pandemic whole Roma settlements were quarantined with military presence - and placed under mandatory quarantines, enforced by police and the military, arguing that such measures were necessary for the protection of public health and safety. However, Roma settlements were selectively targeted, with quarantines not applied to other groups or the general population. Such selective application, in the absence of evidence that less restrictive alternatives were considered is extremely discriminatory.⁵

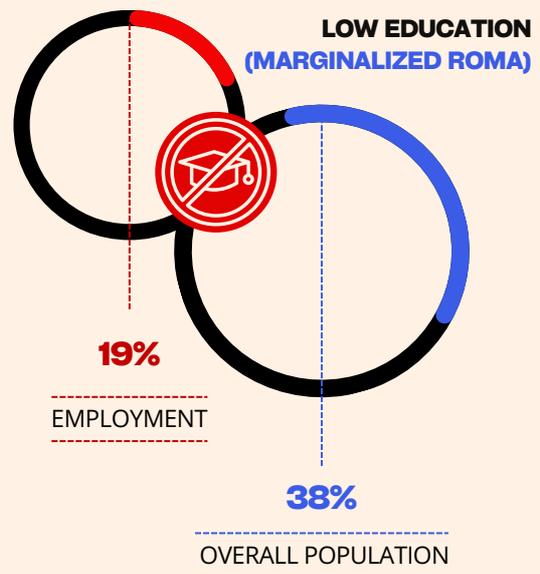
³ <https://www.amnesty.org/en/latest/press-release/2017/03/slovakia-unlawful-ethnic-segregation-in-schools-is-failing-romani-children/>

⁴ SLOVAKIA 2022 HUMAN RIGHTS REPORT (state.gov)

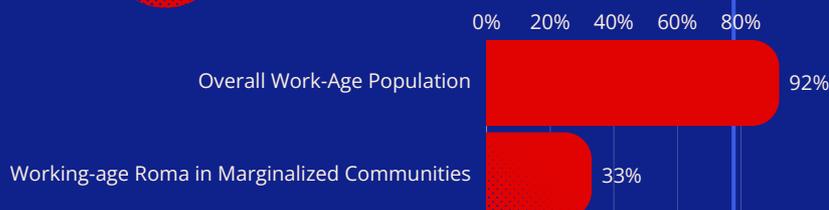
⁵ <https://www.amnesty.eu/news/quarantines-of-roma-settlements-in-bulgaria-and-slovakia-require-urgent-attention/>

BARRIERS TO EMPLOYMENT AND DECENT WORK

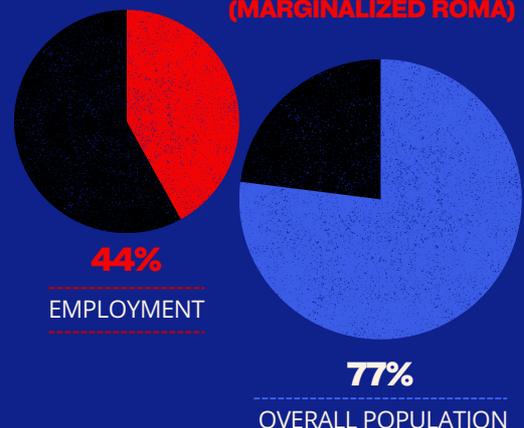
According to 2022 Slovakian Human Rights Report, employers discriminated against members of the Roma minority. A 2022 November Roma Plenipotentiary report showed disproportionately lower employment levels among working-age Roma living in marginalized communities (33 percent) compared to the overall work-age population (92 percent), with significant differences in employment of marginalized Roma in comparison with the overall population with the same education level. According to the report, 19 percent of Roma from marginalized communities with low education and 42 percent with secondary-level education were employed compared to 38 percent and 77 percent, respectively, in the overall population. The report cited social exclusion as a barrier to job market integration as well as employers' discriminatory practices as key reasons. NGOs working with Roma from such communities reported that, while job applications by Roma were often successful during the initial phase of selection, in most cases employers rejected the applicants once they found they were Roma. Rejected job applicants rarely pursued discrimination cases through the courts, and if they did, the proceedings resulted in excessive and undue delays; even successful cases awarded minimal financial compensation. While the Finance Ministry's analytical unit found in its January report that Roma employees from marginalized settlements experienced approximately the same levels of layoffs caused by the COVID-19 as the majority population, the loss of employment and the economic downturn had a disproportionate effect on them due to greater risk of poverty among the Roma population.⁶



EMPLOYMENT RATES



SECONDARY EDUCATION (MARGINALIZED ROMA)



6 SLOVAKIA 2022 HUMAN RIGHTS REPORT (state.gov)

BARRIERS TO HEALTHCARE SERVICES

Barriers to healthcare services for Roma include language, lack of health insurance, and discriminatory treatment from healthcare providers. Additionally, Roma communities in Slovakia are frequently subjected to hate crimes, violence, and harassment.

Slovakia's membership in the European Union does not allow discrimination against the Roma as this would contradict EU values. However, society, individuals, and institutions in Slovakia often have highly discriminatory attitudes without explicit official prohibitions. Similar dynamics can be observed concerning the notions of purity and pollution. Addressing questions related to marriage practices within the Roma community is challenging due to a lack of comprehensive data and the diverse subgroups within the community, each with its distinct customs and traditions. Therefore, it would be unrepresentative to make blanket statements on behalf of the entire group.

Regarding forced and bonded labour, data is insufficient. Officially, forced and bonded labour is not recognized in the Slovak Republic due to its membership in the European Union. However, human trafficking originating from the eastern regions of Slovakia exists, where individuals are subjected to forced and bonded labour in different countries outside of Slovakia. Roma individuals in Slovakia are victims of psychological, physical, and verbal violence due to pervasive racism and antigypsyism. Over half of the Roma population in the Slovak Republic experiences discrimination based on their origin.



Profile of perpetrator in Slovakia

The perpetrators in Slovakia come from various non-DWD communities including the majority Slovak population, Hungarian minority and other ethnic and cultural groups. Many of those perpetrators come from disadvantaged socio-economic backgrounds, live in poverty and lack formal education. Lack of opportunities and economic hardship contribute to prejudices and animosity towards the Roma community. Along with socio-economic factors, political views play a crucial role in discrimination. Both far-right and mainstream political parties (populists) have exploited anti-Roma sentiment for political gain. Some politicians and political groups have used anti-Roma rhetoric to appeal to nationalist sentiment and promote their political agenda, like the fascist party in Slovakia.

However, religion does not have any role. Slovakia is a predominantly Catholic country, but there are also Protestant, Orthodox, and other religious minorities. Perpetrators do not come from a specific religious group, as discrimination and prejudice against the Roma are often based on cultural and historical biases rather than religious beliefs. Forms of discrimination and violence inflicted on the DWD individuals/groups include physical violence, verbal abuse, social exclusion, segregation and economic discrimination. The reasons for discrimination and violence are rooted in historical prejudices, stereotypes, and cultural biases that view the Roma people as inferior and undesirable. The methods and instruments used for inflicting discrimination and violence vary, but they often involve verbal insults, often rejection on the institutional level, intimidation, and physical assault. Discrimination can also take the form of employment and housing discrimination, limiting the opportunities available to DWD individuals and groups. The effects of discrimination and violence on DWD victims are significant, ranging from physical injuries to psychological trauma and social isolation. Discrimination and violence perpetuate a cycle of marginalization and exclusion, which can have long-lasting impacts on individuals and communities.

DWD victims of discrimination and violence have reported cases to the police, but the response has been inadequate. Police officers may not take the allegations seriously, or they may not have the training or resources to investigate and prosecute the perpetrators effectively. Non-DWD community perpetrators are not always convicted for their actions, and many cases go unpunished. The justice system may not have the necessary resources or political will to address discrimination and violence against the Roma community effectively.

REPORTED CASES

Viola, a resident of a segregated Roma community in eastern Slovakia, shared her experiences with reproductive and maternal healthcare in the country. She revealed that the local gynaecologist practice tends to prioritize non-Roma women, often subjecting Roma women to discriminatory treatment. During her first pregnancy, Viola was denied pain relief medication while non-Roma women received it. The doctors and nurses showed little interest in her opinions and needs, and insults targeting her Roma identity were common throughout her childbirth experience. Viola's account is not unique, as many other women have reported similar experiences with reproductive healthcare in Slovakia.

In another case, Romani children were subjected to abuse by Slovak police, resulting in the European Court for Human Rights Reported cases awarding each child EUR 20,000 in compensation. The officers at a police station in Košice forced the children to slap each other, and the court recognized their right to seek compensation for the costs of pursuing legal action against the police.

Furthermore, a violent police raid on a Romani neighborhood in Moldava nad Bodvou in 2013 left over 30 Romani individuals, including children and people with disabilities, injured. After nine years, the Slovak Government reached a "friendly settlement agreement" with eight Romani men who were victims of police brutality. The government agreed to pay €110,000 in non-pecuniary damages jointly to the Roma victims. These cases highlight the pervasive discrimination faced by Roma communities in Slovakia.

It is crucial to emphasize that Slovak society often fails to recognize its discriminatory mindset and acts of racism and antigypsyism. They consider such distinctions among people as normal, which is fundamentally unjust and incorrect. The reported cases serve as evidence of these harmful attitudes. Unfortunately, only a small percentage of cases have been reported or heard from the Roma community, indicating a lack of empathy and support from the rest of society. Even the reported and addressed cases have not received sufficient compensation, therefore the further need for proper redress and justice is extremely needed.





Protection and development mechanisms

In Slovakia, the Constitution contains several provisions that aim to uphold, protect, and promote the rights of CDWD (Children, Women, and Persons with Disabilities). Article 12 of the Constitution recognizes the inherent dignity of all individuals and prohibits discrimination based on various grounds such as sex, race, religion, and social origin. This ensures equal treatment and protection for CDWD.

Articles 17, 18, 24, 26, 34, 35, 36 and 42 further safeguard the rights of CDWD. Such as the right to liberty (article 17), prohibits forced labor and services, emphasizing the importance of health as a fundamental right (article 18). It protects freedom of thought, conscience, and religion, preventing discrimination based on these grounds (article 24). Freedom of expression and access to information, empowering CDWD victims of modern slavery to seek assistance and report abuse is ensured in the constitution (article 26). It guarantees minority rights, including education, language, and participation in decision-making processes (article 34), etc.

Furthermore, specific legislations have been instituted in Slovakia to uphold, protect, and promote the rights of CDWD, particularly in the context of modern slavery. Act No. 64/2011 Coll. The Residence of Foreigners is a law that provides special protections for CDWD victims of human trafficking. It ensures access to healthcare, legal aid, and social services for victims. Slovakia also adheres to legally binding acts of the European Union.



"Through these legislative measures, development policies, programs, judicial mechanisms, and official reports, Slovakia is officially and legally working towards upholding, protecting, and promoting the rights of CDWD in the context of modern slavery."



These include Art. 4(a) of the Council of Europe Convention on Action against Trafficking in Human Beings, the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union, and the Directive 2011/36/EU on preventing and combating trafficking in human beings and protecting its victims. These acts contribute to the prevention and combating of human trafficking, as well as the protection and support of its victims.

The Act No. 365/2004 Coll. on Equal Treatment in Certain Areas and Protection against Discrimination specifically addresses discrimination issues faced by CDWD. It prohibits discrimination based on various factors such as race, ethnicity, disability, age, sexual orientation, and gender identity. Furthermore, Act No. 184/1999 Coll. The Use of Minority Languages recognizes the rights of minority communities to use their own language in public life, education, and other areas. It ensures the use of minority languages in official proceedings, public signs, and communication, providing language rights for members of minority communities.

Slovakia has also implemented specific development policies and projects to advance and develop members of DWD communities. The Roma Integration Strategy aims to improve the living conditions and social inclusion of the Roma community. It focuses on access to education, employment, healthcare, and combating discrimination and social exclusion. The Operational Program Human Resources, funded by the European Union, supports human resource development, including marginalized groups like DWD communities. It provides funding for training, education, and job creation initiatives to enhance employment prospects.

The Roma Education Fund and Support for Roma Youth specifically target the advancement and development of Roma individuals. These initiatives improve educational opportunities, provide scholarships, grants, training, healthcare access, and support Roma cultural and social initiatives.

While there are no specifically mandated Commissions/Committees for addressing the concerns of DWD communities in modern slavery, Slovakia has institutions, governmental agencies, and NGOs dedicated to promoting the rights of DWD communities and addressing concerns related to modern slavery. The Slovak National Centre for Human Rights, the Office of the Government Plenipotentiary for Roma Communities⁷, and the European Roma Rights Centre are among the organizations working towards protecting and promoting the rights and well-being of DWD communities.

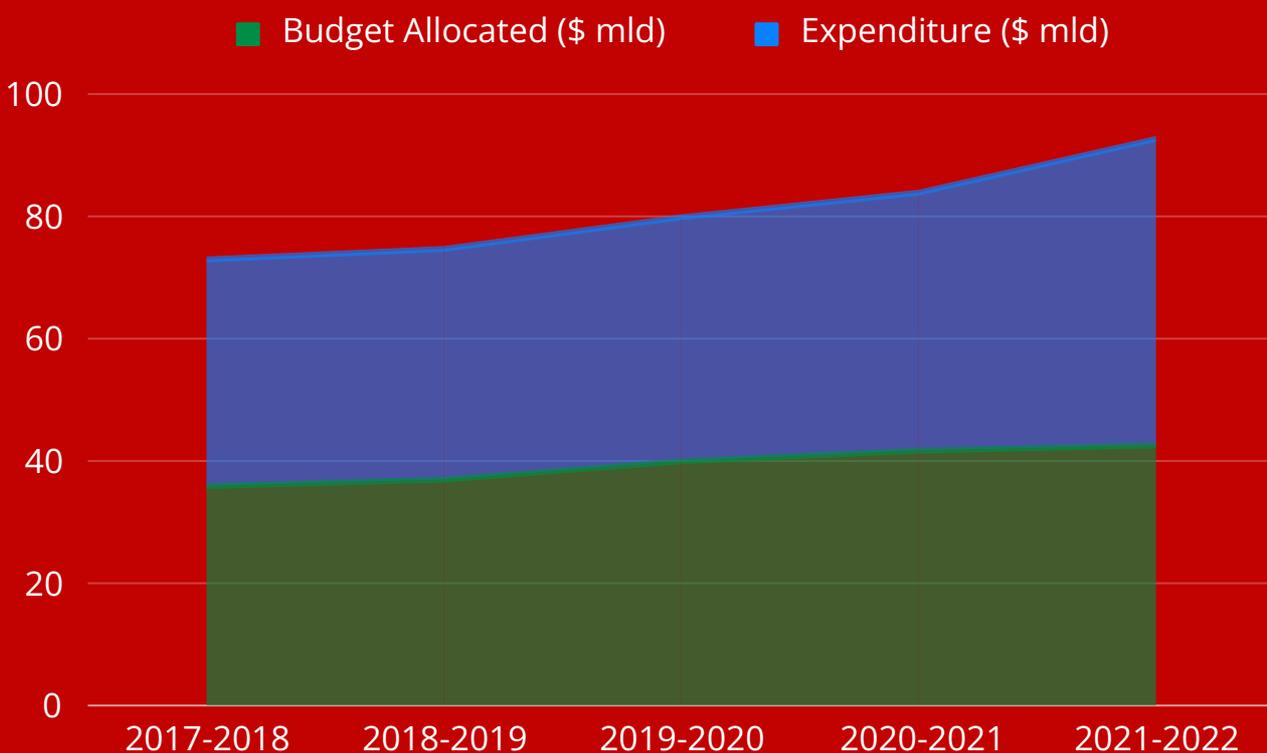
Specific judicial mechanisms to address concerns related to modern slavery and protect the rights of DWD communities have been established in Slovakia. The Criminal Code prohibits various forms of exploitation, including human trafficking and forced labour. The Slovak Labour Code safeguards workers' rights and protects against discrimination and harassment, which can be used to address cases of forced labour. Anti-discrimination legislation further ensures legal protection against discrimination faced by DWD communities. The Ombudsman serves as an independent public authority responsible for protecting human rights and promoting equality, investigating complaints related to discrimination and human rights abuses.

Lastly, Slovakia has several government reports that provide insights into the status of DWD communities. The National Report on the Implementation of the Roma Integration Strategy assesses progress in promoting the social inclusion of Roma communities. While, reports on Discrimination in Slovakia and the Situation of Human Rights in Slovakia highlight discrimination trends, social exclusion, and relevant issues faced by DWD communities.

⁷ This government agency is responsible for promoting the rights and interests of Roma communities in Slovakia, including addressing issues related to poverty, education, employment, and social exclusion.

Through these legislative measures, development policies, programs, judicial mechanisms, and official reports, Slovakia is officially and legally working towards upholding, protecting, and promoting the rights of CDWD in the context of modern slavery. These efforts aim to create an inclusive society that ensures equal opportunities and social justice for all. However, the reality differs, daily the Roma people in Slovakia are experiencing discrimination and racism that significantly impacts their lives. The mechanisms and protection written in legally binding laws are insufficiently safeguarding the most vulnerable groups in our societies.

BUDGETING AND CIVIL SOCIETY IN SLOVAKIA



www.rozpočet.sk/web/#/prehľad

The budget allocation for Roma communities and initiatives to combat modern slavery within DWD communities is inadequate. The country's budget rarely includes separate provisions to improve the living standards of Roma communities. Instead, projects and improvements within these communities are typically sponsored and financed by non-governmental organizations.

Therefore civil society organizations play a crucial role in raising awareness of and responding to the issues faced by Roma communities in Slovakia. The organizations Roma advocacy and research programme, Milan Šimečka Foundation, People in Need, The way out, Open Society Foundation and Centre for Research of Ethnicity and Culture work to promote the rights, inclusion and well-being of the Roma population, which is one of the most marginalized and disadvantaged communities in the country.

For instance, the RAVS - Roma Advocacy and Research Programme pushed to change the term "gypsy" in the Dictionary of the Contemporary Slovak Language. The Ľudovít Štúr Institute of Linguistics has accepted their request and changed the entry "gypsy". From now on, the following explanation is given for this term: 1. the addition to the entry that since 1971 the official term Roma has been used, 2. the pejorative, derogatory term "gypsy", used commonly. "I can tell you what bothers me about Gypsies; our party is interested in dealing with Gypsies". Even if it might be considered as a small step it can have a huge impact considering Roma communities in Slovakia. The rhetorics that are used are part of the created narrative in our society which is built upon hatred towards Roma people. Therefore changing the narrative step by step is immensely momentous.

Another amazing example is the project Omama done by the organization The Way Out. Within this project are trained people from marginalized communities who are approaching their communities with the intention to help them in terms of education. It is established on the peer-to-peer programme. There are many more examples and projects that are heading towards the inclusion and well-being of Roma communities. They work tirelessly to promote social inclusion, advocate for equal rights, and empower Roma individuals to become active participants in society.





Responses of UN bodies, Governments and human rights organisations



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THE UN

The UN has 10 Human rights treaty bodies: all of them are composed of individual experts that monitor the implementation of the international human rights treaties by the state that has ratified them. Each treaty body operates independently and has its specific mandate, reporting procedures and guidelines that concerns Slovakia as well. There are quite a number of recommendations and observations done by each treaty body concerning the CDWD communities in Slovakia.

During the past 3 cycles of the Universal Periodic Review (UPR) conducted by the United Nations Human Rights Council, Slovakia obtained 123 recommendations from 55 countries. These recommendations include ensuring access to quality and inclusive education for every Roma child, establishing an independent body to investigate cases of sterilization without informed consent, setting up an impartial police authority to address abuses, and creating an independent anti-corruption agency with prosecutorial powers. Recommendations were also made to strengthen efforts in preventing human trafficking, addressing segregation of Roma children and individuals with disabilities in education, combating discrimination, reducing residential segregation, and removing "anti-Roma walls." In some municipalities a wall/fence has been built which separates the Roma community from the rest of the population. In Partizanske, the majority of Roma people live among the non-Roma people. However, there are in the city three or four blocks of buildings where the majority of inhabitants are of Roma origin. So non-Roma people decided to build a fence around the Roma with explanations- labeling them as asocials who do not know how to behave.⁸



⁸ <https://www.euractiv.com/section/languages-culture/news/slovakia-told-to-tear-down-roma-segregation-wall/>

The **United Nations Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (CESCR)**: has provided observations and recommendations related to the rights of Roma communities in Slovakia. The Committee Experts remarked that the poverty rate among Roma was more than six times higher than the general population. It was also three to six times higher than Roma populations in other comparable European Union countries.⁹

The **Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination (CERD)** has made observations and recommendations regarding the situation of Roma communities in Slovakia. These may include concerns about discrimination, segregation, access to education, healthcare, housing, employment, and the overall social and economic marginalization of Roma communities. Concerns have been also stated that the anti-discrimination law is weak in practice due to its low degree of enforcement through the legal system and the extreme length of court proceedings.¹⁰

In 2023, the **Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW)** Commended Slovakia on the Adoption of Temporary Special Measures for Roma Women. A Committee Expert congratulated Slovakia for the progress it had made, including the implementation of national projects on the promotion of pre-primary education of children from marginalized Roma communities and one entitled “you have a chance too!”. A Committee Expert said 45 per cent of Roma women had their first child before the age of 18.¹¹

In 2023, the **Committee against Torture** Concluded its Seventy-Sixth Session after Adopting Concluding Observations on Reports of Brazil, Colombia, Ethiopia, Kazakhstan, Luxembourg and Slovakia (12 may 2023). The Committee recommends that the State party of Slovakia investigates promptly, impartially and effectively all allegations of involuntary sterilization of Roma women and provide victims with fair and adequate redress. Medical personnel who have conducted sterilizations without free, full and informed consent should be held criminally liable, prosecuted and punished. They should also be trained on appropriate means of obtaining free and informed consent from women undergoing sterilization, and all written materials relating to sterilization should be translated into the Romani language and other relevant languages.”

With respect to excessive use of force by law enforcement officials, including violence against Roma:

(a) “Carry out prompt, impartial, thorough and effective investigations into all allegations of excessive use of force, including torture and ill-treatment, by law enforcement officials, and ensure that those suspected of having committed such acts are immediately suspended from their duties throughout the period of investigation, while ensuring that the principle of presumption of innocence is observed;”

(b) “Provide the Committee with information on the number of cases of excessive use of force by law enforcement officials that have been investigated, disaggregated by age, gender and ethnic or national origin of the victims; the number of perpetrators who have been prosecuted for acts of torture and ill-treatment; and the penalties applied to those found guilty;”

(c) “Prosecute persons suspected of having committed torture or ill-treatment and, if they are found guilty, ensure that they receive sentences that are commensurate with the gravity of their acts and that the victims are afforded appropriate redress;”

(d) “Ensure that offences motivated by discrimination constitute an aggravating circumstance in criminal prosecution;”

9 <https://www.ohchr.org/en/press-releases/2019/10/committee-economic-social-and-cultural-rights-discusses-situation-vulnerable>

10 <https://www.ohchr.org/en/press-releases/2022/08/experts-committee-elimination-racial-discrimination-commend-slovakia>

11 <https://www.ungeneva.org/en/news-media/meeting-summary/2023/05/examen-de-la-slovaquie-devant-le-cedaw-les-membres-du-comite-se>

- (e) "Establish an independent monitoring and oversight mechanism that complies with the requirement of institutional independence in order to avoid conflict of interest in the investigation of complaints by peers;"
- (f) "Ensure that prosecutors and judges are automatically notified of all cases of ill-treatment and torture in police detention facilities, regardless of the possible absence of visible injuries, make video recordings of all actions by the police, including interrogations, and ensure that persons who have made allegations of torture and ill-treatment, as well as witnesses to such acts, are protected from reprisals;"
- (g) "State at the highest political level that there will be no tolerance for excessive use of force against persons deprived of their liberty by law enforcement officials, including against members of ethnic minorities;"
- (h) "Take measures to eradicate all forms of harassment and ill-treatment by police during investigations and ensure that law enforcement officials are trained in professional techniques and international standards on the use of force and firearms;"
- (i) "Continue the recruitment of police officers of Roma origin and expand the functions of Roma police specialists."¹²

HUMAN RIGHTS WATCH

Human Rights Watch does not possess current precise data, reports or any document regarding Roma communities in Slovakia. However there is a human rights report from 2001,¹³ which acknowledges that Slovakia made significant progress in human rights protection however, incidents such as employment discrimination, skinhead, police brutality,¹⁴ violence and weak anti-discrimination laws are vividly present in Slovakia and are threatening the Roma minority

INTERNATIONAL NGOS

International NGOs have significant work concerning recommendation and observation. European Roma Grassroot Organisation (ERGO) Network is providing insightful recommendations regarding Roma Communities (also specifically in Slovakia) at the advocacy level. Their research reports help to set specific recommendations. European Roma Rights Centre (ERRC) has various research and advocacy work related to the rights of Roma communities in different countries, including Slovakia. Their publications usually provide observations through which awareness is raised, into which they may include specific recommendations for taking actions and policy changes. Open Society Foundations has published reports that include specific recommendations on the situation of Roma communities in Slovakia, their reports address topics such as discrimination, housing, health care, social inclusion etc.

¹² <https://documents-dds-ny.un.org/doc/UNDOC/GEN/G15/203/52/PDF/G1520352.pdf?OpenElement>

¹³ [Human Rights Watch World Report 2001: Slovakia: Human Rights Developments \(hrw.org\)](#)

¹⁴ For example, [Two young Roma men were severely beaten and arrested after a dispute in a bar. They were taken to hospital for brief treatment, and were later transferred without explanation to Moldava nad Bodvou for psychiatric examination. After they were released.](#)

THE EUROPEAN UNION

The European Parliament and International Governments have an important role in addressing discrimination against Roma Communities including Slovakia. The Legislation and Policy Development, the EU as a legislative body, has the power to adopt resolutions, directives and regulations that promote equality, non-discrimination and the protection of minority rights. The European Parliament adopted a resolution in 2019 on the situation of Roma in the EU, addressing discrimination, social exclusion, and anti-Roma sentiment. The resolution emphasized the importance of inclusive education, equal access to employment, healthcare, and housing, as well as combating hate speech and hate crimes against Roma communities.

In 2011, the European Parliament endorsed the European Framework for National Roma Integration Strategies, aiming to enhance the social inclusion of Roma communities by addressing education, employment, healthcare, housing, and anti-discrimination measures. The European Parliament also supported the adoption of the European Roma Strategy for Equality, Inclusion, and Participation (2020-2030), which guides member states in promoting integration and combating discrimination while involving Roma communities in policy processes. The Council Directive 2000/43/EC implements equal treatment between individuals irrespective of racial or ethnic origin. The European Semester facilitates policy coordination and monitoring of national reforms. The European Commission's EU Roma Integration Reports assess progress and challenges in promoting Roma inclusion. Eurobarometer surveys measure public opinion on discrimination and social exclusion, while the EU Agency for Fundamental Rights produces reports on Roma rights, offering data and recommendations on issues like discrimination, access to justice, education, employment, and housing.

Parliaments and Governments at the international level adopted more mechanisms and provided more recommendations. Their actions can help create a supportive environment for the promotion of equality, non-discrimination, and the protection of minority rights.

In conclusion, the situation of the Roma population in Slovakia is deeply rooted with the issues of antigypsyism and racism, which serve as the core drivers of poverty, exclusion, and marginalization. The Roma community continues to face systemic discrimination, social stigmatization, and limited access to essential resources and opportunities. The prejudice against the Roma people has hindered their educational attainment, employment prospects, and overall socio-economic advancement. Consequently, this cycle of disadvantage perpetuates their marginalized status, creating a vicious cycle of poverty and exclusion. Addressing these underlying issues requires efforts from both the government and society at large to combat antigypsyism, promote inclusivity, and provide the Roma community with the support and opportunities they deserve.



Recommendations

- Recognize antigypsyism as a specific form of racism, as defined by the European Commission and European Parliament.



- Ensure a rights-based approach and implementation of the Rule of Law that will strengthen the understanding of Roma as communities deprived of their rights rather than as vulnerable.
 - Develop the social protection section of the strategy for the improvement of the situation of the country's Roma by focusing on equal access issues. Ensure active participation of Romani representatives and experts not only in the development of the social protection strategy, but also in its implementation, monitoring, and reporting stages.
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- Prohibit racial segregation in health care facilities. Investigate and punish all cases of racial segregation in the provision of health care services, and impose effective and dissuasive sanctions on the persons, agencies, and institutions engaged in such discrimination.
 - Set clear, measurable objectives for the fight against discrimination, antigypsyist speech and crime, in line with the Framework Decision on combating racism and xenophobia by means of criminal law and the Race Equality Directive.
 - Develop structural and impact indicators to measure progress in fighting antigypsyism/ anti-Roma racism.
 - Monitor and sanction the dissemination of misinformation, hate speech and the scapegoating of Roma by the media, politicians or public figures, including the ethnicizing of crimes allegedly committed by Roma in the public discourse.
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- Pass legislation prohibiting both direct and indirect discrimination in the public and private sectors, including, but not limited to, the provision of social protection, health care, and housing.
 - Incorporate into existing antidiscrimination laws specific provisions related to housing, including clear sanctions for persons, agencies, and institutions found to be involved in discrimination as well as effective complaint mechanisms and effective legal remedies.
 - Fully adhere to the International Convention on the Elimination of all forms of Discrimination (ICERD)
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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.



Global Forum of Communities Discriminated on Work and Descent (GFoD)



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